

FEATURE STORY



Career Challenge - 2007/08

Thinking Outside the Box

Stereotypical notions often limit student's choices of academic subjects and career aspirations. To break down barriers formed by stereotypes and prejudices, the EOC has been organizing a youth mentorship programme entitled "Career Challenge" since 2002. This year, ten outstanding achievers from a wide spectrum of professions served as mentors and shared their stories of success with students from more than 80 secondary and primary schools. By participating in large-group sharing sessions or visiting the mentors' workplace, over 500 students gained remarkable career insights as well as widened their horizons.

● Students' Sharings After Meeting with the Mentors:



"I learnt a lot about mental illnesses from the sharing session of Dr. TSANG Fan-kwong . He told us about his daily work, as well as the painful experience of people with mental illness." Psychiatrist Dr. TSANG Fan-kwong told a story about the frustrations and barriers faced by an ex-mentally ill person, as well as provided an elaboration on discrimination and how it can ruin people's lives.

A former journalist, Sharon CHEUNG shared her fascinating experience in news reporting. Apart from interviewing well-known national leaders, she often spoke to nameless, hidden and underprivileged residents living in poorer areas in Hong Kong and China. Her valuable experience aroused a lot of questions from the students. We couldn't help but wonder - how many bright future reporting stars were among the group?



"Recalling my past, life was not that difficult, but I often gave up easily when there were any hurdles. I should be ashamed of myself compared to Ms YU Chui-yee." The experience of YU Chui-ye, Paralympics Wheelchair Fencing Gold Medalist, showed us that anything is possible when we don't give up.

"Through the programme, I found out that a quiet person may also be gifted in sports, while a student who has taken subjects in science can also enjoy literature and history. We can assume different roles in different fields." Wendy YU, Equestrian Ambassador, explained how she overcame difficulties and learned the art of taming horses. She also shared her previous work experience as a TV host and reminded students that being gentle did not imply weakness.



Ms. Kitty AU

"As an architect, Ms Kitty AU believes that the most important part of her job is not developing the best architectural plan, nor utilizing every inch of land. Ms Au sees her main mission as meeting the needs of every member of society through universal design. It was truly an admirable goal." During their visit to architect Ms Kitty AU's workplace, students tried out wheelchairs and experienced first-hand the challenges faced by a person with a physical disability.

"It was a great learning experience for me to witness how Mr. Leo LAM overcame his physical disability and actually drove a car. I was really impressed with this close encounter." Leo LAM, President of Rehab Power, became paralyzed from the waist down due to illness in early adulthood. He overcame severe trauma and founded "Rehab Power", which fights for the rights of people with disabilities through positive means.



"After attending the sharing session of Ms Fermi WONG, I realized that I should not discriminate against people of other races." Fermi WONG, Executive Director of Hong Kong Unison, shared with the students a documentary about discrimination faced by ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. The participants were touched by her dedication to promote racial harmony.

"The most unforgettable part is visiting the kindergarten, which provided me with more insight into being a kindergarten teacher, as well as the dos and don'ts on communicating with kids... these skills will be useful for me, even if I do not become a kindergarten teacher in the future." Male kindergarten teachers are a rare sight in classrooms, but Mr. TSANG Chi-hung enjoys being one. While there are many misconceptions that teaching young children is for women, Tsang's passion for his job livens up the classroom, and breaks down gender stereotypes.





"Mrs Mei NG's fabulous presentation was really remarkable. She used different props and a passionate tone to promote green living. It was way more effective than any kind of advertisement." As one of the UN Global 500 Laureate, Friends of the Earth (HK) Board Member and the Evergreen Green Pathfinder, Mei NG practiced what she preached. She made use of every chance to promote environmental protection to the public. With a lot of funny props, she told the students that besides reducing consumption of plastic products, green living could be creative and "romantic" as well.

Media worker, Mary Ann KING used to be a Member of Wan Chai District Council. She has been fighting for equality since she was very young and is a keen promoter for women's rights. Whether it is about choosing a job or picking a hair style, she thinks that people should follow their own beliefs and not to be limited by any gender stereotypes or others' perceptions.



