## **Oct 2005 Issue No. 35**

## **Learning to Accept**

#### Learning to Accept

Sik-wai is a child born with intellectual disability and severe cardiac disease. Her father has never accepted Sik-wai's health conditions, and sometimes blames her, making cruel and cold remarks, "Why weren't you born like everyone else? What a monster!" Despite her father's rejection, Sik-wai's mother has always accepted her daughter for what she is.

Sik-wai is precious in her mother's eyes. Although rejection from family members and discrimination from the community has made life full of disappointment, she has learned to face adversity. She truly believes that every life is worth living. She



secretly hopes that one day, there would be no discrimination against persons with intellectual or physical disabilities. They would be treated as ordinary people, with respect and acceptance so that they can overcome barriers and integrate into society. So, when Sik-wai's school successfully obtained funding from the EOC's Community Participation Funding Programme to organize an integration project, her mother jumped at the chance to get involved.



Sik-wai is a student of the Church of Christ in China Kei Shun Special School, which has an enrolment of about 200 children with mild-grade intellectual disability. The school's motto is "Do not give up on any child". To foster understanding and acceptance of persons with intellectual disability by other youngsters, the school launched an integration project, "A Harmonious New Era with Equal Opportunities", which was an exchange programme between the Special School and primary students in Kwun Tong and Tsuen Kwan O. Earlier this year, Kei Shun Special School organised 8 visits for its students to 4 elementary schools, and later the primary 3 to 5 students of the 4 schools repaid the visits. The visits

ensured that all the children enjoyed fun and games together, and were able to gain a better understanding of each other.

To measure the effectiveness of the project in eliminating discrimination, an "Attitude Assessment" questionnaire was distributed to the children. A total of 639 respondents showed a significant change in the their attitudes to accept children with intellectual disability. Meanwhile, about 95% of the school staff indicated that the activity had promoted better understanding of persons with intellectual disability among the school children, and helped them accept and care for persons with intellectual disability. Some teachers even suggested organizing follow-up activities to provide more interaction with the students, to further enhance the project's effectiveness.



#### Attitudinal change - step by step

The project was supervised by Ms Karen Lau Sau-cheung, a nurse in Kei Shun Special School. "An inclusive community is beneficial to our youngsters and their development, and this nurtures a more united and harmonious society. Through more exchanges, the students no longer feel that children with special education needs are strange," said Ms Lau. The project meant a substantial amount of preparation work for Ms Lau, but she considered it all worthwhile. "Our children with intellectual disability have taken their first step to contact other school children. Naturally, this has enabled them to gain a better understanding of each other. Such a step for the young and frail children showed their strong determination to overcome their personal disabilities. They did not give up easily and were persistent to perform for the other school children. Such a step provides a chance for the two groups to play together, and to interact with each other in a positive way." Students with intellectual disability were not only at the receiving end of assistance, both sides learned to accept each other.

Kei Shun Special School also invited parents to share their personal experiences, and subsequently published 1,000 booklets. The story of Sik Wai is one of many in the booklet. Mr. Wong Sui Lun, Principal of Kei Shun said, "There are many touching stories in the booklet, and you will be deeply moved by each and every one of them. You will also find out what a daunting task it is to take care of a child with special needs." Each parent tells a different story, but the common theme is that every parent and child have suffered some form of social discrimination. They are not fairly treated nor respected, and their children are looked down by others and

deprived of their rights since early childhood.

"Just imagine, how would you feel if these things had happened to you?" asked Mr. Wong. "These families just want their children to be treated like everyone else, so that they can truly become a member of our community."

[Each year the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) sponsors about 50 to 60 community projects through its Community Participation Funding Programme on Equal Opportunities.]

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平等心深情話可在互聯網閱覽 http://www.eoc.org.hk

## Overcoming Adversity to Build a Better Future

#### Overcoming Adversity to Build a Better Future



"EO Through Your Eyes" roving photo competition.

The EOC launches its annual major public education initiative - "EO Expo 2005" on 29 October 2005 at Lok Fu Shopping Centre. "Overcoming Adversity to Build a Better Future" is the theme for this year's community events, which runs from November through December 2005.

Highlights of "EO Expo 2005" include the Commission's youth mentorship programme "Career Challenge 2005" and "EO through Your Eyes" roving photo exhibition. In addition, over 20 activities ranging from talks, workshops, visits and carnivals will also be organized during this period by the community partners to help build the Commission's vision for a fair and inclusive society.

