Starting from Zero
Setting off as Young Heroes

How young advocates strive to make differences in our society
As the Chief Editors, we are proud to announce the publication of the third issue of the English Press!

In this issue’s cover story Starting from Zero, Setting off as Young Heroes, we feature inspiring stories of young people attempting to bring changes to our society by starting up NGOs and social enterprises: Why did they choose such a path where arduous challenges are clear to foresee on the future path? How did they make impossible things possible and make these accomplishments to bloom at such a young age? Is being young a challenge, or an advantage? We hope what our interviewees shared will bring our readers inspiration and insight when pursuing their dreams and aspirations.

Attempting to reach out to our community, in our Community section, we reach unsung heroes behind the intact and unblemished hiking trails in Hong Kong and listen to their opinions regarding the protection and cleaning of hiking trails. After that, we zoom back into our daily lives at school in our Campus section: Behind distinctive personalities of our teachers, what is that special “something” back in the day that casted significant effects on who they are today? We are happy and grateful for all the generous sharing of stories by our teachers which bring us all back to their childhood. In another story, we also interviewed two of our schoolmates with a prodigious passion for music, who found their way of enjoying music through doing covers on their Instagram accounts. If you are curious about their story, go have a read!

In our Lifestyle section, we also feature green eating, a profound trend in the last few years. Have you ever wondered how the concepts of being vegetarian take a stance in their beliefs? In this story, our reporters looked into vegetarians’ thoughts on green eating and how such a lifestyle becomes more prevalent in Hong Kong.

As Chief Editors, we are honored to work with devoted reporters, editors, and photographers. We would also like to express our effusive gratitude towards the teachers-in-charge, Ms. Fiona Chan and Mr. Jason Chin, for guiding us through the journey.

We cordially hope the life stories diligently recorded and social concerns extensively discussed in our issue can be uplifting for our readers in one way or another. Have an enjoyable read!

Cheers!

Mason Ma
Yao Hanying
Chief Editors
As youths in the community, have you ever felt strands of impotence in terms of making a difference in the society? Often being regarded as incompetent, inexperienced or even imprudent, do you feel the limitations in speaking up for your social concerns? As adolescents, lacking financial resources, reality can sometimes be discouraging as our means to put effort and conduct changes in society is bounded in all kinds of ways.

Quoting from one of our interviewees, “Society can be quite harsh when it comes to youths.” Yet, in such an environment, some youngsters managed to gain a foothold and stand for their own beliefs. At around the same ages as me and you, they succeeded in starting-up organisations and devoting themselves into acts of benevolence as a career. Hereby, we shall delve into five inspiring stories of young advocates.
and managing programs in the organisation, he finds experiential learning, like visiting social enterprises and joining design workshops, as the way of addressing and nurturing youngsters in the field of community involvement, as youth are able to unravel their own missions and objectives in the process.

“During my secondary school years, a friend of mine built a mini startup by selling stationery to our schoolmates. I’ve learnt that it’s always important to start by taking small steps,” he says.

Some might fear that as youngsters, gaining support would be the hardest among all. As adolescents, lacking financial resources, reality can sometimes be discouraging as our means to put efforts and conduct changes in society is bounded in all kinds of ways. Harry cleared the myth, that “It is easier than expected.” He stated that it is always crucial for one to be determined enough that one is able to beat the difficulties, as well as having an effective team and only by not being afraid to meet more people can it be easier for you to meet people with similar aims. In fact, more and more people in the Hong Kong society now accept the idea of youth start-ups. All in all, staying determined and never fear of being rejected plays a pivotal role.

From what he sees in his own eyes, the process of idealization is somewhat important when it comes to starting an enterprise. Ideas are meant to be altered and modified in the nick of time. Hence, he urges teens not to be afraid of making mistakes since you are going to gain a lot via them anyway. “Learn from it and try again!” he encourages. He adds that as teenagers, we are all gifted with time and energy, and we don’t need to perform all-rounded to be successful. Thus, simply shifting the mindset from fear of misstep to embracing such reality could, in fact, be the key of moving forward.
Starting an organisation yourself can be very thrilling, as there are high risks that it’s going to fail and collapse. Yet, the rewarding feeling you get may also be doubled.” says Douglas Yang, the Co-founder and Executive Manager of Peer2peer. Peer2peer is a non-profit organization that provides an online platform to support fellow secondary school students from under-resourced communities. They achieve the aim through free and peer-to-peer e-mentorships, with mainly ethnic minority and immigrant students as their target mentees.

“You can’t truly acknowledge how grateful you should be until you see someone not having what you have. It makes me become more appreciative of what I have in life,” says Yang.

It all started when Yang and his brother came across a feed about students struggling with the transition to online learning, when COVID-19 was just starting to spread across Hong Kong. As Yang came to the realisation of opportunity disparity, whereas its enormity was pronounced by the pandemic, making the issues more momentous with the aggravating digital divide, they decided to make a difference with their own efforts. Such an idea developed into practicality with their own persistence and endurance, such that as of now, Peer2Peer consists of academic, university, and career support sectors with mentors working with shared kind visions. “It is also hoped that our mentors and students can learn from one other’s background, culture differences and life experiences through our programs.”

At the very beginning, Yang recalls that it was just him and his brother, and two mentees who were their friends. Nonetheless, as time went by, they started to expand their audience, asking their friends to help, partnering with non-profit organisations like Kids4Kids and reaching out to diversified crowds. As of today, Peer2Peer already has over 30 mentors branching all over the world, some of whom will be studying at prestigious universities like Stanford, Princeton and Cambridge.

Working through, they find the incentivizing commitment of the mentors challenging. “We really need mentors to be proactive, checking in with their mentees, or else the friendship we really emphasize will fall apart.” Especially since all of their mentees are students, it can be really demanding for them in terms of...
time management. To overcome this, there is no doubt that precise policy and guidelines are necessary. Yet, to tackle it in-depth, he expresses that making mentors feel valued and involved in the organisation, as they indulge themselves into being a part of the community, actually gives a better sense of belonging, and additionally brings a heartfelt willingness to contribute to the program.

