

Ambassadorial Scholar
Second Report
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Hosting Rotary District 1040
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"Two Dead and Two Missing" lead the headlines of my University newspaper when I returned from Christmas holidays. One University Lecturer was confirmed dead along with one undergraduate student. The "two missing" are two graduate students who have yet to return from their Christmas break. In a very real way, people from all over the world have been effected by the enormous and horrific tsunami that struck southeast Asia on what the Brits call "Boxing Day", December 26th. So far the death toll, added to those who are still missing, amount to well over 200,000 people. That is a very difficult number to imagine! It is 66 times the number of men and women who died in the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, well more than three times the number of US Soldiers who lost their lives in the Vietnam Conflict (58,226), and over 83 times the men and women who were lost in the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Granted, comparing the ways in which these casualties came about is much different in each case, but these numbers will, hopefully, help put this world catastrophe into perspective.

After living in England for the past four months, my eyes have been opened to many things. The first thing that I have had to come to grips with is the anti-American feelings that run very deep, especially with the younger generations. I didn't expect it to be so strong in England. Secondly, I have also come to realize people in England tend to be more reserved and appeared to me that they would be less likely to be involved with charitable giving or aligned with service-based organizations. On this second point, I must admit, I was wrong. After a full month since the Asian Tsunami, the British public is still, overwhelmingly, giving money, supplies, time and service to help the many struggling families in that region of the world. In fact, the pressures by the public were so strong that the UK Government felt it had to increase its pledge of aid in order to maintain a good government appearance! So far, the UK public has raised over £200 million (which is about \$400 million!) Given the UK's population is about 1/5 of the US population, that would be the equivalent of the U.S. public raising about \$2 Billion. Not too shabby!

In almost every store I go into, there are still cans to put change into that say "help Tsunami victims." Many major retail stores set up a system where you can add a few Pounds Sterling to your credit card so that it would go straight into the International Tsunami Appeal Fund, and almost every major student group on the University of Leeds Campus sponsored a fundraiser to help raise money for the victims families. To say that I have been impressed by the generosity, caring and shear support of the British people to a land far away, is an understatement. That land far away, however, touched this country in a very real way claiming an estimated 453 British lives. For the U.S., we lost 16 American citizens. For the University of Leeds, it appears, we have lost four.

Through this horrific and devastating world event that continues to top the headlines around the UK, a great humanitarian effort is still underway. Rotary has had a big hand on the ground in many of the countries effected, but through it all, hopefully faith in humanity for the cynics of the world has been restored to some degree because of the overwhelming and generous human response. Living in England has given me a greater understanding of just how small our world really is.

God bless,

J.B. Horton