

## Community

The challenges of adolescence are many and varied. Young people live in a world of much uncertainty. They watch television reports and read media articles of dreadful acts of violence and terrorism; they are connected to a wide and vast world through digital medias; but, are they truly 'connected', and if so, to whom are they connected?

There are times in our lives when we, someone close to us, or someone we know, falls into difficult circumstances and needs the help of those around them. What makes some people respond to such news by giving all they can, offering financial or emotional support? What makes some people walk away without a second glance?

Where do we get our sense of what is right and what is wrong? What guides our thoughts at these times? What initiates our sense of giving or lack thereof?

These are difficult, but important questions. Life can take some of the most unexpected turns and present us with challenges previously unconsidered. If we believe that our fortunes, our livelihoods, or our mere existence can be impacted on so significantly by factors beyond our control, how do we safeguard our lives? If we believe in the generosity of others to help us in time of crisis, do we have an obligation to others in times of their crisis?

Where does our sense of community stem from? For some, it stems from a deep spiritual connection - a belief that transcends the physical; for others it comes from a strong awareness and expression of their morals and beliefs about what is right and proper. Regardless of the origin, surely we can only seek generosity and community when we have espoused the underlying behaviours and attitudes of generosity and community ourselves.

If this is indeed agreed, then how do we demonstrate generosity? Is it through donations of money, food or goods, or services? In short, the answer is *yes*, but it is often so much more than these. I believe that the most important gift we can ever give is that of ourselves – the willingness to give of our time and our inner self – our true self, unmasked and honest.

In our fast-paced lives, there are many pressures and demands on us at both a professional and personal level. These impact upon our emotions, our stress levels, our attitudes, and often on those we love, those we care about, and those we encounter each and every day. Do we engage to connect with someone, or do we let the pressure of our circumstances spoil and poison our relationships?

No community should ever become complacent about developing and enhancing the myriad of relationships found within itself. Our community has shown an amazing response to those suffering natural disasters, both within Australia and beyond, for many years. We have supported a number of important charities, and helped specific members of our own community in their time of need.

This sense of community and inclusivity is not found in all schools and is, indeed, a wonderful facet of our College. This must be protected with all our might. We need to open the communication further,

however, and encourage people in need of friendship, support or those needing a sense of genuine belonging to come forward and receive the assistance of the community.

In a genuinely caring, centred, positive and forward-thinking community, you are never alone. Let us all speak with integrity, truthfulness, friendliness and engage with passion and genuine care for each other, in the hope that we can enrich the life of another person. Those who use language to belittle, or intimidate another, do so with selfishness and darkness in their hearts. Should we tolerate such negativity, or call it what it is and demand better? Do we idly stand by and watch others suffer such actions, or do we stand together and expect decency, respect and courtesy? Something for us all to ponder, as those that stand idly by are in fact providing tacit approval.

Marian Edelman once stated that: *“Education is for improving the lives of others and for leaving your community and world better than you found it.”* Let us all aim to improve the life of another person and leave our community better each day for our presence and engagement within it. In so doing, we acknowledge the truth in Paul Ryan’s statement that, *“Every successful individual knows that his or her achievement depends on a community of persons working together”*.

Brian Grimes  
Principal