All in all, Yang would like to shed light on the importance of understanding themselves better, as in his own case, self-acknowledgement is found to be critical towards starting up an NGO. “It will really determine the culture of your organisation, and it is important to not only think about the impact you are leaving on other people, but the culture you created for being an academic NGO, and that comes from understanding more about yourself.” Yang further explained that the process is in fact all experimental, and encouraged fellow students to try out more. “It’s not a catalogue of styles that you can just pick one, it’s, in fact, always a mix of what you feel comfortable with.”

V’air (低碳本地遊) is a youth organisation promoting and providing local ecotourism in Hong Kong to advocate a low carbon emission lifestyle.

There are doubtlessly plenty of challenges to start up an organisation, especially as a teenager. “To continue outreaching and put yourself out there,” Natalie Chung, the co-founder of V’air, also a member of the Council of Sustainable Development at the Environment Bureau, talks about how she came through the initial stages of starting up the organisation.

When V’air was just beginning, they had to join workshops held by various green organisations solely to gather the first group of customers and build reputation among fellow companies. Immense hardships have been endured, as she recalls her experience in the past years.

V’air, as a green organisation, has received criticism regarding their aim of promoting local ecotourism since the early days, where competition judges refer to it as “guilt trapping consumers to not travel while it is a leisure broth by globalisation”. That is when V’air took such commentary by heart and proceeded to slightly shift their target from “You cannot travel”, for which they used to compare places in Hong Kong and foreign countries to...
elucidate Hong Kong ecotourism, to a message of “Hong Kong is beautiful”, hoping that the public would gladly embrace the natural environment of our local land.

Though many companies doubt the proficiency of V’air at the initial stage, thinking that as people in a young age, there would certainly be a lack of experience that hinders their way of developing, Natalie instead remembers some unexpected perks of being a youth to start up. “The age factor is more like a gimmick in some ways.” She then attributes part of today’s success of V’air to media influence. There are several occasions where reporters and the general public use exquisite words like youth-based etc to phrase V’air, in a virtue to pique the interests of the general public. Compared with normal start-ups, the fresh new identity of being young in the industry draws attention and lends additional helping-hand in terms of gaining clients, where more collaboration opportunities can be sought as well.

“In the beginning stage of V’air, we once held a booth in a green carnival introducing our future aspirations. There was a lady from Microsoft who passed by and dropped a name card without saying anything. As we had the practice of sending follow-up emails to people after events, she replied that they were looking for ecotour guides and asked for a proposal.” Such an unprecedented experience ended up turning into a precious chance for V’air, which is why Natalie further emphasises that youths should always seize every opportunity, where having diversified connections could come in handy in the unknown future.

“As a student, there is plenty of time for your repeated trial and error. If you fail, you can just go back to studying.” With support from universities, being able to nest under school organisations’ wings before really starting up an organisation has been one of the distinctive advantages they had alongside the journey. With plenty of resources given specifically to youth start-ups, she finds it not much to fear before taking the very first step.

Festyle (妳想煮意) is a social enterprise that employs women and housewives as home chefs with family-friendly working hours by selling a “ready-to-cook package”, offering a large-scale catering service for hectic city dwellers nowadays. In 2015, a few university students, including Ruby Yip (nicknamed Ding Ding), founded Festyle. Having a massive enthusiasm about the social entrepreneurship, Ding Ding firmly believes that one must always remind themselves about their passion and not to be afraid about needing to solve problems. “For me, the original intention, women’s empowerment, has never changed and it constantly urges me to continue.” Explaining the sacrifice and devotion of mothers being neglected by the society, and how Festyle makes an effort to tackle the issue, a sparkling passion can be seen in the young advocate’s eyes.

The social enterprise started off in view of the
dislocation of many housewives, where Ding Ding sees them spending half of their lives at home, renouncing their own career to work as no-jokingly "family CEOs". Unfortunately, most of them are underappreciated, with the dejected truth that their capabilities are buried in the daily chores.

"Can I be a part of the solution instead of solely staring at the problems?" Before stepping into the industry, Ding Ding has always aspired to devote herself into social impact and she is thankful for the ecosystem that the pioneers of social enterprises have built. Engaging with concerns regarding the quality of life of Hong Kongers in all the hustle and bustle, she placed further emphasis on food quality and sketched a blueprint tackling the hybrid of both social issues to form a commercial prototype of Festyle. However heart-warming the concept was, Ding Ding admitted open-heartedly that the route of starting up a social enterprise has never been easy,"For unknown reasons, my partner, a co-founder of Festyle committed suicide at the initial stage of the project." It was a heavy storm on her team as an overwhelming dismay. "This prompted me to notice how important mental health is to us. I believe your mental state is the key - no matter what you are trying to accomplish."

She further shares her views on dealing with hard times in life. "Other than matters concerning life and death, nothing is really unsolvable. You can always break huge puzzles into small pieces and eventually find a way out as long as you don’t stop trying. Once you acknowledge that the essence of life is, frankly, trying to accomplish seemingly unreachable tasks one by one, it is left for you to choose how to face them. Hereby, I choose to enjoy them," says Ding Ding, "I am grateful that so much has been learnt from the process, namely executive power, how to 'live sustainably', which is finding ways to relieve stress, and, most importantly, persistence on living and working through hardships."

"Entrepreneurship is like a process of dealing with endless questions without any model answers," says Ding Ding. She has also gone through some challenging tasks like finding partnership restaurants to achieve the concept of common kitchen, which was a seemingly naive idea back then. Foreseeably, countless rejections were faced. The unstable supply of manpower of housewives, which are the protagonists of the whole idea, further
exacerbated the difficult situation. Yet at the moment, she reckons that companions who agree with your pursuit will eventually come to you - if you insist on doing what you believe. Growing up in a differing generation with relatively sufficient material conditions, she firmly believes that youth shall not waste our time being dispirited, but trying our best to reach our goals.