Details of the EO Expo 2005: <a href="http://www.eoc.org.hk">http://www.eoc.org.hk</a>

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Every year, the "EO Expo" draws large groups of interested participants.

## 平等機會博覽 2005 — 社區活動巡禮 Equal Opportunities Expo 2005 — Events Calendar

日期州	邓杨	Date	and	venu
10/2005	- 9/2	006		

#### 活動 Community Event

2005 精神健康用 Mental Health Month 2005

13/11/2005

22/11/2005 - 23/11/2005 郑島西格里拉洛店 Island Shangri-La Hotel 亞海多元共融會議2005 (探討在職女性及路文化共融的問題)

第二十六屆籍人乒乓球比赛 The 26th Table Tennis Competition for People with Hearing Impairment 13/11/2005 九股長沙洲硬地足球場 Cheung Sha Wan Playground

「性與法律研討會 一 較素質」及 西斯電台 「性本部Online 性與法律」期的原用 Sex and the Law Forum & Website Launching Ceremony

「平等級合單創版」動畫設計比賽 "Equal Opportunities" Animation Design Competition 10/2005 - 17/12/2005

10/2005 - 12/2005 柏雅學校/天主教柏物學校/ 九原東爾學校 Bishop Paschang Memorial School / Bishop Paschang Catholic School /

26/11/2005 旺角社區含型 Mong Kok Community Hall

全港中小學 Primary & Secondary Schools 5/11/2005、13/11/2005、19/11/2005 26/11/2005、3/12/2005、17/12/2005 18/12/2005、21/1/2006 (15:00-17:00) 电图 Tuen Mun

12/11/2005 & 19/11/2005 (16:00-18:00) 經濟 於所養通和實合猶22號002箇 Rm 002, No.22, Wo Yi Hop Rd., "Knowing More About FSDO" — Small Group Discussions & Talks 新界英涵和官合遊22號002室 Rm 002, No.22, Wo Yi Hop Rd., Kwai Chung

19/11/2005 - 20/11/2005 烏溪沙青年新村 Wu Kai Sha Youth Village

9/2005 - 2/2006

11/2005 - 12/2005 (16:30) 美竹乳老人服務綜會大樓 Wong Chuk Hang Elderly Services Centre

12/11/2005 (截止報名 Deadline)

11/2005 - 12/2005

8/11/2005、16/12/2005 (19:00-21:00) 适期文化中心行政大権4權2致會議室 2, Conference Room, 4/F, Hong Kong Cultural Centre Administration Building 12/2005 - 4/2006

12/2005 - 4/2006

12/2005 坪洲 Peng Chau

全年活動 A Year-round Project 九龍東頭邻梁東德地下10-16號 10-16, G/F, Wing Tung House, Tung Tau Estate

記念が経済しますの Events: http://www.hwfb.gov.hk/download/services/ events/mental\_health2005/program\_summary.pdf

Diversity & Inclusion in Asia Conference 2005 (Women in the Workplace and Cross Cultural Effectiveness)

始出平等等 — 满座及其他活動 The Road to Equality — Talks and Fun Activities

推動管际人士被入社會 一 學校選座及美工服務 Integrating Persons with Intellectual Disability — School Talks and Volunteer Service

规子订新输之「浓度岗位」 "Family Status" Drama Performance for Parents & Children

「無定型」Camp Camp 訓練器 "Breaking Down Stereotype" Training Camp

「戲」走談視 創新天地飲創創作小組 "Eliminating Discrimination" Drama Performance

「家妹技術」填色語句創稿比赛 "Equality for All" Colouring & Slogan Design Competition

「地域的規則」即時計划 O&A Contest on FSDO 精神健康等距溝座 2005 — 灰色天空 — 即樹度、欧阳不能 — 擁迫症 Mental Health Workshop Series 2005 — Depression & Obsossive Computsive Disorder

「技能分享、政學相称」共設計劃

Social Inclusion Programme: Mental Development through Teaching and Learning

精神健康急救課程 Mental Health "First Aid" Training 課程弱質表 Programme Schedule: http://www.mhahk.org.hk

無险級大使計劃 Barrier-free Programme

133 · 男人斯 — 报告分享 Mutual Support Group for Men — Sharing Session

主辦機溝 Organization

精神健康用等備委員會

ee of the Mental Health Month

社區資康網絡

Community Rehabilitation Network
12: 2794 3010

Community Business

12: 2125 1889

http://www.communitybusiness.org.hk/Diversity.html (夜費項目 Registration fee required)

