

Love is All Around

Mr Li Ka-shing's philanthropic programme *Love Ideas, Love HK* has reshaped the way Hong Kongers think about community spirit

By Teri Fittsell



TWO WORDS sum up the overwhelming feeling at the *Love Ideas, Love HK* Sharing Session in December – joy and passion. Representatives of the 177 winning projects in this community-spirited programme were overjoyed at having won enough votes to put their ideas into action through the generosity of the Li Ka Shing Foundation (LKSF) and every one of them was truly passionate about those projects.

Perhaps the electricity and excitement in the air should not have surprised anyone – for since its launch in September last year, LKSF's *Love Ideas, Love HK* programme has lit a spark in this city – a spark of altruism and community spirit that some doubted even existed.

Hong Kong has a reputation for its wealth creation, so it is inspiring to see how *Love Ideas, Love HK* brought out a different aspect of the city's character – social entrepreneurship instead of financial entrepreneurship. The programme is actually reshaping the way people think about caring for others.

Comedian/radio DJ Lam Chiu-wing, who won funding for his idea to cheer up patients by doing stand-up comedy in hospitals, summed it up when he said: "The programme has really got people thinking creatively about how to help their community. It has created a platform for selflessly helping others and provided the means to do so – I think that's why it has sparked a whole new way of thinking in Hong Kong. It's truly inspiring to see the innovative ways people have found to help those in need."

Mr Li Ka-shing made a speech at the sharing session in which he quoted former United States President Theodore Roosevelt's famous *In the Arena* speech, originally delivered at the Paris Sorbonne University in 1910, that "The credit . . . belongs to the man who does actually strive to do the deeds."

For that is what this HKD300 million philanthropic campaign, whose umbrella title is *Love HK Your Way!* is all about: giving people the means to help each other. It goes further than just financial support, too. At the sharing session, representatives from Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) and charitable body St James' Settlement (SJS), were on hand to advise people how to implement their plans successfully, and these two bodies will actively help winners to put their ideas into action.

After all, most of the winners are new to philanthropy and do not have experience in running a charitable programme. During a speech Josephine Lee, Senior Manager of Corporate Venture-Partnership & Alliance at SJS, talked about what it means to be a charity. She said the *Love Ideas, Love HK* programme advocated care for the community and encouraged creativity, which dovetailed nicely with SJS's own objectives. She also offered practical advice, reminding people to plan carefully how to allocate the money. "Be clear about your objectives, stick with your original plan."

The programme has also been given the support of the HKCSS, whose Business Director Cliff Choi said at the sharing session the Council was delighted that the programme connected and mobilised the public to be more thoughtful to those in need. He urged the winners to call the Council if they ran into difficulties and needed help. "Tell us early if you discover you will have cash left over from your project. We can advise you how best to use it to further the benefits to others," he said.

Ms Lee from SJS also warned that the work can be tiring, but added: "Please call us immediately if you

“[The programme] has created a totally **original** way for corporations, individuals and social organisations to **work together.**”

*Opposite: Mr Li Ka-shing gives a warm welcome to the enthusiastic winners of the first *Love Ideas, Love HK* programme.*





DJ Lam Chiu-wing aims to cheer up patients by doing stand-up comedy in hospitals.



feel you are losing sight of your goals or losing your passion for your project.”

The ideas that *Love Ideas, Love HK* sparked are certainly varied and imaginative. The range is astounding: from providing specially equipped transport to enable victims of spinocerebellar ataxia to participate in various activities, through creating a rock music class to keep teens creatively occupied, to

DJ Lam’s idea for performing stand-up comedy in hospital wards.

Interestingly, the reasoning behind his concept was largely fear.

“I’ve always feared hospitals,” explained DJ Lam. “But, at least when I visit I can always leave. However, there are many patients who have to stay for long

periods of time. I wanted to overcome my own fear of hospitals, but I wasn’t sure what I could bring. Then I thought – I am good at telling jokes, so why not perform stand-up at hospitals?”

Already, the Queen Mary Hospital has contacted him to arrange some performance dates, and he is spreading the word to other hospitals which are interested. “I remember watching the movie *Punchline* in which Tom Hanks’ character says something like if you can make a room full of patients laugh, then you can make anybody laugh,” said DJ Lam.

One of the most encouraging aspects to emerge from the wave of social entrepreneurship that *Love Ideas, Love HK* set in motion was an ability to think outside the box and beyond the usual “causes” and bring to the fore needs that have otherwise gone unnoticed. For instance, for students at the Fresh Fish Traders School, most of whom are from low-income families, scraping together the HKD900 to buy a new uniform can be difficult.



School principal Leung Kee-cheong believes *Love Ideas, Love HK* draws attention to lesser known causes.



Carmen Chan, whose project will aid stray dogs and cats in Yuen Long, brought along some of her four-legged friends.