Highlights of the 10 sharing sessions are now available on the EOC's Youth Corner and Education webpage:
[Please Click here for details!](#)

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

EO Club Corner : Seminar on "Preventing Disability Harassment and Handling Employees in Mental Distress"

EO CLUB CORNER

Seminar on "Preventing Disability Harassment and Handling Employees in Mental Distress"

As an employer or a human resources practitioner, you may have encountered job-seekers with certain types of disabilities; in addition, you may have to handle complaints or stress problems of staff who have been discriminated or harassed. Do you know how to deal with such situations in a fair and non-discriminatory manner?



Expert speakers of the EO Club Seminar - (from left) Miss Karen Cheng, Mr. Polaris Puk, Dr. Lee Wing King and Miss Amy Lee

A seminar was held for EO Club Members on 29 April 2008 to address the above issues and to suggest best management practices in the workplace. It was also part of the EOC's public education initiatives in memory of Miss Li Ching, who had hearing impairment and put an end to her life in March 2008 due to repeated discrimination in school and at work. (Articles about Li Ching: [Discrimination Hurts](#), [Ponder Before You Say No](#); [Please Click here for details.](#))

Several speakers in different fields shared their expertise and the gist of discussions is summarized below.

Helping Staff in Mental Distress

[by guest speaker Dr. Lee Wing-king, a specialist in psychiatry]

Depression and GAD

Everyone feels sad when bad things happen. However, everyday "blues" or sadness is not depression. People with "blues" usually have a short-termed depressed mood, but they can manage to cope and soon recover without treatment. "Clinical Depression" lasts for at least 2 weeks and affects a person's ability to carry out their work or to have satisfying personal relationships. They lose interest, energy, appetite and self-esteem. They could not sleep well and some have recurrent suicidal ideas or behaviour.

People with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) generally have uncontrollable worries and feelings of apprehension about everyday events for a period of at least six months. They experience sweating, shaking, chest pain and etc.

Practical Tips for Helping Staff in Depression

Helping someone who are not ready to recognize that they need assistance may be an uphill battle. People with depression often do not see the point of doing anything and may think that no one can really help them. Consider the following tips:

1. Educate yourself about depression and understand the employee's needs. Beware of signs of mood disorders.
2. Encourage support from colleagues and accept the fact that the person has a legitimate illness, but not character flaws or weak personality. This would prevent the exclusion of the person and negative attitude of co-workers.
3. Listen to the employee without being judgmental. Do not deny but respond to his/her feelings, rather than to the content of the conversation. Be respectful and calm. The key is to be empathetic.
4. Avoid patronizing behavior or over-protecting the employee which may lead to embarrassment or jealousy among colleagues.
5. Encourage and assist the person to seek professional help.
6. Monitor the health progress, and pay attention to warning signs of possible relapse or worsening of symptoms.

Case Study -Disability Harassment in the Workplace

[by EOC Speaker Miss Karen Cheng, Senior Equal Opportunities Officer (Operations)]

What is Disability Harassment under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance(DDO)?

Disability harassment means any unwelcome conduct towards a person in relation to his/her disability. A reasonable person, having regard to all circumstances, would have anticipated that the person with disability would be offended, humiliated or intimidated by that conduct. Examples of such acts could be insulting comments, offensive jokes, and unnecessary gestures mimicking someone's disability. Over 70% of complaints under the DDO received by the EOC since 1996 are related to disability discrimination and harassment in employment field.

The DDO provides that, where the act of discrimination or harassment is done in the course of employment, whether with or without the employer's knowledge or approval, the employer is liable. The employer may be able to discharge its liability if it can show that it has taken reasonable practicable steps to prevent the unlawful acts, such as having equal opportunities policies and complaint handling procedures in place, or providing training and information to staff.

