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Fake fur may cause pollution and other problems **P12**

Customers find it hard to change payment habits
Can Alipay be a mainstream payment method? **P14**

Flying winemaker lands in Hong Kong
Making Hong Kong wine with foreign grapes **P18**

THE YOUNG REPORTER *magazine*

April 2015

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Previous issue explores how Hong Kong's aviation industry stays unaffected despite the increasing number of flight accidents.

Letter from the Editor

THE YOUNG REPORTER magazine

In the April issue we run an investigative feature on the misuse of medical vouchers provided by the government for the elderly. Six years into its launch, we take our readers to look at the loopholes of this policy of good intention.

As we reach to our pockets, we may no longer find a wallet. Digital money and smartphones are becoming a trend of payment as e-wallets like Alipay emerge. The hassle of counting and carrying heavy coins may soon come to an end.

We are possibly looking a bit too far for a good bottle of wine. Hong Kong is joining the club of wine production. We visit a local winery that produce made-in-Hong Kong wine with imported grapes.

An environmentalist says that faux fur may reduce animal cruelty, but not pollution. Customers may be buying cheap animal fur while thinking that they are doing no harm to the environment. There are more problems when it comes to disposal of these products.

Last but not least, we bring you to the scene of the 40th Hong Kong Rugby Sevens to make sure you do not miss out on a colourful weekend of sports and entertainment.

The new editorial team is starting off with our first issue and we always welcome any feedback letters or emails as well as your opinion on issues of your concern. Letters and messages will be published in May issue.

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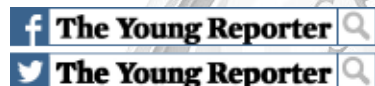
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Jamie Kan, student of Hong Kong Baptist University

Obituary

April started with heavy hearts on the campus of Hong Kong Baptist University for the loss of Ms Jamie Kan, a talented writer, a fellow passionate publisher and a schoolmate, in a tragic car accident that happened near campus. The team is terribly sorry for Ms Kan's family and wishes them peace in this difficult time.

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40 LONG SEVENS



One Moment

The Hong Kong Rugby Sevens attracts 120,000 sport fanatics gathering at the Hong Kong Stadium from March 27-29. This year is the 40th Anniversary of the tournament, the flamboyant and coordinated costumes, beers and cheers at the south stand form a stirring backdrop for the pitch where 15 countries competing furiously for shield, bowl, plate and cup.

By **Christy Leung**





Elderly abuse health care vouchers

Without effective monitoring, elderly possessing extra health care vouchers can easily exchange them for superfluous products.

醫療券

Health Care Voucher

香港特別行政區政府

**The Government of
the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region**

At the end of the year, 75-year-old Mr Wong was wondering how to spend the \$2,000 health-care vouchers he had. Instead of medicine, he decided to get soup ingredients and health supplements.

Entitled to free medical treatment, the retired civil servant's health vouchers are redundant, but he still receives them every year under the Health Care Voucher Scheme.

"I once spent over a thousand dollars' worth of my vouchers on some supplements," said Mr Wong, who declined to give his full name.

Although health care voucher recipients are forbidden to purchase food products and health supplements with their extra vouchers, many elderly have managed to do so in the absence of government

supervision. Such voucher abuse is especially common in Chinese medicine clinics.

Launched in 2009, the Elderly Health Care Voucher Scheme aims to supplement public health care services by providing financial incentive for elderly to choose private services. People aged 70 or above are eligible for the benefit. In 2014, the annual voucher amount was increased from \$1,000 to \$2,000. Vouchers are issued through the eHealth System.

According to the scheme's official website, health care vouchers cannot be used to buy medication, spectacles, dried seafood or medical equipment. But people who try can often succeed in obtaining a prescription for those banned items.

Mr Wong chose to ask his Chinese medicine doctor

“No one from the government ever checks,”

Dr Wong, a Chinese medicine practitioner who helped elderly exchange health care voucher for dried ingredients said.

for a prescription for health supplements. He then paid for the ingredients with the vouchers in his eHealth account.

Dr Wong, a Chinese medicine practitioner who does not want to be identified, said he had helped the elderly exchange health care vouchers for dried ingredients, often at the end of each year.

“They don’t want their subsidies wasted,” said Dr Wong, whose clinic is one of the health care service providers enrolled in the voucher scheme.

Dr Wong said most were retired civil servants like Mr Wong, who didn’t need to pay for their regular health care services. Others had saved vouchers because they rarely had the chance to use them.

Under the scheme, elderly cannot accumulate vouchers exceeding \$4,000. Meanwhile, vouchers cannot be redeemed for cash or transferred to another person.

Miss Ip Oi-in, executive officer of the Health Care Voucher Unit at the Department of Health, said if someone used a vouchers to purchase banned products, both the user and the service provider would have violated the terms of scheme.

She said the health care provider would not be reimbursed for the relevant claims, and serious violations might lead to termination of agreement. The elderly person could be asked to pay back the cost in cash.

Dr Wong said he knows what he does is wrong, but it is hard to reject the requests coming from regular patients. He has no fear of being punished.

“No one from the government ever checks,” Dr Wong said.

