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## **Editor's Remarks**

**By Chou Chun-cheong**

The flag fund-raising event organized by Blind Union was successfully held on 28<sup>th</sup> January on Hong Kong Island. Although there were only 300 participants including our members, the result was surprising and inspiring that each flag bag raised around \$800. The outstanding result of our participants' unity and passion brought about the miracle that drove the cold away.

While the help of sighted volunteers contributed to the miracle, the self-help spirit among visually impaired members also played a crucial role. Since 1964, the year when Blind Union was established, we have been promoting the spirit of self-help among visually impaired members. With this spirit, the visually impaired can go to work or school by themselves, and even be the one who takes care of their family. Our colleague, Victoria Chiu, will tell you more about how the visually impaired are not social burden, but good partners at work in this issue.

Do the visually impaired have to listen only to the radio at their leisure time? Nowadays, the visually impaired can also watch a football match with their sighted friends. Ng Ping Tung, General Secretary of our executive committee, will explain more about this in detail.

We emphasize not only self-help but also being included in society. In the past three years, the city was fighting the epidemic. It is required to scan the app Leave Home Safe when we go to some public places, restaurants, for instance. However, some visually impaired persons were unable to fulfil the requirement as they were unfamiliar with the use of smartphones. Are the visually impaired unable to contribute to the fight against the virus? Merrick Ho, the Financial Secretary of our executive committee, will talk about this in detail in this issue.

The 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Blind Union is coming in September 2024. We hope our work on making Hong Kong a more harmonious and barrier-free society continues to go from strength to strength. Help and support from different sectors of society are needed to pursue the rights of people with visual impairment, to encourage their independence and self-determination, and to promote the social integration of visually impaired persons, which is the mission of Blind Union. As we move forward with your support and the support of everyone in society, we hope we will be able to continue to progress.

## **“Leave Home Safe” is Already Past, Three Points to Note for Everyone**

### **Written by Merrick Ho**

At the time of writing this article, most anti-epidemic measures in Hong Kong have been cancelled. With society returning to normal, reflections on anti-epidemic policies begin to emerge. This article will focus on one of the policies, the “Leave Home Safe” app, to point out aspects that different stakeholders should reflect on.

It is suggested that government policies should take every sector of society into account. As the use of smartphones is required to scan QR codes in Leave Home Safe, Blind Union was worried that the visually impaired, especially the elderly, may find it difficult to use and unable to enter some public areas. Fortunately, the government exempted certain groups from scanning Leave Home Safe codes at last. During the implementation of the Leave Home Safe policy, some customers were arrested for providing incorrect information. Therefore, Blind Union requested that the visually impaired be allowed to bring their own form, and the request was also accepted by the government. In my opinion, although the policy was set in a hurry, the government should be careful in detail to take care of the needs of various groups, especially the socially vulnerable.

In keeping with our motto of self-help, we take the user's perspective into account every time we deal with a problem. At the very beginning when Leave Home Safe was released, the Information Technology team of Blind Union started testing the level of barrier-free and continuously reflected our opinions to the authorities. Until the stage where Leave Home Safe is mandatory, the Equal Opportunities in Social Participation Committee, which is organized by our members, extensively collected opinions about the difficulties that our members came across while they used the Leave Home Safe app, and discussed making an initiative. The transparent plastic Braille cover for QR codes is one of the solutions suggested by Blind Union. In the three-year anti-epidemic period, Hong Kong Blind Union has always been pursuing the motto of self-help and the result is admirable.

The cooperation of the general public can make Hong Kong more socially inclusive and equal. According to our members, they were rejected to enter certain public places as the staff were not aware that the visually impaired can fill out forms to make records instead of scanning Leave Home Safe QR codes. They said it was lucky that some citizens gave a helping hand. Also, some said that they were happy that they received

help from others in finding the QR codes. These incidents implied that the help and understanding of the public are undoubtedly important. Hong Kong Blind Union would like to thank everyone who gave the visually impaired a helping hand. Your help and kindness warmed us in this ruthless epidemic.

The Leave Home Safe measure is already over. Looking back, we hope that when the government reviews the anti-epidemic measures, may consider the needs of stakeholders before implementing social policies even if there is a limited timeframe. In the meantime, we hope that the public will keep the spirit of helping one another in mind, and work together to create a barrier-free society.

Last but not least, Blind Union and I will continue to strive for equality, opportunity, and independence.

Photo 1.1

Photo 1.2

## **Opening A New Chapter – SPAS Brings Sports Fun to the Visually Impaired**

### **Written by Michael Ng**

After three years of anti-epidemic measures, our life is finally restored to the norm. At the time of writing, it has been three years since Blind Union provides Jockey Club Sports Programmes with Audio-description Service (SPAS). The service was officially launched in January 2020, when most sports events were cancelled due to the epidemic outbreak. After that, some events resumed one by one. And we were able to continue providing the service to the visually impaired, where they can fully enjoy the events without barriers.

Thanks to the continual support of the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, a new 3-year programme of Jockey Club SPAS was launched. We strive to deliver a more vivid audio-description service. With the gradual restoration of normal life, our team hopes that various sports events such as volleyball, table tennis, and badminton may resume, so that we can expand SPAS coverage to these as well. As such, the visually impaired can equally participate and enjoy sports events, where their experiences of sports events can be enhanced.

