

FEATURE STORY

## A Mission from the Heart



A group of dedicated teachers

Students often complain that the path of learning is tough, but for an educationalist who is dedicated to inclusive education, the path of teaching is not that easy either. She's been devoted to this path for almost 40 years and has gained in wisdom as a result of her experiences with her students. She has seen how her students, faced with physical disability, never give up and are never deterred by failure. She understands better than most how, in comparison, our everyday difficulties are indeed insignificant. 'I have been more on the giving end than the receiving end of educational benefits,' says she. She is Ms. Maria Wong Yuen Bing, former school principal of the John F. Kennedy Centre, established by the Hong Kong Red Cross.



### Ms. Maria Wong's

whole career was with the John F. Kennedy Centre, spanning a memorable 40 years.

### Developing Potential

Maria's whole career has been with the John F. Kennedy Centre, starting out as a teacher and ending up as the principal. Along the way her experiences and insights helped shape her values. 'Our Centre's motto is "With Freedom and Willingness to Serve". We believe that even if a person is disabled, he/she has the same dignity as everyone else, and deserves to receive equal opportunities in education, so that he/she can live an independent life.'



**With the help of aids and equipment, students can learn more effectively.**



**Students are using 'alternative and supportive tools' to communicate with others.**

### **Respecting Life**

Maria says that knowledge can be gained through reading, but character and conduct have to be built through action. That's why, the Centre provides opportunities for students to experience life in a variety of situations which help them develop a positive attitude towards their own disability. 'The students help me see that "gratitude" is the most amazing driving force in life. They see how their families and teachers are trying so hard to help them; in response, they work very hard as a way of thanking these people for their support,' says Maria. At the same time, however, Maria reminds parents and teachers not to do everything for the students as this would deprive the students of the chance to overcome obstacles by themselves.

The Centre aims to provide a holistic approach, which embraces the moral, intellectual, physical, social and aesthetic aspects of education. Maria points out that the importance of developing an aesthetic sense should not be overlooked. She encourages students with disabilities to ensure that they are neat and tidy, to show a dignified beauty and not to give up on their appearance. At her farewell party, Maria urged students to make further progress along the line of 'not to abandon oneself', and encouraged them to fight for opportunities that should be made available to everyone; though each would develop in different ways. She said, 'One shouldn't impose limits on oneself.'



**'I Love Pineapple Buns' is a musical performed for the 40th anniversary of the John F. Kennedy Centre. It had a re-run this August due to popular demand.**

### **The Macau Trip, and 'I Love Pineapple Buns'**

Outside the classroom, Maria devised a variety of activities to train the students' lateral thinking, and improve their life skills and teamwork. She says, 'With enough incentive, people can overcome all sorts of obstacles. One example was when the school sponsored a trip to Macau. Everyone was very excited. But the school requested that the students design their own itinerary, and work out the transport logistics between all the sightseeing spots. The students were full of ideas, but they discovered, when they tried to implement the plan, that they were faced with some unforeseen challenges, which they had to address and find solutions for, one by one. Alternatively they had to adapt the plan.' Although, in the end, the itinerary was simplified, the whole process was a happy one. What's most important is that they came to understand that things are easier said than done, and that a lot of coordination and arrangement is necessary behind each planned event. Through this exercise, they've learnt to treasure everything more.

Another school activity which Maria is delighted to recount is the musical performance 'I Love Pineapple Buns', which was put on to celebrate the Centre's 40th anniversary. The show was the first musical ever performed in public by persons with disabilities. Due to popular demand, the show had a second run in August. 'The main character in the play has super power,' says Ms Wong. 'Witnessing a group of students with disabilities memorising the lyrics, the dialogue, the plotting and dance steps, I think everyone has super power. At the end of the performance, the staff on stage and backstage, and even the audience were all in tears.'



**The Centre encourages students to participate in a broad range of physical activities, and develop their potential through competition.**

### **Retired But Not Out of Work**

There was good news in August this year, when Lau Siu Fung of John F. Kennedy Centre gained three distinctions in his HKCEE. Whenever students attain good grades, or when they've found a job, Ms Wong feels particularly pleased. Ms Wong has retired, but she continues to be very concerned about her students. She's most indignant about the transport arrangements for cross-border students with special needs, that they have been given a late timeslot for crossing the border. She says, 'Students with special needs require more time to study, so priority should be given for them to cross the border earlier. This would show understanding and respect for students with disability.'

