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### **Editor's Remarks**

**Written by Jess SHEK**

Over the past year, I am delighted to take part in editing and producing the audio version of the 50th Anniversary Commemorative Book of Hong Kong Blind Union. Reading through Blind Union's historical development, I am impressed by the persistence of our predecessors in "speaking up for our own rights and striving for our brighter future". The efforts they made have paved a way for an era with equality, independence and opportunities. Going forward, we will continue to keep up this persistence by removing all obstacles hindering the visually impaired from having basic rights and developing their potentials.

Our Jockey Club Vocational and Educational Resources Centre organizes personal growth activities for students from time to time. On 6-7 June, the Centre organized the "self-Challenge Training Camp for Tertiary Students". Mary and Becky shared their fruitful experience in participating this program in the article "A Training Camp for Self-Challenge".

Support, care and encouragement from parents are vital for the growth of children. Having a child with visual impairment, with no influence by traditional prejudice as well as the tireless effort in helping the child to overcome difficulties brought by visual impairment are the portrayals of Merrick Ho's mother. In the article "The Contributions of The Trunk", Merrick shared in his journey of growth, his relationship with his mother is like branches growing from the trunk. It is a touching read.

2014 is a busy yet fulfilling year for the Blind Union. We joined hands with our members to organize a series of large-scale celebration activities. Members not only took part in these activities, it was also an opportunity for them to realize their potentials. "50th Anniversary Celebration Recap", summarized our memorable celebration activities.

I would like to thank Ms. Mary Lee and Mr. Merrick Ho for their contribution to this issue of our newsletter. Acknowledgement also goes to Ms. Lilian Leung, our Community Relations Officer for her help with publishing. Our Flag Day will be held on 22 August, 2015. I would like to invite all of you to register as volunteers for our Flag Day. You can also contribute to our efforts of enabling social integration of the visually impaired by donating to the Blind Union. For details of the Flag Day, please contact our Head Office at 2339 0666.

## **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration Recap**

**Written by Jess Shek**

In 2014, Hong Kong Blind Union marked its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a series of celebration activities. Not only tremendous funds were raised, such activities also brought publicity and positive attention to Blind Union and its work.

Run For Vision – 27 Apr

"Run For Vision" was co-organized by Hong Kong Blind Union and Running to Your Home. 25 visually impaired runners were paired up with sighted guide runners from different enterprises to have a relay of 50km around the Hong Kong Island. Dr. Ko Wing-Man, Secretary for Food and Health officiated the

kick-off ceremony. HK\$340,000 was raised. One of the visually impaired runners got an employment opportunity through joining this event.

#### Golden Jubilee Dinner – 20 July

Government officials, legislators and representatives from our partner organizations were invited to join the Golden Jubilee Dinner to share the joy of our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with our members, staff and volunteers.

#### Century Break Charity Drive

The “Century Break Charity Drive” was launched at a press conference on 22 July. In the charity drive, the world famous snooker player, Mr. Marco Fu, would donate an amount of money to Blind Union for any “century break” he achieved during the 2014-2015 snooker season. Special pages for this charity drive were created on Facebook, Twitter, Weibo and Instagram so as to encourage the public to support Marco and the charity drive. Around HK\$100,000 was raised.

#### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert – 6 September

With audience of over 2,000, the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Concert promoted Blind Union’s mission of striving for “Equality, Opportunities and Independence” for the visually impaired through music collaboration between local pop singers and members of Blind Union. Local pop singers shared in the concert that through their contact with the visually impaired, understanding and passion of promoting social inclusion were enhanced. HK\$800,000 was raised.

#### World Blind Union Asia-Pacific Mid-Term Regional General Assembly 2014 – 21-24 November

The General Assembly hosted by Hong Kong Blind Union was held with great success. Over 300 participants mainly from the Asia-Pacific region took part in it, and around 200 volunteers were recruited. The ICT Symposium with the theme of eAccessibility was also held.

I truly believe that Hong Kong Blind Union could not move forward steadily and confidently without your continued support. I thus wish to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks to all our donors. We look forward to your continued support in our journey together to promote “Equality, Opportunities and Independence”.

## **A Self- Challenge Training Camp**

**Written by Mary Lee**

The Jockey Club Vocational and Educational Resources Centre held a two-day "self-challenges Training Camp for Tertiary Students" on 6-7 June. Visually impaired tertiary students and sighted volunteers took part in adventurous training activities in small groups. The objectives of the Training Camp are to enable tertiary students with visual impairment to know more about teamwork, raise their communication skills as well as break through the boundaries brought by visual impairment. At the same time, sighted participants could learn and understand more about the abilities of the visually impaired. The following are sharings from two visually impaired participants, Mary and Becky.

