

"Learn to Give"

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That was humanitarian Peter Dalglish's message to educators and students during a recent visit to Dubai. He spoke to Rania Al Hussaini about how he involves teenagers in his mission to help destitute children around the world.

The man who has traveled thousands of miles to help the poor and the illiterate and speak for those who can't speak for themselves... fight for those who don't have the strength to fight and lend a hand to the helpless There he was, Peter Dalglish, founder of Street Kids International, a well-known organisation that works with destitute children, sitting at a coffee shop in Dubai in casual clothes, reading the newspaper, his laptop next to him.

Having found his cappuccino, he was ready to talk to *Gulf News* about his projects and his mission. The minute he began talking, it was obvious why he had succeeded in making a difference. So follow his footsteps, listen to his words ... as he can teach you.

Dalglish was in Dubai as the guest of honour at Beacon Education School for their annual faculty orientation day. He spoke to the faculty about how important their role was in helping the dispossessed - particularly children of Iraq, Lebanon, Afghanistan and Palestine - and in turn to inspire students to do the same.

Where he comes from

Dalglish comes from a Canadian business family and studied at Upper Canada College, Stanford University and Dalhousie Law School. It was not enough for him to only help people as a lawyer; he wanted to do more. So he started helping street children, soldier children and children who are victims of human trafficking.

His mission

Dalglish believes that "with privilege comes responsibility". Accordingly he works with both the wealthy and the poor, to raise awareness among affluent children and youth about the less privileged.

"Children should know that they can make a difference regardless of their age, and there are people who need them. That is, they should connect with the poor and help them whether through education, sports, computers, or business" said Dalglish. He calls this a "biological need to be needed."

"I use my education and skills to help [promote] children's rights, because maybe these kids deserve a lawyer and advocate of their own," he added. "By helping others you get real satisfaction."

Volunteer for summer break

Dalglish encourages teenagers to help in overseas projects during their summer break or 'gap year'. As he has said, he often acts as a catalyst, guiding them on how they connect with a suitable project overseas. The community service they do later can work to their advantage, because it often helps them get admission to well-known universities.

"For me many students can achieve high SAT scores, but fewer are willing to give up their summer vacations to go volunteer in Thailand or the inner-cities of their own countries; that is why those who do front-line volunteer work get most of my attention and time," Dalglish said.

He also works with older children.

He is involved in the Shree Mangal Dvip School in Nepal that takes in impoverished Buddhist students from the Himalayan region. Several of the students in his weekly Global Issues class have won scholarships at leading independent schools in Europe and North America, including the esteemed United World Colleges.

The 'Affluenza' disease

According to Dalglish the current young generation is the richest in the UAE, and many are suffering from "affluenza". Not to be confused with Influenza, this is not a medical illness, but nonetheless a disease rapidly spreading these days, he said.

But money can't always buy you happiness.

However, Dalglish is not asking people of the UAE to give up on luxury.

"I have no objection to luxury. However, money can either be a set of wings that sets you free, or an anchor around your neck," he said.

"The UAE citizens are lucky that they have a leader with a progressive vision, who makes everything possible, and since they are privileged they have a responsibility to help others," he said.

- For more information on Peter Dalglish read his book "The Courage of the Children"

HOW YOU CAN HELP

Peter Dalglish said that most UAE national parents, who have worked hard to get what they have achieved, are concerned that their children are getting everything too easily.

They are keen to teach their children that life is not all about Nintendo Play Stations and owning luxurious cars and homes. Dalglish believes parents should encourage their children to help others, and to 'make their world larger.'

They can do this through various voluntary organisations and programmes such as Teachers Without Borders, and Habitat for Humanity. They can help build schools, visit countries like southern Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, Thailand, Nepal and Sudan. Or they can join non-governmental institutions such as the Red Crescent Society and Medecins Sans Frontieres.

"Parents and schools should also educate their children about global issues so that they will be aware of what is going on around the world, because many children have the misconception that everyone is leading as wealthy a life as they are," Dalglish added.

And he has advice for wealthy parents about providing for their children. "Leave enough money for your children so that they can do anything, but not so much that they can do nothing," said Dalglish quoting American billionaire entrepreneur Warren Buffet.

Teachers' contribution

"Our vision is for our students to become involved with Peter's projects," said Alice Markson,

public relations manager, Beacon Education.

"We invited Peter to our orientation day to inspire our teachers to work with their students to design projects that affect change for poor children across the globe for this year. The outcome of this event has been amazing - our teachers are already planning different ways of involving their students, from hosting exchange students from one of Peter's schools to taking a group of students to the schools.

In order to ensure these ideas come to fruition, Beacon Education has invited Peter back to Dubai at the end of October to help solidify our teachers' plans, and to speak with our students and parents."