

Breaking the Cycle

“A very moving, inspirational assembly with truly lovely people who have clearly experienced extreme hurt and tragedy and could excuse themselves for blaming others but don’t – forgiveness is their message and, if they can forgive what they have had to endure, then so can many of us”.

July 4th, Independence Day in America, was “Break-through Day in Forgiveness” at Northfleet School for Girls. All Year 9 and 10 students sat through one and a half hour assemblies with “Breaking the Cycle” which both moved and inspired students and staff alike. Many were reduced to tears with the true stories of tragedy and violence, but subsequent forgiveness given; whilst others were not yet able to comprehend how Glenn Fielder, a lovely man who was paralysed from the chest down by a mindless act of violence when in his teens, could possibly forgive his assailants.

Yet this is what he has done and this is the message he has told: he spoke of two disabilities he had inflicted upon him. The first is obvious – he is in a wheelchair due to his paralysis from the act of violence he endured. The second, not visible, was the cancer from within due to his hatred and bitterness towards the person who stabbed him and who caused his physical disability. None of us, or very few of us, can imagine Glenn’s physical disability but more of us can begin to comprehend the poison in the heart he suffered from anger, fear and hatred. So... his message reached out to all students and staff in the hall. If Glenn, who was stabbed with an 8 inch knife purely for trying to help someone else, can forgive the person who inflicted this disability on him, surely we can forgive those people who have hurt us... our egos, our self-esteem.

Let’s all try doing what John and Glenn suggested and care for one another, respect each other, talk to someone we trust about our hurts and learn to forgive – both ourselves and others for the wrongs done.

“It was a great opportunity and such an inspiration”, (Year 9 student).

“I thought the assembly was very inspiring and very eye-opening. It made me realise that even though Glenn has had something devastating happen to him he forgave”, (Year 9 student).

“I never believed in forgiving but ever since listening to Glenn’s story I have been inspired by the wise man to forgive and forget!”, (Year 9 student).

“The assembly was really good; it got me thinking that holding a grudge won’t get you anywhere in life”, (Year 9 student).

"I can now forgive more easily because if Glenn forgave someone that permanently affected him then I can forgive someone for an argument", (Year 9 student)

"I have been reading the book, "Why Forgive", they gave out; some of the stories in there are upsetting and use powerful words", (Year 9 student).

"I think the Forgiveness assembly was brilliant. I learnt so much and it made me realise how lucky I am. The best part of the assembly was when Glenn gave his talk, it brought back memories of when my dad got attacked and it made me realise how lucky I am to have my dad around", (Year 9 student).

Miss Collingridge

Assistant Head: Ethos and Behaviour