However, according to the Health Care Voucher Scheme’s interim report in 2011, the Department of Health has put forward a mechanism to ensure proper use of scheme funding. The mechanism includes routine checking, monitoring and investigation of aberrant patterns of transactions as well as investigation of complaints.

Secretary for Food and Health Dr Ko Wing-man said in June last year that if the supervision of the voucher scheme was too loose, the government would consider using administrative methods to contain abuse.

Dr Chan Hon-ye, Director of the Department of Health, said in a Legco hearing last December that government officials used to notify the doctors before checking the status of their clinics, but surprise inspections might be conducted in the future.

By **Jonathan Chan**
Edited by **Viola Zhou**

POLITICS

Can mainlanders run student bodies in Hong Kong?

Communist background obstacle for mainland students to join student union cabinets

Some mainland students in Hong Kong want to join student organisations to have their voices heard. But local classmates are worried they will create a more powerful pro-Beijing, pro-communist force on campus.

The involvement of mainland students could affect the image of student organisations because people link them with communism, said Mr Chan Sze-ho, president of the Student Union at Hong Kong Baptist University.

Mainland students say this discriminates against them. Local students hold prejudices towards mainland students. He said students should respect each other's value and have adequate communication, said Mr Chen Hegao, art editor of the Hong Kong Institute of Education Student Union Editorial Board who comes from Shanghai.

Some mainland students said they should not be compelled to reveal their political background. "It's my right to decide whether to disclose my political stance or not," Mr Chen said.

A mainland committee member of the Student Union at one of the Chinese University of Hong Kong's colleges, who asked to remain anonymous, said he couldn't reach a consensus on political issues with the local members, so the

cabinet chose to maintain neutrality on politically sensitive topics.

But Mr Chen said staying neutral could be problematic. He said although candidates should have the right not to proclaim their political stances during an election, they take the risk of losing student votes in doing so.

"It is not suitable to remain neutral on certain political matters," Mr Chan said. "It implies that you have a stance towards the issue but you are not willing to reveal it".

Mr Billy Fung Jing-en, president of the University of Hong Kong's Student Union, said it is essential to declare one's political stance in the election. He said that political stands by committee members affect the stand of the whole organisation.

Mr Fung said individual viewpoints are the decisive factor in deciding if that person could contribute to preserving student rights and fighting for a better future for Hong Kong.

But for mainland students, being outspoken in politics is not only a personal choice but also a safety issue.

A former mainland committee member of HKBU's Student Union, who also



Mr Chan Sze-ho, President of the Student Union at HKBU

asked to remain anonymous, said the central government monitors student unions in Hong Kong. He didn't participate in the Occupy Movement last year out of fear he would not be able to return to the mainland.

Debate over the mainland committee members' political stances was stimulated after a mainland student, Ms Eugenia Ye Lu-shan, the proposed social secretary of the HKU's Student Union, was identified as a former member of the Communist Youth League of China earlier this year.

Ms Ye, from Guangzhou, was criticised by HKU students and the public for her "red-dyed" background. She lost the election as people were worried she was here to propagate Beijing's ideology.



A protestors held up a sign saying he will fight until Hong Kong has genuine universal suffrage.

However, mainland students don't think such background can speak for their political views.

The HKBU committee member said most of his classmates in the mainland are Communist Youth League members.

"I would see this identity as an honour, just like the class monitor in Hong Kong, since students only with outstanding performance were asked to join," he said.

He said that although students vow to devote themselves to the Communist Party before joining the League, nobody puts it into practice towards the issue but you are not willing to reveal it".

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By **Phoebe Wong**
Edited by **Jennie Tang**

SOCIETY

Fake fur is not the solution

Faux-fur products may be made of fur from dogs, say green groups. The real artificial ones can cause pollutions.



Faux-fur products may be made of fur from cheaper animals. And the real artificial kind can cause chemical pollution.

Nearly identical in appearance and touch to real fur, faux fur seems a good alternative. But as the apparel

industry transitions to faux fur, experts warn that it may be creating other environmental problems.

First introduced in 1929, faux fur is typically made from polymeric fibres including nylon, acrylic, and polyester. The clothing is then

processed and dyed to match a specific fur texture and colour, according to the website “How Products Are Made.”

“I prefer faux fur to real fur as I sympathise with those animals being killed,” said Mr Cheung,

who declined to reveal his full name, assistant designer for the International Environmental Protection Association.

Mr Cheung said faux fur is easier to cut, sew and dye with more colour combinations. Unlike natural fur, it is strong and resilient and can resist heat, sunlight and smoke.

However, fake fur is not welcomed by everyone. Its material, which is derived from non-renewable

petroleum, faces criticism for its environmental impact.

“Faux fur is difficult to degrade,” said Ms Hidy Ng Kwan-kay, the design director at Co-Wear International Limited. “Due to its low price, consumers often dump their faux fur garment as soon as they are bored with it, which gives more pressure to the environment. But real fur is a durable and degradable material, and it can be re-styled into different pieces as fashion changes.”

Potential chemical pollution created in the production of faux fur is yet another environmental concern. Dr Hu Di, chemistry lecturer at Hong Kong Baptist University, said the solvent used in the dyeing process is often volatile.

Various chemicals are used in the manufacture of faux fur. Making synthetic fibres requires a mixture of polymers, which are made from raw materials derived from oil. The fabric is subsequently heated and added with other chemicals such as resins and silicones.

