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30th Anniversary
The Hongkong Bank Foundation

Healthy vegetarian cuisine is served with a hearty ladle of smiles mixed with flamboyant gesticulation between the hearing-impaired serving staff and diners at Wan Chai eatery Happy Veggies. This brand of social enterprise is typical of those being cultivated by the HKCSS-HSBC Social Enterprise Business Centre (SEBC) to let the underprivileged shine.

"Unleashing Potential, Enriching Life" series

HSBC OFFERS SOCIAL ENTERPRISES BUSINESS ADVICE

Uncovering talent

Smiles are always served at Happy Veggies by its dedicated staff, half of them are hearing-impaired. Their palpable happiness comes from the due recognition that they are just as capable as their hearing counterparts, if not more.

While the restaurant, claimed as the first social enterprise in Hong Kong to serve vegetarian food, provides jobs for the underprivileged, it has delivered a lot more than that to its hearing-impaired employees - it has given them self-confidence.

Edmond Kwok, the restaurant's general manager, is pleasantly surprised by how well it has worked out for the restaurant too. "They use their eyes to make up for what they lack in hearing," he observes. For example, they are much quicker at spotting a teapot needing a refill or a customer signalling for service. Their superb memory serves them well in the catering industry too. "They are clearly better at certain things than people without hearing difficulties," Kwok admits.

Hearing-impaired star employee Samuel Chan used to hold clerical jobs but now works as the chef's assistant at Happy Veggies. He believes that recognition is a great motivator. "My colleagues come to me sometimes for solutions to their problems and it makes me feel confident about myself," he exclaims. "I'm training to be a chef. I hope I'll run my own restaurant

"Social enterprises must satisfy three key tenets: Be a pioneer. Be excellent and be unique."



A delightful venture - Happy Veggies creates opportunities for the underprivileged with the help of HSBC.

one day to give more jobs to the hearing-impaired."

Valuable mentorship

Social enterprises such as Happy Veggies owe their success to the HKCSS-HSBC Social Enterprise Business Centre. Funded by the Hongkong Bank Foundation and inaugurated in 2008, SEBC is Hong Kong's first business centre for social enterprises. "Social enterprises are a hybrid of commercial concerns and social welfare organisations. They support social causes through commercial operations," says SEBC's senior manager Howard Ling. "However, many social enterprises are run like charities. Through SEBC, HSBC hopes to share its commercial knowledge and management expertise to help make social enterprises commercially sound."

In the past three years, the centre has recruited over 1,100 volunteers

from the business community to be "Social Angels" who mentor social enterprises. About 100 of them are from various departments of HSBC.

Wings to fly

According to Ling, SEBC has two missions - to make the public aware of social enterprises' role in unlocking the strengths of the underprivileged, and to make social enterprises commercially viable.

"Social enterprises must satisfy three key tenets: Be a pioneer. Be excellent and be unique," Ling says. Happy Veggies, for example, distinguished itself from other vegetarian restaurants by serving homemade healthy vegetarian cuisine with all natural ingredients and no mock meat or MSG. Its winning formula was proven when the restaurant broke even within two months and returned a profit in six months, despite keen competition in



SEBC's Howard Ling applauds HSBC for the care it shows in supporting SEBC and social enterprises.

Wan Chai.

With a taste of success, Ling and SEBC harbour a bigger hope - that more companies will adopt the business model of combining profit-making with supporting the underprivileged to benefit more people.

Social Angels a godsend

Running a social enterprise has its challenges. "You put in 150 per cent but only get 70 per cent in return, plus there are a lot of bumps along the way," says Leung Pui-fung (left in the photo), founder of FAIRTASTE, a social enterprise promoting fair trade.

"Thankfully, professional help is at hand," she adds, referring to the Social Angels from SEBC. They offered valuable help when Leung was pricing Christmas hampers in 2009. The Social Angels suggested that a higher price tag with more products might make the gift more impressive.

"The hampers sold like hot cakes. The response was just overwhelming," Leung remarks.



HSBC employee offers sound advice

One of Leung's Social Angels was Eugene Litright (in the photo), a MBA graduate working at HSBC's IT division. He volunteered to become a Social Angel in early 2009 to share his business knowledge. "Social enterprises have great ideals for helping the underprivileged but they need commercial insight to realise them," he says. "Pooling together the different skills and ideas of Social Angels helps to trigger useful insights to propel them forward."

"In FAIRTASTE's Christmas hamper venture, the Social Angels worked together on the marketing and sales strategy. The process opened my eyes to the retail business too," says Li, believing that Social Angels learn as much as they impart in the process.

Hongkong Bank Foundation 30th Anniversary

Inaugurated 30 years ago, Hongkong Bank Foundation has helped more than 600,000 people annually through charitable programmes that cover all walks of life. It also supported many pioneering and worthwhile causes in education, environment and community.

The Foundation helped establish the HKCSS-HSBC Social Enterprise Business Centre in 2008, the first in Hong Kong to promote cross-sector collaboration on social enterprise development. The centre shares best practice on different business disciplines to help make social enterprises commercially viable. Some 300 social enterprises have benefited so far.

Celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, the Foundation has launched a series of programmes under the theme of "Unleashing Potential, Enriching Life" to mark the milestone year.

"My Dream Community" Photo and Drawing Competition

Visualise your ideal community through photography or drawing. Enter the competition and win prizes including an iPad 2 and book coupons.

"Community Explorer" Online Game Challenge

Win the Foundation 30th anniversary commemorative stamps in an interactive online game showcasing the potential of Hong Kong community and how the Foundation has addressed social needs across the society.

Visit: www.hongkongbankfoundation.org/30thanniversary

Life-changing job - Samuel Chan enjoys a more satisfying work life since joining social enterprise Happy Veggies.