

All-round 'Star Project' Helps Autistic Youth Embark Their Career

Entering the workforce after graduation is a huge challenge for autistic youth. Even when they are employed, they have problems staying in the position, which worries their parents a lot. Heep Hong Society has launched the 'Star Project' with a vision to help these youth and families through three programmes that offer career planning, assessment and training, job matching and case counselling.

In October and November 2015, the Society conducted a survey — 'Parents' View on Job Hunting and Employment for Autistic Youth'. A total of 123 parents, whose children's average age was 22, were interviewed. The survey found that among the autistic youth, only 60% had been employed; only 30% could stay in their current or previous position for over a year; 50% could not stay longer than three months; and 60% encountered difficulties in communicating with their colleagues or supervisors. The results also showed that all parents were extremely worried about their children for not being self-reliant, being unemployed or bullied by colleagues.

A lot of autistic youth are competent workers. However, due to lack of vocational skills or difficulties in socialising, they cannot integrate into the mainstream work environment. Therefore, they cannot remain in the job for an extended period of time. In 2008, the Society began providing vocational training and career support to autistic youth. At present, its two employment support projects for High Functioning Individuals with Autism sponsored by the Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust and The Community Chest of Hong Kong provide comprehensive services including career planning, vocational assessment and training, internship, vocational selection and employment support. Workshops are conducted to educate employers and staff about the characteristics of autistic individuals.



Case counselling by educational psychologist

Training Based on TEACCH Approach

The pre-job training, which targets for high-functioning autistic youth over 15 years old, helps reinforce work competence and communication skills, so that they can cope with the job challenges more easily. The programme adopts the TEACCH approach, which is tailored to the characteristics of autistic youth.



Vocational assessment by occupational therapist



Phase 1

Career planning, vocational assessment and training

Phase 2

Internship, job matching, counselling services, mentorship programme and family support

Phase 3

On-job support and public education

Service Highlights

- Borrows the TEACCH model with a structured approach to provide systematic training for enhancing youth's ability to work independently
- Provides comprehensive vocational assessment and assists youth set work objectives
- Offers individual counselling service and helps youth select suitable jobs
- Occupational therapists adapt vocational training based on youth's competence and work requirements
- Arranges internship opportunities in cooperation with corporate partners so that youth will learn about the job nature, responsibilities and proper work attitudes
- The programme is executed by the Society's multi-disciplinary team of professionals

Application of TEACCH Approach in Vocational Training

- ★ Fixed work procedures
- ★ Visual cues
- ★ Reduced distraction
- ★ Work timetable
- ★ Systematic environment



Case story

Pak-lam, 31, was diagnosed with autism and speech delay. He joined the Society's pre-job training programme in 2011. He excels at office work such as photocopying, filing, document processing and data entry. With the referral from the Society's social worker, he has joined Welcome Construction Co Ltd as an accounting clerk.



Pak-lam's supervisor Mr Ivan Leung, Accounting Manager, said that Pak-lam is cheerful and stable. Since joining the company four years ago, their colleagues have embraced Pak-lam as part of the team. Pak-lam experienced difficulties in understanding others' emotions and situations. Sometimes, this leads to funny scenarios. 'He keeps talking about his interests all the time during work. After we reminded him not to talk during work, he started talking all the time during lunch.'

Ivan and his colleagues are willing to mentor Pak-lam on rotation. 'We treat him like everyone else. We slightly adjust our job allocation to suit his character. He helps us a lot with photocopying and scanning documents.'

One of the highlights of the Society's job training programme is that the social workers communicate regularly with the employers to follow up on the performance of the autistic youth. Workshops are organised to help employers/fellow workers learn how to better communicate with their autistic employees.

Pilot Project on Strengthening Support for Persons with Autism and their Parents/Carers

To further strengthen its support for autistic youth and their families, the Society launched a 30-month Pilot Project for persons with autism and their parents/carers' this April with funding from the Social Welfare Department. The project will help 200 high-functioning autistic youth who are aged over 15 and their families through case counselling with a focus on academic, career, and interpersonal relationships. Consultation service will be also offered to other rehabilitation institutions on handling the behavioral and emotional problems of individuals with autism.