“If waste water discharged from dyeing is not properly processed, the industrial pigments will reach marine lives via rivers, and finally

enter human bodies, causing adverse health effects,” Dr Hu said.

While scientists express concern over environmental problems, animal activists worry that dishonest businessmen are selling fake faux fur.

Faux fur might not be entirely man-made, Dr Lian-hee Wee, animal activist.

“It is a marketing gimmick to sell you real fur but fake mink or fake fox. It is real fur from cat, dog, rabbit, and raccoon -- the four most commonly seen ones,” Dr Wee said.

An investigation by the Humane Society of the United States found some reputable stores there selling dog-fur garments labelled as faux fur.

Dr Wee said fur products aren't necessary at all. “It's a fashion statement that says: please dress in fur. Making it faux fur so that it does not hurt the animal, but it hurts the sense of humanity,” he said.

Despite the continuous appeal of animal rights activists and the steady supply of low-cost faux fur, Ma Wai-ming, the director of Walter Ma & Co. Ltd., said most of his customers in Hong Kong still prefer real fur.

“Real fur is much better than faux fur in terms of softness, breathability, warmth, and smoothness,” Ma said. “The difference between real and faux fur is similar to real hair and wigs.”

Ms Ng, a Hong Kong consumer who declined to be identified, said she has been fond of fur clothes since she was young.

“I only wear real fur,” she said. “I never consider buying faux fur as it feels uncomfortable.”



“It’s a fashion statement that says: please dress in fur. Making it faux fur so that it does not hurt the animal, but it hurts the sense of humanity,”

Dr Lian-hee Wee, an animal activist

By **Lindsay Long**
Edited by **Joanne Lee**

BUSINESS

Alipay needs more to enter Hong Kong market

Alipay may not replicate its dominant market position in e-commerce in China



Alipay users can pay their bill by scanning the bar code or the QR code.

Alipay, China's largest online payment system, offered a 50 per cent discount in select Hong Kong stores if customers paid using their mobile devices during the Chinese New Year. But the tactic did not ease concerns from locals over the Alipay system.

An affiliate of e-commerce giant Alibaba, Alipay has more than 650 million registered users and financial institution partnerships with companies such as Visa, MasterCard and Shanghai Commercial Bank.

However, Alipay is struggling to gain sizable market share in Hong Kong, despite its popularity in China.

Ms Fok Wing-san Wing San, 19, a student from Hong Kong Baptist University tried to use the New Year discount. But the system did not support a transaction

“Everyone is using it now, and it seems like that we cannot live without Alipay and TenPay, even when we buy takeaway,”

Ms Li Jiarun, an Alipay user

with her Hang Seng Bank credit card. Although more than ten banks support the current online payment service, none of them are local.

In this case, Ms Fok didn't get the discount. And this isn't the first time she's had difficulty using Alipay. She said she has

also run into problems with it on Taobao, China's largest online marketplace. Other locals also say they are unfamiliar with Alipay's payment procedures.

“Few Hong Kong people actually used Alipay during its promotion period,” Ms Sandy Ho, a sales clerk in the beauty and healthcare

E-wallets in the market

OCTOPUS CARD



Octopus cards are widely used in HK for daily transactions.

CREDIT CARD



Alipay purchase cards are more convenient and safer to use compare to credit cards, a user said.

ONLINE PAYMENT TOOLS



Other online payment tools are also investing into the international market at the same time.

store Sasa said. “People who showed interest in it were mostly mainlanders.”

Two of Alibaba’s major online marketplace platforms, Taobao and Tmall.com, introduced purchase cards in November in a venture with the convenience store 7-Eleven. The purchase cards allowed customers who opted not to pay with credit cards to top up their accounts and pay for their shopping online.

“Using the cards is safer and more convenient than credit cards,” said Ms Chak Ka Hing, a final year student majoring in Hotel and Tourism Management at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She shopped more on Taobao because of the cards.

More Hong Kong people are comfortable paying with Octopus

cards, Mr Cui Geng, the Associate Dean in the faculty of Business at Hong Kong Lingnan University, said.

In the mainland, Alipay is found in numerous cities in supermarkets, cinemas and even bakeries. Mr Cui said he is not optimistic about Alipay’s future in Hong Kong, even though mobile payment is a trend.

“Everyone is using it now, and it seems like that we cannot live without Alipay and TenPay, even when we buy takeaway,” Ms Li Jiarun, a second year student at Zhejiang University said.

Alipay is expanding to other countries, with current negotiations in Taiwan. And in February, Alibaba invested 1 billion in an investment fund for young startups in Hong Kong.

“This is not exciting for Jack Ma to invest here, because the market is too small,” Mr Zhang Xiaoquan, Associate Professor in the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology said. “For him, this is most likely just a small investment to complete his portfolio to reduce risk.”

Other payment platforms, such as Apple Pay and Google Wallet, also want to get in on the act.

“If Alipay can reduce the current barriers, Hong Kong e-commerce business can be more viable and considerable,” said Mr Zhang.