Case Study:

Mary was a Training Officer who had lost her hearing function of one ear. She did not need to use any hearing device in her daily life. The Training Manager, Kenny, sometimes teased Mary about her hearing loss, "Are you deaf? Left ear or right ear?" He even threw paper on her face. Mary could no longer bear Kenny's behaviour and finally lodged a complaint of disability harassment with the EOC against Kenny and the company.

Kenny explained that he had no intention to offend Mary, and the comments were just for fun. The company argued that it had formulated an anti-discrimination policy since 2000, and the staff were given a copy of the policy. A non-compulsory training course on anti-discrimination laws was held in 2004.

Analysis of the Case

- Even if Kenny had no intention to harass Mary on the ground of her disability, it was inappropriate to make insulting comments in relation to her hearing impairment and throw paper at Mary. Disability harassment under the DDO is established by the "conduct" instead of a person's "intention"
- Although the employer formulated an anti-discrimination policy in 2000, it did not review or update the policy. Moreover, the training course on anti-discrimination laws was only arranged for interested staff, without keeping any record of attendance. The company should review the policy from time to time and to consider organizing compulsory training courses for all staff and keeping proper record of such training.

During investigation, the EOC would consider the context and the underlying meaning of the alleged harassing remarks. The EOC would also examine the available evidences, such as staff reports, witness notes, etc in order to find out if disability discrimination or harassment has taken place.

A Win-win Situation: Employing Persons with Disabilities - Sharing by an Employer

[by Mr. Polaris Puk, Managing Director of an Advertisement Company]



Quality design by persons with disabilities (Artwork provided by Mr. Polaris Puk)

Experience from Mr. Polaris Puk has proven that in employing persons with disabilities (PWDs), business operations are not affected; quite the contrary, it creates a win-win situation. PWDs are always eager to learn, diligent and focused. They value the opportunity given to them, and are very loyal.

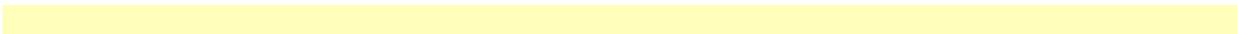
"Because of our business nature, we often have to meet tight deadlines. One of our graphics designers who is a hearing impaired person, is able to meet every deadline without sacrificing the quality of work. With her excellent performance, she has even raised the overall standard of the design team," said Mr. Puk. "The key is to match the ability of the persons with the requirements of job!" Mr. Puk has also accommodated staff with different needs by offering flexible working hours or to work at home.

Effective Ways of Communicating with Persons with Hearing Impairment

[by Miss Amy Lee, the Centre-in-charge of the Employment Services Centre of the Hong Kong Society for the Deaf]

Persons with hearing impairment use a variety of ways to communicate. Some rely on sign language or assistive devices; some rely primarily on written messages or lip reading. More often, a "multiplex" method, i.e. combining different modes of communication, is employed. Colleagues should find out how the person communicates best. Gain their attention before starting a conversation. Talk to them face-to-face in a quieter place, speak slowly and clearly. When someone with hearing impairment asks, "What did you say?" the answers, "Never mind", "Nothing" are very common replies. These are demeaning because it denotes that the person is not worth any effort of repeating the conversation.

Employers are encouraged to accommodate staff with hearing impairment by different approaches, such as written communication cards or notebooks and amplified telephones.





EOC on YouTube

www.youtube.com/user/HKEOC

A short video "Between Hearing and Not Hearing" unveiling the problems faced by persons with hearing impairment in everyday life has been uploaded to the EOC YouTube webpage. Previous TV advertisements on equal opportunities are also in store. Visit now!



- [Subscription Form\(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Race Discrimination Ordinance Passed on 10 July, 2008

Race Discrimination Ordinance Passed on 10 July, 2008



The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) supports the elimination of discrimination on all grounds and welcomes the passage of the anti-racial discrimination legislation by the Legislative Council on 10 July 2008.