Heep Hong Launches Star Classroom to Raise Autism Rehab Standard in Mainland China

Heep Hong Society and Rotary Club, with the support of 14 mainland organisations, launched 'Star Classroom' to provide professional training for special educators in Guangdong Province. The unprecedented programme offers 120 hours of training on autism interventions. Special educators, parents and social workers have the chance to learn directly from the Society's team of professionals with full subsidies.

The kick-off ceremony was held on 2nd April (Sat) at Guangzhou Library. Officiating guests included Mr Luo Zhiyi, Director of the Coordination Department of the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government in the Hong Kong S.A.R., Mr Wong Chi-foon, former President of the Rotary Club of Tolo Harbour, Ms P. Yoshiko, President of Rotary Club of Taipei Pailing, Hong Kong actor Mr Sunny Chan, Ms Guan Xiao-lei, Deputy Executive Director of the Children's Palace Guangzhou, Ms Liu Li-mei, Deputy President of the Guangdong Petrel Electronic & Audio-Visual Publishing House, together with Mr Peter Wan, Vice-Chairman of Heep Hong Society, and Ms Nancy Tsang, Director of Heep Hong Society. The ceremony received enthusiastic response with over 400 parents and 15 media attended.



The Training Package for Autistic Children written by the Society has been published in Mainland China for the first time.

Rotary Club presented *The Training Package for Autistic Children* written by the Society to the representatives of parents, social workers and teachers as a token of appreciation for their support. Mr Sunny Chan shared his experience of raising his autistic son.

Immediately following the kick-off ceremony, the Society's educational psychologist and senior child care worker conducted a talk on training for preschool autistic children for the parents.



Heep Hong's 6.18 Flag Day

The Society's Flag Day was held on 18 June (Sat) on Hong Kong Island. The flags feature paintings by our children with special needs. All funds raised from the Flag Day will be used to sustain the operation of our Parents Resource Centres and other non-subsidised projects in support of thousands of children with special needs and their families.



New SLP Yuen Long Centre in Service

Heep Hong Society Yuen Long Centre (Supportive Learning Project) officially opened on 3 May. Situated in downtown Yuen Long, the new centre is easily accessible. Currently, the centre offers preschool integrated training, speech therapy, music therapy, AD/HD training groups, social groups and intensive training for autistic children. More professional training and interest groups will be available soon. For details and enrollment, please visit the Supportive Learning Project website or contact the centre at 3974 5775.



Inter-School Brain Gym Challenge Returns and Opens to Secondary Schools



In 2015, the Society obtained funding from the Partnership Fund for the Disadvantaged to launch the 'Executive Function Training Programme for Children with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (the Programme). Students from eight secondary schools participated in the training groups led by occupational therapists (OTs) and the Brain Gym competition. In 2016-2017, thanks to the sponsorship of Providence Foundation, the Society will host the Programme which includes training groups led by OTs and two times of the Brain Gym Competition. For details, please contact the Supportive Learning Project at 2393 7555.

Professional Development Programme for Kindergarten Teachers on Catering for Learner Diversity Commissioned by EDB

Commissioned by the Education Bureau, the Society conducted the 'Professional Development Programme for Kindergarten Teachers on Catering for Learner Diversity' from March to May. The five-day programme helped 120 kindergarten teachers acquire the knowledge and skills to identify children with learning difficulties and provide appropriate support for them.



Wife of Chief Executive of Macao and Ze Ai Association Visits Wan Chai Centre



Mrs Winnie Chui, wife of the Chief Executive of Macao and honorary advisor of Ze Ai Association (back row, 8th from left), visited Wan Chai Centre on 18 March (Fri) with members of Ze Ai Association. Children of the centre presented Chinese paintings to Mrs Chui and cookies baked by autistic youth of the Society to all the guests.



Healthy Kids' Principal – Annie Law

On 31 March, Ms Annie Law, Principal of Healthy Kids Nursery School, retired from the place where she had spent the past 12 years. Holding the photo album presented to her by the teachers at Healthy Kids, she looked at the photos from 2004 to 2016 and felt deeply touched by all the beautiful memories.