Mary

"There is a cliff on the right hand side. Let's stick to the left! ... The road before us is scattered with broken rocks. Mind your steps." These were the reminders given by our sighted volunteers during the night walk. We were on a bumpy road for three hours. In addition, we also had to make a Roman catapult for shooting water balloons. On the second day, we worked together to build a raft. After moving the raft to the sea, we couldn't wait to board them to see how strong they were.

Becky

It was a new try for Blind Union to organize this kind of activity. It was a good opportunity for me to know volunteers from all walks of life and meet my old friends. My communication skills have improved a lot. When we made a Roman catapult, we had to identify the strengths of each other through close communications in order to achieve good teamwork. The night walk was the most memorable activity. In a section of the trail, participants were blindfolded. They had to find their way by holding a rope. This was a challenge for sighted volunteers, and even for me, who is low-visioned. The road before us was pitching dark. I could not determine how wide the steps were. We finished the trail with the help of the volunteers. I was exhausted yet I found the Training Camp an enjoyable experience.

## **The Contributions of the Trunk**

**Written by Merrick Ho**

When we go hiking, while seeing red flowers swinging in the wind and stepping on the moist and fertile earth, we cannot help praising the amazing creation of nature. Yet I am wondering whether there will be someone thanking a trunk which supports the whole tree and links up flowers and soil? For me as a tiny seedling, my unostentatious mom is my trunk.

For such humble mission, the trunk must be ready to sacrifice in silence. Mom was a white-collar worker. She gave up her job and became a full-time housewife after I was diagnosed with eye disease. She is more than a housewife who takes care of my daily life. Secretary of Welfare could better describe her as she looked for resources for me. Since none of our relatives had had similar experience, to search for support for me as a visually impaired child was like salvaging a needle from the sea. You may think she had plenty of time to do so. Yet I am sure that it was driven by her love for me. She did constant searches on the internet and collected relevant information and she found two important organizations helping visually impaired people. One of them was Hong Kong Blind Union. I was once told by a staff member of the Blind Union that mom was holding me when came to the Services Centre. She was like an unexpected visitor and surprised the staff that how a mother could be so capable. I still cannot comprehend this. Nevertheless, mom's helpless and tireless searches, as well as her persistence enabled me, the seedling, to have the first sip of nutrition.

We are not short of enthusiastic educators and eager students. Yet they need a tree trunk to connect one another. Mom went on excursions with me to nurture my mind, so that I could stay curious and open to new things. I was the only visually impaired student in my primary school. The headmaster appreciated and welcomed me. But at the same time, he had concerns about the support of my family I had. Mom was definitely willing to pay attention to my learning needs. She had close communication with the teachers, which paved my way to grow up at school. Because of such close cooperation and communication, my needs were quickly identified. My study went on smoothly ever since. We still meet the teachers back and then from time to time.

A plant grows up and produces leaves. It blossoms and bears fruits through photosynthesis. It has to be self-sufficient and has to face the challenges ahead. Yet the tree trunk has never ceased to support the plant. Mom has been feeding me the seedling and reached every fertile soil for me, making my little success possible. When I was a senior secondary student, I woke up to the fact that I had become a beautiful and mature plant. It was time for me to take on my life challenges. Halfway in your growth, you might consider the tree trunk playing a less important role over time. For me, however, the very trunk remains my most reliable water source and the most reliable support. I am always the one who she concerns most, and she is always a part of my life. Today, mom can no longer, and is not going to take care of every detail in my daily routines. I couldn't live without her. My friends, besides appreciating the beauty of flowers and sweetness of fruits, please do pay attention to the leaves and the trunk beneath the flowers and fruits.

### **What's News?**

The Blind Union is going to organize the "King's Glory Inclusive Qinghai Fund-raising Tour 2015" from 4 – 12 July 2015. Participants have to walk a total of 68 km in Qinghai. This year, 21 visually impaired members, 15 buddies and 3 staff members will be joining the tour. All proceeds, deducting operational costs, will be donated to Hong Kong Blind Union to support its service delivery.

A briefing session of the tour has been organized on 21 June 2015, to provide the most update information for the participants. I am sure that this memorable tour can encourage participants to grow and learn.