



FRIENDSHIP

Kelsey Boileau, Lougheed Area, Canadian Speaker at Hands Across the Border, 2011

Photos: Marlene Graham

When you ask someone what the most important thing in the world is to them, friendship is usually in the top three. You want to be friends with your girlfriend or boyfriend, husband or wife. When your mom sends you to school for the first time she says, "Have a nice day! Go make some new friends!" You are friends with the kid next door or down the street and spend summers laughing and running wild. You want to be friends with your family and the dog, or "man's best friend." And it doesn't stop there. When you go to college, you meet and establish friendships with people from different places, and later, in the workplace with people from different backgrounds. Basically, no matter where you are or what you are doing, you are either surrounded by friends or trying to make new ones. Friendship is the thing you can always count on. Friends are the people you can laugh with or cry with or call at two in the morning just because you need to talk.

Last year, I got the opportunity to participate in Girl Guides of Canada's first trip to Mainland China. It was a group of girls thrown together, most of whom had either never met, or didn't know each other very well. We went with a goal of teaching English to less privileged children, but what we learned was much more important than what we taught. We met children who had no

parents and may have owned no more than one set of clothes, but they were some of the happiest kids we had ever met. Why? Because they were friends with every other child there. They all put the others before themselves, which is the key to being a good friend. We couldn't speak the same language as these kids, or most of the other people we met on our journey, but we managed to communicate using smiles and gestures. And we noticed one important thing: one of the words everyone wanted to know was "friend."

Activities like Guiding and Scouting provide amazing opportunities to make long and lasting friendships. We all have to work together to set up camps and do the cooking and the cleaning that comes along with camping, as well as all the other fun things we get to do. Whenever you get the chance to go to a big event, you get opportunities to meet amazing people that you normally wouldn't get to. Isn't that what traders are for? To start a conversation with new and interesting people. And hopefully, if you're lucky, form a bond that may develop into a new and interesting friendship. This is what we are here for today. To spark a new friendship, live in the moment, and enjoy every single second we get.

