Luminosity 2013 Illuminated our Minds

The adventure to Port Macquarie for the 2013 Luminosity Youth Summit was immediately exciting for us both. There was the thrill of having been selected to represent the university, the novelty of an hour-long flight, and the extravagance of our complimentary accommodation. These, of course, coupled with the anticipation of the impending conference itself, which promised to be an inspiring and life-changing experience. A quick headlining blurb: it delivered.

Our immersion in all things awesome began with the instant bond forged between two UNSW students with a shared passion for the climate, an unambitious desire to save humanity, and a wicked sense of humour. Also, let’s not forget the free in-flight beers and cheese crackers. Anyway, back to that UNSW student bond: despite having no prior knowledge of each other beyond the odd email and a tiny bit of purely research-based, non-creepy Facebook stalking, it was a pleasure and a relief to be able to share the experience with a likeminded person.

Upon arriving in Port Macquarie we were plunged into inspiration, sharing a car ride with a key organiser of the conference and one of the acclaimed speakers for the event, Mr. Dan Flynn – the founder of the Thankyou brand. Whilst starting off on shaky ground with one of us carrying a blacklisted Cool Ridge water bottle, Dan seemed to like us ok, or at least didn’t appear to hold a grudge, delivering an inspirational presentation to kick off Day One of the summit. Dan’s speech detailed the unearthing of the Thankyou Company, starting with an alternative foreign aid plan to your average charity, through sale of bottled water. Capitalising on society’s obsession with consumerism in order to aid development projects. Genius. From there the company has expanded, releasing a range of muesli and hand washes, with the aim of providing developing countries, not just with clean water supplies, but now also access to food and hygiene as well. With a unique tracking device enabling purchasers to see exactly how they have supported specific causes, and large-scale social media campaigns, it seems Dan and his team have thought of everything. Dan’s animated and youthful charm, alongside his impressive and unique initiative, wowed us both, and from the reaction of the crowd, I’d say we weren’t alone.

Next up we heard from Phil Jamieson. Yep. Lead singer of Grinspoon. No big deal. Phil provided us with some intimate tunes and some heartfelt words about his career, fatherhood and his current project in supporting young people with mental illness (intermittent with some inappropriate swearing and drug references, as expected with any good rock star).

As if the first day could get better, we were launched into further inspiration by the celeb-appeal and fresh enthusiasm of The Voice’s Fuzzy, the humble words of down-to-earth Paralympic Gold Medalist Riley Batt, and a man with a big job: Stewart Dowrick, chief executive of the Mid North Coast Local Health District. Then of course there was The Social. With plenty of wine, food and good music flowing, and with the younger attendees off to bed, an enjoyable night ensued.
The early start the following day was made bearable by the sublime buffet breakfast on offer at the hotel, and of course, the promise of further Morello magic. The impact of the event’s MC Andrew Morello (winner of the original *The Apprentice Australia*) throughout the summit is not to be glossed over. Morello’s phenomenal success from an early age, his charisma and impressive passion, made the conference the enjoyable and worthwhile experience that it was. Plus his boundless energy kept the kids entertained, and the more senior members of the audience (us) amused and in awe.

Day Two kicked off with a motivating and informative presentation from the founder of the online Village Agency, Justine Bloome. Justine’s innovation, creativity and obvious strategic approach to success, offered us useful tools, applicable to aspiring professionals in any field. Following from this, the engaging presentation talents of John McGrath consolidated the tips we had picked up from Justine, demonstrating that failures and mistakes aren’t the be-all-end-all, and that a recipe of hard work and passion can take you anywhere you want to go.

The day continued with informative talks from several successful businessmen, with an up-beat and exciting presentation from talented dancer Anthony Ikin to conclude the day. Anthony capped his speech off with an intense acrobatic dance class. One of us may or may not have pulled some serious back muscles in the process.

Waking us up for our final day of the summit was Michael Crossland. Literally. We ran into him whilst overloading on breakfast goodies at the buffet. The impossible hurdles that Michael has faced, and then smashed in the face with a chair (an analogy used throughout the conference) is a true mark, not only of his character, but also of the insurmountable power of the human spirit. The level of positivity that this man has managed to maintain in the wake of unfathomable barriers in the form of recurring illness, is a demonstration of the fact that our human minds are our most valuable asset. With determination, passion, love and the audacity to never give up, whatever we pour ourselves into, we can achieve. Even if that goal is merely a ‘normal life’ against all odds. I would hardly call the life of Michael Crossland normal; who in spite of repeat episodes of terminal cancer, strokes, heart attacks and collapsed lungs; has played high-level baseball in America, is a sought after motivational speaker, an optimist in the truest sense of the word, and has recently married the love of his life.

A hard act to follow (excuse the Grinspoon pun but we are good friends with Phil Jamieson after all), Sue Lennox truly rose to the challenge. As pre-existing climate activists, we were fixated with Sue who is responsible for uniting so many Australian youth in climate activism, leadership, and assorted other humanitarian causes. Her method of strategic questioning, and her ideas regarding the influential power of young people have made the two of us, and I suspect, the entire auditorium, feel extremely powerful and entirely capable of changing the world in our respective areas of interest.
Luminosity was jam-packed with high caliber speakers, quality food (think chocolate fountains and miniature crème brulee), as well as truly impressive organisation complete with matching green décor (right down to some interesting florescent green spider-web brushes used to direct attendees?!) 

Although the vast majority of the conference's participants were Port Macquarie school kids, we were able to gather an array of valuable contacts from all walks of life. Being among the eldest participants, we had the good fortune of connecting largely with the speakers and organisers of the event, which proved to be a real asset. Hello increased Facebook friend-count comprising the likes of Andrew Morello, Sue Lennox, Michael Crossland and Dan Flynn, to name a few.

Many of the various skills that the DPP enables us to acquire were consolidated and built upon at the Luminosity Youth Summit. We feel extremely fortunate to have been selected for such an eye-opening experience. The opportunity to rub shoulders with some of our country’s most successful, respected and innovative leaders, in such a variety of fields, has thrown the doors to our futures wide open. We both feel very much empowered to aim high, setting big goals for ourselves, and sweating them into fruition. As dreamers, who are still idealistic enough to think that we can change the world, it was refreshing to meet and learn from real people who have actually already done so.

... As Henry David Thoreau famously said: “If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.”

And we intend to.

Jenny Horne