Mr. Raymond TANG, Chairperson of the EOC, said, "The enactment of the Race Discrimination Ordinance demonstrates Hong Kong's commitment to protect our citizenry from discrimination and harassment regardless of his/her race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin. Protection means safeguarding access to basic rights such as education, employment and accommodation; it is important that this protection is extended to every person in the community. Eliminating racism can enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong as a business centre, and help demonstrate to the world that we are a genuine cosmopolitan city."

The EOC is entrusted with the administration of the Race Discrimination Ordinance. In order to raise awareness and promote understanding of this new legislation, the EOC has already started laying the groundwork through liaison and discussion with our stakeholders; drafting a Code of Practice on Employment; conducting public education on social integration and racial harmony through radio and TV programmes, etc. The Commission would continue to enhance its public education and publicity programmes for the ethnic minorities which include strengthening the on-line resources for ethnic minorities, translating and printing EOC pamphlets and booklets into different ethnic minority languages, and organizing training for ethnic minorities in collaboration with NGOs.



"The passage of the ordinance represents the culmination of many years of hard work on the part of ethnic groups, NGOs, business community, legislators and the government and their commendable dedication and efforts have now been duly recognized." Mr. TANG added.

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Sex Discrimination Case : Case on Sexual Harassment

SEX DISCRIMINATION CASE

Case on Sexual Harassment



The complaint

Mary was a student of a local educational establishment. She lodged a complaint with the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC), stating that she had been sexually harassed and victimized by her Caucasian teacher, Mr. X.

"I felt very uneasy every time I met Mr. X. He always stared at me and commented on my appearance. One day, he suddenly lifted up my skirt and said I've got a pair of sexy legs. I escaped from him immediately and avoided him afterwards." Mary later reported the incident to Mr. X's supervisor but no follow-up action was taken. "My classmates said that the school management trivialized the matter as they believed that physical contact such as hugging is part of the western culture. However, I believe that cultural differences are no excuse for inappropriate or offensive behavior," said Mary.

After graduation, Mary applied for a job in the same educational establishment, but was not granted an interview. "Mr. X refused to recommend me for the job. Mr. X might have victimized me because I had refused his sexual advances and reported the matter to his boss."

What the EOC did

Mary lodged a complaint with the EOC against (1) Mr. X for sexually harassing her; (2) Mr. X for victimizing her and not recommending her for a job vacancy in the educational establishment; (3) the educational establishment for vicariously liable for the act of Mr. X.

The EOC investigated into the complaint. Mr. X denied that he had lifted up Mary's skirt. He only recalled he had comforted Mary by saying that she was a nice and good looking girl when she grumbled about her appearance. He did not recommend Mary for the job only because there was another candidate who was far more suitable.

The educational establishment replied that it had not received any formal complaint from Mary. Besides, they had organized training courses on the prevention of sexual harassment for all staff six years ago.

While Mary and Mr. X had presented different stories, all parties concerned agreed to resolve the matter by conciliation. Mr. X provided a verbal apology to Mary and a written apology to related parties of the educational establishment for their time and effort in handling the matter. Mr. X and Mary both agreed to treat each other respectfully if they meet again in future.

The educational establishment undertook to formulate an equal opportunities policy and codes of conduct for both the employees and students. A new complaint handling mechanism would also be in place and that all complaints would be properly recorded. Besides, anti-discrimination training to staff and students would be organized annually.

What the law says

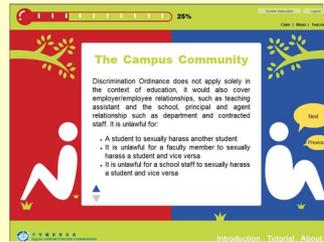


Under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance, it is unlawful for a teacher to sexually harass a student. Sexual harassment refers to any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which a reasonable person regards as offensive, humiliating or intimidating. It is important to be sensitive to cultural differences. Behaviour and speech that may seem innocuous to you may be offensive or uncomfortable to someone else.

