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Editor's Remarks

By Michael Ng

The COVID-19 outbreak in Hong Kong has lasted for more than two years. Opportunity to host physical events was precious. Blind Union was pleased to hold different forms of events in the past six months

15th October marks the International White Cane Day. It was established to commemorate the invention of the white cane used by visually impaired persons. White cane is a symbol of independence and self-strengthening of the visually impaired. Visually impaired persons can go out independently and live an active life by using it.

Blind Union held a thematic celebration event last year as crowdfunding function and mainly participated by members. Let's investigate how this meaning charity event convey to the public that the visually impaired can participate equally and live independently in the community, and the public thus have a better understanding on the abilities and needs of visually impaired persons.

People with visual impairment mainly rely on hearing to perceive information, Blind Union was honoured to receive funding from "The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust" to launch the "Jockey Club Sports Programmes with Audio-description Service" in 2020, this programme was aimed to provide professional audio description services for the visually impaired. Blind Union, together with the Hong Kong Society for the Blind and Arts With the Disabled Association Hong Kong, held the first ever Audio Description Week last year. Let's have a better understanding on the development of audio description services in Hong Kong over the last decade.

Our first social enterprise "Yau CAFE", which combines two elements of massage and coffee, first ever combination in Hong Kong, officially opened in September last year. A thematic fundraising event of JER Braille Cookie Gift Box was held earlier before. It is a meaningful collaboration to extend contribution back to people in need in the community from transforming the positive impact of popularity among youngsters in Hong Kong. We will take a deeper look on how this new social enterprise marks a great milestone for us.

We are truly grateful to make the events mentioned above happen, as well as the Christmas lucky draw for our members and the public experience day of sports audio description, which co-organized with the Hong Kong Football Association last year.

We hope the epidemic will end soon and we will be able to have more face-to-face interaction with our members and supporters.

Fundraising Events That Empower Members To Develop Their Potential

By Jess Shek

Blind Union holds fundraising event every year on International White Cane Day. Apart from raising fund to support services for visually impaired persons, we also hope to take this opportunity to enable the public to have a better understanding on the visually impaired.

With social distancing restrictions, it is more difficult than ever to hold large-scale fundraising events, such as walks, sports events, that involve participation of the public.

After having discussion by the White Cane Day Preparatory Committee, we believed that in the past White Cane Day events, members were purely participant, but actually White Cane Day has a special meaning for the visually impaired. Therefore, we adopted the direction of improving the engagement of members to plan last year's event, finally we decided to use the concept of "DIY : Do Fundraising Yourself" as the event theme, and conceived "Cane-A-Thon" Fundraising Campaign - two crowdfunding projects, jointly prepared and completed by the visually impaired, including night hiking and the performance of "Music x Story".

I would like to share with you an ordinary story about the preparation of these two crowdfunding projects.

Mr. Wen, one of the participants of night hiking, did not have hiking habit at all. At first, we were a little worried about whether he would be able to cope with the selected route, but in order to complete this challenge, he not only bought a pair of new sneakers, but also often practised cycling to train up his foot endurance. All of his hard work paid off, and in the end he completed the journey. Another participant said that the feeling of sweating made him feel happy, and this joy and satisfaction influenced all the participants.

Members worked hard to prepare for the performance of "Music x Story". They hoped to share their experience of overcoming visual impairment through singing and drama. From the idea creation of the whole story plot to music selection, they prepared all the elements on their own. Although this group of amateur musicians did not have a lot of on-stage experience, they all wanted to do their part to thank the donors for their support.

This shows that it not only provided them an opportunity to perform publicly, but the frequent rehearsals also let them establish deeper friendship, they would meet for gathering from time to time and look forward to the next show.

On behalf of Blind Union, I would like to thank all of our donors for their support, which allows us to set a higher fundraising target. However what is more meaningful is that this event enables our visually impaired members to apply their self-help spirit, and Blind Union can really serve as a platform for them to develop their potential.

Audio Descriptions Bridge Over Visual Impairment

By Chou Chun-cheong, Lau Shing-kwan

The historical development of audio description service in Hong Kong is not long at all, audio description projects have been gradually provided for the public in different categories of services with efforts of various organisations over the past ten years.

Blind Union co-organised the first Audio Description Week with the Hong Kong Society for the Blind (HKSB) and Arts with the Disabled Association Hong Kong (ADAHK) in December last year. During the period, a number of exciting events were held, including webinars, public's experience day of audio description of sports held by Blind Union, the preview of "Sunshine Of My Life" movie with audio description held by HKSB as well as "Beyond Sight", the non-visual Photography Exhibition organised by ADAHK.

We hope that by organising the above-mentioned events, we can fully demonstrate how audio description services are applied in three categories, i.e. movies, art projects and sports events, let more people recognise audio description services and understand cultural recreational needs of the visually impaired. Furthermore, we would like to review the past, integrate experience and discuss the future development of these services. A guest speaker shared in the webinar, Mr. Lee Tak-nang (Note 1) said, "I never thought it could be applied so widely."