Reese Wong, an 18-year-old student, has a multiple identity of being the Co-Founder and President of ISSIA HK (Inter-school Social Issues Association HK), the Executive Director at Justice Leaders’ Council and the Co-Founder of The Luminate Network. He has always been a passionate advocate for youth empowerment and social engagement, whose efforts are further proved by receiving the HK Outstanding Students Award 2019-2020 and being recognized as one of the youngest UNITE 2030 Youth Delegates.

Talking about the main inspiration and motivation behind starting up all the social enterprises, he mentioned that he has always been socially-conscious, trying to tackle problems about the status quo and debating topics regarding global relevance. “I have always been a big-idea person who loves to ideate about the world. Wanting to look beyond self-contained debate, I decided to seek opportunities so as to play my own part in contributing to the society, no matter how small it may seem.” Such aspiration drives him to always revolve his passion around seeing gaps and problems in the community and coming up with workable solutions.

Starting up his own organisations allows a degree of specialisation to tackle a unique problem, thus bringing about strategic solutions. Beyond that, as a person who values autonomy, the freedom to implement his own ideas and create a larger impact, he then figured out that setting up his own organisation would be the best choice. For instance, in the case of ISSIA, beyond simple metrics and achievements, “The most rewarding aspect has been being able to see the great power of a community and the diversity within, as my own idea comes to life.” To further illustrate, ISSIA encapsulates the notion where people from a variety of backgrounds with diversified skill-sets can come together for a greater good, forming collectives that allow us to do much more than one single person.

Beyond that, these experiences have taught his invaluable skills - from leadership to project management, from video editing to pitching and engaging with the media. Worthnoting that all are difficult to cultivate through an academic setting. Reese has also become a more effective communicator and became more confident in his own ideas. “That’s why I would recommend engaging in extracurricular activities to expose yourself to more learning opportunities.”

There are certainly a lot of struggles he met halfway, yet, Reese managed to tackle all of them one by one. To exemplify, ISSIA HK started on a tumultuous road in the summer of 2019. They began strong with unrelenting passion, but were then held back due to the lack of focus and diminished momentum. After entering a local community project competition with high hopes, they were then rejected. It can be disheartening, but they never gave up. “At this point, I knew that I wanted to branch out too much, and too quickly.” Reese
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We should all be willing to take risks. You never know what opportunity you might come across because of them,” He further suggested practically, “If you are not sure where to begin, start small - contribute within your school, take part in community projects and see what you are interested in.

There surely is something existing as society norms like “do it the right way to contribute to society”, yet, with that being said, it does not have to be volunteer work or directly service-related. He believes that we can all play a part in making differences, no matter how minor or seemingly insignificant, as at the end of the day, each person’s contribution coalesces into long-term social change.

Reese ends the interview by advising students to only pursue things that they are passionate about and not to do things simply as “a means to an end”. Rather, we should treat our passions as “ends in and of themselves”. We should be doing it because we truly find it enjoyable, not necessarily because of the tangible rewards that may come across our way. This is the belief he has had in mind all along the journey.

Edited by Yao Hanying

knew that he had to start again from the basics, which brought him to the question: what was something he was experienced in? He previously led two school-based magazines, driven by his love for language and reportage. In hopes to broaden his impact beyond his school, he established Hong Kong’s first inter-school magazine (ISSIA Magazine), where people across began writing articles on topics ranging from mental health, LGBTQ+ issues, to racism and gender equality. The magazine served as an anchor point for a wider organisation.

ISSIA HK now has over 150+ articles on the website, scaling to 200+ members across over 50 schools in Hong Kong; they also have international contributors and since February, have gone on to implement a wider range of other projects, from multimedia initiatives (podcasts, videos, research surveys) to events (ISSIAMUN, ISSIA Youth NGOs Forum, webinars). They have been featured in several Hong Kong press outlets and are chosen as representatives in renowned conferences, such as the Hong Kong Youth Summit and the World Humanitarian Forum.

“I decided to seek opportunities so as to play my own part in contributing to the society, no matter how small it may seem.”

- Reese Wong, 18-year-old Co-Founder and President of Inter-school Social Issues Association HK, Executive Director at Justice Leaders’ Council and Co-Founder of The Luminate Network

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Possessing a mountainous terrain, Hong Kong has constantly been a delight for local hiking enthusiasts and a destination for overseas explorers. With over a hundred hiking trails of 600 kilometres, these trails pave ways through lush woods, running rivers and rugged peaks, dedicated to showcasing the city’s picturesque panorama. Long have we admired the greenery in the concrete jungle, but how often do we acknowledge some of the efforts done to restore and maintain the phenomenal scenery of nature?

Protecting Our Irreplaceable Nature Starts From Oneself
According to statistics published by the Environment Bureau, the amount of rubbish discarded in country parks dropped from 2943 tonnes in 2018 to 2316 tonnes in 2020. Nevertheless, the numbers are still unpleasant as more rubbish is transforming country parks into “landfills”, not to mention the lack of realisation on the topic “Leave No Trace”. In fact, more evidence of nature vandalization emerges, including trailblazing and carvings. As the current condition becomes as despairing as it seems, some have pioneered to showcase that our seemingly bleak future can be averted.

“You can leave no trace behind nature instead of letting others clean them up.” This is the slogan of Trailsweepers (清徑先鋒), a volunteering group which goes on trail-sweeping hikes biweekly. “We can never clean all the waste up the mountain, but we can make a difference through influencing other
pedestrians and hikers to take their litter home,” says Terry Li Ching, the founder of Trailsweepers. Aiming to minimize the adverse impact of indecomposable rubbish on the environment, Li established a volunteering group on Facebook in 2017, where all citizens are welcomed to join.

