

**Better Tomorrow for All October 2021**

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## **Editor's remarks**

By Merrick Ho

A small Hong Kong can also give birth to world-class athletes who win Paralympic medals, from this one can see the limitations of the external environment cannot stop ambition of individuals to pursue excellence. Similarly, as long as you find the right way and perseverance, plus proper support from others, visual impairment is only an insignificant part of the road to success.

Blind Union received funding from the Arts Development Fund for People with Disabilities of the Social Welfare Department to support the visually impaired in learning music. The visually impaired staff of the project, Margaret Sen, wrote an article to introduce this project called "Seeing Joy In Music". Over the years, many visually impaired musicians have overcome various barriers of buying Braille scores so as to pursue their ideals. The author hopes that this project will enable them to get twice the result with half the effort on the music road.

Individual effort is the key to success, but the encouragement of others is equally important. The article "Give Carer A Helping Hand" written by Social Worker Kitty Yuen of the Service Centre introduces the new support services for carers launched by Blind Union. This is a visionary project, when the visually impaired have a stable support system in the family, they can bravely run to the society full of obstacles and pursue their ideals.

Persistence is to keep trying until you succeed. This is not only a kind of sportsmanship, but also the stubbornness to insist on good choice. The author interviewed two baristas who are visually impaired, and wrote an article entitled "Brew You The Best Aromatic Coffee With Heart". The process to brew coffee visually impaired learn, may be different from that of the sighted people, but being able to find and exercise one's own tips for success, individuals' wisdom and perseverance can be seen.

The three articles published in this issue are all about new projects recently launched by Blind Union. Although the epidemic has not yet retreated, we believe that risk and opportunity coexist, and in this challenging moment, we are even more aware of the importance of helping oneself and mutual assistance. At the time of writing, a social-enterprise restaurant -Yau Cafe set up by Blind Union is newly opened. I hope to see you in the cafe. This is not only an action to support the employment of the visually

impaired, but also an affirmation of their efforts.

## **Seeing Joy in Music Learning**

**By Margaret Sen**

(Editor's note: The author is the staff responsible for the Music Learning Programme called "Seeing Joy In Music".)

It has always been common for the visually impaired "VI" to learn music, and there have been many excellent VI musicians in the past. However, what is their learning process?

As someone who came along, I can share with you that learning music for the VI cannot count solely on hearing. It requires also the touch reading of Braille music score as well as understanding the details of music to become an outstanding performer. The situation is the same as if a sighted person reads a staff. However, the process of learning music for the VI is very difficult. On the one hand, there is a shortage of resources for making Braille music scores. In the past, we could only buy music scores from overseas libraries or service organisations for people with visual impairment. Upon receipt, it is required to spend time to recite the score, plus to practise continuously to achieve a perfect performance.

Blind Union has always been concerned about the lack of music learning resources for members, and hope that through professional training, VI musicians can receive systematic training, and through public performances, they can increase their confidence and enjoy equal opportunities on the music road, and then develop this into an individual career.

Since the beginning of this year, we are honoured to receive funding from the Arts Development Fund for People with Disabilities of the Social Welfare Department to launch a three-year training programme, which is named "Seeing Joy In Music", that means the VI can get all necessary support and training to learn music, so that they can enjoy the fun of it. The programme includes training eight vocal and four piano students, providing coaching services between teachers and trainees, holding public performances, and providing support for music learning.

In the first half of the year, we successfully selected suitable candidates, and held the first teachers & students gathering in late June. Students were very involved, actively shared their learning goals for the next three years and current difficulties they encountered in music learning. I strongly believe that they will definitely benefit from

the coming training, and we will also be able to enjoy their superb performances in the near future.

Apart from the training of the above-mentioned 12 participants, this programme also collaborated with Jockey Club E-Learning For All Project of Blind Union to produce Braille music scores in order to increase the supply of music scores and ease the difficulty of learning music for the VI. Moreover, we have also carried out the training for volunteers in making Braille music scores, so that sighted musicians can also participate in scores production to practise the concept of Arts Inclusion.

## **Give Carer A Helping Hand**

**By Kitty Yuen**

(Editor's note: The author is a social worker responsible for carer support services.)