Apart from fighting for the students' rights, Ms Wong is keen to use her nearly 40 years' experience in special education as the basis for a research project so that she can share her insights with colleagues more systematically. She hopes that by doing this, professional knowledge and the spirit of equality and love for all will be spread and carried forward well into the future.



A broad spectrum of learning experiences



Established in 1967, the John F. Kennedy Centre is a government subsidised special school under the Hong Kong Red Cross . With 18 classes, it is the only special school in Hong Kong that provides education from junior primary to matriculation level. It provides education, rehabilitation and boarding services for students with disabilities, ranging from six to twenty years of age.

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# Public Consultation on the Code of Practice on Employment under the Race Discrimination Ordinance

## Public Consultation on the Code of Practice on Employment under the Race Discrimination Ordinance

The Code of Practice on Employment (the Code) under the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO) has been published for public consultation. The public consultation period will last for eight weeks from 13 October to 8 December 2008. The majority of complaints received by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) under the other anti-discrimination legislation currently in force were employment related. The Code aims to explain how the RDO protects people from racial discrimination in employment-related matters. The EOC believes that fair employment opportunity available to ethnic minorities is essential to their integration into the wider society.

The Race Discrimination Ordinance, enacted in July 2008, makes it unlawful for anyone to discriminate against person on the ground of his or her 'race' in the areas of employment, education, the provision of goods and services and the disposal and management of premises. This is the fourth anti-discrimination ordinances in Hong Kong. The EOC will take up the additional responsibility in administering the new law.



Copies of the Code are available at the Public Enquiry Service Centres of the Home Affairs Department, the EOC office, and on the EOC website.

### Join with Us to Build an Inclusive Society

You are welcome to provide your views in writing to the Equal Opportunities Commission by **8 December 2008**

### [Public Consultation Meetings on Code of Practice on Employment under the Race Discrimination Ordinance](#)

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### Preventing Sex Discrimination in Pay



Human resources professionals have participated in a forum organized by the EOC to discuss the benefits and effective measures in implementing equal pay for work of equal value (EPEV). The EOC is preparing a set of guidelines, which will incorporate the valuable contributions of the participants at the forum, to help employers to ensure that their pay practices are free of sex bias. Implementing EPEV also helps prevent unlawful pay practices under other anti-discrimination ordinances.



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## The Inclusion Solution Series: A Simple Sign Will Do

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Signs are one of the last details to go on buildings and often an overlooked element in building design. Yet when they are installed appropriately, they can be the most helpful facility for visitors especially those with disabilities. A sign needs not be expensive to be useful. A simple tactile sign – (see photo) a raised profile of a female icon in red colour contrasting with the grey background, is very helpful to individuals with visual impairment to distinguish between male and female lavatories, and to avoid potential embarrassment of going into the wrong place.

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### EO CLUB CORNER

#### Experiencing EO – Field Visits

A half-day visit was arranged for EO Club members and guests a few months ago to two local social enterprises (SEs) for enhancing their understanding of SEs as well as experiencing equal opportunities.

This is one of the EO Club's initiatives to promote corporate social responsibility (CSR), which has flourished as a major corporate trend in recent years. Nowadays, more and more private firms and professional organizations are committed to the concept of CSR. Showing support to SEs, which are established to achieve social objectives and equal employment opportunities, is an effective way to demonstrate commitment to CSR. The field visits therefore served as the starting point for our members to get in touch with SEs and explore how they can support SEs.

##### YMCA of Hong Kong (Cheung Sha Wan Centre) - Community Shop

YMCA of Hong Kong (Cheung Sha Wan Centre) has set up a project namely "Multi-cultural Enrichment and Exchange Network" to provide services for ethnic minorities. Nepalese, Pakistanis and new women arrivals from the mainland work as "trainees" in the Shop. Apart from producing handicrafts, they also work on shifts as salespersons from Monday to Saturday.

