

Changing Young Lives Foundation

15th Annual General Meeting, to be held on Thursday, 29th December 2011

Executive Director's Report

The first chapter of our signature programme for street youths, Slam Dunk Basketball Challenge started 12 years ago. There were only two elements: Social Service and Basketball training. As the number of youths increased to almost 500 by 2006, two more elements: Dream Work Shop and Career Improvement were added onto the programme. Two years ago, when we first moved into the Centre, it was our wish to utilize all the learning rooms in our Learning Centre, so we began to invite other youths with different interests to join our youth programme, Slam Dunk Challenge was thus born. The Slam Dunk kids were no longer just basketball players, but youth from different walks of life. The Gym and the Music Rooms were extremely popular and were very much in demand.

It was during the 2009 Dream Work Shop interviews with the Slam Dunk kids, that I was introduced to Kwok Chin Ho, he was a 16 year-old teenager, with a positive outlook in life and was extremely enthusiastic in everything that he did. He joined our Learning Centre and became one of our Slam Dunk kids. His favorite past time at the Centre was using the gym facilities. Cooking was his passion and his dream was to become a chef. When I interviewed him, he was a volunteer teacher at a cooking class for our younger children.

During this time, we had started preparation for our annual signature fundraising event, Festival of Trees, 2010, Shanghai Night. This event was to be held in the Chinese Restaurant of the Chinese Cuisine Training Institute in Pok Fu Lam. I suggested to Ching Ho that he should make some enquiries regarding cooking classes provided by the Institute. When he was awarded with the 2010 Slam Dunk Dream Work Shop Award, he registered with the Institute for the Elementary Chinese Cuisine Course. In January 2012, he will be graduating from the Institute with a Certificate. His dream of joining the catering industry became a reality, and he is definitely on the road to becoming a Chinese Cuisine Chef. Six months ago, on a volunteer basis, he started a Chinese dessert class for our children. We are truly thankful to the Burberry Foundation for continuing to sponsor Slam Dunk Challenge for the 3rd year.

On the evening of the Festival of Trees' 2010, not only did Ching Ho start his career in the Chinese Restaurant at the Institute for the first time, I am extremely proud to say, our Pay It Forward children also took pride in taking part in this annual fundraising gala dinner event. The children participated in every performance, from singing in the CYL Tiny Tenor Choir to showcasing their moves during the Kung Fu Kids show.

Our own Ling Dangui, a 17 year-old student from our Guiangxi, Madame T.Y. Wong's Tainyang Special School for disability children returned to Hong Kong to perform. Ling has hearing and speech disabilities, she joined the school in 2002. In 2009, she was awarded with one of the top five Champions Awards for her Egg Shell Mosaic artwork. On June 1, International Children's Day, this piece of artwork was exhibited in the Shanghai World Expo, in the Life & Sunshine Pavilion. The same artwork was auctioned during our FOT 2010 Gala Dinner event. The donor who was successful in bidding for this artwork, returned it to us in a generous gesture, and it is now on display in our Centre.

Once again, we are grateful to Sally Thompson and Jane Chao Lee for chairing this significant fund raising event. We appreciate their time, effort and donations and we are also grateful to their spouses, Jim Thompson and Dominique Lee for their strong support. Their families and friends were great, thank you ! A round of applause for Sally and Joe Bobatz for their brilliant singing and dance performance of Honey Bun from the musical South Pacific. I am proud to say that the children were in top form, they were all little starlets in their own right. It has only been one short year since they started training for their performances, they were proud and confident, the word "shy" did not exist in their vocabulary. There were many teary eyes in the audience. And I am certain, none of our generous guests have forgotten our own three little Michael Jacksons- their MJ Moonwalk was the talk of the town for many months after the event.

In December, a proposal for 20 Arts and Cultural Programmes for our Pay It Forward children was presented to Kowloon Wharf for their consideration. If we are granted the sponsorship, all the children's performances that made the Festival of Trees a magnificent success will continue henceforth. A "Tomorrow's Star" may just be among one of the many young people that participate in our Art and Culture programmes.

On behalf of our staff, our children, youth and their families, I would like to take this opportunity to thank our Chairman, Sheilah Chatjaval and her Council of 12 members for their time, patience, guidance and advice. I am grateful to Dr. Eleanor Wong, Chairman of our Board of Advisors for their continued support. Last but not least, my heartfelt gratitude goes to all our donors and volunteers. It is through your strong belief in our cause that we are able to turn dreams into realities by providing so many opportunities to our youth and children, helping them to believe in miracles.