Besides trail-sweeping, they also collaborated with The Green Earth (綠惜地球), another green organization previously, where they did tree plantation after typhoon Mangkhut hit Hong Kong in September 2018. They especially welcome infrequent hikers who might have little to no awareness of environmental protection. Li points out that the infrequent hikers are the concerning factor of littering as the concept of “Leave No Trace” is still not prevalent yet. "The amount of rubbish we collect is decreasing, which is a silver lining, however, the littering problem can only be solved if people stop littering randomly anymore,” he adds.

Mr. Ho Chi-ming, one of the team leaders (also an alumnus from Pui Ching’s Class of 1974 基社), perceives that some new tactics adopted by the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) lead to more indiscriminately littering. “Over the past few years, the AFCD has significantly cut the number of rubbish bins. On one hand, hikers’ awareness of picking up their litter gradually grows; on the other hand, when they are unable to find a rubbish bin nearby, they randomly throw their garbage away, and their counterparts follow, which is undesirable,” Ho sighs.

More About Tree Plantations

Besides their weekly "trail sweeping", The Trailsweeper(清徑先鋒) also collaborated with The Green Earth(綠惜地球), another green organization previously. They mainly did some tree planting work. During the procedure, they used some tools such as a shovel, axe to weed. Then, they encircled the root of plants by soil, thus aiding the growth of saplings. After that, they fastened a tiny label that had a code on every plant. This can indicate the organization planted the tree(TGE), the year(2020), the location(CWB) and the tree number.

To prevent them from being stabbed by aristate plants and sharp, incisive equipment, most of the volunteers wore gloves when they were doing tree plantations.
Despite this, he thinks that his participation in trail-sweeping has made a considerable difference over time. "I see hikers being more environmentally conscious: they will help us pick up litter even though they are not members of our group." He also attains a sense of accomplishment whenever he receives positive appraisals from fellow hikers due to his work.

Our Computer Studies teacher, Mr. Leung Man-kit (MK Sir) is also a nature lover, which is conducive to his zealousness towards hiking. Similar to many other hikers, he did not uphold a strong sense of nature conservation at first. "Hiking slows down our pace in this city of hustle and bustle and relieves all the undue stress, but for the current me, it is more than these. As I appreciate the wonders of nature, I also reflect on our actions on nature."

What ignited his determination to protect the hiking trails is a hike to Pyramid Hill. Since few hikers had visited the hill before, he needed to alter some positions of the plants to create a "trail". However, he noticed more people utilised his "trail" to mount Pyramid Hill, damaging more native plant species. That was when he realised he was indirectly contributing to land degradation. After his first trail repairing workshop held by the AFCD in late 2019, he thinks it is a necessity to have someone taking the initiative to preserve nature. His recent volunteering work includes clearing canals at the MacLehose Trail 6th section in May. "I hope to make a difference in the community by inviting them to recover hiking trails whenever possible. Nature protection is a value which must be adhered to by all," he says.

We were invited by the Trailsweepers to join a cleaning activity held at the Lau Shui Heung Reservoir, along with our interview with them in April. During the activity, we also had the opportunity to conduct a survey among some leisure hikers near the reservoir on their cognition of common trail conservation activities. Among the 25 hikers who responded, nearly all (92%) had acknowledged or seen some trail conservations done in country parks, but only 3 of them had participated in these activities beforehand. When asked to raise examples of trail conservation activities, most of the hikers were cognizant of waste cleanups, while some had also heard of tree plantations and trail repairs. Despite the
majority of hikers having little knowledge of trail conservations, more of them have eventually acquired the awareness, and are becoming proactive warriors to protect the countryside.

Pioneers of trail conservation inspire more fellow hikers to culminate the effort of protecting their beloved sceneries. Lily, who is a new member of the Trailsweepers, is obsessed with hiking. However, she also has the desire to conserve country parks for generations ahead, motivating her to lend a helping hand to cope with the serious problem with her passion. After her first experience, she feels optimistic about her efforts. “Even though I am still a newbie, I believe the common goal shared among all Trailsweepers can ameliorate the conditions of hiking trails,” she says. She is eager to become an advocate for a more sustainable hiking lifestyle from merely a partaker. “I do want to witness the fruit of my current work in the future!” she says.

Ah Hong, another Trailsweeper, had his green awareness kindled which was once frozen in amber after noticing a change during his usual hiking routines. “During the COVID-19 pandemic, I could not help but notice the vast amount of food packaging, plastic bottles and even disposable face masks. It is ironic that we, residents of the Earth, are tormenting the natural environment ourselves,” he sighs. Not wanting his favourite pastime to be affected by the environment’s drastic deterioration, he gradually becomes one of the most active Trailsweepers. “People put an extensive emphasis on physical health in the surge of the virus, yet they always forsake the health of a common home they live in,” he states. Be it environmentalists, hikers or citizens, they are not to neglect the seriousness of our frail environment.

The Trailsweepers welcome participants from all walks of life. However, for some conservation activities, specialised courses are required beforehand. “Impairments to the hiking trails will exist if the correct procedures are not adapted. This is more fatal than human damage to the trails,” explains MK Sir. For example, many people have the misconception that simply filling in concrete in cracks is effective in repairing hiking trails. Much to
many’s surprise, this act will damage this environment as water cannot pass through the soil, causing wilting of plants alongside. This is not a sustainable mode of mending.

What do Trailsweepers want to say to our readers?

Bring a trash bag with you to collect rubbish made by both you and other hikers. It is an important step in alleviating the problem! - Lily

Although not many people appreciate and acknowledge our efforts, I still enjoy helping society very much. Do not let other voices stop you from protecting our environment. - Ah Yip

Even though you may not join us in picking up rubbish, encouraging words are still appreciated! - Ah Hong

A Mutual Responsibility Shouldered By All

The stakeholder shouldering the greatest responsibility in conserving the country parks has been a hot potato in Hong Kong. Some people place the blame on the government for the lack of regulations regarding trail destruction, while others believe that irresponsible hikers are accountable for the rapid spoliation of the countryside. This ultimately leads to a question: who should go to the greatest lengths to safeguard nature?