The Community Shop selling handmade products, garments and small ornaments is jointly operated by South Asian women and new arrivals from the mainland – an effective way to promote racial harmony and community economic development.



According to Ms LAW Lap-man, the responsible officer of the project, the Shop faces a number of difficulties in operation. For example, all trainees and instructors involved in the project lack in-depth experience of doing business. Training on sales skills is also urgently required for trainees of the Shop. Collaboration and assistance from the private sector is being sought to boost up sales volume and achieve sustainable development of the shop.



EOC Member Ms Carmen Chan thanks Ms Law Lapman of the YMCA for her clear explanation of the employment situation and livelihood of South Asian women in Hong Kong.

##### New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (NLPRA)

Our second destination was the headquarters of the New Life Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association (NLPRA) at Shamshuipo. The NGO, which set up its first SE in 1994, has up to now developed 19 diversified and comprehensive SEs, providing work and training opportunities for people with a history of mental illness. Their SEs include retail shops selling organic food, an eco-tourism farm, a souvenir shop, restaurants, a coffee shop, convenience stores, a fruit store, a vegetable store, a light refreshment kiosk, a cleansing service company as well as a property management service company.



Occupational therapist of NLPRA explains how to develop the necessary work skills for the trainees with a history of mental illness.



During the tour, we visited NLPRA's sheltered workshop and long stay care home for persons with a history of mental illness. All trainees in the workshop concentrated on their work and all visitors were amazed at their beautiful handicrafts, such as mosaic paintings, photo frames, mini fridge magnets, handbags and etc.



Visitors are impressed by the handicrafts and art works created by persons with a history of mental illness during the visit to NLPRA's sheltered workshop.



Afterwards, we visited the New Life Fast Food Restaurant at Shek Kip Mei Park Sports Centre, and were deeply impressed by the catering service provided by persons with a history of mental illness.

#### On reflection ...

Through the field visits to SEs, all participants agreed that their understanding on the missions and operation of SEs was greatly enhanced. The way in supporting SEs can be various, including consuming SEs' services and products as well as sharing business experience and knowledge. It is worthwhile for all of us to explore possible cooperation with them, as well as bringing the concept of equal opportunities to staff and clients.

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## **Application of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Extended to Hong Kong SAR**

### **Application of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Extended to Hong Kong SAR**

The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) welcomes the application of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) following the Convention coming into force for China on 31 August 2008. It shows the government's reaffirmation of its commitment to protect and promote the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities.

In Hong Kong, the number of people having some kind of disability is expected to increase with the ageing of the population. It is important for our society to put universal access and inclusion for people with disabilities into practice ---- whether it is a matter of being able to fully use and access housing, public transport, buildings or just basic services.

"In Hong Kong, the Disability Discrimination Ordinance provides equality and non-discrimination protection for persons with disabilities. We must strive to remove barriers to physical and information access, ensure equal opportunity in employment and education, as well as provision of goods and services," said EOC Chairperson Mr. Raymond TANG.

In fulfilling the obligations of the Convention, Mr. TANG urged the government to undertake all necessary measures to ensure equality of rights to persons with disabilities. He pointed out that an important strategy for achieving the goal was mainstreaming the needs of the disability community at policy level.

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### DISABILITY DISCRIMINATION CASE

#### Discrimination in Insurance



Discrimination in insurance is one of the most complicated areas of the disability law. To promote better understanding of the relevant provisions of the Disability Discrimination Ordinance and for illustrative purpose, we have come up with this hypothetical case.

##### The complaint

Simon was a senior managerial employee in a multi-national trading firm. As his remuneration package included insurance benefits, he was approached by an agent of an insurance group (the group). The agent had prepared a basic life plan as well as a protection plan covering hospitalization and critical illness for Simon's consideration. One week later, Simon decided to join the scheme. In filling out the application form for insurance coverage, he revealed that he had developed a syndrome related to immune system disorder about 10 years ago. Upon the request by the group, Simon underwent a medical examination, during which he had also disclosed his health condition. Finally, the group demanded Simon for extra premium for his basic life insurance while his application for additional protection was rejected.

Simon felt that the decision of the insurance group to increase the premium and reject his application for additional protection was discriminatory due to his disability. He added that his disease would not shorten his life expectancy.