“Our ultimate purpose is to let our customers enjoy their cooking process,”

Mr Ka Ho
co-founder of ChiC Kitchen



BUSINESS

Have yourself a merry little kitchen

A new dining trend in Hong Kong has customers paying to make their own food

Hong Kong is full of people passionate about eating and cooking. Picking what to eat is never a problem in his gourmet paradise, but cooking like a pro requires a restaurant-style kitchen.

Private-party rental kitchens are popping up all over town to give space-constrained Hong Kongers the room and the facilities to cook, eat and socialize.

Some rental kitchens cater to customers who desire privacy and space to cook. Ms Calanthia Wong, owner of Rent-A-Kitchen, which offers a rental kitchen and home-styled party venue, said the idea of hiring a dream kitchen came to her when she felt a lack of privacy sharing a flat with her family.

"I believe a lot of Hong Kong people are good chefs and they enjoy sharing food and cooking experiences with friends too. We create a fantasy that you may rent," Ms Wong said.

Mr Ka Ho, one of the partners of ChiC

Kitchen, which offers cooking parties, said the inspiration for having a cooking studio came from his friends who loved cooking but found difficulties in finding a suitable place to cook in Hong Kong. They are now renting a 1,300 sq. foot flat in a factory building in Kwun Tong to use as a kitchen. The flat includes two rooms and a living room.

"Our ultimate purpose is to let our customers enjoy their cooking process or to taste high-quality cuisines at a cheaper price," he said.

Some Hong Kong rental kitchens try to make the space match the community. For example, Ms Wong said that Kwun Tong, which used to be one of the largest industrial areas in the city, has transformed into a modern hub for trendy products, restaurants and catering in recent years. She tries to reflect this transformation in her kitchen.

"I am trying to blend in a nostalgia of the past with a touch of modern simplistic

and minimalist design that flows with its neighbourhood," she said.

Other kitchens offer more than just do-it-yourself facilities. Mr Desmond Yeung, a representative from EasyChef Cooking Studio, said their business offers cooking classes and events, such as wine tasting.

"My boss also likes to invite his friends and people to come and taste Chinese tea. It is about cleansing soul and searching for your inner peace," said Mr Yeung.

Some rental kitchen also function as private restaurants for those that don't want to do all the cooking. They serve a variety of cuisine based on customer requests.

"Our chefs are professional, many of whom come from prestigious restaurants and five-star hotels," Mr Ho said. He said ChiC Kitchen recently hired a chef who used to serve the North Korean team during the 2009 East Asian Game. The chef was chosen mainly because of his eagerness to communicate with the customers and understand their needs.

"Every chef has his own attitude and style and we will not change that," he said.

Maintaining a good relationship with the customers is another key to success, owners said.

"Some customers thanked me for setting up such a venue and created special, romantic moments for their loved ones. I am so glad to know that I have helped them achieve their dreams," Ms Wong said. "The kitchen enables our customers to have their own intimacy in the busy everyday life in Hong Kong."

By **Sharon Tang**
Edited by **Annie Lau**





ARTS&CULTURE

Hong Kong's first urban winery slowly to invade market

Local winemaker sees beam of light in developing wine industry in Hong Kong

One of the oldest forms of transportation in Hong Kong, the wooden sampan has paddled its way through history. Now, Hong Kong's first urban winery is commemorating it by featuring the boat on its logo image.

"This is also a history lesson," says Mr Eddie McDougall, a local winemaker.

Urban wineries have been popping up in the United States, Canada, Australia and now in Hong Kong. "Hong Kong is always trying to find what is the next coolest thing," Mr McDougall says.

Graduating from the University of Melbourne in Wine Technology and Viticulture, the Hong Kong-born Australian already has over a decade of experiences in winemaking in wineries in Australia and Italy. He returned to his place of birth to accomplish the "crazy idea" of producing wine in Hong Kong in 2009.

He then founded the Flying Winemaker, a store that combines retailing and recommendation occasions. There will be a tour to Italy in the coming September, aims at visiting six vineyards within a week.

Mr McDougall is also a host of a 160 million viewed television programme named "The Flying Winemaker. In the programme, he travels around Asia and talks to various winemakers, looking into different surprising ways in making wine.

His ambitious does not stop here. Passionate in winemaking, he is now

serving as a winemaker in the 8th Estate Winery. The winery, located in Ap Lai Chau, doesn't grow its own grapes. Instead, it imports varieties from all over the world where it ferments the grapes and bottles the wine. "The most exciting thing is that you can make wine from any part of the world here," the winemaker says.

The technology of snap freezing, that is icing the grapes within minutes, makes it possible to transport the fruit in refrigerated shipping containers from Italy, Australia, France and the United States.

Upon the grapes' arrival at the winery, defrosting is started after weighing the following factors: the ambient temperature, whether the grapes are whole clusters or destemmed and the time schedule. "It could take anywhere between three to ten days."



“Understanding the part where the grapes are defrosting is critical, because they have to defrost the grapes at a consistent temperature,” he says. Mixing the grapes constantly and manually prohibits the grapes from fermenting inconsistently.

The urban winery produces around 50,000 bottles of white and red wine on average every year.

Winemaking has two fermentation processes. First, for red wine, the must of black grapes is fermented in open vessels, together with the grape skin and seeds. For white wine, only squeezed juice goes through the fermentation, the winemaker says. It takes ten-day to three-week to convert sugars into alcohol with yeast.