Ah Yip, a Trailsweeper for three years, conceives the government should never pass the buck in protecting country parks. “That our nature is recovering in recent years is crystal clear. Nonetheless, this is mainly the outcome of us volunteers,” he says, “Had it not been for our love for nature, our nature will be placed in dire jeopardy since the government is slacking in environmental conservation.” He agrees the government has made attempts to alleviate the hiking environment, yet they are not sufficient. “Although the government cannot appoint government officials to monitor the degenerating countryside at all times, they can at least fulfill the role as an educator. Promotion, or even giving out trash bags to hikers to carry their rubbish away, are more or less welcomed by the public,” he suggests. In addition, he points out that without cooperation from the public, the governmental policies made are still in vain.

Dissimilar to Ah Yip’s perception, Mr. Leung thinks repairing hiking trails is not only a
governmental responsibility nowadays but a task for all of us in Hong Kong. He believes all of us also wear the mantle to protect nature. We can all act our parts, despite the government’s shortage of environmental protection measures. We may not have opportunities to join the workshops and participate in rebuilding hiking trails, but there are still alternatives that can be done to reduce the damage, like start sharing the "Leave No Trace" concept with friends and family. “Leave no trace, and follow the designated road. Never blaze a trail. With education and socialisation, I am sure a beautiful nature is in our hands,” he says.

Last but not least – Sharing with you more about PCMS English Press’s trail-sweeping experience!

In our trip with the Trailsweepers to experience trail-sweeping, 120 kg of solid waste disposal was collected! Besides the common plastics, abnormal trash collected includes badminton rackets, sneakers and even truck tires! Terry points out that plastic bottles and plastic bags are most often seen in the last decade. Following are the cigarette butts. “These waste, unfortunately, take centuries to decompose. Some are detrimental to agriculture and fisheries, ultimately damaging our health.” On the other hand, some of the trash found have been left in nature for decades (it is evident from their outdated packaging), with no one clearing them. From another perspective, it could resemble a nostalgic treasure hunt for older members!

For more information about the Trailsweepers, check out their Facebook page: 清徑先鋒 Trailsweeper!

Edited by Wing Yu Yip
Behind every person, every object, lies an untold anecdote of its own, being molded and sculpted to become the one that you see today. Such objects act as time capsules, which store their owners’ memories, intertwining and extending relentlessly and weaving into unique experiences of one.

Being the “more experienced” group in school, teachers’ lives are filled with more personal experience and memories than students. To teachers of different generations, varying objects hold an irreplaceable position in their childhood, no matter their size or price. Nonetheless, they are all priceless treasures to them, and here are their stories.

As free as a Butter-Fly*

Ms. Chan Hiu-ching, the school’s Liberal Studies teacher, was fond of the Japanese Digimon (數碼暴龍) series in her childhood. Born in the 90s, her workload as a child was much lighter than children nowadays such that she could watch a lot of cartoons in her free time. Popular during the inception of the Internet, the show builds on the perceived novelty and expansiveness of the
online world back then. The main characters of the show were children around Ms. Chan’s age who went on adventures in the digital world, symbolising a positive outlook of infinite possibilities. Each character had their respective digital pet and a unique trait, each symbolising values such as bravery, innocence, justice etc. About battles in nature, the cartoon attracted numerous children. “Around 80% of my classmates watched it,” Ms. Chan says. A sizable chunk of their day-to-day conversations always involved the show.

While cartoons are fun to watch, the physical interaction between the content and audience is quite limited. Nevertheless, game cartridges with a Digimon storyline were eventually released. Compatible with the Game Boy handheld console viral back then, Ms. Chan’s family bought multiple generations of these along with over 40 different games. “Finishing a game takes around 2 to 3 weeks. When you’re done with one, simply replace it with another.” Furthermore, having the necessary cable enables one to participate in multiplayer with up to 4 players. Ms. Chan usually played with her brother. On top of that, countless spinoff merchandise of the show was also sold. Ms. Chan also collected stickers of Digimon and still keeps them well now. Possessing such popularity along with a battle nature, the Japanese cartoon and its games’ storylines have always delivered messages such as passion, perseverance, and desire for justice. Ms. Chan says that Japanese culture, such as Digimon, brought great ideological influence on particularly her (the 90s) generation of children who are young adults nowadays, for which some say is what sets them apart. As an ending note, compared to more mainstream cultural influences nowadays, such as Korean music or drama, she expresses her preference for Japanese culture over the others. “In my eyes, Japanese comes out on top,” says Ms. Chan. “More interesting, more creative.”

You just can’t say that you never watched TV
Television is the item that represents Mr. Ma Yik-yeung. Back in his childhood, Mr. Ma spent most of the time watching TV, with his favourite cartoon, Ultraman Taro. “I even woke up at six a.m. in the early morning just to watch the program,” he shares the anecdote as he laughs, “Given that there will be a rebroadcast at noon.” It has always been a passion for him to enjoy the program, which alongside brought motivation for him to keep waking up early and being a healthy child.

Remembering the days with his old TV, Mr. Ma found nothing but good influences, as besides the fascinating cartoon, documentaries, debate shows and many other educational yet entertaining programs can be found. “It brings me to view issues from varying points of view.” He further

*Butter-Fly is the name of Digimon’s Japanese theme song
Figuring out yourself

As a child growing up in the eighties, figurine toys took up a special place in our school’s English teacher, Mr. Edgar Cheung’s heart. “They made me the person I am today,” Mr. Cheung says.

