

GLAMOROUS GIVING



By combining charitable activities with luxurious rewards, one group aims to change the way young people get involved

“This isn’t just something for the wealthy. A lot of people get confused with the luxury emphasis. A lot of the time, people think that giving is just about money,” explains Alexandra Abrams, President of the UK division of the World Council of Peoples for the United Nations (WCPUN).

“It’s not. It’s about changing consciousness. It doesn’t matter how much you have, how much you earn. It’s about what you could be doing.”

Abrams, 24, is talking about The Society of Young Philanthropists, a group that forms the UK division of the WCPUN. Headed by Abrams, The Society focuses on ‘incentivising and facilitating the involvement of young current and future ‘leaders’ in social action’. It does this through a rewards scheme aimed at 20 to 35-year-olds where charitable involvement can lead to discounts on luxury brands, restaurants, hotels, and access to ‘money can’t buy’ experiences.

“You could effectively host a dinner party for 10 people, charge each 10 pounds, donate that to a charity of your choice, and get 10 percent off a luxury brand,” says Abrams. Previous brand partners have included Pritch, Beulah, Neuluxe, and fine jewellery company Tessa Packard London. The Society also hosts events like volunteering at Polo in the Park and a Mother’s Day fundraiser at Kate Spade.

The luxury focus was a “conscious decision. We want to incentivise people with slightly more unachievable things,” says Abrams. Although the perks may speak of glamour and money, the involvement doesn’t. “We are rewarding people twice as much for volunteering and fundraising than we are for writing blank cheques. It’s all about getting people involved, creating a consciousness.”

Plans for engagement

Just recently Abrams returned from speaking to the UN on involving

young people in philanthropy. To quote Tessa Packard, Founder of Tessa Packard London, “Lexi is a fireball of energy” and a “visionary.” Volunteering is a subject Abrams is clearly passionate about.

“People want to get involved, to learn, to do good. We started looking at why people weren’t giving, why they weren’t doing it. Often they didn’t know how,” says Abrams. To this end, The Society is finalising an app that will help connect a user’s personal preferences with relevant charity opportunities. It has a blog, ‘Society Redressed,’ that mixes fashion, luxury lifestyle, and events, but requires everything to be “sustainable, ethical, and philanthropic,” explains Abrams. “We are showing people that ethical isn’t about tree hugging. There might be brands you are tempted to buy anyway, but they are doing good things.”

The Society has additional plans to organise debates mixing recognised leaders with passionate celebrities. “The whole idea is to incentivise people to go by making the debates with better known faces and glamorous locations. But at the same time they will learn about [the issues] while they are there. It’s creating a culture where people are learning, wanting to learn, regardless of why,” says Abrams.

“Every generation needs new philanthropic ambassadors to keep the traditions of ‘giving’ and ‘charity’ alive, as well as keeping it contemporary,” says Packard. “The simple fact that a group of young adults have come together to try and make a difference, however small, can only be encouraged.”

Abrams has a simpler way of looking at all the work The Society is doing: “When you start doing good, in whatever scale, you realise how easy it is, how rewarding it is. If people start volunteering to get their discount, it’s fine. But they’ll learn at the same time to start doing good without thinking about what they’ll get in return.” ♦