

Pitching in to help others is marvellous

Mark Pavilons

?Oh, I get by with a little help from my friends ...

?Oh, I'm gonna try with a little help from my friends.?

Beatles ? With A Little Help From My Friends



We are blessed.

I am constantly reminded of that fact.

My daughter Lexie, the world traveller and humanitarian, points this out regularly. Just the other day we were talking in the car, and she pointed out that in some countries people don't have access to valuable documents like birth certificates or citizenship papers.

Without these, they really don't exist.

In our country we take these for granted. We also enjoy universal access to health care and education.

Our young girls learn to drive, go to university, get into politics and often, help change the world. In many parts of the world these opportunities simply don't exist.

My daughter is going to Kenya this summer for a three-week volunteer mission, through Toronto-based Me to We (Free the Children). There, they will help at a local girls' school, health clinic and pitch in with water infrastructure projects. It's a tremendous, once-in-a-lifetime experience.

While it's secure, Lexie will be out of contact with us for the majority of the trip. There's very little cell phone service in the Massai Mara region, where they stay in a mobile tented camp. This is not a vacation by any stretch of the imagination.

We were not surprised when Lexie approached us with the idea. ?She has done volunteer work for the past four years, helping Haitian sugar cane workers in the Dominican Republic.

We support her efforts wholeheartedly. Admittedly, though, volunteer work can be expensive. Her trips are not subsidized and this coming adventure is costly. We also had to get medical insurance that includes a helicopter transport to the nearest health facility, if necessary.

Lexie works hard at her part-time job to save money for her missions. She is also currently saving for university. She's a bit of a worry wart when it comes to her future, an unfortunate trait she inherited from yours truly. But she is committed and driven.

I?have said that we, as parents, try our best to teach, guide and prepare our kids for the world. We also try to be their mentors. In the past few years, as Lexie has become this one-person humanitarian force, she has become my mentor. I?have learned so much from her passion that it astounds me.

In order to ensure her passage to Africa, we had to be creative in our fundraising efforts, something that's encouraged by Me to We.

Did I?mention we were blessed?

We have received so much in the way of support from the King community, I can't adequately express my gratitude. The comments I receive from readers and residents has been amazing. Some have opened their doors, hearts and wallets to help make this happen. We were blessed with the outpouring of support at an evening soiree dedicated to Lexie. Kingscross residents Ellen and Peter McCarthy opened their home for us, and invited their neighbours to share in an evening of fine food, entertainment and friendship. It was emotional at times and Lexie was quite overwhelmed by the generosity of strangers. But, as our host pointed out, these are not strangers, but friends. Their presence alone, sharing in a fun night, was support enough. But they went above and beyond. Some are familiar with charitable causes, and one family also has a child who will also be going on a Me to We trip this year. As we mingled with the guests, I was the one who was overwhelmed with the amount of heart, and talent in that home. There are some very interesting, amazing people who live and work in King.

This fact has not escaped me. I've been a journalist for more than 30 years and have met literally thousands of people, including astronauts, inventors, Hollywood stars, Olympians and even royalty. I must say that I have encountered more fascinating types in King over the past four years than in previous decades. And I'm looking forward to meeting even more.

Making the evening a success were the efforts of two very special people.

Catherine Hughes, King's 'diva,' performed a set of her favourites, to an appreciative crowd. Catherine has performed at several local fundraisers, including the Food Bank's annual gala. She's not only immensely talented, but knows how to work a room. Thank you!

Aladin Jarrah is a maestro in the kitchen. This chef, through his Dinner at Eight service, provides 'ridiculously good meals for two to 20 in the comfort of your home.' He's worth every penny, plus he's a decent human being. Drop him a note if you'd like to find out more, jarrah@sympatico.ca.

King is a wealthy community. In fact, it's the most affluent community in Canada. It's also wealthy in terms of talent, heart, community involvement and volunteerism.

Service clubs are often the backbone of the community. King is no exception. The volunteers with various organizations, most notably the Lions Clubs, are dedicated people. They are genuine and it's evident they care deeply about their community. I had the pleasure of attending a dinner with the Nobleton Lions recently, and this small, but mighty club is incredible. They too, go above and beyond on a regular basis and they often work behind the scenes, seldom seeking any glory or praise. That's true giving.

Just as our Township promotes itself as THE place to live, work and play, let's not forget those individuals who make incredible contributions to the very fabric of this wonderful community.