

CHARITY ON THE AIRWAVES

Peter McVerry, General Manager, U105



Peter McVerry (right) with U105 presenter Frank Mitchell, Sandara Kelso-Robb (Strategic Advisor to Giving NI) and Gary Mills (Chairman of Giving NI).

1. What are your thoughts, in general, on charitable giving?

I firmly believe that it is the responsibility of all of us, both as individuals and organisations, to recognise our social responsibility and give back in whatever form we can. I am lucky that I was raised in an environment where I saw my father lead by example in terms of the time and effort he gave to the local community.

2. Is your giving personal or corporate or a combination of both?

It's a combination of both which I think would be the answer for most people in society these days.

3. How do you give to charity: monetarily, your own time as a volunteer or your specialist skills?

Again it would be mix of all of these. As well as personal gifting, I am involved in a number of community initiatives. I am a committee member of my local GAA club in Dundrum. I sit on a cultural committee that has recently organised a St Patrick's Weekend event and a choir for a folk Mass, both of which gave a platform for local youngsters to develop and contribute. I have also recently taken on the chair role for the Club Development Committee with a view to looking at the infrastructure, both physical and societal, needed for the future of the club and community. For three years I was also chair of the management committee of the Dundrum Cross-Community Playgroup.

I have friends who are giving so much of their time in the Donard Fundraising Group, raising funds for a range of charities in South Down, especially Marie Curie, defibrillators for rural communities and also the Mind Your Mate initiative and do all I can to support their efforts.

4. What types of causes do you favour and why?

Personally and professionally I want to support as many as I can. Like so many

other people I have had family members who lost their lives to terminal illnesses such as cancer and so those will always have a special place in my heart.

5. Are there specific charities or causes that you give to regularly? How do you choose which to support?

In U105 we try to support as many different charities and initiatives as we can. I am conscious that we can't always be asking our listeners to give money but one key thing we can do as a radio station is offer a platform for charities to communicate their key messages to our 189,000 listeners each week and then allow those listeners to decide if they wish to help and how.

Over the past six years we have organised an annual fundraiser on U105 in aid of the Northern Ireland Hospice and the way in which staff and listeners have embraced the project has been astonishing. In 2014 we raised £126,000 - bringing the total raised across the lifespan of the fundraising to more than £600,000. We have kicked off planning for year seven already, due to take place this autumn, when Operation Purple will again encourage individuals, community groups and businesses from across Northern Ireland to show their purple power through a series of events and innovative fundraising activities.

6. Do you believe that companies and individuals have a duty to help others? If yes, why?

I firmly believe that we all have a duty to help others in whatever way we can. Often the help can take a form

other than financial and can be in time, advice, skills or putting them in touch with others who may be able to offer specialist help. You never know when it could be you that is in need of the help.

7. What is your message to business people who may be thinking about becoming more involved in strategic philanthropy?

I think developing a philanthropic strategy is key. That is why U105 were delighted to sign up as a media partner for Philanthropy Fortnight last year and again this year to play our part in bringing that message to as wide an audience as possible and to highlight the many forms that support can take.

8. Giving Northern Ireland was set up last year to champion Philanthropy. Why do you think it is important that there is an organisation that helps businesses and individuals think more strategically about giving?

An organisation such as Giving Northern Ireland, which aims to promote that culture, rather than giving to one particular cause, means businesses and individuals can gather more information and case studies on Philanthropy in general, before taking the next step of deciding which particular causes to support.