Over the years, Hong Kong's rehabilitation policy has focused on the needs of people with disabilities, but has ignored that their carers are also a group worthy of attention. In fact, the media occasionally reports various tragedies caused by the carers being overwhelmed and unable to seek help. Some visually impaired (VI) persons are unable to release various negative emotions through close contact with the outside world due to immobility. The carers living with them in addition to taking care of their daily lives, need also to act as an outlet for their emotions. The burden they bear can be imagined.

In view of this, the Social Welfare Department allocates extra resources for Blind Union to provide free support services to the carers of visually impaired people in Hong Kong since November last year. The purpose is to make the relationship between family members more harmonious through comprehensive support for the VI and their carers, so as to build a happy family gradually. Through case counseling and various group activities, the stress of carers is relieved. The service has been implemented for more than half a year and has benefited more than 10 families, among which there are many impressive cases.

Mr Chan (pseudonym) is 75 years old this year and lives with his blind wife. Since Mrs Chan was diagnosed with glaucoma 15 years ago, Mr Chan quit his job and concentrated on taking care of her. As Mr Chan is old and has been deeply suffering from pain, at the first home visit of social worker of Blind Union, he expressed that it was very difficult to cook for his wife when his feet were numb. So the social worker took the initiative to update his family's status with the organisation that applied for the meal delivery service. Mrs Chan's meal delivery service was soon arranged. Mrs Chan also expressed concern that her husband would be in danger due to his pain when going out for a medical appointment. The social worker also accompanied Mr Chan to seek consultation across districts, so as to make up the lack of that area's escort out-patient services. Moreover, Mr Chan is not familiar with smartphones, he cannot help his wife install communication software to participate in the online activities of Blind Union. Hence, the social worker arranged staff familiar with information technology to help and solve related problems for them, so that Mrs Chan can stay at home and keep in touch with other VI people.

Everyone encounters difficulties and needs help from others, the same is true for carers. If you are a carer of VI or there are some carers for people with visually impairment around you who

are now facing difficulties and in melancholy mood, please contact us at 27600100, we will give you or them a helping hand.



## **Brew You The Best Aromatic Coffee With Heart**

**By Merrick Ho**

"I may not succeed every time, but I can say that visually impaired people are capable of pouring latte art." Known as "Chu Tsai" the visually impaired barista-to-be, Daniel Chu showed a little embarrassment when he talked about the successful experience of an internship in a coffee shop one day. After experiencing several days of intensive training, his success and joy could still be heard clearly over the phone,

At the beginning of the year, Blind Union received funding from "Enhancing Employment of People with Disabilities through Small Enterprise" Project of the Social Welfare Department to open "Yau Cafe", which combines the two elements of massage and coffee, and trained 10 visually impaired people to work as baristas in the Cafe, Daniel is one of them. Being low vision, he considered enrolling in an outside barista course, but he gave up due to various reasons. Later he learned about the enrolment of relevant course of Blind Union, and as unemployed at that time he signed up without hesitation.

"We have been in class for four consecutive days, among them the key learning is to brew espresso and fresh milk coffee because all other types of coffee such as mocha etc., are evolved from this." Although Daniel knows a lot about coffee and has the required tools at home, this does not give him any advantage in class. He believes that the most difficult part is the tamping process, as it will affect tremendously the quality of coffee with a little carelessness.

Talking about tamping, Sandy Wong another barista who is totally blind, was also impressed. "That is a metal tool called tamper, like an old-style stamp, used to smooth and compress ground coffee, water is infused from above, flows through this layer of ground coffee in the middle, and then drips into cup below. The instructor holds my hand getting me feel what sort of pressure to apply, because if the pressure is improper or uneven, it will change the amount and flow of water going in and out of coffee grounds, and then cause the final cup with insufficient serving size or tastes weak."

In Sandy's view, the secret of success is to keep in mind every detail, such as the angle at which the cup is placed, and the pressure applied of different movements. She agrees that people with visual impairment need more time to familiarise themselves with each step. They must also familiarise themselves with the slight differences

between different models of machines before the first day of field practice at “Yau Café”. Apart from trying latte art, Daniel also recently bought a hand-made coffee tool to perfectly combine his hobby and career. When it comes to employment prospects, both of them confessed that they are not sure whether they can hold a full-time job at Cafe for a long time, but they still hope via this expertise to prove to themselves and the society, that the visually impaired are able to work as well.

## **Flag Day 2021 Acknowledgement**

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