Moreover, we will encourage and promote the visually impaired to do more exercise with our service “SPAS Version 2.0”. With our expanding network of sports volunteers, we will match a suitable sports volunteer to each visually impaired. We hope that they can encourage and support each other while exercising together, achieving the goal of building a healthy living. In the long run, we hope it will build a more socially inclusive society.

We are indebted to the continual support of the public, and consultants of SPAS over the past 3 years. In particular, Mr. LI Tak Neng (Hong Kong football commentator), Mr. MA Kai Yan Keyman (sports commentator and host), and Dr. LOUIE Hung Tak (Hong Kong Sport Science Scholar; Senior lecturer, Department of Health and Physical Education, The Education University of Hong Kong). We sincerely thank all commentators for providing sports audio-description service. In fact, their excellent commentaries are the essence of SPAS. Besides, we are also indebted to the volunteers and our colleagues, who walked along with visually impaired football fans over the past 3 years. Looking ahead, we hope that we will strive together, and reach a higher ground of SPAS in the next 3 years.

Photo 2.1

Photo 2.2

## **To Self-help and Help Others, Public Education Reduces Misunderstandings and Raised Satisfaction**

**Written by Victoria Chiu**

“The visually impaired can deal with all daily chores independently! That’s amazing!”

“I have never thought that the visually impaired can take care of themselves well when they can’t see things clearly!”

“Can the visually impaired work? What kind of job can they work?”

I came across the questions above from the public when I was conducting a public education workshop. It has been decades since the public casts doubt on the ability of the visually impaired. The public generally thinks the visually impaired need long-term assistance, including getting taken care of daily needs, due to their impairment, and that may become a burden on their family. The misconception that the visually impaired should not take important roles at work may still lie in the public’s mind.

The employment of the visually impaired has always been an issue that Hong Kong Blind Union follows, and promoting public education has always been one of the key projects of Blind Union. The Union has been established for nearly 60 years, we have always been following the spirit of self-help, and promoted public education by ourselves. We insisted to assign our visually impaired members as public education ambassadors. Our ambassadors are trained to visit various schools, educational institutes, social welfare organizations, private enterprises, and government departments, to share their own experiences as to practise our mission of self-help and let the public know more about their abilities.

Here is an excerpt from the reflection of our public education ambassador, Chung On:

In recent years, various schools and organizations would like the participants to design assistive tools for us through our sharing. This kind of sharing differs from encouraging talks. Students pay more attention and are more active to raise questions. Their designs showed that they started to understand the needs and expectations of the visually

impaired. I believe our sharings are like droplets of water, and the flower of social inclusion will bloom one day.”

Hong Kong Blind Union was sponsored by the Labour and Welfare Bureau last year to screen a series named “A Day with You”, about three visually impaired persons, Chung On, an employee; Lok Sze, a student; and Sai Mui, a housewife.

Please scan the QR code for viewing.

[QR CODE]

Photo 3.1

Photo 3.2

Photo 3.3

Photo 3.4



## **Activities Review**

### **15<sup>th</sup> October 2022**

#### **“Cane-A-Thon” - International White Cane Day 2022**

Following our motto of self-help, raising funds by ourselves was the objective of International White Cane Day last year on 15th October. Together with committee members, volunteers, and colleagues, the 10 visually impaired members set off from different locations as ambassadors for White Cane Day. They walk 10.15 kilometers across different routes to YAU CAFE, the social enterprise under Blind Union. We raised a total of \$140,000 for charity on that day. The activity did not only imply that the visually impaired can walk on their own with white canes, which is the message of the White Cane Day, but also promoted equality, opportunity, and independence, the motto of Hong Kong Blind Union.

### **1<sup>st</sup> December 2022**

#### **Audio Description for the Movie “The Sparring Partner”**

Our members and their companions watched the audio descriptive version of “The Sparring Partner”, the movie which topped the box office among level 3 movies. Under the arrangement by Mei Ah Entertainment, we are honored to have the director, Mr. Ho Cheuk Tin, and the main actress, Miss So Yuk Wah with us in person. And the audio describer, Wong Shui Lam, also attended the seminar to share feelings after watching the movie and the process of recording audio descriptions with our members.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> December 2022 to 4<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

#### **Jockey Club Vocational and Educational Resources Centre: “VERC Open Day of 50th anniversary”**

Since Hong Kong Blind Union founded Student Centre in 1972, it continues to care about the employment needs of students and the youth. After decades of development, our subsidiary JCVERC entered its 50th anniversary. We held a two-day event “VERC Open Day”, where we shared our happiness of VERC’s fruitful development over the past 50 years by means of exhibition, games, and letter exchange. Now, we are embarking on a new journey upon this milestone.

### **5<sup>th</sup> December 2022**

#### **Merry Christmas! Buffet by 33 Financial Services**

The Christmas event of Hong Kong Blind Union was sponsored by 33 Financial Services Limited. Our members enjoyed the buffet together, and Blind Union

accompanied members to visit shopping malls.

### **28<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

#### **Hong Kong Island Flag Day**

The flag-raising event organized by the Blind Union was successfully held on 28<sup>th</sup> January on Hong Kong Island. There were more than 300 participants, including 110 of our visually impaired members. We raised around \$550,000 in this flag-raising event, \$250,000 from the flag bags, and \$300,000 from selling the gold flag. It was thanks to the proactiveness of our members and volunteers that we were able to raise around \$800 for each flag bag.