Nowadays, these toys are not difficult to obtain. All we have to do is simply purchase a McDonald’s happy meal and a figurine toy may be gifted along the way. Yet, the value the item holds is not as simple as it seems, at least not as Mr. Cheung perceives it, “I grew up in a grassroots family, and couldn’t possess a lot of luxurious items,” he explains, “most of the figurines were either gifts from relatives, freebies from eateries or picked up from lost and found.” Such rarity might have ignited a further treasurance with the irreplaceable memories of toying, and influenced the figurines to take up a special place in his grown-up heart. “To receive gifts, I had to work hard to earn them.”

He has always preferred figurines over other toys, as simple figurines remind him of how relaxing life could potentially be. With the sight of his favourite items that refreshes his memories, Mr. Cheung recalls a lot of wonderful moments, such as swapping the toys with his childhood friends, role-playing figurines with his sister and creating an imaginary world based on the magical adventures of the characters with distinctive personalities. “With limited resources, we had to improvise with whatever we had at hand. We created stories of romance with these toys, and on a logical note saying, that helped me substantially in developing our sense of creativity.”

Now being an adult, Mr. Ma finds it regretful that there isn’t enough time to enjoy TV programmes, compared to before. As technology has progressed in a drastic amount over time, there are now numerous alternatives in the place of TV, adding on with additional flexibility, for the sake of convenience there are many more people who choose to “abandon” TV shows. Yet, personally, for Mr. Ma, TV is a traditional way for him to enjoy his quality time.

While he is growing up, he finds out he is attached more and more to TV, the bond is deep and compared to the growing trends of using electronic devices to rewatch TV programmes, he firmly chooses to watch TV programmes as he still wants it to be firsthand. “We all need to compare and contrast to realise what is the thing or person we truly treasure, just like choosing between TV and its alternatives. When we rethink about things that are just mere daily to us, we may find out a lot of things, in fact, important to us that we didn’t notice, never before.”

Mr. Ma shares his childhood memories of watching television with our reporter.

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Figurines take up a special place in Mr. Edgar Cheung’s heart as it means more than just a mere toy.
“These goodies have taught me to cherish what is at hand and to enjoy the simplest pleasures. Unfortunately, most of them that I’ve once had are now lost, but these toys will forever be a part of my life.” He cherishes the reminiscence of this short period and further adds on to the story, "I recall using cushions and blankets as backdrops and keeping them in mooncake boxes. These will be memories that I will forever enshrine," Mr. Cheung ended the interview with a heartwarming smile.

Popsicles represent father’s love and care

Mrs. Josephine Mak, our history teacher, expressed that the most memorable object from her childhood was popsicles. "My dad, who was a barber, would always buy popsicles for me and my brothers after he had dinner in his barbershop. He would buy them from a store downstairs and rush them upstairs because there were no refrigerators in our home." Mrs. Mak smiles cheekily, "Other neighbouring children could only watch in jealousy. However, when our siblings entered secondary school, we started asking him not to buy popsicles for us, and I think he might have felt a little bit down back then." She expresses the regret of not knowing the importance of cherishing it back then. She then added, as a fun fact, the two favourite brands preferred by the young Mrs. Mak were Dairy Farm and Lotus ice cream cups.

When asked about what these humble popsicles meant to the juvenile, Mrs. Mak explained that they represented the love and care of her father. "My father was from Shanghai, so he had very high living standards. He always insisted that us siblings should have leisure and keep cool in the summer, even though we were not wealthy," says Mrs. Mak, "He also believed in the importance of reward and leisure, and that’s why he bought us popsicles and candies."

Mrs. Mak recalls that her father was a one-of-a-kind father of that era. "Unlike other fathers who commute and work 24/7, my father would take the whole family out to the beach or even Kowloon Park, which was relatively far away from our home at that time. We would also head to traditional cafes, where I would drink a red bean fleecy and my sister would drink a cup of pineapple ice. Compared to how our mother nurtured us, I think my father spoiled us." Mrs. Mak finds herself very lucky and she have been immensely grateful for that. "Even though we were not very rich, my parents treated me very well. Unlike other parents, who single-mindedly believed in the importance of education, my family emphasised the importance of leisure. Thanks to that, I didn’t have to go to work at a young age. That’s what made me the person I am now."

However, when asked whether the object still holds the same value and if she had kept any of the popsicle sticks, Mrs. Mak jokingly answers, "I’m not a person who enjoys collecting things as my students would perceive me to do so. Also, I do not eat ice cream or popsicles now." However, popsicles do still hold a precious meaning of the love and care she received from her father till today.

Edited by Yao Hanying and Mason Ma
In 2019, the burst of COVID-19 hit us like a hurricane, taking everybody off guard. The outbreak of this pandemic has brought drastic changes and uncertainties to our daily lives up till now, which has made many of us feel helpless and downbeat in this seemingly never-ending situation. Yet during such a dire period, a handful of people still maintain their positive mindsets whilst being bombarded by immense amounts of work and the restriction of outdoor activity. They include two Form 5 students from Pui Ching, Hannah and Charli, who decided to make good use of this period to share their positive energy with people, with a medium that connects up souls in a universal language - music.

Both of them always have an immense passion for music, which motivates them to cover songs. Before creating their Instagram account, Hannah tends to post covers on her personal social media account, while Charli records them using instrumental software. Having been long time friends with common interests, Hannah has wondered whether she could further strengthen the bonding between her friends through music. Wanting to share their covers online, Hannah came up with the idea of creating this Instagram account and invited Charli to collaborate with her. The boredom during the pandemic further propels their intention, igniting the determination to make this aspiration into a reality starting from sketch – true, all of these techniques of MIDI handling, instrumentation, etc., are gained through the self-learning process of Hannah and Charli.

The account Hancha_1875 name is a combination of their birthdays and first names. They post covers and even originals irregularly. The account is mainly managed by Hannah because Charli records cover less often. “Sometimes I need to push her to record covers,” Hannah said candidly.