香港舞人総利促進會 The Hong Kong Society for the Deaf 雷: 2527 8969

香港電台 RTHK 及 eTVonline 電: 2339 3190 http://www.SexEdOnline.tv

型網名紹群會復康級務社交康獎中心 St. James Settlement Rehabilitation Services Social & Recreation Centre で: 2835 4361 http://www.sjsrs.c

香港超樂場協會彩港青少年中心 Hong Kong Playground Association Choi Ha C & Y Centre で: 2759 9821

香港唐氏综合症協會

The Hong Kong Down Sydrome Association

2: 2718 7773 http://www.hk-dsa.org.hk

東華三院雷詠祥兒童中心 Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Lui Wing Cheung Children Centre **立**: 2462 4405

各項型公會麥理浩夫人中心 (改庭芳勤及資源中心) H.K.S.K.H.Lady MacLehose Centre (Family Activity and Resource Centre) で: 2423 5045 http://www.skhimc.org

新界社機器會婦女中心 New Territories Association of Societies Women Centre **む**: 2660 5543

東華三院黃竹坑服務耶會大樓 Tung Wah Groups of Hospital ☎: 2814 2868

路振音石研尾失明者中心 Hong Kong Lutheran Centre for the Blind 立: 2776 0033 http://hk.geocities.com

香港心理街生會 Mental Health Association of Hong Kong ☎: 2528 4656

香港機能協會坪渕長者暨青少年起含中心 HKPHAB Peng Chau Neighbourhood Elderly cum C/Y Centre ロ: 2983 9000 http://pc.hkphab.org.hk

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## "A Mission for Equal Opportunities" TV Docu-drama Series & Student Forum



Have you ever thought of how Hong Kong's equal opportunity legislation affects you?

- What is discrimination? Could I discriminate against someone without knowing it?
- As an employer, I know I have legal liability under the anti-discrimination ordinances, but what actions should I take?
- How do the anti-discrimination ordinances protect my rights?

Since the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), which is responsible for implementing the three anti-discrimination ordinances, over 100,000 enquiries and 7,000 complaints have been received, covering a wide range of areas, including employment, education, services and facilities. As the anti-discrimination ordinances affect all of us, the EOC joined hands with the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) again to produce a new TV docu-drama series "A Mission for Equal Opportunities" for a closer look at different forms of discrimination.

#### "A Mission for Equal Opportunities: Enhanced Version" — Get Yours Now!

The TV docu-drama series based on 6 real-life cases, were broadcast from April to May this year. Following the series, the EOC and RTHK held a Student Forum to discuss the contents of the programme and the legal provisions related to the cases. The Student Forum is now produced as an educational module, which includes a set of DVDs of the TV series and an explanatory booklet. If you are a teacher, student, employer, employee, human resources practitioner or a social worker, you may be interested to get a free copy of our new educational module.

#### Audience Feedback:

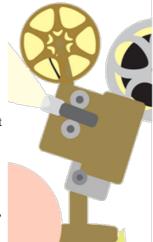
The TV docu-drama series "A Mission for Equal Opportunities" attracted an estimated 1.3 million viewers per episode. The viewers also provided a lot of valuable feedback:

"It is a very meaningful, substantive and serious production. I understand how helpless the person in the episode feels when he is dismissed as a result of his mental illness..."

"The programme brings a message — we may face unequal treatment in employment, yet with the EOC, we have channels to make a complaint!"

"Legislation is essential to equal opportunities."

"Not only do women face discrimination in the course of recruitment, men are often discriminated against in the service sector."



"I share the same feelings — I suffered from sexual harassment as the female student in the episode when I was in school. Everyone has to be strong to fight against such unequal treatment."



#### Episode 1: I am Always with You

Ah Keung, a diligent employee is dismissed as a result of his mental illness — early psychosis. Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), it is unlawful for an employer to dismiss an

employee solely on the ground of his / her disability. In today's world, persons with mental illness are often stigmatised. However, with the support of family and the community, they are able to pick up their lives again.



#### **Episode 2: Family Ties**

Pauline, a working single mother, was fired by her boss who believed she had to take care of her son and would not be committed to her work. According to the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (FSDO), an employer should not treat an employee less favourably on the ground of his / her family status. How will Pauline cope?



#### **Episode 3: The Unmarried**

Two hard working and outstanding single women, Candy and Peggy, have been dismissed in a redundancy exercise because they do not have any family burdens. Is it reasonable for an employer to retain or dismiss an employee solely on the ground of a person's marital status instead of one's ability?