2005 Educational Reform Posed a Challenge

Annie has a lot of unforgettable memories during her 12 years at Healthy Kids. Annie expressed, 'The 2005 Educational Reform was particularly memorable. Education services of nursery schools and kindergartens were to combine. My colleagues and I faced huge challenges to upgrade ourselves and prepare for school audit. We were united and in high team spirit during that time.' In others' eyes, Annie is an amiable and respected principal. She continued, 'Parents and students often volunteer and don't mind doing trivial work. I still keep contact with some graduates who are now in secondary school. They have a strong sense of belonging to our school.'

No Child Left Behind

During admission, most kindergartens select children by their abilities, but Healthy Kids opens its door to children with special educational needs (SEN). Last year it expanded its integrated places from 12 to 18. Annie said, 'We admit children regardless of their family background. As long as the parents believe in our education philosophy, we shall not reject them.'

With the efforts of Annie and the teachers, Healthy Kids has become a very popular kindergarten in the district. Every year, they receive over 500 applications competing for 100 places. She was grateful for the parents' trust in Healthy Kids and found it difficult to refuse all the door knocking, although she always informed them they could not jump the queue for interview.

Appraisals are Most Difficult

Annie was unfazed by administrative work or educational reform, but found conducting annual appraisals most difficult.



Annie cherished the best wishes from Director Ms Nancy Tsang (second from left).



Annie did not want her students to spend money on gifts. Instead she encouraged them to draw.



The photo album carries 12 years of memories.



'I had a close relationship with my colleagues, and I seldom criticise them. Appraisals are difficult to do because we work together as a team. It is hard to strike a balance between praise and criticism. After the farewell dinner, one of the teachers thanked me for reminding her to smile more and have more eye contact with the children. I didn't expect her to bring that up. I was impressed that they really took my advice to heart.' Some colleagues even asked her to set higher expectations for them so that they could excel.

Time to Follow Her Heart

Having to leave a place where she had worked for 12 years, it was bittersweet for Annie. It was sad to leave an organisation with a good supervisor, colleagues, students and parents. She does not have much plan about retirement. She said with a smile, 'In the past I kept writing teaching plans and annual plans at work. At home, I had to plan for the future for my children. Now that they are adults, I have accomplished my mission. Right now I want to enjoy travelling with my husband, and visiting my sponsored child.' She concluded her retirement life in one line, taken from local singer Paula Tsui's famous song *Capriccio*: Let me live a peaceful life with no more desire.



The 24th Great Chefs of Hong Kong — 50 Leading Hotels and Restaurants Support SEN Children

The Great Chefs of Hong Kong returned to celebrate its 24th year. The star chefs of nearly 50 high-end hotels and restaurants wonderfully prepared their best delicacies on 12th May (Thu) at Grand Hyatt Hong Kong in aid of Heep Hong Society. Chief Secretary for Administration Mrs Carrie Lam, GBS, JP officiated at the opening ceremony as the Guest of Honour.

The Cook-off Press Conference was held on 18th March (Fri). Artist and Great Chefs Ambassador Mr Alex Fong joined hands with the children of the Society and the star chefs to decorate a croquembouche and called for public support for children with special needs and their families.

The media were also invited to a preview session where they could savour the dish from the star chefs of eight of the participating restaurants and experience the atmosphere of the Great Chefs.



Wyeth Nutrition — 360 Degree Social Adaptation Programme



Wyeth Nutrition is one of the Society's long-standing partners. Starting from 2011, our collaborative '360 Degree Social Adaptation Programme' has brought children and youth with special needs the opportunities to integrate into the community.

The volunteer team of Wyeth Nutrition visited Chun Shek Centre for the first time in 2012 and painted the exterior wall with the children. In the following Christmas, they held a party for the children where everyone had a great time playing games, eating turkey and singing Christmas carols. One of their volunteers dressed up as Santa Claus and brought a smile to every child's face.

The volunteer team took the children of the Society to the Dream Come True Education Park twice to participate in job simulation workshops and experience the work of astronauts, policemen, doctors, etc. Parents highly praised the interactive activities.

Wyeth Nutrition understands the importance of continued support for children with special needs. They arranged volunteers to provide vocational advice, including mock interviews and interview tips, to help the youth prepare for entering the workforce.