They embarked on their journey on 9 March 2020, covering the song ‘The End’ by Shiga Lin. The cover has since racked up 1174 views and they currently have 700 followers. Though it is relatively small in number’s compared to other heated covers on the internet, their achievement is nevertheless a symbol of stark aspirations and a remarkable benchmark for the two talented musicians, manifesting the potential of these two teenagers.

Having a consistent basis of followers is certainly an anomaly for young teenagers. With the emerging trend of KOLs and gradually lowering the difficulty of entry into the field of entertainment production, it begs the question, what are their thoughts on their account, and are they celebrity hopefuls? “We don’t do this to gain followers or fame since we purely want to share our music with others. We treat this account with the mentality of busking - if people like us and stay, we’ll be happy about that, but if people don’t and go, we’re still fine.”

One feature that may only be noticed by a handful of audiences in their covers is anonymity, as in not showing their faces. With the trend of implementing a ‘studio setting’ into cover videos, where the vocals sing in front of a mic and their expressions are shown, there is burning curiosity within some of the listeners as to why they chose not to disclose their physical appearance. Apart from their parents’ concern,
they choose not to disclose their face because they believe the emotional expression of singing is more about the voice than facial expression. "If your singing doesn't sound relatable or expressive, the face can't help at all. Indeed, facial expressions can help but augmentation effects by such actions are limited. Towards the end, it's all about the voice," said Charli.

"It is those background noises that annoy us the most because we lack professional devices, even though this problem is alleviated now because we've figured out how to utilize those software." Hannah added that recording a song is considerably time-consuming since the time needed to finish recording a song is three hours on average, which lowers their frequency of releasing. "We often overrun and underestimate the time required for a recording session. There is just never enough time." That's why they released the most during the Christmas holiday when there was less homework and tests while having enough time to enjoy the festive season with their friends.

Besides the covers, one speciality of Hannah and Charli's Instagram page, divergent from the mass of other cover artists or singers, is that they compose short episodes of original music based on stories. 

When asked about the inspiration of these short fragments of original music, the girls expressed that they are mostly based on their aspirations or life stories. During Christmas, they made some progress on their originals. To them, the originals are one of the manifestations of their thoughts on music and life. One of their major goals is to influence others and bring positivity through their music. As to what inspires their originals, they said TV shows play a major part, such as High School Musical. Their personal life, including pursuing dreams and studies inspires countless originals as well. Hannah told us her favourite original is about dream pursuit. She is currently perfecting the lyrics of their new original, and it is certainly a spectacle to be awaited.

Both of them are sanguine about their prospects. Charli said, "I wish to develop my style. Some people may not find music enjoyable and if I bring a new and unique element to the music, I hope people who didn’t will like it." Likewise, Hannah hopes to equip herself better and create more music to reach out to others and make them feel sympathetic. Hannah has expressed that she would like to pursue her career in the cinematic industry - to be a director, to be precise, to arouse the sympathy of others to humane emotions.

Towards the end of the interview, when the girls were asked about what words of encouragement and support they would give to other cover artists on Instagram, they unanimously answered, "Be perseverant!"

"This is undoubtedly not an easy way to go, but it’s getting better. Hong Kong’s music industry is currently being reinvigorated because more and more people pay attention to Hong Kong’s music, which is delightful." That the Hong Kong music industry is not at the top of the billboards cannot be denied. Nonetheless, Hannah and Charli did not let the others-proclaimed 'bleak future' affect their passion for music, for they had only started their trek on the pavement of music.

Edited by Mason Ma
Delicious burgers, mouth-watering pasta and scrumptious spam bring us to the earthly paradise. Yet, how many of us do acknowledge the worst is yet to come? With the exponentially increasing human population and commercial activities, the world is developing at a breakneck speed at the expense of the environment. In view of that, the idea of green eating emerges.

“I still find it difficult to maintain vegan habits,” says Debby Tsang, a 38-year-old lady who became a vegetarian at 21, with a bright smile. “Especially when it comes to occasions like dining out with friends and family, I have to do a lot of research beforehand to look for a vegan restaurant. Yet there are only limited options for me.” Therefore, Tsang usually cooks her own food at home instead of eating out. Despite these difficulties, she still finds herself being more relaxed and delightful after being a vegetarian.

Talking about the biggest misconception about vegan diet she has encountered, she points out nutrition concerns. Many people may hold doubts about the nutritional value of vegan diets as it is widely believed that vegetarians usually obtain inadequate nutrition. “Actually, a lot of nutrients aren’t only found in meat. They can also be found in other food substances. For instance, omega 3 exists not only in fishes, but also in nuts,” Tsang further explains. To her, she consumes vegan products with rich nutrients like eggs, tofu and nuts to ensure sufficient protein and various vitamins intake. Tsang also shares that she has been mocked and stereotyped at the early stage of becoming a vegetarian. “Someone called me a monk once and laughed at me because of my troublesome dietary habits.”

Yet, time flies and things have been changing. There is a growing awareness of health and well-being in recent years. More and more people are shifting from fatty meat diets to green eating. “I reckon that people are gradually accepting and attempting it (being vegetarians),” Other than that, some people figure that their eating habits take a heavy toll on the environment. Due to environmental concerns, an increasing number of people proactively take part in green eating to promote sustainable development.

While vegan eating habits become more popular in society, Tsang points out that different stakeholders in society, especially food producers, can do more to promote vegan diet. “It will be more convenient to vegetarians if the...
nutrition labels on food packages are printed larger, more clearly and more precisely,” Tsang suggests. Vegetarians are especially cautious about the ingredients of prepackaged food to avoid purchasing meat-containing products. “That the words on the labels are too small and blurry has been a waste of time to me as I have to study them carefully every time,” she adds. She suggests the government learn from Taiwan’s food labels policies. Their labels are not only clearer, but also indicate the specific type of vegan diet it targets. For example, a noticeable label can be easily spotted on the front of food packaging, which mentions the targeting vegetarians, like lacto-vegetarian (excludes meat, poultry, seafood, and eggs but contains certain dairy products), ovo-vegetarian (excludes all animal-based foods except for eggs) or even full-vegetarian (do not eat meat products of any kind including eggs, dairy products, or processed foods containing these or other animal-derived ingredients).