Identifying this need, school principal Leung Kee-cheong came up with an idea to supply and recycle uniforms to students in the school. In the past older students leaving the school have sometimes donated their uniforms to the younger kids. But now, with the help of the money donated by the LKSF the school can buy enough uniforms for all.

Under the programme, students still have to pay for the uniforms but only approximately HKD20 for each set, a fraction of the real cost. This money is then refunded when they return the uniform at year-end. Asked why the uniforms couldn't now simply be given to the students for free, Mr Leung explained that if there is a nominal fee, the parents still qualify for the school uniform subsidy from the social welfare.

Mr Leung believes strongly in sharing and in promoting real community spirit. That is why he was particularly taken with the *Love Ideas, Love HK* programme. "In short," he said, "I love it!"

"The programme promotes creativity and draws attention to lesser known causes. It encourages ordinary people to take part – either by submitting ideas or by voting." He also feels that it is an impor-

tant lesson in how mega corporations can give something back to society and he hopes others will follow suit.

Carmen Chan's *Love Ideas, Love HK* project is certainly practical. She aims to alleviate Yuen Long's stray dogs and cats problem by rounding up the animals and having them neutered. Previously, she has been doing this with a group called Happy Animals, but their efforts have always been restricted by lack of funds. "It costs HKD1,000 to neuter a dog and sometimes several thousand to treat them."

She applied for the grant not only to raise money for the vets' bills but also to raise awareness about the neuter and return programme so that hopefully the government will adopt such a programme as its official solution to the problem of stray animals in Hong Kong.

At the moment, the policy is to round up stray animals and destroy them. "In 2009, 13,000 dogs were put to death by the government," said Ms Chan. "We are proposing a more humane treatment of these strays."

She sees the *Love Ideas, Love HK* programme as a great opportunity and is thrilled that it has inspired so many people into taking action to help others. As for next round. . . "I have tons of ideas!" she smiled.

One of the more unusual ideas submitted to last year's programme came from the Hong Kong Youth Employment Network (HKYEN) which proposed a scheme, called Working Reality, to help students about to leave school to prepare for the workplace. It's a simple idea, but voters liked it because it's an area that few people actually think about.

Wong Man-shun of HKYEN explained how the idea was developed. "We realised that students nowadays don't learn about work ethics, work environment and dynamics. Through this programme students will set up their own 'companies' and learn about human resources management, sales, marketing, promotions and actually get to practise them."

HKYEN aims to begin the workshops, targeting Form 5 students, in March this year in 20 schools, enabling about 4,000 students to take part. "We want to inspire them to think about their career development," said Mr Wong.

He thinks the beauty of this idea is that it is ongoing, students can run with it and really get to know how the workplace works. He feels that *Love Ideas, Love HK* is a similar "ongoing" project, which is why it inspired him in the first place. "It is not only very creative and innovative, but also very transparent," he said. "I love the way you can see how new ideas will now develop from other ideas already submitted. People are looking at this first programme and already thinking ahead to how they can take the ideas further forward next time. It has created a totally original way for corporations, individuals and social organisations to work together."

The emphasis is certainly on originality for Making Their Dreams Come True, an idea

submitted by the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel HK District Ltd. If it weren't for *Love Ideas, Love HK* this is the kind of idea that would probably never get funding from more conventional channels – but it's a cute, fun idea and voters deemed it worthy of support.

Bearing in mind that it is easy for old people to become isolated in their own homes as they become older and less mobile, the church proposed a project to get them thinking about countries they have always wanted to visit and then holding special themed evenings based on those countries, including the national food, talks, music, etc. The church will also take photos of the senior citizens in front of backdrops of the countries (for example in front of the London Bridge) and deliver enlarged prints of the pictures to their homes.

Wong Shui-lin of the church believes the idea will encourage senior citizens to think beyond their own daily boundaries, give them a bit of fun and “enable the church to gain a better understanding of their needs.”

Hong Kong's elderly citizens were also the inspiration for *The Last Photo*, a project submitted by students Gabriel Yu and Benson Hung. They propose taking photos of elderly people to be used as the display photo at their funerals. It may seem like a rather depressing, even macabre idea, but as the two young lads discovered it is a service rarely provided yet there is a big demand for it.


The idea was born after Mr Yu met a film director in Australia who was making a documentary on funerals. “It sparked my interest and made me realise this was an area we could explore,” he said.

Mr Hung added, “we noticed that senior citizens tend to be forgotten in Hong Kong. We actually had the idea before the *Love Ideas, Love HK* programme was launched, but realised it would give us the means to put our idea into practice.”

“So far two nursing homes have approached us since we won the funding,” said Mr Yu. “We are buying equipment that is easily portable so we can also visit people in their own homes. We intend to proactively seek senior citizens in need of this service.”