### **Episode 4: SARS Panic**

Hong Kong people lived in fear during the SARS outbreak in 2003. Joey's mother contracted SARS. During Joey's home quarantine, her employer dismissed Joey on the ground that she had violated the company's instructions. Joey soon found out that the Disability Discrimination Ordinance protects persons with a disability against discrimination, and their associations, such as family members.



#### **Episode 5: Sexy Campus**

Carmen, a Form 6 school girl was sexually harassed by her classmate, but the problem would not go away. Sexual harassment is very prevalent in Hong Kong, this programme raises the serious issue of sexual harassment in schools, and sends out the message that it is unacceptable behaviour in our society.



## **Episode 6: The Three of Us**

After so much hard work, Janet was happy to finally get a promotion. But she was soon dismissed, because her employer's wife felt uncomfortable about her husband working too closely with a woman. Does this case violate the Sex Discrimination Ordinance?



Visit the EOC website and fill in the request form for a free copy of the educational module "A Mission for Equal Opportunities — Student Forum".

Website: http://www.eoc.org.hk

Enquiries: 2511 8211

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#### Valuing Diversity - a new on-line self-learning package for civil servants

#### Valuing Diversity

## - a new on-line self-learning package for civil servants

As a cosmopolitan city, which embraces diversity and encourages acceptance of individual differences, Hong Kong has attracted people from different backgrounds to work and live here. They have enriched Hong Kong socially, culturally and economically.

Joining hands with the EOC, the government has developed two self-learning training modules, one on the disability sensitivity and the other on equal opportunity ordinances for civil servants to deliver quality service to the public.

The civil service employs about 4.5 percent of Hong Kong's labour force, representing about 158,000 employees 1. The government is not only the largest employer, but also the largest service provider, covering areas such as education, health, leisure, emergency services, environmental and social services. Therefore, it is important to raise the sensitivity, understanding and interest in gender, race, disability and equal opportunities issues, so that after completing the self-learning courses, civil servants, especially frontline officers would be better equipped to serve the public.

CD ROMs and a web site designated for civil servants will be launched soon and equal opportunities concepts will be conveyed through various multimedia formats, such as text, videos, games and quizzes.

To know more about the self-learning package for civil servants please contact Evelyn Lai of the Civil Service Bureau on 2231 3922.



Note 1: Hong Kong Yearbook 2004

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## **Disability Discrimination Case - The Night Shift Blues**

#### **Disability Discrimination Case**

#### The Night Shift Blues



#### The complaint

Mr Cheung worked as a customer relations officer in a property management company, which required him to perform night duty on a regular basis. Last summer, Mr Cheung took three months' sick leave because of a brain operation for his epilepsy, which had been worsening in recent years.

"After the operation, my doctor advised me not to work the overnight shift, at least for a few months, as this might affect my recovery. She wrote me a medical note explaining my situation so I could present it to my supervisor. However, having been informed of my health condition, my supervisor continued to assign me night duty," said Mr Cheung.

"What's more, I was the only person in our team who was not given a bonus at the end of the year. My supervisor explained it was because I took too much sick leave that year. He even threatened to fire me if it happened again. It's so unreasonable! I feel like being penalized for my illness!"

#### What the EOC did

Mr Cheung lodged a complaint with the EOC against his employer for disability discrimination. Both the Complainant and the Respondent agreed to attempt early conciliation to resolve the conflict.

Facilitated by an EOC investigator, Mr Cheung and his employer attended a conciliation meeting to discuss the settlement terms. After expressing their claims and positions, the two parties reached a consensus. It was also agreed that the Complainant would be exempted from night duty for the period recommended by the doctor, and he was also due for monetary compensation.



#### What the law says

Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (DDO), it is unlawful to discriminate against a person on the ground of his / her disability. In this case, if an employee provides a medical certificate supporting special arrangement of duties, the employer should consider providing accommodation to help the employee with a disability perform his / her duties, unless unjustifiable hardship is encountered.

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## Sex Discrimination Case - Company's Bonus Trip Not for Pregnant Staff

#### **Sex Discrimination Case**



In Hong Kong, the number of women complaining that they have been discriminated against on the job because they are pregnant is soaring even though birth rates have declined. Many pregnant women have been unfairly fired, or denied promotion and other staff benefits. It is clear that many employers are still discriminating against their female staff on the ground of pregnancy.

