

MICHELMORES/MARSH BUSINESS BREAKFAST AND LORD DIGBY JONES RAISE OVER £3,000. FOR GRASSROOTS CHALLENGE

The 100th anniversary meeting of the Michelmores/Marsh Breakfast Club raised over £1,500. for local charity Devon Community Foundation recently, when over 200 local business people met at the Exeter Golf and Country Club to hear guest speaker Lord Digby Jones.

The money, which was raised through the donation by Lord Digby of his speaker's fee and a percentage of ticket sales for the breakfast will now be doubled by the Foundation's Grassroots Challenge to make £3,000 for local causes across Devon.

The Grassroots Challenge matches all donations £1 for £1 until December 2009, making giving go further to support small voluntary and community groups helping local people in need across the county.

As well as many amusing anecdotes from Lord Digby's time as Minister for Trade, president of the CBI and his various exploits for charity, he also had a serious message for businesses and their role in kick-starting and surviving the recession.

He urged them not to cut their training budgets and to use business as an agent of social inclusion. He talked about how much of the population did not have the basic skills to engage in the new knowledge based economy in the UK and how if business ignored this section of society it would only end up costing them more in the long run in tax to support a higher level of public services. He told businesses they needed to be ready for when the recession ended with a skilled and able workforce.

Kathy Beechen, Assistant Director of Devon Community Foundation, "We were really impressed by Sir Digby's message as it reflects much of the ethos of the 56 Community Foundation's across the UK.

"Much of our work is with vulnerable and socially excluded people and is about giving them the opportunity, confidence and skills to turn their lives around and re-engage with society and play a positive role.

"As part of their CSR commitment, we can match businesses up with groups and projects in the voluntary and community sector who are working with these people at grassroots level and use their support to make a real difference to local lives.

"The Grassroots Challenge should give businesses an added incentive to support us as we can match all donations made £1 for £1 using £1 million available from the government. Money raised is being used to build a permanent Grassroots Endowment Fund for Devon, ensuring a permanent source of support for voluntary and community groups supporting local people in need.

“Businesses can even use the match funding to build a Grassroots Fund to give in their company name and companies like London and Westcountry Estates and Wales and West Utilities have already signed up to do this.”

Anyone who would like to know more about joining the Grassroots Challenge should call either Kathy on 01884 235887 or Sarah on 01752 509581.