The two lads believe that without the unique opportunity offered by *Love Ideas, Love HK*, their project may never have got off the ground. “What is great about the programme is there is no mandate or strict framework on what needs to be done. It allows people from different walks of life to use their creativity. Some ideas simply would not have secured funding through conventional channels . . . *Love Ideas, Love HK* has meant the small ideas as well as the big ones can flourish,” said Mr Yu.

“It has enabled us to do three meaningful things,” added Mr Hung. “One, to prove to others that the post-80s generation can contribute in a meaningful way. Two, to inspire other young people to contribute time and energy to society. And three, to provide an immediate service for senior citizens.

“Right now, all my friends are talking about *Love Ideas, Love HK*. It has really ‘infiltrated’ society and had an immediate impact on people in need – not at a macro level, but at a micro level. It has also shown us that the biggest – that is, a mega corporation – has not forgotten the smallest in our society.” 

Making Their Dreams Come True gives the elderly a “virtual trip” to their favourite destinations worldwide.



Without *Love Ideas, Love HK*, students Benson Hung (left) and Gabriel Yu would never have been able to put their Last Photo service into action.





How Love Ideas, Love HK works

The premise for the programme was simple – to help those in need. And the idea behind *Love Ideas, Love HK* was to ask the public who exactly was in need, how could they be helped, and then to give them the funds necessary to do the helping.

With *Love Ideas, Love HK*, anyone could put forward ideas for causes they thought worthy of support – the only real criterion was that they must benefit the local community. People had more than a month to submit their ideas, then between 1 and 21 November anyone could vote for the projects they felt most deserved funding. Winners would receive the funding they had requested.

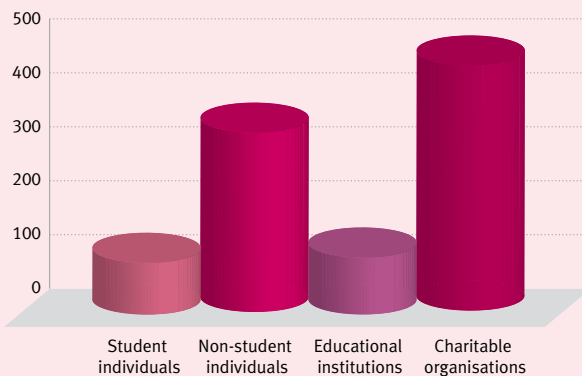
A total of 1,029 project ideas were received by the LKSF, of which 674 were considered eligible and uploaded for voting. Mr Li Ka-shing took a personal interest in the programme and he chose 12 projects that had touched his own heart. After the final count, 177 emerged as winners who would receive the funding they had requested to undertake their project.

Love Ideas, Love HK is part of a HKD300-million campaign called “*Love HK Your Way!*” to engage Hong Kong citizens in charitable activity and to elicit innovation and creativity to make Hong Kong a better place to live.

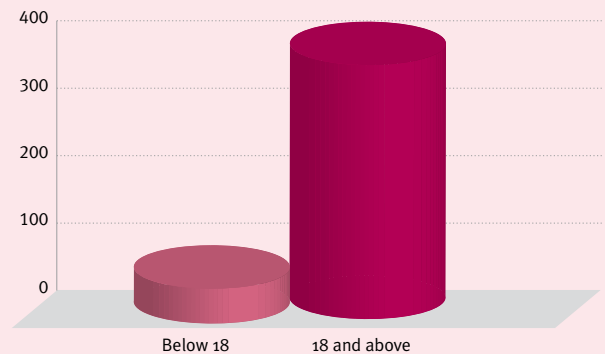
The following are some statistics about the first round of applications:

Total number of applications received **1,029**

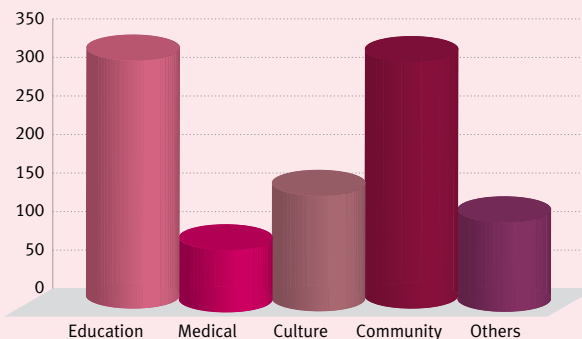
Applicants by category



Individual applicants by age



Applications by project nature*



Eligible applications **674**

Number of winning projects **177**

Grant amount awarded **HK\$28 million**

* Remarks: Beneficiaries of projects include senior citizens, teenagers, people with disabilities, minorities, new immigrants, low-income families, prisoners, etc. There are also projects advocating cultural development, music, animal care and environmental protection.