#### The complaint

"I was excited to learn that my company had invited the staff to a short overseas trip, as a gesture to show appreciation of our hard work. I was three months pregnant at the time and I believed I would enjoy such a short and relaxing trip. However, my application for the bonus trip was rejected. It was decided that two days annual leave would be deducted if I were to join other staff on the trip. The company's excuse was that I did not have sufficient leave days and was worried about my health condition. However, three other colleagues who also did not have sufficient leave balance were allowed to go. The company could have checked with me or my obstetrician to confirm whether I was fit to travel. Finally, when I resumed work after my maternity leave I was sacked. The company did not fulfill its statutory obligations and did not give me sufficient payment in lieu of notice. It seems to me I was discriminated against because I was pregnant," said Mary.

#### What the EOC did

Upon receipt of the complaint, the EOC investigator approached the employer for an explanation regarding Mary's allegations. While the company had asked the travel agency if Mary was suitable to go on the overseas trip, only very general information was obtained. It

did not approach Mary or her doctor for additional information. The company admitted that other staff who did not have sufficient leave days were allowed to join the company trip. The company then added that Mary was not allowed to go because of her poor performance.



The company explained that Mary's employment was terminated because her services were no longer required. No recruitment had been carried out after Mary left the company.

The EOC investigator explained the provisions of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance to the employer and after several rounds of discussions and exchanges of correspondence, both parties agreed to conciliate. The company provided Mary with monetary compensation to cover the difference in payment in lieu of notice, and a letter of apology.

#### What the law says

Pregnancy discrimination comes in many forms and in many different instances of employment: hiring, promotion, firing, benefits, and more. The Sex Discrimination Ordinance enacted in 1995 states that it is unlawful to discriminate against a woman on the ground of pregnancy. That is, an employer should not treat a woman less favourably on the basis of her pregnancy.

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#### **Around the World**

#### Around the World

## Landmark Case: US Disability Law Covers Foreign Cruise Ships



Recently, the US Supreme Court ruled that foreign cruise ships sailing in US waters can be sued under a landmark anti-bias law if they

discriminate against passengers with disability. The case has been closely followed by the multibillion-dollar cruise industry. About 10 million people a year take cruises and an estimated 54 million Americans have some types of disability.

The lawsuit was brought by several travellers with disabilities who used wheelchairs or electric scooters. These travellers said that physical barriers on the Norwegian Sea and the Norwegian Star denied them access to emergency evacuation equipment and to facilities such as public restrooms, restaurants, swimming pools, etc. The cruise ships had also charged extra for cabins accessible to those with disability. The US Justice Department backed the appeal by the passengers, arguing that foreign-flagged ships are covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act.

### Information source:

http://www.usatoday.com/news/ washington/2005-06-06scotus-disabled x.htm?csp=N009

#### Kuwaiti Women Win Full Political Rights

The Kuwaiti parliament has voted to give women full political rights. The amendment to the Kuwait's electoral law means women can for the first time, vote and stand in parliamentary and local elections.

The result, announced by the speaker of parliament, was greeted with thunderous applause from the public gallery where backers of the amendment were gathered. The Kuwaiti prime minister expressed his congratulations to the Kuwaiti women over their newly gained political rights, and at the same time announced his plan to appoint a woman in the government soon.

#### Information source:

http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/ Daily/Day/050517/2005051705.html

## **Disability Tax Credit Benefits Canadians** with Diabetes

Canadians who use insulin to manage their diabetes may now be eligible for a federal tax credit worth up to CAD1,055. People with diabetes can face annual medical costs ranging up to CAD5,000 a year to manage their disease, and this federal assistance to ease some of the financial burden of diabetes has proved popular.

The Canadian Diabetes Association has offered to work with the Canada Revenue Agency to develop guidelines to assist individuals with diabetes and their doctors to determine whether they would be eligible for the new disability tax credit.

Information source:
<a href="http://www.diabetes.ca/Section">http://www.diabetes.ca/Section</a>
Main/NewsReleases.asp?ID=117

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# Payment to Family Carers of Disabled Persons Expected

In New Zealand, people who stay at home to look after a sick or disabled family member may soon be paid for their work.



The Office for Disability Issues has submitted a paper to Cabinet ministers, asking them to consider paying caregivers, as they have given up employment opportunity to provide care. The policy review follows a 2001 decision of the Human Rights Commission's Complaints Review Tribunal that the Intellectual Handicapped Children (IHC), New Zealand's largest provider of services to people with intellectual disabilities and their families, breached human rights law by disallowing an application by the parents of a boy with intellectual disability to become paid carers.

#### Information source:

http://www.nzherald.co.nz/section/ story.cfm?c\_id=1&objectid=10116379

## Career Challenge2005



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