

THE TSUNAMI DISASTER

Michael Joslin looks at the devastating consequences of the Tsunami disaster last Christmas, the incredible story of a young local heroine and what schools in Kingston have done to raise money for the appeal.

On the 26th of December 2004 many of us were celebrating. We were drinking, eating and having fun with our Christmas presents.

In Sri Lanka old and young alike were screaming and frantically darting away from the approaching wall of water. In Indonesia hundreds of thousands were already dead, painful amounts of people simply washed away and their bodies will probably never be found.

On that day the world changed for a huge number of human beings. Orphans were made, young children's dreams and hopes were snubbed out in an instant with their deaths and people lives were blown apart.

For once I can say that this appalling tragedy was not of human cause. For once our reckless actions were not the cause of death on such a large scale that humans actions have unfortunately been accustomed to cause.

There are some heroic stories coming out of the carnage. As the Tsunami came into the beaches of Phuket in Thailand, most stood aghast

and gazed at the rapidly receding tide. Not 10 year old Tilly Smith from Oxshott, whose quick thinking under pressure saved a hundred lives.

Tilly was holidaying with her family and was relaxing on the beach when the natural phenomenon struck. While others stood and gazed, Tilly knew exactly what to do. A few weeks earlier the young heroine had studied Tsunamis in class with her teacher Andrew Kearney. Her teacher taught her what happened when a tsunami struck and how it formed. Tilly immediately recognised the beginning of a Tsunami that day and with just minutes to act, she alerted hotel staff and her parents who evacuated the beach. The beach was struck minutes later and was the only beach in the area, despite mass devastation, where not a single person was killed or injured.

A true heroine! 100 people owe their lives to Tilly Smith and the British education system! Teaching really does save lives.

That kind of story is pleasing to hear but this story is unfortunately one of the happiest stories you will hear about the Tsunami. Thousands of children, your

age, were not as lucky as Tilly Smith to know about Tsunamis. Thousands died, thousands were made homeless and thousands were made parentless on that terrible day in December.

Millions across the world were touched by the horrendous stories

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emerging from the disaster. None more so than communities in Kingston, and the response by schools and young people has been nothing less than extraordinary.

An act of nature is a terrible thing, especially when death on such a grand scale is abundant. The misery, suffering and anguish on show in Asia is enough to touch the hearts of every person in