##### Points to consider

1. Simon had discovered his syndrome for more than 10 years. During this period, another insurance company did offer him a protection plan for the coverage of hospitalization and major diseases even after he had disclosed his medical condition. This suggests that offering additional protection to Simon may not impose unjustifiable hardship in terms of general insurance principles.
2. Medical information showed that Simon's case was a mild and benign one. He had skin irritations only and no other symptoms.
3. The insurance group explained that the operation of risk assessment in insurance industry was through a worldwide collection of relevant data, and that risk was to be shared out globally by different groups. However, medical information of the syndrome indicates that risk levels differ by localities so that it may be reasonable to assess by local population and share risk within local population rather than globally.

##### What the law says

Under the Disability Discrimination Ordinance, it may constitute direct discrimination if an insurance company provides a less favourable term to a person on the ground of his/her disability. The antidiscrimination law recognizes that the insurance practice necessarily involves the classification of risks and that premiums and policies are tailored to reflect such risks. The law permits differential treatment based on actuarial, statistical or other data. However, the data should be reasonable in itself, and upon which it is reasonable to rely.

In this case, the insurance group may have discriminated against Simon for increasing the premium for his basic life plan and refusing his application for additional protection if the group cannot show that the decision was based on actuarial or other data from a source that was reasonable for it to rely upon.



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### On-line Training Module on Sexual Harassment for Tertiary Institutions



The Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) has launched the Hong Kong's first on-line self-learning training module on sexual harassment since August 2007. Local tertiary institutions have been supportive of this initiative, and over 3,500 university students completed or used the self-learning training package during the last school year.

The interactive on-line course aims to raise students' awareness about behavior that may constitute unlawful act under the Sex Discrimination Ordinance (SDO) in school setting. It was developed partly in response to the issue of sexual harassment at orientation events involving new university students, where they were coerced to chant sexually charged slogans.

The module explains the definition and various types of sexual harassment, the liabilities of individuals and educational institutions. A certificate is awarded to those who have passed the final test of the training module which consists of scenario type questions.

In the new school year, the EOC continues to join hands with Hong Kong tertiary institutes to promote the interactive on-line course to their students with posters and bookmarks. A 1-GB USB memory stick will be awarded to students who have successfully completed the training module, while stock lasts.

The EOC has been organizing workshops on preventing sexual harassment for university students who are responsible for planning orientation camps for newcomers. The workshops help to promote a deeper understanding of the issues of gender equality within the university environment, preventing further incidents of sexual harassment. Under the SDO, sexual harassment refers to any unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature, which a reasonable person regards as offensive, humiliating or intimidating.

For details of the on-line training module, please visit the EOC's website: <http://www.eoc.org.hk:8080/shoncampus>



### Amendment to the SDO



Slogans and posters with sexual contents create a sexually hostile environment on campus. Before the amendment of the SDO, a sexually hostile environment in relation to the workplace is unlawful but there was no legal provision outlawing sexually hostile environment at an educational establishment. The EOC therefore recommended to the Government to amend the Sex Discrimination Ordinance. Effective from 3 October 2008, the sexually hostile environment concept also applies to school settings, meaning that conduct of a sexual nature which creates a hostile or intimidating environment is unlawful.



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## Around the World

### USA

#### Breast-feeding Made Easier at Work



In Indiana, USA, new mothers returning to work might find it easier to keep breast-feeding after July 1, 2008, when a new state law took effect. The law requires employers to provide a private place for women who are breast-feeding to pump milk and have a cold place to store it. The new measure means better health for the infant and mother and savings for companies because of lower employee turnover and absenteeism.

Current recommendations call for women to breast-feed for the first six months of a child's life but statistics show that many mothers stop after three months, just about the time they return to work. With the enactment of this law, new working mothers could continue to breast-feed their infants.

Information source:

<http://www.wfi.com/Global/story.asp?S=8584071>

### Pakistan

#### Cricketers with Physical Disabilities Strive for Recognition

Salim Karim's right leg was seriously injured in a motorbike accident in his teens and now he can only barely walk. In recent years, he has set up a team for persons with physical disabilities and now he runs the pioneering Disabled Cricket Association of Pakistan.

