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While the mortgage broking industry can occasionally get negative attention in the press, there are many people in the business who are doing good in communities here and abroad, bolstering the industry’s reputation as one that revolves around putting people first.

**“Everybody wants to do something where they get up in the morning and they go to work and they feel good about it.”**

**Fiona Dickson, BDM, Moula**

While they may not get as much recognition as those who help big-ticket deals, there are a lot of people doing good in this industry, something the MFBA has been showcasing through its Community Champion Award. Another initiative meant to highlight the industry’s best side – National Finance Brokers Day (NFBD) – is coming up on 16 August. Industry veteran Dino Pacella founded the day back in 2010 and hopes that this year brokers and other industry members will be able to raise $100,000 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation through various charity drives. This year, Pacella has secured a broker company, Atrius, to sponsor the day. The company will donate $10 to the foundation for every customer who signs a broker on 16 August and documents it by uploading a picture and tagging it on the NFBD social media pages.

Pacella says he thinks it’s really important for brokers to get involved in positive initiatives outside of providing loan transactions. “Demonstrating to the public that the industry cares in other ways, such as helping to improve financial literacy, shows that the industry is run by people who care about people,” he says. “One of the biggest hurdles of fundraising is getting over how uncomfortable it is to ask people for money.” Dickson knows this well. But she says once she spoke to people candidly about what the Hunger Project was all about and why she was passionate about it, people were keen to support her. With the help of friends and colleagues from Tyro, My Accounts, Valiant, Denux, Moula and Liberty, she was able to leverage her network and raise $700 at a Brome Beach sausage sizzle. Moula and Liberty, the companies and her colleagues, contributed $2,000 to the cause.

“We all have household budgets,” Dickson says. “If we all do our bit, we can help.”

**WHAT MOTIVATES YOU TO VOLUNTEER?**

To give something back to the community
To make a difference
To gain skills and experience
To develop relationships with other volunteers
To improve your health and wellbeing
To make social connections
To help with activities which my children participate in
As a pathway to employment
To make professional connections

Source: Volunteering Australia, State of Volunteering in Victoria report 2018

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No. of respondents

1. **To improve my health and wellbeing**
2. **To make professional connections**
3. **To give something back to the community**
4. **To make social connections**
5. **To help with activities which my children participate in**
6. **To develop relationships with other volunteers**
7. **To make a difference**
8. **To gain skills and experience**
9. **To learn new things**
10. **Other (please specify)**

**So, what did she do for her? And it’s an experience that Dickson already has an extensive background in. She’s been volunteering in Timor-Leste for over 15 years. “I think it’s really important for brokers to get involved in personal initiatives outside of providing loan transactions. “Demonstrating to the public that the industry cares in other ways, such as helping to improve financial literacy, shows that the industry is run by people who care about people,” he says.”**

“In Australia, the Hunger Project supports around 250,000 people a year, including 20,000 children, through a range of programs such as school breakfast programs, girls’ empowerment programs and direct financial support.”

Dickson was genuinely surprised by the response the post received, with supporters emerging from across the broking, lending and RGM spaces. The Hunger Project invests in impoverished communities, spending about 15 years in one location. First, the organisation conducts research and builds workshops with community members to find out what sort of help is needed and what residents want. Usually the wants are as basic as having a clean water source, having food to eat, and being able to send their children to school.

Next, the organisation brings in local people to provide training, education and support so community members can learn how to build the infrastructure they need to lift themselves out of poverty. This framework gives participants the tools to find solutions that work for them, resulting in a sense of agency and ownership.

Dickson visited three communities in various stages of this process and says the differences between those who were just beginning to move towards self-reliance and those who were approaching the end were stark. The self-reliant communities had transformed and their residents were thriving. One person who adopted the methods learned and sees the progress they’re having and how their lives are improving, they want to get on board too, Dickson says. “When you’re going to be involved in the community, people are ultra-friendly – usually they’re women. Then when they make a change in their lives, that propels them forward,” she says. Similarly, that domino effect seems to work in other contexts too.

“One person’s success is another person’s success. The knock-on effect is huge.”

For more photographs from Fiona Dickson’s trip to Uganda, flip to Caught on Camera on page 25.
In May, Moula BDM Fiona Dickson went to Uganda for 10 days after fundraising $10,000 for the Hunger Project, a non-profit organisation that aims to end hunger and poverty by assisting with the establishment of community-led sustainable strategies. The Hunger Project works in 20,000 communities throughout Africa, South Asia and Latin America. Dickson was one of 20 people who visited Uganda as part of the 2030 Leaders Program to see how three communities there were progressing towards a framework of self-reliance. The Hunger Project aims to empower and support people to become leaders in their communities, providing them with the tools to lift themselves out of poverty.