Blind Union chose one of the matches "Hong Kong Premier Football League - Rangers vs Kitchee", and arranged three senior sports commentators to provide audio description services for the event. Participants were our visually impaired members and over 40 members of the public. Apart from "seeing the ball" (Note 2) along the way while listening to the audio description, it was required for these sighted friends to blind-fold during part of the game timing. Participants responded such experience not only allow them to figure out the needs of the visually impaired, but also let them understand the essence and subtlety of audio description. In addition to better engagement of the visually impaired in the game, audio description can help sighted people who are unfamiliar with sports events to understand the sport more quickly.

We look forward to the fact that audio description services can be more inclusive within the lives of visually impaired in the next ten years. They are not solely driven by

institutions, but also can be promoted by the government, public-private sectors. Media can provide more audio description services which allow visually impaired can enjoy more cultural and recreational activities independently. TV stations may consider providing audio description services on the second channel, so that the visually impaired viewers can enjoy live broadcasts of high-level international sports events at home. Hoping that the audio description services not only bring different experiences to the visually impaired, but also promote social inclusion across the city.

Note 1: Famous sports commentator.

Note 2: It means "watching the match" in Cantonese.

Seeing Light Spectrum In Darkness

By Victoria Chiu

MIRROR, a group of male singers have set off in Hong Kong, which created an upsurge of “Chasing Star” recently, it is believed that everybody can also feel personally the appeal of fan group that cannot be ignored. By chance the official Fan Club of Jer Lau Ying-ting of the MIRROR member chose Yau CAFE, a social enterprise cafe under Blind Union, as one of the venues for fan group event of Jer’s birthday exhibition at the end of last year. Songs of Jer Lau are recognised as having the magic power to heal people's hearts, and in the discussion, it was discovered by chance that the creative background of several of his songs is similar to the concept of Blind Union - "Even in darkness, the visually impaired still have their own talents and skills, and can still shine brightly”.

In line with the common value, it is believed that everyone can become a ray of light in darkness, the fan group also strongly believed even in present dark age that everyone apart from being capable of watching over each other in darkness of unforeseen future, most important is that they can still exert their talents and unique skills in their own positions. Such valuable concept also coincides with the concept of Blind Union since their establishment: striving to exert the spirit of self-help and mutual-help of the visually impaired and provide diversified services, so that the visually impaired can occupy a place in the society and can be independent and self- reliant gaining equal treatment by the public.

With the common concept, Blind Union cooperated with a Fans Club for the first time. The fans group not only rented the social enterprise “Yau CAFE” under Blind Union as one of the exhibition venues, helped arousing awareness of this first social enterprise cafe that combines massage and coffee, but also jointly launched the JER Braille Cookie Charity Gift Box. All funds raised would be donated to Blind Union to provide employment and study development services for the visually impaired, hoping to call for different fans in the names of idols to contribute to the social inclusion and support work of the visually impaired.

The Braille Cookie Gift Boxes of this Charity Sale were all hand-packaged by the visually impaired, in addition to providing employment opportunities, whereby Blind Union uphold the spirit of getting the visually impaired realise fully various talents. Hoping that Blind Union can continue to be a platform for people with visual

impairment to showcase their strengths, also wishing both of the public and Blind Union can uphold the concept of walking together with the visually impaired.

Activity Review

22nd October 2021

Experience A Relaxing Day for Mind & Body at Yau CAFE sponsored by Johnson & Johnson Hong Kong Limited (JJHK)

Apart from inviting employees of JJHK and members to enjoy coffee and light refreshment at the social enterprise Yau CAFE of Blind Union, we also co-organised the Knot Weaving Workshop with Viva Blue House for volunteers of JJHK and members, in the process of mutual cooperation, it not only deepened mutual understanding, but also let employees of JJHK have a deeper knowledge of the visually impaired.

13th & 27th November 2021

Body Checks and Health Talks Sponsored by Johnson & Johnson Hong Kong Limited

JJHK sponsored members to conduct body checks and deliver health talks by registered nurse at Wellness Hub under Wofoo Social Enterprises. In addition to measure blood pressure, blood lipids and conducted a series of body checks, health talks were also delivered to members. Professional advices and caring tips were also provided based on various health conditions.

19th November 2021

Early Autumn Event : Happy Shopping in Causeway Bay

Blind Union worked together with Mountain and the Sea Educo Limited and went shopping with members at various malls in Causeway Bay by a group of students from Han Academy as volunteers, apart from cultivating the empathy of students and learning to repay to the society, most important was to deepen the understanding of each other and get to know the needs of the visually impaired.

11 December 2021

Peng Chau Slow Living Day Tour

Blind Union, the volunteers of the Christian Family Service Centre and members, taking the opportunity of Autumn season, went to Peng Chau altogether for the visit and tour to allow members to take a good chance to recognise Peng Chau, this small, peaceful, fully equipped island and spend a leisurely Saturday together.

20th December 2021

Christmas Lucky Draw

Blind Union held Christmas Lucky Draw for members, arranged also for members of the Executive Committee to talk with members besides having lucky draw session, and prepared some short video clips of events plus a session of performances by Teams in order to enrich content of the programme, to ensure that even if members could not participate in large-scale physical activities due to the impact of epidemic, could also feel the joyful atmosphere of Christmas, and spend the festive season together.

26th December 2021

Public Experience Day of Audio Description Service

Blind Union and the Hong Kong Football Association jointly organised a public's experience day for the public to experience audio description service for sport activities. While a group of visually impaired fans were listening to the commentators' verbal description, the public could experience the audio description service.