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**James Bradburne**

I have been a Patron of the Children’s University for several years, and the Palazzo Strozzi, in Florence, Italy, where I live and work as its Director, was Italy’s first Learning Destination.

I am often asked what is the Children’s University, and why I support it so vigorously. Answering the first question allows me to answer the second. The Children’s University is an exceptional initiative that provides a framework in which participation in a wide variety of out-of-school activities can be made visible and recognised. This recognition achieves two important goals: first, it confirms the importance of ‘informal’, non-classroom learning, and, as a consequence, motivates those students who for whatever reason are not able to succeed in the classroom. That is not to say that those who do well at school do not need recognition for their activities outside the classroom, but for those for whom the school has become a place that means lack of success and rejection, the ability to succeed and receive credit for out-of-school activities can make the difference between a life of exclusion from education and the workplace, and a life of innovation, stimulation and re-entry.

The statistics are unequivocal – participation in the Children’s University is an important means of motivating failing students to return to the classroom and to succeed, whilst at the same time giving them a taste for learning that will serve them long after their years of formal education have passed. In today’s rapidly changing world, the ability to learn outside formal settings is an essential skill, and a taste for the pleasures of learning – fostered by the Children’s University – an essential part of our humanity. The CU’s founding Chief Executive Ger Graus says “Learning is a satellite navigation to better places in life”.



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