

Deputy Lieutenant, Police and Crime Commissioner, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and gentlemen, and, of course, staffs, supporters and cadets, As High Sheriff, I have the great honour of being your patron during my year in office. My pleasure with such a role is that I have a chance to support you all, as a fellow volunteer. Yes, alongside Helen Hartley, Sgt Kerlake, Staffs, supporters and all of you Cadets, the High Sheriff is also a volunteer.

Volunteering is what sets our county, and indeed country, apart in the world, and makes our local communities great places to live. Why do we all do it? Well there are lots of good practical reasons, like building our CV's (and employees really do put a lot of store in such activities), but I believe the real reason is that we all want to make a difference, in a world all too easily prone to despondency.

Police and Crime Commissioner, the determined support from yourself, the Deputy Lieutenant (both now and during his year as High Sheriff) and the Chief Constable, has provided the bedrock for the development of the Surrey Volunteer Police Cadets, and has meant that everyone here this morning can make a difference - you have our grateful thanks.

Let me tell you a short story from an American scientist and poet, Loren Eiseley: to me this describes why we are all volunteers;

One morning an old woman was walking along the beach after a huge storm had passed, and found it covered with washed-up starfish, stretching as far as the eye could see.

Off in the distance, the old woman noticed a young girl approaching. As the girl walked, she paused every so often, picked up an object and threw it out into the sea. The girl came closer still, and the woman called out 'Good morning. May I ask you what you are doing?'

The young girl looked up and replied, 'Throwing starfish into the ocean. The sun is shining and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die'

The old woman replied, 'But there are tens of thousands of starfish on this beach, I'm afraid you really won't be able to make much of a difference.'

After listening politely, the young girl bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it back into the ocean. Then she turned, smiled and said, 'Well, I made a real difference to that one!'

So the question I would like you all to ask yourselves in future, as you develop as Police Cadets within your Units, is this - how many starfish have we given assistance to?

Now, I am used to intense and highly perceptive questioning whenever I meet any of our units, so I know that you would all immediately ask - well, how many individual starfish has the High Sheriff helped?

I would like to think that the answer will be 'quite a few' by the end of my year, but so far, I know for certain that the number stands at seven. Nothing heroic in that, I was simply at the right place at the right time, and willing to help.

Just like many of your fellow cadets last Tuesday evening when they helped throw the High Sheriff himself back into the ocean! At the High Sheriff's Garden Party, cadets from Epsom & Ewell and Guildford Units came to the rescue and immediately became waiters and waitresses (and even nannies) for a few hours, just to give me support as I was wilting in the sun!

The difference does not have to be earth-shattering, but the fact that you are so willing to help will bring great personal satisfaction to everyone involved, including yourselves.

And if you ever in doubt about your capabilities, remember this African proverb;

'If you ever think that you are too small to make a difference, try spending the night in a closed room..with a mosquito!'