"A matter of she"-

Online Training module on Preventing Sexual

Harassment for Educational Establishments



<http://www.eoc.org.hk:8080/shoncampus>

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

An Alternative to Experiencing the Joy of Reading



The EOC 's Commemorative Publication "Advancing Equal Opportunities" version (in Cantonese, Putonghua and English), in addition to its print and Braille versions. This is Hong Kong's first talking book on equal opportunities produced in collaboration with Retina Hong Kong, a self-help group of persons with visual impairment. DVDs are available to the public upon request (2511 8211).

The chief technical consultant of the project, Mr. Bennet Ha, who is a blind person himself, explained the benefits of a talking book, "It enables persons with visual impairment and those with deteriorating vision for various reasons, such as aging, to enjoy reading in an alternative way -through listening. With latest technological advances, we have used text-to-speech software to convert the book to an audio version instead of asking a real person to read and record the text. The near human voice audio output is well received by persons with visual impairment. This new technology promises a great deal more convenience and lower cost."

EOC Chairperson Mr. Raymond Tang elaborated the rationale for producing a talking book, "We want to establish a new trend in Hong Kong. Whenever we produce a publication, we may consider developing an additional audio version to cater for the needs of different people." Mr. Tang added that talking books are popular overseas. "While driving, exercising or travelling, you find listening to talking books a good use of time."

About the EOC Commemorative Publication

The publication features how the EOC assists complainants and respondents, and how the EOC has effected changes in Hong Kong. The first part of the book recounts the remarkable experiences of 14 individuals on how they have contributed to the cause of working towards a fairer and more inclusive society. The second part highlights the advancement of equal opportunities in Hong Kong since the establishment of the EOC more than a decade ago.

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Seminar on Work, Income and Gender Equality

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East Asian economies, China in particular, are among the fastest growing in the world, and many of them are characterized by relatively high levels of female labour force participation. At present, gender pay inequity is pronounced in the region and is characterized by persisting gender pay gap, occupational segregation and inadequate maternity protection for working women. These are the findings of "Work, Income and Gender Equality in East Asia: Guide for In-country Research and Action" (the Guide) published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) this year.

To follow up on these issues, in May 2008, ILO, China Labour Association and Women Research Institute of All China Women's Federation jointly organized the Seminar on "Work, Income and Gender Equality". The seminar brought together about 50 experts and participants from government departments, businesses, unions, women's groups, universities and research institutes to discuss issues raised in the Guide and the labour market situation in China. The EOC's senior training officer Cynthia Lam shared the Hong Kong's experience in the implementation of the Sex Discrimination Ordinance and our work relating to equal pay for work of equal value.



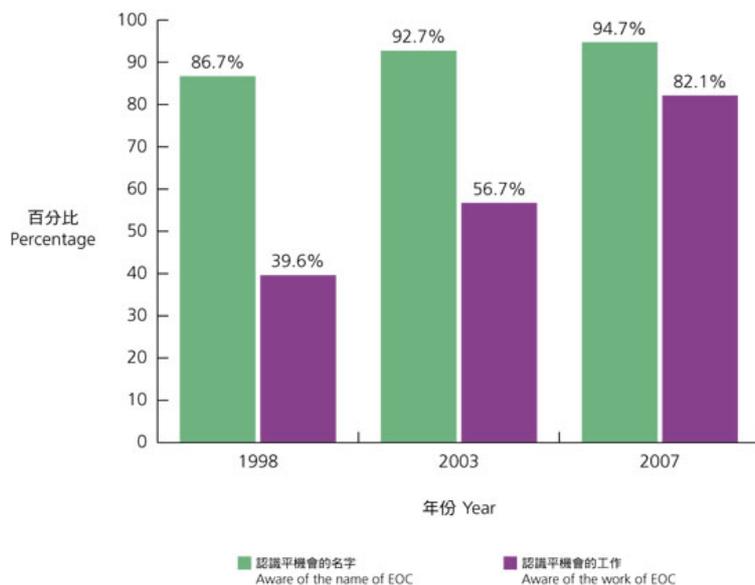
- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Survey Shows Strong Support for Equal Opportunities

