

Spot the difference



At the Stephens and George Charitable Trust summer camp

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When I accepted the honour of serving as High Sheriff of Mid Glamorgan, I imagined many memorable experiences would come my way. Yet one of the most touching moments of my tenure so far came during a summer afternoon at the Dowlais Community Centre, where I joined the Stephens and George Charitable Trust for their children's summer camp.

The camp itself was a breath of fresh air – children aged between five and eleven enjoying a week together without phones or computers, simply playing, talking and learning from one another. As soon as I arrived, the room buzzed with excitement. The volunteers, who give so much of their time and energy, had created a warm and safe environment where children could simply be themselves.

It was not long before I was surrounded by curious faces. Many wanted to know what exactly a High Sheriff does. Their questions came thick and fast, full of

curiosity and innocence. I was interviewed one-on-one by Luna, an extraordinary eight-year-old with a sharp mind and a natural confidence that belied her years. She held her notepad with such determination and seriousness that I could not help but feel I was facing one of the toughest interviews of my life! Her thoughtful questions – ranging from my role in the community to why I wanted to serve – reminded me just how observant children can be when given the chance to lead the conversation.

Alongside the questions, there was a creative activity organised by one of the volunteers, Sarah. She had prepared a cartoon version of me for the children to colour in – a playful and charming likeness that brought a smile to my face. The children eagerly grabbed their crayons, keen to bring the drawing to life.

What moved me most, however, was something very small but deeply meaningful. A number of the children asked for brown crayons so that they could colour my face and hands

accurately. It may sound simple, but for me it was profound. Representation matters and in that moment I felt the children were recognising me for who I am and accepting me into their world with kindness and respect. That act of reaching for the right crayon spoke volumes.

The Stephens and George Charitable Trust deserves enormous credit for the work it does. It offers not only camps like this but also ongoing opportunities for children across the community. By making the activities affordable and accessible, they ensure that no child is excluded from taking part, regardless of background. They give young people the freedom to explore, learn and ask questions in a safe and supportive environment. Volunteers such as Sarah, Emma, Fleur and the many other young people who give their time so generously play an enormous role in making this possible and their energy and commitment are an inspiration in themselves.

For me, the afternoon was not just another engagement in the High Sheriff's diary. It was a highlight of my past six months. The camp embodied so much of what I believe in: community, curiosity, inclusivity and hope for the future. As I left the centre, I carried with me not only Luna's sharp questions and Sarah's clever cartoon, but also the memory of those brown crayons – a simple, heartfelt reminder of the importance of being seen and valued.

I am certain that the children who attended will remember their time at camp for a long time. I know I will never forget mine.



A selection of some of the cartoon versions