

Bringing philanthropy home



Bill and Julie Holroyd thought they'd fulfilled their philanthropic aspirations until they realised there was much more they could do in their home county of Cheshire. Working with the Cheshire Community Foundation has enabled them to focus their charitable giving to meet the needs of the local people they are so passionate about helping.

For successful entrepreneur Bill Holroyd and his wife Julie, their philanthropic story began at a local level. **"For many years my focus was purely business,"** Bill explains. **"But I'd begun to feel that something was missing - I still wasn't totally fulfilled."** It wasn't until a chance visit to Bolton Lads and Girls Club in 2003 and a subsequent invite to Chair its Board, that he realised he'd found the missing link. **"I knew from that point onwards that I had to give back."**

Together with his wife Julie, Bill made a pledge to give 20% of their capital to charitable causes and went on to set up The Holroyd Foundation. Their OnSide Youth Zone charity was soon born, inspired by Bill's experience at the Bolton Lads and Girls Club. OnSide has grown from strength to strength, bringing 14 modern Youth Centres to some of the UK's most deprived areas. Each week, thousands of young people can engage in a range of affordable leisure activities in a safe environment kitted out with quality equipment.

Their philanthropic success on both a national scale and on a county and local level has seen youth-related crime go down by a minimum of 50% in the areas where the OnSide centres have been set up. And yet despite this, the couple felt there was a gap in what they wanted to achieve right on their doorstep in Cheshire.

"We were short on time and resources and felt that we were making snap decisions on what we would and wouldn't give to. We had the funds but at times it felt as though we were scattering them around without carrying out due diligence. It didn't

sit comfortably with me and it was very unrewarding." That's where the Cheshire Community Foundation came in to solve Bill and Julie's charitable dilemma: *"I did my homework on the Foundation and felt confident that it would enable us to fulfil the Cheshire-wide giving element of our strategy,"*

For the first year, the couple set up a substantial fund with the Cheshire Community Foundation, with the aim of supporting young, disadvantaged people in Cheshire. It's testament to their faith in the Foundation that they have increased the amount year on year. *"Reflecting our commitment to supporting young disadvantaged people through OnSide, we wanted to continue this focus throughout Cheshire. The Foundation meticulously root out worthy causes and connect us with the small, local charities that we would never come across otherwise."*

Amongst the worthwhile causes that Bill and Julie support through the Foundation are Home-Start and Stick 'n' Step, as well as charities which promote the emotional

health and wellbeing of young people such as Visyon and Papyrus. They have also donated generously towards the Cheshire Community Foundation's Young Minds Matter programme, a major new fund of £500,000 helping to support young people in Cheshire with mental health issues.

"It's a smart and hugely rewarding way of giving something back. The Foundation carries out the due diligence on our behalf and each year we are presented with a factual report on how our funds have been shared and the difference our giving has made for young people across Cheshire."

From Bill's role at the Bolton Lads and Girls Club and the subsequent nationwide success of their OnSide Youth Zones, to bringing their focus home to Cheshire, the couple have come full circle in their remarkable philanthropic journey.

"Donating to local causes through the Cheshire Community Foundation gives us the ultimate feel good factor - we know that our money couldn't be spent in a better way."

If you would like to discuss setting up a fund or would like further information, please call 01606 330607 or email office@cheshirecommunityfoundation.org.uk