“If you want to become a vegetarian, you must have a balanced diet. Don’t be picky and you have to be persistent and self-disciplined,” says Tsang to people who are interested in adopting a vegan diet. “Eating vegetables alone is absolutely not preferred. Please remember you always have to obtain various nutrients from different food sources.” A number of people may hesitate to become a vegetarian because of limited food choices. Fortuitously, with the advent of technology, it creates revolutionary insights towards human dietary habits and lifestyle -- meat can be plant-based!

Plant-based meats are products designed to imitate meat, made from plant-derived ingredient. They are trying to mimic the taste, texture, smell and appearance of meat and have become a viable option in our daily lives. Nowadays, plant-based burgers, ground meat, sausages, nuggets and even seafood are commonly found in grocery stores and restaurants.

Green Monday is a social venture founded in Hong Kong in 2012 that aims at shifting the public towards sustainable living. It promotes the adoption of a plant-based diet for at least one day per week to combat global problems such as climate change, food insecurity, public health crisis and animal suffering. As
a pioneer promoting green eating, it sets up Green Common, a plant-based concept store having nine locations in Hong Kong, to actively introduce advanced food-tech innovations to the public. Green Common sells plant-based gourmets from all over the world, such as Beyond Burger, Omni Pork, and Impossible Meat.

Responding to the public’s common stereotype perceiving plant-based diets as an imbalance in nutrition, Tiffany Cheung, a nutritionist who is also an assistant program manager of Green Monday, suggests that plant-based meat can in fact be nutritious. "In fact, plant-based meat-like Omni pork contains similar nourishment compared to real meat," she further explains. Take Omni Pork Luncheon as an example, Cheung says that it actually carries richer protein, fibre and calcium content with less cholesterol, calories and saturated fat than canned luncheon. It goes without saying that the nutritional value of plant-based meat is comparable to authentic meat.

To achieve a sustainable environment, green eating is one of the ways out. "Nowadays, most people choose green eating not only because of religious purposes, but also for the environment’s sake," Cheung says. Green eating reduces carbon emissions significantly because of the reduction of meat consumption. Thus, it also protects animals from being killed cruelly.

There is still a long way to go to popularise green eating in Hong Kong. Cheung points out that students in Hong Kong are generally not aware of green eating. "I hope more students can understand how meaningful green eating is," Cheung says.

Indeed, some may worry that green gourmets may not be very accessible and affordable, but Cheung remains optimistic. She clarified that the cost of Omni Pork is similar to real meat. Besides, she believes there will be an increasing number of people adopting green eating as chain restaurants such as McDonald’s and Pizza Express are offering more green options now. "Some plant-based meat can also be purchased in street markets!" she shares. She ponders green eating is going to be a popular trend in the foreseeable future. Yet, she also stresses that the government can do more in developing green eating, especially by education.

"You need not be 100% vegetarian at first. You could try green eating step by step for the environment and your own sake," Cheung suggests. With the joint effort of little warriors, the bright future is within our reach.

Planted-based gourmet food is now omnipresent in Hong Kong with a myriad of choices, in wet markets, various eateries and even convenience stores. Cheung says that Green Monday will proactively innovate and invent more and greener food products, ranging from desserts like vegan ice cream to microwave prepackaged food. The vitalization of green eating alters a new social norm. Just like the motto of Green Monday, Make change happen, Make GREEN common.

Edited by Paris Ma
To get a clearer picture of green eating culture in Hong Kong, we had lunch at Green Common’s flagship restaurant which is located at the Forest, 17 Nelson Street in Mong Kok. With great expectations, we started our journey to the meat-free restaurant.

As you enter the place you are immediately welcomed by a comfy setting. Green Common provides a cozy and warm environment for consumers. Despite its location in the heart of Kowloon, it is relatively a tranquil place with merely a handful of people inside, perhaps because we went there after lunchtime. There is a delightful blend of cozy illumination and the woody yet modern showcases of commodities labelled “green” and “healthy”.

In terms of choices, it offers a wide variety of sides, mains, burgers and lunch sets made with all vegan ingredients! We had Omni Trio, which is also known as Stir-Fried Spaghetti with OmniPork Strips. Likewise, to experience the novel plant-based meat-like OmniPork, we also ordered Omni K-Ramen (OmniPork Luncheon with Korean Spicy Noodles), Beyond Sausage Breakfast Muffin consisting of English Breakfast Muffin, Beyond Sausage Patty, kale, tomato and veganaise, as well as Happy Nuggets plus french fries. Each lunch set is accompanied by an exclusively delicious beverage such as latte and expresso made from vegan milk as well as lemon tea. Moreover, all the dishes are made with pure plants like mushrooms, peas, non-GMØ (genetically modified) soybeans and rice.

All of us were quite impressed by the food quality. The Impossible Meat burger and Happy Nuggets were especially astonishing. The taste and texture of the patty and plant-based meat were relatively authentic. Honestly, at first, we didn’t really expect much from it, as we reckoned that “meat” consisted solely of beans, potatoes and other substances would taste weird. However, after we took a bite of it, the vegan meat actually tasted so much better than we expected. Even though some of us thought the texture was a little bit uncanny, it was still very impressive and acceptable.

Overall, in our opinion, the price (around $70-$100 per person) seems reasonable for a hangout gathering among friends to explore green eating. Worth a try! Yet still, it may be a bit costly as a regular lunch for secondary school students.

**Reporters’ food review!**

| Atmosphere | ★★★★★
| Service    | ★★★☆☆
| Value      | ★★★☆☆
| Food quality | ★★★★★☆
| Worth revisiting | ★★★☆☆
| Overall   | ★★★★☆

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