



## Speech to Giving Nation Awards

Transcript of a speech by Phil Hope MP, Minister for the Third Sector, at the Giving Nation Awards, 29 October 2007

Thank you for inviting me to these awards to celebrate the achievements of the schools engaged in Giving Nation.

First of all I'd like to congratulate all the winners but particularly Felpham Community College, today's overall winner.

I have been in this job since the summer and the one thing that I have been most impressed with is the engagement of young people with the issues that matter to them – just last week I was speaking to a group of 20 young social entrepreneurs who are setting up a Youth Commission. These young people, like you, are passionate about achieving social change. They've chosen to make their impact through social enterprise and through business. They hope that their Commission will galvanise other young people, like yourselves, to make a difference and they have the courage of their convictions.

This is one example and the winners here today represent dozens more.

Up and down the country you have been dedicating your time to raising money for charity, increasing awareness of the causes that are important to you and campaigning for change.

Today I'd like to pay tribute to you.

And pay tribute to your personal sacrifice in achieving the goals you set yourself – shaving your hair off to save your local hospital or waxing your legs to raise money for Children in Need.

And I'd also like to pay tribute to your passion for change – lobbying the Government and lobbying local business on issues that matter to you, in some cases doggedly sending letters and emails to the Government and the Prime Minister, or in the case of the children from year 7, 8 and 9 from the Folkestone Academy sending a paper chain to the G8 Summit campaigning for education for all children across the world.

For me examples like these mean that you are all winners.

And it's not just the schools here today who are winners. Earlier this year the Citizenship Foundation, who I'm proud to say is a strategic partner of the Office of the Third Sector, won a prestigious international prize – the Carl Bertelsmann Prize. It's the first time a third sector organisation from the UK has won this award and it recognised the Foundation's fantastic and innovative work encouraging civic engagement within the school curriculum.

So, Michael, on behalf of the Government I'd like to congratulate the Citizenship Foundation for this important honour.

[Round of applause]

I'd also like to recognise all 37 schools who've taken part in the Giving Nation Awards this year – it just goes to show the level of enthusiasm young people have for being socially active, making a real difference and contributing to their community is alive and well.

Civic engagement and a sense of social responsibility are incredibly important for us all.

This is because if we all acted on our social conscience, in the way that all of you here today have done, I think the world would be a better place.

Recent campaigns like Make Poverty History, Live Earth and Oxfam have been driven by you, young people, who believe that their actions can make a

difference. And I know without the mobilisation of young people change simply won't happen.

But it's not just about campaigning for change through existing national and international movements, it's also about spotting an issue or a problem that you feel passionate about and acting for change amongst your friends and peers or even as an individual.

Many of the most effective campaigns are led by charities – small and large. We believe in the right of charities to campaign to change the law and what we, the Government, do. Government doesn't always get it right and it is often citizens organising together that make a change that otherwise Government might have ignored. We don't make change alone. It's together that we can make the difference.

The Torry Academy, a winner here today, did just that by conducting a sleep out on the streets of Aberdeen this year – experiencing what it's like to be homeless, raising awareness and calling for change.

I want to see more opportunities for young people to get involved with voluntary and charity work.

This is important because engaging positively with the community you live in – and that community can be your school, it can be your local area, it can be your town or even the wider world – as Felpham Community College's visit to the Door of Hope Charity in South Africa shows – doesn't just benefit others less fortunate, although of course this is incredibly important, it's also about personal benefits too:

– It's about personal satisfaction – the sense that you've made a difference to those around you;

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– It's about acquiring new skills (and I'm sure many of you have got involved in things that you've never dreamt of before) and knowledge that you can apply in your school, at home or in the workplace;

– and it's about a acquiring a greater understanding of different lives, countries and cultures – making new friends, meeting new people and experiencing different situations to those you're used to.

All these things matter and this is what I think is so important – programmes like Giving Nation and the Giving Nation Challenge allow young people like you to fulfil your potential, make you feel good about yourselves and proud of your friends and they allow you to see the difference positive action can make – and this is what I believe being a good, active citizen is all about.

And, as the judges said about one of today's winners, it's about, "becoming the best and most active, caring and loudest young citizens they can be, standing up and questioning the issues they feel just have to be addressed".

Awards ceremonies like these recognise young people like you and recognise the difference they make. Congratulations to all of the winners. I hope that you will continue to act as leaders and promote a culture of giving to other young people.

I also hope the students from Felpham Community College have a rewarding trip to Kenya next year – I'd be interested to hear about your experiences!

Thank you.