Ms Veronica Sze, Director of Public Affairs and Compliance (HK & Taiwan) of Wyeth Nutrition said, 'We are delighted to see our staff actively participating in voluntary work. In addition to helping the children and youth of Heep Hong. They have gained many wonderful memories and insights from interacting with the children and parents.'





Everbright — Caring for SEN Children from the Bottom of the Heart



Everbright and the Society began partnership in 2012. Everbright has been actively supporting the Society for promoting diversified learning through computer games. They sponsored tablet computers so that children could enjoy learning.

In June 2015, their volunteer team visited Catherine Lo Centre and participated in a treasure hunting activity. The children brought home the treasures for their fathers as a token of gratitude. After the activity, their volunteers discussed the current situation of autistic children in Hong Kong and what they could do to help the children further. The centre staff was impressed by the dedication of the volunteers.

Knowing that some children with special needs have difficulties in sensory functions, Everbright sponsored the Society's 'Sensory Fun' activity. Recently, they sponsored Catherine Lo Centre's 'Water Motor Fun' activity to help the children experience the feel of different materials such as bubble water, grass, etc. Everyone enjoyed it!

Hair Salon — Hair Cut Programme for Social Adaptation

Children may feel excited about having a haircut at a salon. However, it could be a hassle for children with special needs and their parents. The children may feel insecure being in an unfamiliar environment and overwhelmed by the feeling of water and shampoo running over their head. When it becomes too much, they may scream or cry.

Hair Salon partnered with the Society for the first time in 2015, where 60 children from Cheung Sha Wan Centre had their hair cut by the professional hair stylists at the salon. The hair stylists were very patient and helped pacify the children to make sure the hair cut was an enjoyable experience. The parents were gratified by the learning opportunity and the new haircut for their children.



On 4 May (Wed), Hair Salon invited the children of the Society to have a haircut at their salon again so that more children could have the opportunity to learn how to adapt to social situations.

Special thanks go to the following donors for making donations of HK\$10,000 or above to the Society between October 2015 and March 2016:

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New App to Motivate Children with Disability to Learn



Some of the children at Heep Hong Society have severe intellectual and physical disabilities, due to conditions such as cerebral palsy or epilepsy caused by brain infection in their infancy. Their physical development is delayed or even limited; their muscle tone is abnormal and their heads, arms and feet are too stiff or too weak to move. Some children suffer from chromosomal disorders such as Down Syndrome and Angelman Syndrome. These children have different degrees of intellectual or physical disabilities and require a lot of physiotherapy treatments to improve their physical functioning.

Constrained Body Control Limits Choice of Toys

These children have constrained body control and often require medical facilities to support themselves when they sit or stand. It takes them tremendous effort to hold their head up or stretch their arms when they play with toys. Since they have limited functions in their hands, it is difficult for them to perform actions such as point, pinch, pull or turn. Only a small range of toys is suitable for them. When they reach five to six years old, they can only play with toys intended for infants. Those children who are physically disabled but are intellectually normal soon become bored with the toys. Worse still, some children who lack the physical functions to play with toys may seek sensory stimulation through playing with saliva or banging their heads against the desk. Physiotherapists have to look for better alternatives.



The Touch and Swipe App

The operation of tablet computers is easy for children with disabilities to use. However, the apps for children in the market usually require capabilities beyond these children. The Society's team of physiotherapists specially designed the 'Touch and Swipe' app tailored to the abilities of these children with severe developmental delay or difficulties.

In this new app, the children can easily play the 10 games with simple 'touch and swipe' – just the name suggests – without constraints on tap direction or reaction time. The vivid images and sound effects keep children engaged, at the same time strengthening their physical abilities.



The games incorporate elements of training in various areas such as visual-motor and auditory-motor, basic cognition, social interaction and emotional development. The themes are those children encounter in their everyday life, e.g. weather, animals, toys, daily necessities. Children will have a fun learning time.



Free download

Audience : Children with severe disabilities

Contents : 10 easy to play games

Download : Search the keyword 'Heep Hong Society'

Platforms :



*The app is available in Chinese only