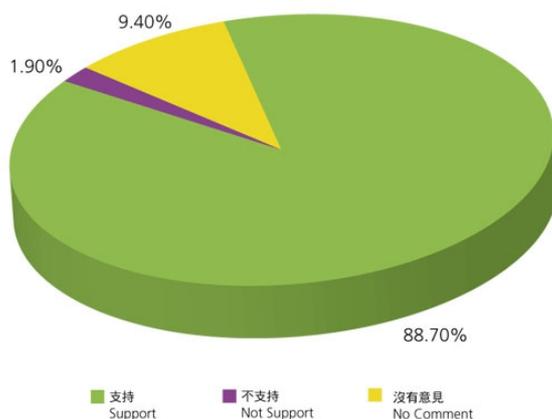
Survey Shows Strong Support for Equal Opportunities

In order to gauge public perception towards the concept of equal opportunities (EO) and understand public views on the effectiveness of our work, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) appointed an independent research agency to conduct a public survey on EO awareness from August to November 2007. Over 1,500 households were interviewed by telephone for the "survey of the general public" and 153 EOC's service recipients participated in the "user survey". The survey results were released on 30 April 2008. Similar public surveys were conducted in 1998 and 2003.

圖表一：對平機會的認識
Table 1: Awareness of the EOC



圖表二：對平機會工作的支持
Table 2: Support to the Work of the EOC



Survey of the General Public

The survey found that 94.7% and 82.1% of the respondents respectively revealed they had heard of the EOC and had knowledge of the work of the EOC - the highest ratings among the three surveys (see Table 1).

An overwhelming majority (96%) of the respondents personally considered EO very important or quite important. The reasons for their attaching importance to EO were mainly that it could ensure justice for individuals (77%), it would help promote Hong Kong's image (58%), it would help individuals' personal development (50%) and it was beneficial to Hong Kong's economic development (49%). 62% of them rated sex and disability as the major aspects they were concerned about.

A vast majority or 89% of the respondents said that they were very supportive or quite supportive of the work of the EOC (see Table 2).

The User Survey

The "user survey" showed that the majority of the respondents, who had participated in the EOC's training courses, seminars or activities, considered those activities very useful or useful. 90% of them said that their understanding of EO was enhanced.

Over 86% of respondents also agreed that they had benefited greatly from EOC's activities, including "raising the awareness of EO" and "strengthening the commitment to EO".

"The survey findings reveal that the community has confidence in our work as an agency to eliminate discrimination and promote equal opportunities. We shall continue to promote values that underpin equal opportunities, diversity, inclusion and respect for each other so that we can ensure fairness and social harmony for our community," concluded Mr. Raymond Tang, EOC Chairperson.

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Events Calendar

社區活動巡禮 EVENTS CALENDAR



9/2008

「社區齊心抗抑鬱」十周年開放日暨壁畫創作共融嘉年華
10th Anniversary Open Day, Mural Painting and Carnival

香港心理衛生會
Mental Health Association of Hong Kong
2772 0170, 2708 7134
<http://www.mhahk.org.hk/>



22 & 29/8/2008, 5 & 12/9/2008
新世代爸爸媽媽教室
Workshop for Parents

明愛粉嶺綜合家庭服務中心
Caritas Integrated Family Service Centre - Fan Ling
2669 2316
<http://family.caritas.org.hk/index.php>

30/8/2008

單親動力分享會
Sharing Session by Single Parents

明愛屯門綜合家庭服務中心
Caritas Integrated Family Service Centre - Tuen Mun
2466 8622
<http://family.caritas.org.hk/index.php>



6, 13 & 20/9/2008

對抗抑鬱認知治療工作坊
Against Depression
Workshop

香港心理衛生會
Mental Health Association of Hong Kong
2668 2332 <http://www.mhahk.org.hk/>