"I started this team with a vision to enable all persons with physical disabilities realize that they can live a life without any worries and I am happy that the cause has been served," said Karim. The team has also played an important role in promoting equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in the country.



Information source:

[www.taipeitimes.com/News/sport/archives/2008/05/22/2003412552](http://www.taipeitimes.com/News/sport/archives/2008/05/22/2003412552)

### England

#### Record Level of Women Magistrates' Mentorship Scheme for Ethnic Minorities Gets Underway



London-based Operation Black Vote has been running the "Magistrates' Mentorship Scheme" for a few years, with an aim to encourage people from ethnic minority communities to have a closer examination of the roles and responsibilities of a magistrate. The trainees could observe court proceedings when the magistrates are deliberating, and a mentor will explain what is going on and how the decisions are made. The long term goal is to attract more qualified persons from a wider diversity to serve as magistrates. The scheme also allows the magistrates to learn about different nuances in different cultures.

Information source:

## USA

### New Software to Aid the Visually Impaired Access the Web

US-based Lighthouse International, an agency advocating accessibility for people with low vision, recently unveiled an innovative add-on software that will enable millions of people worldwide with low vision to access previously inaccessible web pages.

The first programme of its kind, Low Browse allows the users to create their own preferences for font, text size, colour contrast, and letter spacing. The configuration remains intact for all web pages. The programme will be available for free download soon.



Information source:

<http://www.lighthouse.org/aboutus/press/press-releases/lowbrowse>

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### 社區活動巡禮 EVENTS CALENDAR



**3/11/2008 – 15/12/2008**

「圓滿奧運精神 愛與夢想同行」  
徵文及劇本創作比賽

Script Writing and Essay Writing  
Competitions

香港盲人輔導會

The Hong Kong Society for the Blind  
2994 9655

<http://www.hksb.org.hk/Chinese/competition.html>



**1/12/2008**

「總有出路」精神健康教育講座

Talk on Mental Health Education

威爾斯親王醫院 — 社會福利署精神科醫務社工部  
Prince of Wales Hospital – Medical Social Services Unit  
(Psychiatric Unit), the Social Welfare Department  
2327 0493



**2008年年底 End of 2008**

「萬耳長城」照片收集活動及展覽

“Caring for Persons with  
Hearing Impairment” Photo Exhibition

香港聾人福利促進會

The Hong Kong Society for the Deaf  
2711 1974

<http://www.deaf.org.hk/ears/>



**全年活動**

**Year-round Programme**

多元文化足印 - 認識南亞裔文化工作坊

Workshops on Understanding

South Asian Cultures

香港基督教服務處

Hong Kong Christian Service  
3188 2525

<http://www.hkcs.org/gcb/psasa/footprints.htm>



**5-22/11/2008**

香港首個(第一屆)領養節

Hong Kong's 1st Adoption

Festival

母親的抉擇

Mother's Choice

2537 7633

<http://www.motherschoice.org>



**12/2008- 9/2009**

第二屆半邊天-青年領袖百萬培訓計劃

The 2nd Youth Leadership Million

Dollars Training Programme

香港各界婦女聯合協進會

Hong Kong Federation of Women  
2833 6131

<http://www.hkfw.org/chilyouth.html>



**11/2008- 2/2009**

「全港第六屆手語歌比賽」

The 6th Hong Kong Sign Singing Contest

香港中華基督教青年會聯青聾人中心

Y's Men's Centre for the Deaf,  
Chinese YMCA of Hong Kong

2717 1754

<http://www.ymca.org.hk/ymd>

### Wisegiving 惠施網

知多一點 做聰明智捐款人 Informed Donors Make Wise Choices

Wisegiving mug for donors  
贈予捐款人的惠施紀念杯



惠施網由香港社會服務聯會啟動，旨在提高本港慈善機構的透明度，包括機構管治及財務資料。網站亦會介紹各項社會需要，及公眾人士如何支持有關慈善項目。

Wisegiving, launched by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS), aims to enhance public understanding on the work, governance and financial status of charitable organizations in Hong Kong. The website also highlights different social needs and suggests ways to address these needs.

詳情 Details: [www.wisegiving.org.hk](http://www.wisegiving.org.hk)



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