

Dear Team

The opportunity to journey with others as they deal with their daily challenges is a privilege that we must never take for granted. Every one we meet has a story that inspires or saddens us and sometimes, one that does both at the same time. As we listen to these stories, we enter lives we would never live but yet we would find something important or meaningful in these lives that we would resonate with.

“I was so embarrassed to see my children jumping around like monkeys when I followed them to ukulele class early this year but last week when I saw them perform, I could not believe they were my children.” Others laughed and nodded as they heard this during a meeting of parents gathered to support each other and to look out for the children in their neighbourhood. Another mother shared that she was most surprised when her children listened attentively to her when she got them to help her in the kitchen. To her delight they carried out her instructions with care and accuracy. To this, a mother commented that parents should be appreciating their children more adding that when parents trust their children they usually respond well.

Last Thursday, we were at 5 different neighbourhood meetings and it was a joy listening and appreciating how people were helping themselves and their friends. We take heart that language and ethnicity were not barriers to the honest and personal sharing within the different groups. People translated for each other and were ever ready to offer a helping hand. There was concrete support like job referrals but no less important were the gentle reminders of how people have stuck out for each other.

A mother of 4 was close to tears as she related the difficult week she was having and a stranger listening would be concerned if she could still cope. She came across discouraged and helpless but she was just lightening her heavy heart. All changed dramatically when she was reminded that if not for her, her neighbour's 5 young children will not be having 3 meals a day. When others realised she was helping a neighbour who was ill despite her own challenges, they gave her a round of applause and took turns to pat her on the back. Her strength returned instantly when she remembered that she was still fortunate enough to be able to care for others.

Our work requires us to discover how people are helping themselves and to find ways to support and further their efforts. It begins with appreciating what's right with others and perhaps more importantly, appreciating that like everyone else we too have strengths and weakness.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

*“Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.” - Voltaire*