Afterwards, with the sediment filtered, the alcohol will be sealed into a tank or placed in a barrel for three or four weeks. Malo-lactic, the secondary fermentation, allows the bacterial process to soften the taste in a barrel. He says it generally takes 12 to 18 months to mature a wine.

“The bacteria can easily attack” Mr McDougall says, comparing the frozen grapes to a frozen steak being defrosted for cooking. If improperly handled, the entire stock of fruit can be lost.

“Producing local wine is a good business in Hong Kong,” says Mr Billy Lo, the facilities manager, but limited space hampers development.

“You cannot continue to produce more and more,” he says. “It takes a very long time to mature wines but the space is limited.”

While the secondary fermentation takes place, there is no space for a new batch of grapes to undergo the first fermentation.

Increasing rental costs makes finding more space a challenge, added Mr Lo.

With all wine duties removed in 2008, the Hong Kong has opened the door to wine trading, according to Hong Kong Trade Development Council. With a growth of 80 per cent, the total value of imported wine reached \$8.4 billion, mostly from France, the UK and Australia. France alone takes up 52 per cent of the total importation.

“Now Hong Kong people have more places, regions and tastes,” says Mr McDougall but he adds “more and more funky and interesting restaurants are starting to source their projects more locally.”

A restaurant owner, who “strongly believes in farm-to-table philosophy”, is supporting the local winery by adding them to the menu. But another restaurant says the wine’s sales “were slower than expected”.

“Customers don’t buy local wines at the first place,” Mr Lo says. “They preconceived that domestic products are inferior to imported wines.”

“[Local wines] are still very new,” says Mr McDougall. “People are still learning about it.”

“People should be proud of their local products and understand that Hong Kong is capable of making good quality of wines,” he says.

He says the whole philosophy of project is to engage more people and enjoy the experience.

“Drink wine and have fun,” Mr. McDougall says.

By **Sharon Shi**
Edited by **Christy Leung**



“The most exciting thing is that you can make wine from any part of the world here,”

**Mr Eddie McDougall
a local winemaker**

ARTS&CULTURE

Deaf films translate deaf culture to the hearing

Social inclusion needed, deaf say

Deaf films use subtitled sign language such as hand signs, body gestures, facial expressions and sound patterns—to translate actors' speech to deaf viewers.

But these films aren't just translating speech to the hearing impaired, they are also translating deaf culture to the hearing.

Deaf films are a platform for deaf people to voice and promote the concept of social inclusion to hearing people, said Mr Gary Wong Chun-man, the Vice Executive Director of the Hong Kong Association of the Deaf.

For example, deaf people do not like sitting at long tables as it is difficult to see each other's hand movements when doing sign language, Mr. Wong said. Instead, they rely heavily on visual expression such as body gestures.

"Deaf films can enhance the understanding of hearing people towards the deaf, so that they can better embrace and accept each other," said Mr Wong. The association treats the deaf as a community, he said, not just a medical condition.

"The Sign Name Game," a movie directed by a Japanese filmmaker Ms Mika Imai, showed at The Fifth Hong Kong International Deaf Film Festival in collaboration with the Hong Kong Association of the Deaf and the Hong Kong Arts Centre.

Sign language was forbidden in ancient Japan, forcing the deaf to speak, and the film depicts this history and its tragic consequences.

"We can see in Hong Kong, there are schools for the deaf still insisting on teaching them to speak, which is not easy for them at all. Using sign language to learn is easier for them," said Mr Wong.

Deaf films are not popular in Hong Kong, Mr Wong said. The festival, usually the only time deaf films are shown in theatres, aims to make deaf film mainstream.

Mr Terry Tsoi Kei-kwai, a deaf film director from Hong Kong, showed his film "Dream of the Deaf" at the Festival. As a child he lost after a high fever. Encouraged by his secondary school teacher, he has made two deaf films.

"I made the two films because I want to let the hearing audience know that we, deaf people, can also make a film by our efforts and talents, so please don't look down on us. And I also want to encourage other deaf people that if I can do it, they can also do it," said Mr Tsoi.

Mr Tsoi says he faced unique difficulties when making films. For example, when filming "Dream of the Deaf", the leading actor did not know sign language, so the crew had to teach him. Mr Tsoi also had to find funds himself, so the budget was small.



Mr Tsoi now also works in the Hong Kong Association of the Deaf

The government should improve social inclusion policies, Mr Stanley Ng Wing-kei, the Executive Director of the Hong Kong Rehabilitation Power said. "The government is not doing enough to help the disabled merge into society," said Mr Ng.

Mr. Ng said the government should give financial relief, such as tax rebates, to employers hiring the disabled.

"I was overjoyed when I talked with the directors from other regions and knew that they have their own deaf film societies for making deaf films. It makes funding and filming easier," Mr Tsoi said.

