A life lived for others

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High Sheriff of Cheshire 2024-25

Only a life lived for others is a life worthwhile
Albert Einstein

I have met hundreds of people this year who dedicate time and energy to our communities. Negative global news can be overwhelming; however, I have been overwhelmed by the positivity emanating from our volunteers – people whose words have positive consequences. People who recognise a need, identify a solution and take action by creating, joining or accelerating something to make it better for others. They shape destinies. All these volunteers are heroes in my book.

I learnt about our legal system way beyond what's in the books *The Secret Barrister* and *Unlawful Killings.* Globally, corruption and lawlessness destroy countries, communities and lives and I am so grateful for our legal system and the values of democracy, rule of law, respect and tolerance, and individual liberty, which enable our society to flourish.

A glimpse into the courts to witness their ability to analyse, interpret the complex, deal with legal issues impartially, with limited resources under constant public scrutiny, is an honour. Seven cases were heard in one day, the last being the most challenging. His Honour Judge Everett determined what was right, while I was in awe at the court's professionalism and reeling from observing the angst, disbelief and distraught expressions on the faces of the two mothers in court as they watched their sons receive custodial prison sentences and leave through the back door.

Our magistrates are volunteers and dedicated to maintaining standards, promoting respect and encouraging offenders to recognise the impact of their actions on our community. They need recognition and thanks for their contributions. Ninety-six per cent of criminal matters end up in a Magistrates' Court and only take four per cent of the legal budget. There are other amazing Cheshire people changing our justice system: Lady Edwina Grosvenor is leading the transformation of the prison system and James Timpson OBE DL is Minister of State for Prisons, Probation and Reducing Reoffending.

Having insight into the police service is a privilege. Being a police officer is challenging as there is a growing complexity and diversity of issues, from violent crime to mental health crises, drug addiction, homelessness and social unrest. The police made time to take me with them on underwater searches and invited me to attend their awards. I supported Crimebeat and their wonderful projects, including the Mini Police. This is an engagement programme aimed at primary school pupils that creates a fun and interactive volunteering opportunity to build positive, trusting relationships between the police and young people, as well as their families and communities.

How do we create a society of inclusivity, kindness and respect? How do we reduce the likelihood of another two sons being in court? I met a young man – homeless and addicted – who had been on the brink of ending his life. He was saved by one person who held out their hand, asked him

At Creating Adventures, a Warrington based charity which seeks to bring laughter, stimulation and personal fulfilment to adults with autism and learning disabilities

if he was OK and supported him to go to a hostel. This changed his trajectory; he is clean, working and forever grateful. One person, one hand.

It's been an amazing year. I have learnt a lot about our society and our incredible communities; and I had the 'once in a life time opportunity' of declaring the general election result. A note for new High Sheriffs: have spare shoes, umbrellas, pens, certificates, chocolates and a speech in the car. Arrive around the corner early; get your hat and feather ready, because people are waiting to greet you with enthusiasm. All in all, what a lot of miles and smiles, sandwiches and parishes, volunteers and cheers... and what an honour.

A game of table football at the YMCA Crewe

With the mini police at Cheshire Constabulary headquarters in Winsford for a flag raising ceremony