


Love is in the air





The power of love has been doing a power of good since the Li Ka Shing Foundation (LKSF) launched its “Love Ideas, Love HK” initiative just over a year ago. *Sphere* has been speaking to Round 1 participants whose funded projects are now completed, and to community service experts helping entrants turn great ideas into action.

WITH ITS GOAL OF ENCOURAGING compassion and improving the lives of Hong Kong people, the “Love Ideas, Love HK” campaign has struck a chord among local citizens looking for meaningful ways to make lasting contributions to their community. The scheme is part of LKSF’s HKD300 million (about USD38.5 million) interactive philanthropic campaign to engage local citizens in making a difference.

Making it easier is the fact that “Love Ideas, Love HK” is Internet based. Through the platform www.loveideas.hk, participants create projects and the public votes for those they would like to receive LKSF grants. Round 1 saw a flood of more than 1,000 proposals and participation from 74,000 voters who elected 177 projects they considered worth funding. In Round 2, with the introduction of voting by telephone, the number of voters for competing projects increased five-fold, to over 370,000. They elected 230 projects benefitting a wide cross-section of the community.

Round 1 projects received HKD28 million in total, and Round 2 projects were granted a further HKD36.75 million. They included caring for unattended teenagers by providing a pot of warm soup, sending stand-up comedians to entertain patients in hospital and support for those grieving the loss of a deceased pet. Also among the initiatives were the following two projects, one aimed at comforting underprivileged elderly citizens, and the other at preserving the distinctive culture of Hong Kong’s small businesses.

Faces to remember

It used to be common for families in Hong Kong to have a photo taken of their ageing loved ones, eventually to be displayed at their funeral and placed, in remembrance, in the family’s ancestral



Elderly citizens benefit from the “Last Photo” project, which gives them a free-of-charge portrait to leave for loved ones.

shrine. In recent times, however, as ownership of cameras increased, providers of this special service all but disappeared, along with the tradition.

That is, until Gabriel Yu, 23, and Benson Hung, 24, stepped into the picture, so to speak. After brainstorming how to help Hong Kong’s elderly citizens feel more cared for, they decided that leaving a beautiful last portrait for their families would be a meaningful gesture. The pair wanted to volunteer their time and skills for the project they called “Last Photo”.

The HKD25,000 they received from LKSF made all the difference to their plan. It enabled them to buy special equipment that otherwise would have been beyond their budget. “With the tsunami last March in Japan, the price of some new Japanese photo equipment we needed to purchase had radically increased,” explained Benson.

Already, they have been approached by two local nursing homes, interested in the possibility of Gabriel and Benson providing their free portrait service on a regular basis. But, so far, most of 300-plus individuals photographed have been visited at their homes. “Many elderly people are unable to go out of their homes on their own,” explained Gabriel. “We intentionally purchased portable equipment so that we are able to visit them in their homes and take their photo in the location that is most convenient and comfortable for them.”

Gabriel and Benson hope that their project will show other generations that young people do care about the well-being of the Hong Kong community. “As members of the generation born after the 1980s, we do not want other generations only to view us as radical, short-sighted individuals,” said Gabriel. “We want people to know that the post-1980s generation can be just as caring and forward-looking as any other group.”



Hong Kong's small businesses house a unique neighbourhood culture.

“We were inspired to find a way to help them preserve their businesses.”

Neighbourhood treasures

Volunteers Aki Ho Yuen-man and Leung Man-ching, social workers and founders of a community-based organisation called Life Workshop, are dedicated to preserving the unique neighbourhood culture housed in Hong Kong's small businesses.

The initiative stemmed from their concern that many small businesses in their area were on the brink of closure because of an influx of larger businesses and an overwhelming societal shift towards buying global brand-name goods.

“When we first spoke with small business owners in the Tai Kok Tsui district (of Kowloon), we found that they were having many difficulties keeping their businesses afloat,” said Aki. “We were inspired to find a way to help them preserve their businesses, broaden their networking capabilities with each other and raise awareness of their businesses, particularly among younger generations.”

Thus, Life Workshop, which originally focused on helping underprivileged individuals when it was established in 2004, evolved into a donation-driven initiative to support small businesses so they could keep alive their legacies as cultural treasures and community assets.

With the help of the HKD300,000 from LKSF, Aki and Man-ching, along with other social workers and some 100 youth volunteers, now regularly bring groups of young people to visit local storefronts. They also host bazaars showcasing small businesses and hold frequent sharing sessions for business owners to help them develop supportive local networks.

