
TOWER AND TOWN



Thriving Through Venture Caro Stover

What does Thriving Through Venture do and why do we need it? It offers purposeful learning experiences to young people within our community in Wiltshire, and then in Marlborough's partner community, Gunjur, in The Gambia.

2018 was our first year, and we had ten students from different independent and state schools in the area, working together in both communities on a writing project, a photography project and a business project. When in Gunjur each young person thrived being partnered with a young Gambian, working together on the projects, such as the beekeeping project illustrated opposite. .

I have worked with children and young people since 1989, Over the last 15 years I have become increasingly aware of the significant contribution that mental wellbeing has on learning and living. We now understand that specific brain changes during adolescence can contribute to a predisposition to poor mental health particularly with this period of life being very focussed on working out, "Who am I, Who do I want to be?"

What in our environment makes our young people so anxious and so vulnerable to low mood and poor confidence these days? Two core factors are a weak sense of belonging and connecting within relationships and community and having little sense of purpose. Another is the pressure caused by the current levels of competition for gaining desired employment, professional status, looks and/or material wealth.

What can we do about it? In part, we need to move from a suffocating focus on exams and league tables, and, as an example, include in our curriculum relevant, practical and purposeful learning opportunities within our communities working and connecting with all ages and professions, and then to do similarly in a very different community.

These young people in Thriving Through Venture were not the normal candidates who would put their hand up for an adventure like this. However, with the carefully constructed programme and support, they all took deep breaths and took on the challenge. As one of them reflected: *"TTV taught me that if you go out of your comfort zone, exciting things happen."*

Our evaluations showed that these young people's individual resilience increased because of this experience, enriching them and the communities involved.

We are now planning the 2019 programme. For further information on this year's specific projects, please contact me on Caro@ttventure.org

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GUNJUR

“Many people are frightened of the bee sting in The Gambia. I protect the bees and make them as your friend. I have studied beekeeping in many countries. I make and sell lots of bee products but making honey is my favourite thing.”

Sulayman Manjang, Gunjur