

Poverty And Equality It Is Our Responsibility To Enable Prevention

Lara Morgan (www.laramorgan.com)

Having just had the enormous pleasure of providing only a little expertise and time to *The Childhood Trust*, I feel compelled to share the value of being involved on the ground in philanthropic support.

Support causes where I feel I can have significant impact on a prevention-focused basis, in the areas where I feel I gained significant advantage due to my upbringing - and where I see the value that enabling (not necessarily giving) this experience to others, will make a lasting and life-improving difference. In fact, all my investments, having made money, have to offer 10% of their profits to a trust, to a charity or to an organisation the founders passionately believe in, so they do good business whilst also doing good.

Prevention has always been the best way forward. The NHS is under a ridiculous strain simply because we are all living longer, but compounded by the deteriorating amount of exercise people now take. We have a massive additional challenge to overcome simply because of individuals' inertia, sometimes laziness or their inability to eat well. The madness of spending money on obesity-related illness, when nearly every individual has their own health under their own influence is, in my view, bonkers. As lazy sickness increases so do the distractions, cash demands and wasted resource going into people who simply need to be educated to know better and to do more activity.

Recently I started doing triathlons. I do not want to run every day of my life. I do not want to carry around hideous wet swimming costumes or smelly running shoes, but I do. I do not always want to set myself goals and objectives, but this is the way I have found I commit to staying fit and healthy, because I am a competitive little sod. We don't all have to race, but we do all have to raise our heart rates to look after our bodies, the machines of our wellbeing.

Prevention is surely better than anything else. I expect I live driven by the sweat-count, knowing that if I bother and when I bother to exercise, I might be

pushing back the possibility that an illness might get me. I have a view that I am making positive deposits in the bank account of health that will allow me to enjoy the later years for longer, avoiding the restrictions of wheelchairs and ill-health.

The Childhood Trust approached me to help them with the event as a guest speaker, after their CEO Lisa Gagliani took part in a sleepout fundraiser for the homeless at Wembley Stadium, where we slept out on the wettest night of the year. She asked me if I would be able to provide a short guest speaker spot, which was fine - and, because the event was going to be run as a friendly dragon's den, I also offered to assist the pitching charities with the expertise I have gained from pitching all my life.

I think a lot of people I think worry too much about getting involved with charities, assuming it will always be about giving money or it will be worse, being asked to sit on a committee or buying tickets for gala style dinners to drag friends and clients along to. It needn't be any of those and as in this example, I was simply being asked to 'give' what I do. I enjoy public speaking and it's my job to motivate, so I was simply being asked to do it for free and to give a few hours of my time - many months ahead, so it could be planned and scheduled.

The Childhood Trust's mission is to alleviate child poverty - across London. I was staggered to learn that 600,000 children in the wealthiest capital on the Planet, are living in poverty - without a hot meal every day, without a warm coat in winter and without hope to be able to grasp the opportunities that most of us take for granted. How can a child be expected to learn if they haven't had a good night sleep, if they haven't eaten since yesterday's school lunch? And if they can't learn, if they can't participate in sport or socialise after school,



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how on earth will they know how to behave, how to get a job later on and become a good citizen?

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The interesting way that *The Childhood Trust* operates is that it uses entrepreneurial techniques to curate and fundraise, supporting mostly small community based charities who provide practical, emotional or inspirational themed work for children and families. Started in 2012, they have match-funded online giving campaigns, helping the charities to master the techniques of social media and online giving – the fastest growing form of fundraising today. This way they have already raised over £2million for 50 such groups and in so doing have helped alleviate the life suffering of 32,150 children.

Three groups took part in another 'first' for *The Childhood Trust* – a joint event with *The Funding Network*. The three had been whittled from ten small charity founders who had applied. My simple task was to help them maximise their pitch. One was a preventative school based project to help deter teenagers from drinking alcohol before they complete their GCSE's. Another wanted to give life enhancing/ changing opportunity for talented singers to belong to a prestigious youth choir and the third had a proven track record in helping young black boys (aged about 8 years+) through mentoring, providing the missing father-figure into their lives, so that they reach their true potential and avoid trouble such as gangs and petty crime leading to worse case self-destruction and ultimately worse cost to society.

As I have said, it was enormously satisfying to see the

results of my modest input. Where they had hoped to raise £6,000 each on the night, the result was that they actually did a lot better and raised £8-10,000 each. These amounts will be put to work immediately and make a difference to several hundred children's lives who live not thousands of miles away, but right here under our noses.

We can moan and blame society, politicians, and parents all we like – but all the time we do, we could be simply digging into our wallets and fixing what we can, how we can. These children in many cases don't need policies, they need lunch! They need us all to think, "what can I give that will make a positive difference, to offset the imbalance we see all around us?" and I believe that all of us with more than we need or expected to have available to us, could and should do more.

Lara Morgan is the straight talking, no nonsense entrepreneur and mother of three. Best selling author, Lara started her first business, aged just 23 years, Pacific Direct, which manufactured and sold branded licensed toiletries and amenities to the hotel industry. Seventeen years later she sold 99% of the business for £20million.

She now focuses on investments in hospitality and toiletries related start-ups, as well as the growth of the Company Shortcuts business with Nicola Cook. She continues to inspire entrepreneurs to raise their aspirations, remove any self imposed barriers to growth and apply real strategy to enable their businesses to succeed.