By **Kary Hsu**
Edited by **Thomas Chan**

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- 幫助中學生提升媒體解讀能力

對象：中六生或大專生
導師：註冊社工、教育工作者及資深籌委
訓練費用：\$170 (另須繳交\$30元社員費)

培訓營

日期：2015年7月 (待定)
內容：講解傳媒運作及活動策劃技巧
體驗帶領活動及團隊合作技巧

完成活動後總義工時數超過30小時的「媒人」可獲證書乙張

截止日期：2015年5月22日 (星期五)
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INTERNATIONAL

Saving the ocean with a tail

An environmental activist uses her tail to push forward ocean conservation



Katie Laczko lies prone on the Australian beach, her raven-black hair flying over her shoulders; her body gently washed by waves; her huge mermaid tail swinging and glistening in the sun. Children gather around her, screaming at this mysterious creature afraid to touch her.

“Hi, I am Aradia,” Laczko says, smiling. “I don’t bite.”

For the last three years, Laczko has dressed as a mermaid on Australian beaches to raise public awareness of ocean protection, including fighting problems such as coral bleaching, shark finning, fish decline, shark baiting, pollution and rubbish.

“It’s boring to have scientists talking to you about ocean protecting, but if a mermaid says something, you’ll listen because they are so unusual,” Laczko said.

Laczko said her mermaid love was activated by Hannah Fraser, a British mermaid model. When she started university, she found a like-minded friend and together they ordered monofins.

“It felt exactly how I imagined in dreams: the monofin made me feel like I was being propelled through the water. Even today I think there is nothing more amazing than holding my breath and

just swimming until my lungs burn and spasm,” Laczko said.

In 2010, Laczko and her friend Shelly Dunlop founded Mermaidens, an entertainment group that performs as mermaids at private events. Their Facebook site has more than 1,600 likes.

The mermaid name Aradia just came to her Laczko said. It was only after several months of using it that she found it is associated with the goddess of witchcraft and lunar deity.

“It all fits really well with the immense peace I feel swimming as a mermaid and the importance of using my skills to teach others how to appreciate and care for the oceans,” she said.

A certified scuba diver, Laczko said after witnessing the decline of fish species, pollution and garbage on her dives, she found it necessary to stand up for the ocean.

“Also, being a mermaid legitimises what I am saying because it’s my home. I’m talking about and I am a part of it,” Laczko said.

With adults she said she is more scientific in discussion the ocean’s problems, but with children she is “just trying to change the way they see the world”.

To do this, she translates her real adventures into mermaid stories. “Sharks aren’t scary,” she tells children. “When you’re unsure of something, the reaction is to poke it; a shark doesn’t have hands so it pokes it with its teeth.”

The Mermaidens acted as Australian Conservation Foundation’s ambassadors for its national marine resource reserve campaign, “for all the fish who can’t vote” in 2012. The campaign aimed at promoting Department of the Environment’s proposal to build up a reserve network in Commonwealth waters. They successfully gained support from Australian cities Mooloolaba, Brisbane and Cairns.

“I know I’ve had an impact on the lives of the people I talk to,” Laczko said, adding that a little girl she met years ago still writes to her every few months.

Her mermaid journey isn’t always fun. Some make fun of her or make rude comments and “generally people are just cruel” she said. On more than one occasion, she has been pursued by fetishists. “it’s never really been anything I wanted to be a part of,” she said.

Despite the frustrations, Laczko is grateful. “I have been very blessed by being a mermaid and I wouldn’t trade any of it for anything,” she said.

By **Catherine Chen**
Edited by **Jane Cheung**

主辦：
有骨戲

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《愛喪事家庭》《我要食老本》班底妙絕打造

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HEALTH&BEAUTY

Meditation fights insomnia

Suffering from insomnia or poor sleep quality? Meditation may be the solution

Many of us have experienced the struggle of sleepless night after sleepless night. A recent study says meditation may be the solution.

A health study published by medical journal JAMA Internal Medicine showed that meditation can improve sleep quality and relieve pressure-related symptoms.

Transcendental meditation is one of the most common types of meditation and involves the use of a mantra and sitting with eyes closed for fifteen to twenty minutes a day. Well known figures such as actress Ms. Emma Watson, who is a yoga and meditation instructor, and Ms Oprah Winfrey, who leads her employees in meditation twice a day, also practises transcendental meditation.

Meditation is about understanding how the mind works, said Ms Natalie Warn, a transcendental meditation teacher in Hong Kong who has been practicing for nearly 30 years.

“The outer part of our minds is always affected by external stimuli while the inner part fluctuates like ocean waves,” Ms Warn said. “Our bodies only get deep rest when our minds naturally go down to ground level.”

Meditation modulates our autonomous nervous system, a control system that unconsciously regulates heart rate, respiratory rate, and the digestive system, said Dr. Rainbow Tin-hung Ho, director of the Centre on Behavioural Health at the University of Hong Kong and who does stress-related research.

“Doing meditation hinders the release of stress hormones, producing a calming effect on our minds and helps us sleep better,” she said.

Meditation also enhances immune responses, influencing brain structure and gene expression, she said.

“I see the magic and the immediate effect of transcendental meditation on my students,” Ms Grace Yuhming Chow, a transcendental meditation teacher, said.

One of her students is a pilot who suffered from insomnia for years before he started transcendental meditation classes, she said. Sleep-monitoring machines can track sleep patterns, indicating how much rest a person actually gets.

“Doing meditation hinders the release of stress hormones, producing a calming effect on our minds and helps us sleep better,”

Ms Natalie Warn, a transcendental meditation teacher

“He used to get only an hour of deep rest before doing transcendental meditation, but he can now enjoy six hours of deep sleep,” Ms Chow said.

