

## The Gifts of Leadership

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Last night I met two young Canadians who are models for all of us. Talk about creating results that matter...the folks at [SchoolBox](#) are Authentic Leaders at their best!

Tom Affleck and Sarah Kerr were at the home of family friends who hosted us for supper so we could all learn about the work that SchoolBox is doing to support children in Nicaragua. Tom told the story of how this all started - he was in Nicaragua and he gave a little girl a notebook and a pencil. Her father came out and saw the gift and said, "Now that you have a notebook and a pencil, you can go to school this year!" Imagine that these children are unable to obtain a primary education, for want of a single pencil and a notebook, items that we here in North America can get for a mere dollar.

This was a life changing moment for Tom, who saw the connection between education for these children and the future of Nicaragua: the largest and poorest country in Central America. He and Sarah went on to create programs that have in 3 years supplied 4255 Nicaraguan children with notebooks, pencils, rulers and erasers AND have built schools there with plans underway to build another one which will serve about 300 children. SchoolBox has also partnered with other programs to connect Canadian Aboriginal Youth to the children of Nicaragua, creating hope for both communities.

Two things struck me most about this meeting:

1. How inspiring it is to see people who are so strongly motivated to be of service, actually creating their vision.
2. How our friends who introduced us to them have been profoundly impacted and changed by their interaction with SchoolBox.

### Vision and Creating

Tom and Sarah have a vision of supporting the right of every child in Central America to a basic education. This at first glance feels like a daunting task and yet

they are well on their way. They got started by taking small (and large) steps. Tom made sacrifices along the way, putting everything he had into SchoolBox and even having to temporarily live with his mother. What keeps them moving forward is their passion for and commitment to their vision.

As a Leadership and Team Development professional, this is music to my ears! I told Tom last night that this is exactly what I want for all of my clients - for them to get clear on their vision, then assemble a team that is aligned on that vision and has a shared stake in creating it. Then, using their passion, enthusiasm and commitment to this vision as a guide, to take step after step to make it a reality!

### The Impact of Involvement

Our friends who introduced us to Tom and Sarah are entrepreneurial folks who by all North American measures are highly successful. I've known them for many years. Last night when I arrived at their home, I was immediately struck by an essential difference in the way I experienced one of them. This man's heart had clearly been opened by his experience of volunteering to work with SchoolBox on a recent school build. It was beautiful to witness and was almost more compelling for me than the story of the organization.

Tom, Sarah and our friends all spoke of how the giving of the gift of support to these children was not a one-way street. They get back so much from their experiences and from the people they've met along the way. Tom summed it up eloquently, "Every time I go to Nicaragua I learn more about myself: how to have faith, how to be trustworthy and how to be loving. What better gifts could one receive?"

I'll be supporting SchoolBox this year as I celebrate my 40th birthday in October. In lieu of gifts, I'm asking my friends, colleagues and clients to make a donation to SchoolBox. (More information on that to follow.) Check out their [website](#) to learn more about this fabulous organization. And take a moment to read the invitation on the sidebar of this newsletter to reflect on YOUR vision.

The gifts of leadership are essential ingredients in the recipe for success!