24/8/2008

聽障人士燒烤樂
BBQ Day for Persons with
Hearing Impairment

香港聾人福利促進會
The Hong Kong Society
for the Deaf
<http://www.deaf.org.hk/>



16/9/2008

「人生路不熟」
新來港人士簡介會
Briefing Session for
the New Arrivals

聖雅各福群會 St. James Settlement
2835 4342 <http://www.sjs.org.hk/>



- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Around the World

Japan

Wasabi Fire Alarm



Japan has developed a smoke detector for people with hearing impairment that is based on the pungent smell of Japan's spicy green horseradish, a condiment more typically found tucked under fish in a piece of sushi. If it detects smoke, the alarm sprays out a synthesized wasabi smell that wakes up people.

The Wasabi smoke detector was tested on 14 people, including four deaf people. Except for one person with a blocked nose, all woke up within two minutes of the smell reaching them.

Information source:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/lifestyleMolt/idUST29421020080318>

Mexico

Women-only Bus Service in Mexico

Mexico City has started a women-only bus service to protect female passengers from groping and verbal abuse common on its packed public transportation system.

Millions of people cram into subway trains and buses in the Mexican capital, and women have long complained of abuse from men taking advantage of overcrowding to sneak in an inappropriate grab. The special buses pull up at ordinary stops but have large pink "women only" signs on the front and side. The first three subway cars are already reserved for women and children, and this is the first time the model has been tried in buses.



Information source:

<http://www.ihf.com/articles/reuters/2008/01/22/america/OUKWD-UK-MEXICO-BUSES.php>

England

Record Level of Women Recruits for the Police

Lancashire police force says it is the first in England and Wales to take on equal numbers of female and male recruits. Out of the 182 new recruits appointed this year, 91 are women and 91 are men.



Louise Miller, the force's recruitment and selection manager, said the numbers are "unprecedented". She added that Lancashire police has a gender equality scheme which aims to support both sexes in achieving their full potential. Chief Superintendent Irene Curtis, Chairwoman of the force's Women's Network, said the result is "a great step forward", and "an example of how the constabulary is committed to promoting gender equality".

Information source:

Malaysia

Lifestyle Magazine for Persons with Disabilities

Malaysia's first and only magazine tailor-made for persons with disabilities (PWD) has been launched recently.

"Challenges" founder and editor Mary Chen said the magazine aims to promote public awareness and connect all parties involved in disability. She added that being disabled themselves, the magazine's writers would provide the public with first-person insight into how people with disabilities find solutions to living a more independent life. "Challenges" also provide people with disabilities a career choice in journalism and print production.



Information source:

<http://thestar.com.my/metro/story.asp?file=/2008/4/11/central/20887111 &sec=central>

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)

Cover



Cover:

"The Broccoli Tree" symbolizes persons with mucopolysaccharidoses (MPS) who, despite their short stature, are life fighters. Like everyone else, they could contribute to the society if given equal opportunities. The mucopolysaccharidoses are a group of inherited diseases causing cellular damage that affects appearance, physical abilities and mental development. (Designed by Mr. Gideon Lai, photo source: new book "Love Letters from Little Beans, Please Reply")

I'm only Three Feet Tall — Eric Ma, 14, MPS VI

"It's alright!" "It's alright!" This is my pet phrase. People always stare at me in the street. Once, a kid tried to roar at me like a tiger. Sometimes other children make faces at me. I can never get used to these but then it is no big deal. "It's alright!"

I have never thought about wearing special high-heels. I have never thought about doing jumping exercises to make myself taller. It does not matter how tall I am, because I already have a lot. I am happy every minute of my life as I breathe freely every day.



Johnny Yeung (left), 14, MPS VI and his younger sister Annie Yeung, 11 (right), also has MPS VI

Book Title: "Little Giants, Dreams of Braving MPS"

(<http://www.hk-mps.com>)

Information and photo courtesy of Bbluesky and Hong Kong Mucopolysaccharidoses & Rare Genetic Diseases Mutual Aid Group

- [Subscription Form \(PDF\)](#)
- [Content Page](#)
- [Top](#)