

## Caring Communities

by BROCK WEIR

I don't care.

Well, I do ? but, that's one of those phrases we say all too often, usually without a second thought, but almost always with a dismissive wave of the hand. Most of us do care, but such are the phrases we utter out of little more than reflex without really thinking about it as it leaves our lips.

?What do you want for dinner tonight??

?I don't care.?

?What do you want to watch??

?I don't care.?

Boil it down, you really do care, whether your tastebuds have a hankering, whether your favourite show might be on that night, or, you know, you have a conception of how your words and actions might impact others.

So, why has it become such a reflexive thing to say? Maybe it's just a matter of trying to move a conversation along, or to wade through conversational waters without making too many waves of your own. On the other hand, maybe it's a symptom of something a little bit deeper.

There might occasionally be some instances from time to time when the person who utters those three ridiculous, flippant words when a person genuinely doesn't care, but, in my experience, those who say it with regularity or, at the very least, disproportionate conviction, are usually the ones who very much care ? or even care the most.

How many times have you thrown caution to the wind and stumbled against your better judgement into the comments section of an article, thread, or social media post, only to find yourself knee-deep in a sea of I-Don't-Cares on any number of subjects?

I don't know about the rest of you, but it seems that those who are most insistent on not caring, even taking time out of their oh-so-busy schedules to type out and register their lack of interest for posterity and, at the risk of undermining my own argument here, in the mistaken assumption that others had the slightest concern whether they cared or not.

In my own spare time ? time which has, over the years, unfortunately become more sparing ? I help run a social media account for a particular fandom. A co-moderator with two of my closest friends, it's a forum that engages thousands of people every day, can spur some decent discussions, but rare are the times our usually celebratory posts make waves.

That all changes, however, as June approaches as we take the time to wish our followers a Happy Pride. It's a fandom that appeals to a wide cross-section of our populace, transcends all demographic boundaries, and boasts followers across six continents, for which we're all truly grateful. But it is also a fandom that has a significant appeal to members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community, so nothing could be more natural than wishing this particular demographic a Happy Pride when the month rolls around.

We're a welcoming bunch and ignoring a part of the year that celebrates inclusivity is simply not in our natures. And yet, whenever we post a message as simple as that, we're flooded with, at best, variations of ?I don't care?, at worst, comments that are nothing short of hateful, and, at funniest, replies from people who don't even follow us, that they were going to ?unfollow? us for daring to post such a thing. Some have even gone as far as following us and, after a lull of a few minutes, unfollowing us in an apparent effort

to make some kind of point.

It's clear to us that this particular demo doesn't really care about the fandom at all; rather, they are seeking out places to vent their respective spleens on this issue, which suggests that, despite their protestations, they really do care ? and how!

This job is often something of a respite from that hotbed of negativity. That's not to say that the issues that face our communities are all sweetness and light ? these issues can sometimes be as difficult to write about as it is to read about ? but there's just so much good happening out there to keep the balance.

Reporting on those individuals and groups who do so much ?good? in our community always warms my heart, not only for the benefits our communities reap from such ?good?, but how much it undercuts the idea that the dreaded ?I don't care? is nothing short of a juggernaut.

We see it in actions large and small ? and, in some cases, examples where people don't really think of what they do as ?doing good?; rather, they're just living their lives as they've always done, leaving positivity in their wake.

Perhaps the best, and most varied, examples of this can be found in our schools where week-in and week-out students, often guided by passionate and dedicated teachers who have their eyes on the big picture, find new ways to make a difference in their communities, whether they define their respective community by their school walls, the towns and cities in which they live, or as global citizens.

It's clear when they take on large-scale fundraisers for organizations like the Canadian Cancer Society, to pick but one of myriad examples, to give a hand-up to under-served and remote communities to help them be the best they can be, or it can be as simple as extending a hand of friendship to a peer who might be shy, bullied, othered, or simply have more difficulty than others in forging a genuine human connection.

Large or small, these grand or simple acts, can make a world of difference ? immediately, or even down the road.

Through the 2025 Give Back Awards, a scholarship program administered by Magna International, to recognize students who have made valuable contributions to their communities rather than simply academic prowess alone, offered myriad examples of students making real, tangible differences in our communities, collectively dedicating thousands upon thousands of hours to issues, concerns, and initiatives beyond themselves.

We've also seen students recognized for exceptional advocacy work on the international stage. Even more have found their way into the spotlight, even reluctantly, for just being the change they want to see in the world.

As the school year winds down over the next week for many students, they, in my view, deserve a round of applause for what they've been able to take on above and beyond their day-to-day school work. This round of applause should also be extended to dedicated teachers and other faculty members who go above and beyond to provide or identify opportunities for students to make a real difference, even taking time out of their already busy days to foster these opportunities in house.

For those of you who are on the cusp of graduation this week or next, standing at the start of a new chapter of untold possibilities, you're closing another chapter with a job well done, and you should all be congratulated.

Having interviewed many of you over the last four years of your high school careers, I know that you will continue to seek out opportunities to continue your work, further your passions, and exercise the simple act of caring wherever you land.