Ms Jessica Chan, a mindfulness meditation practitioner, another type of meditation, said she took courses from the Integrated Medicine Institute in Hong Kong. In class, participants lie down or sit in a comfortable position and focus on feeling their body, from head to toe.

“Mindfulness meditation improves the quality of sleep by developing in-the-moment awareness, which regulates emotions and makes sleep more restful,” she said.

By **Catherine Xu**
Edited by **Jane Cheung**



PEOPLE

Confession of a villain hitter chosen by God

The villain hitter loves her job that helps people get rid of bad luck

While most of the people think there is no worse job than to curse people for a living, Mrs Chiu Yin-siu says no.

“We don’t actually curse people. We are just trying to free the client from bad luck instead of casting spells on a specific victim,” Mrs Chiu said. Often known as “Auntie Chiu,” she quickly clarified and defended her job - villain hitting.

What she said seems to be true, as a woman crippled to sit down on the plastic stool in the middle of our interview, asking Auntie Chiu to get rid of the sore in her leg by “hitting” on a piece of man-shaped paper.

Surrounded by different gods’ statues, she sits on a six-inch tall plastic stool under

the Canal Road Bridge in Causeway Bay with a worn slipper in her hand from 11am to 7pm every day.

The practice of villain hitting, also known as Da Siu Yan, has taken place under the Canal Road Bridge for decades.

Auntie Chiu has been engaging in this traditional practice in the mainland since 32. She came to Hong Kong ten years ago and had once been a cleaner and security guard. She has also did some part-time villain hitting in her early days in Hong Kong. At the age of 65, she is a full-time villain hitter. “And I still love what I am doing,” Auntie Chiu added.

While it seems harsh for an elderly person to beat paper figures to tatters for eight hours a day for only \$50 per

service, Auntie Chiu sighed and said it is not the worst part. Situated in the centre of the busiest district where incense smoke mingled with the fumes from passing buses, the health of Auntie Chiu is actually at stake.

“This is in the middle of a main road, where vehicles pass by 24-7. The mixture of fumes and incense smoke is making my respiratory system worse. My throat started to sore few years ago too. But this is my job. I have no choice,” Auntie Chiu said in a low, husky voice.

When asked about why she chose this job in the first place, Auntie Chiu gave the most unexpected answer saying that was not her choice.

“The Bodhisattva selected us to bless the public and protect them from any misfortune that may occur.”

“Goddess’ seventh daughter, Zhinu, (the weaver girl from an old Chinese legend) suddenly appeared in front of me when I was farming as usual and asked if I am willing to enforce justice on behalf of the God,” said Mrs Chiu. She answered that she was just a farmer and did not have time for taking up the job. “Zhinu smiled at me and said ‘but it’s decided by God’ and flew away.”

Been thinking about Zhinu’s words, Mrs Chiu went to a temple one day and was asked by the temple attendant to join their gatherings more often. As time went by, she has learnt many traditions in the temple including the skills of villain hitting.

Maybe that is why Auntie Chiu does not worry that such a traditional practice will die out.

“There will not be a shortage of villain hitters in the future nor will villain hitting become a sunset industry, as the Bodhisattva will make the selection again when the time comes,” Auntie Chiu said sincerely with thankfulness to her “God”.

Yet, despite being a villain hitter, it seems that Auntie Chiu fails to beat her own ill fortune away. Married with 2 sons and three grandchildren, Auntie Chiu lives separately with her husband and sons. She is renting a subdivided flat in Wan Chai for HK\$3,000 a month while her husband and sons are living in a public housing estate in Kowloon Bay.

“Sometimes the fate decides everything. I will just keep helping those with bad luck and working for the God, who assigned me to where I am right now.”