The “Love Ideas, Love HK” grant has enabled them to provide their services to more than 200 shops and to offer transportation that allowed more than 10,000 people to

participate in their events. They have also been able to expand the geographical area in which they operate.

“What we are really striving for is an overall balance between the development of small neighbourhood shops, the passing on of traditional trade skills and the ever-expanding big high-street brands,” Aki explained. “It is important to preserve and grow our unique community culture at the same time as the city grows and expands in other ways.”

Inspiring efforts

From conception to implementation, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) and St James' Settlement (SJS) have provided valuable assistance to both LKSF and to “Love Ideas, Love HK” project participants. Both share the Foundation's vision of encouraging truly selfless community service.

In the submission phase, they help entrants prepare and polish their project proposals. After winners are announced, they mentor participants by advising them on the implementation of their project and preparing them for difficulties they might face on the road to project success. Most recently, they tutored participants in carrying out impact assessments of their projects to ensure that the effects of the projects have been clearly articulated.

According to Josephine Lee, Senior Manager of Partnerships and Alliances for SJS, the most common area in which participants express a need for support is in the execution of their ideas. “We hope that by liberally sharing our experience and expertise with participants, they will be able to fully realise their projects' potential,” explained Ms Lee.

Both SJS and HKCSS have been moved by the creativity, determination and selflessness of all participants. “I have been deeply impressed by the student-run projects,” said Cliff Choi, Business Director (Sector Development and Partnerships) at HKCSS. “They have been fully in charge of their projects, from decision-making to implementation, and have handled this responsibility remarkably.” For Mr Choi, the willingness of students to help the community's underprivileged highlights the

younger generation's growing involvement in society. "It is a lesson to all ages," he added.

Ms Lee said it was wonderful that "Love Ideas, Love HK" supported individuals as well as larger organisations. "There are so many enthusiastic individuals in our community who simply need a little help and encouragement to implement their valuable and beneficial ideas," she noted.

Lasting impacts


A common thread in people's reactions to the "Love Ideas, Love HK" initiative is a firm belief that the programme marks just the beginning of a rekindled passion for community service in Hong Kong.

"Even though Hong Kong people are very busy, they were willing to come together under this programme and make a huge collective community service effort," said Ms Lee. "It really is a starting point for arousing the attention of our seven million Hong Kong citizens. Hopefully, the seed planted by 'Love Ideas, Love HK' will grow

and flourish into something even more beautiful in the future."

According to Benson, of the "Last Photo" project, the submission of so many ideas under the scheme has already sparked conversations with a huge impact. "There is now wider awareness about all of the issues the project entries targeted. I am confident that these efforts will grow and develop long into the future."

Still more love

During the summer, citizens were urged to "Keep Loving HK Your Way!" during Round 2 of "Love Ideas, Love HK". More than 1,000 proposals were posted, attracting an astonishing tally of more than one million votes. To enable more people to participate, LKSF set up an interactive voice response system to accept votes via telephone, in addition to votes received online. More than HKD36 million in grants was given to 250 projects, including 20 proposals personally selected by Mr Li Ka-shing. 

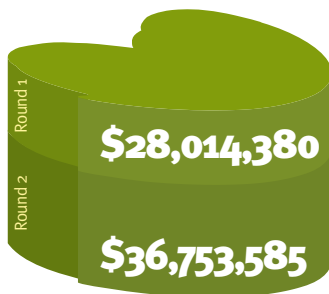


Expert Advisers work with entrants to help them turn ideas into action.

Top: Cliff Choi of the Hong Kong Council of Social Service
Above: Josephine Lee of St James' Settlement

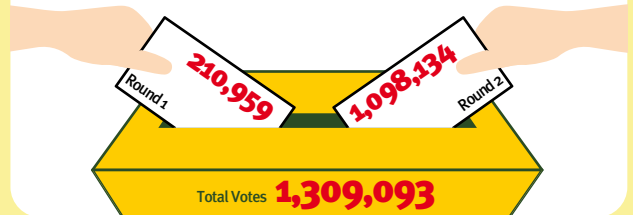
A snapshot of Love Ideas ♥ HK

Total Funding/Grants Awarded (HKD)



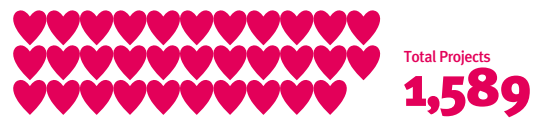
Total Funding/ Grants Awarded
\$64,767,965

Total Votes



Total Votes **1,309,093**

Admitted Projects



Total Elected Projects

