**Mr Bill Charnley. RIP**

**(1935-2023)**

Dear Parents and Carers

It is with a heavey heart that I write to let you know that after a short illness, Mr Bill Charnley passed away on Friday 24th February with his loving family by his side.

Those who knew Bill will be deeply saddened by the loss and those who never met him will, I am sure have heard of his work.  The comments on our recent Facebook post bears witness to the many lives that Bill saved in his work.    Bill was a strong rock in the Horwich community for well over 40 years supporting local children at school but also in the wider community. For over 25 years, Bill volunteered his services as a counsellor to the school and as a result, generations of pupils have been supported during some of the most turbulent and distressing times of their lives. Given the confidential nature of Bill’s work, he was never often publicly acknowledged, but his work was never for public acclaim, just the quiet gratitude and dogged determination of seeing those he helped thrive once again.

As a result of this, many ex-pupils were still in contact with Bill to this day. For over 40 years, Bill also (until a couple of years ago) refereed school football matches for generations of pupils in all weathers at weekends and after school. Not only did Bill support pupils at school for over 40 years, but he also made a passionate impact in the local community. He attended Mass regularly and consistently at St Mary’s Horwich and was a well-respected member of the community.  His work for SVP is just one of the ways he has used his own resources to do God’s work in the world today.

Bill devoted his life to caring for children and families in need, devoting his time to finding, matching and placing children of all ages into a safe environment whether it be foster care, an adoptive or residential setting. Bill offered support not only to children but to their biological families and families they were placed with by supporting them emotionally and practically. He just seemed to know what was the right thing to do and say. He never made anyone feel ‘bad or inadequate’ if they were unable to cope, he held out a hand to all in need without being judgmental and advised and allowed people time to move forward and see light at the end of the tunnel. He helped families to resolve problems and love and appreciate each other.

Bill gave so much of his energies representing the Bishop’s voice as a foundation governor of St Joseph’s RC High School and continued to give as a school counsellor to improve the lives of our young people until his final days.   Even during the hardest part of the COVID lockdown, the school called on Bill to ask if he would be telephone support for a member of staff or a student who had lost someone they love.   He had a way in meetings to make people not just feel at ease but encouraged them to be the best version of themselves.  He made the governor meetings that he was part of, a meeting where the presence of Christ could be tangibly felt.  He is responsible for helping to recruit and appoint some amazing staff members who went on to be the game changers needed in the lives of our young people and  he dealt with difficult governor business with integrity.  When he retired from the Governing Body he left behind on the GB what is affectionately known as a ‘Bill Barometer.’  Even though he was not present at our governor meetings, the team would often think “What would Bill say about this?” or at interviews, “What would Bill be asking of this person?” or “Who would Bill appoint”  In essence he has embodied Christ in the school. He has done the work of Jesus and used his own hands, voice, words and actions to do God’s work in the world today.

Through his work with SVP Bill has introduced the school to so many kind people who have donated their time and money to support the lives of young people as well as modelling to our young people the joy that comes from giving.  He has changed the lives of so many young people and it has been a privilege having him in the life of the school as a governor and quite literally, a counsellor and friend.

Bill has supported hundreds of children who have faced abuse of every kind, spending hours of counselling and listening to them, he’s spent time with foster carers, and adoptive families ensuring they were equipped to deal with children’s emotional needs and behavioural outbursts whilst in their care. He helped families to resolve problems so that they could remain together. He gave up his time to drive the minibus so that children in Children’s Homes and mothers in Mother and Babies Homes were able to enjoy a day trip out. Bill really did ‘rescue’ so many children from harm, giving them the opportunity to be placed in an environment where they could feel safe and secure, allowing them to thrive.

Bill has been a ‘Guardian Angel’, to so many people of all ages in their hour of need. To understand the challenges of fostering, Bill made the decision with his wife to foster children himself so he could advise families from his own experience how to deal with difficult situations they may face both emotionally and physically.  In his own words he commented, ”How can I help them, if I do not have the personal experience to understand.”

Within the local community, Bill was one of the founders of St Mary's Football Team in Horwich which has enabled thousands of young children to thrive through football over the years. Bill also founded St Mary's Church youth club and was an active member of the Church St Vincent De Paul society- supporting vulnerable families in the local community.

Bill Charnley has been an unflustered and dedicated advocate of young people in the Horwich area for over 40 years. His desire to better the life chances of young people is immeasurable.  We are honoured that the Charnley Building at St Joseph’s serves as a lasting reminder of Bill’s work so that people will drive past in years to come and say “It was here that I found joy in life and discovered who God had called me to be.”

Bill Charnley, Rest in Peace.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace. Amen.

We will be remembering Bill in our Assemblies this week.  Please also remember Bill's family in your thoughts and prayers.

Many thanks

Mr T McCabe

Headteacher