PHOTO ESSAY

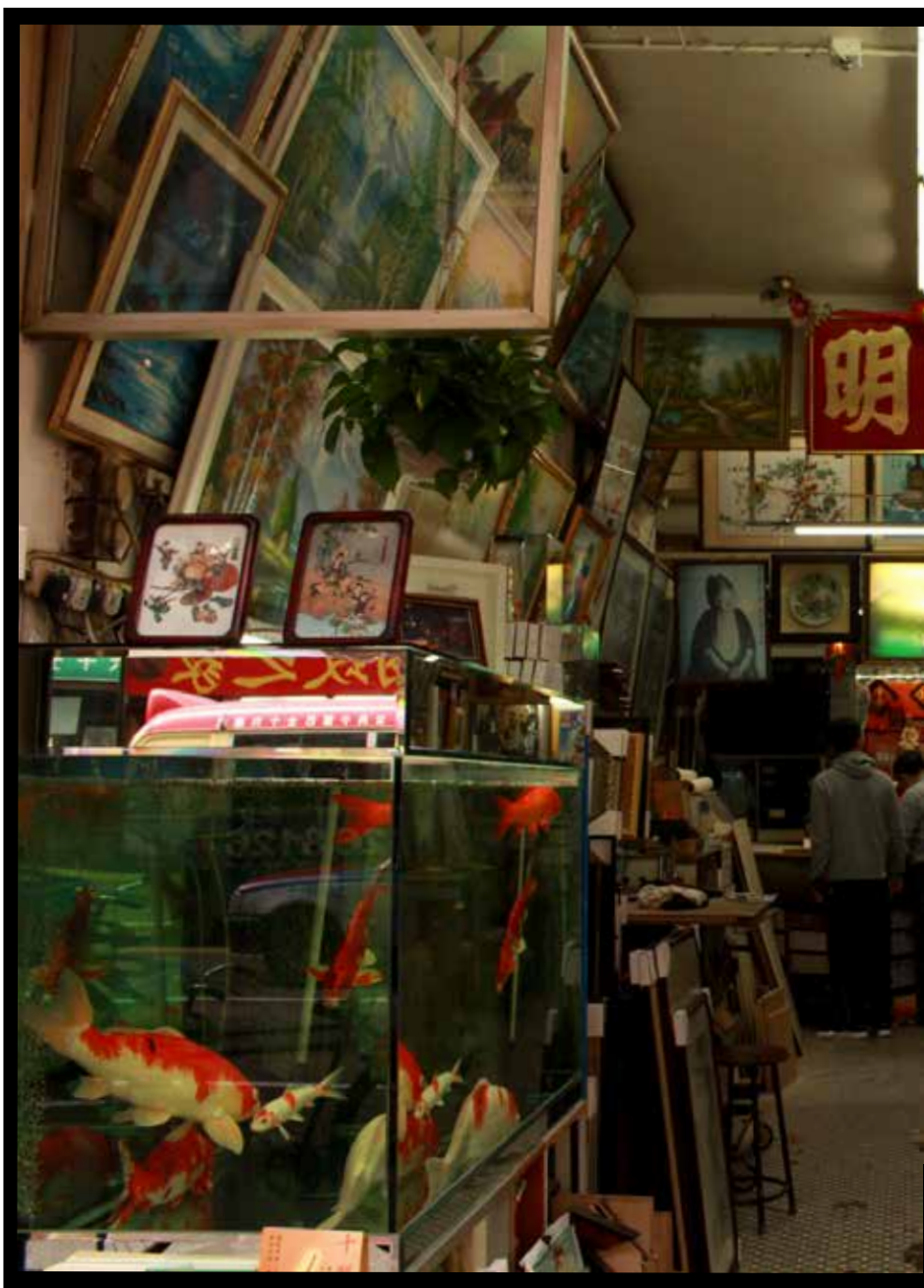
Surroundings stay, people change

Local frame maker describes the changes of the nearly-90-years business

Shanghai Street in Yau Ma Tei is self-sustaining. You can find whatever you want: food, furniture, massage and art. Near Jordan Road lies a little shop selling portrait frames, the space filled with machines, sample displays and a big fish tank.

Mr Chan Hon-hing, 65, the current owner of Kang Ming Picture Frame and Glass, has spent 57 years in the industry.

To make a picture frame, he familiarly and swiftly collects two pieces of wood from an untidy bunch, turns on the machine, aligns the pieces and suddenly they are bound by an arrow-shaped nail. The bearded craftsman said this is stronger than regular nails and the machine saves money and time.



Using machines can firmly binds two pieces of the wood together in a perfect right angle.



The black and white family photo (right) was sent to also displayed alongside.



Kang Ming was founded in 1927. Mr Chan, the third successor, recalls when he used to anticipate work as a result of typhoons and rainstorms. People nearby needed their broken windows fixed.

But now, with stronger aluminum window frames and a more distant coastline thanks to land reclamation, this market has disappeared. As has the practice of writing calligraphy couplets alongside the handmade frames.

“The service was eventually eliminated because we could not afford the salaries of the masters,” Mr Chan said.

Mr Chan says it is up to his children if they will carry on the business. He will keep on making frames as long as he still has the strength to do it.

“As for the future, I will deal with it when it arrives,” he said.

By **Thomas Chan**
Edited by **Kyle Sun**



transnational broker for auctioning; the coloured is



According to Mr Chan, using machines make the process more efficient.

Game of Sevens, fun for all

The Hong Kong Rugby Sevens hits 40 years of bringing Hong Kong entertainment alongside sports.



Team Fiji and New Zealand enters the stadium as the





the match-up of Hong Kong Sevens' Cup Final.

The British government may have left Hong Kong in 1997, but it left rugby behind.

One of the most colourful events in town, the Hong Kong Sevens marked its 40th anniversary this year.

It was a tough weekend for the Hong Kong team, which fought hard to qualify in the rugby sevens world series. Hong Kong Captain, Jamie Hood, said it would be a great season and beneficial for the upcoming Olympics if the team could win the Qualifiers and enter the World Series next year.

Hong Kong lost its first match against Brazil 17 – 12 but triumphed over Mexico 38 – 5 to enter the knockout stage. The team was at last brutally defeated by Russia 24 – 0 and had gone no further beyond the quarterfinals. In the World Series, Fiji beat New Zealand, cup winner last year, 33 – 19 in the final, bringing home the Cup and US\$100,000 (about \$780,000).

It is more than just watching men catching the egg. The Sevens is also well known for the beat, the beer, the Mexican wave and generally the carnival atmosphere around the stadium especially on the south stand where people from all across the globe dress up, cheer and dance.

By **The Young Reporter Team**



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