

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Community Project Grant: Ageing Well with Youth Intergenerational Programme

Promoting mental health, bridging generations, and building a caring society

(January 20, 2024) Today, the Samaritans held the opening ceremony for the new programme office of The Hong Kong Jockey Club Community Project Grant: Ageing Well with Youth Intergenerational Programme. Funded by The Hong Kong Jockey Club Charities Trust, the programme is designed to enhance community mental health and in particular to prevent suicide.

In Hong Kong, people aged 60 and above have the highest suicide rate (according to data from Coroner's Court, with registered death date up 31 July 2023) , with social isolation being a major risk factor. At the same time, there is an increasing trend towards suicide amongst younger age groups, reflecting the mental pressures faced by the younger generation.

To address these issues, it is necessary to go beyond immediate crisis intervention to build public awareness of mental health. Therefore, in addition to its 24-hour hotline and email service, the Samaritans actively promotes community mental health education.

Social connectedness and community support networks are key factors in suicide prevention, which is the focus of the "Ageing Well with Youth Intergenerational Programme" established with the support of The Hong Kong Jockey Club.

Through the programme, young people are trained as "Youth Ambassador Volunteers", equipped with the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to connect with society, enhance mental well-being, and prevent suicide. In addition, an "Elderly Mental Well-being Nurture Group" helps older people embark on a journey of personal growth and enhanced mental wellness. Through training and group counselling, the programme improves the mental health of both youth and the elderly. Subsequently, the Youth Ambassador Volunteers will organize inter-generational workshops for the elderly, promoting care and empathy between the two generations. Additionally, the programme provides mental health training for parents and teachers, enhancing their ability to support the mental health of adolescents.

The programme has shown significant effectiveness (Please see the program figures in the following page). The training of youth ambassador volunteers and group counselling for the elderly have received positive feedback, helping to break the taboo surrounding mental distress and suicide-related issues.

The inter-generational interaction has helped the elderly feel the care of the younger generation, strengthening their self-esteem and sense of purpose through sharing life experiences and wisdom. The activities planned by the youth volunteers have been highly praised and recognised by the elderly, providing an important impetus for the positive self-development and self-esteem of young people. In addition to sharing positive energy and mutual care, some young volunteers have reflected on their neglect of their elderly family members, awakening a sense of care and respect for the elderly in their surroundings.

The link is the photos of the ceremony and the program video.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1G3CYLlkpfPgKkZgzApahVB0uitXIO4ef>

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About Samaritans:

Samaritans is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing emotional support to individuals in distress, preventing suicide, and promoting mental health in Hong Kong. They offer a 24-hour multi-lingual hotline and email service, as well as community outreach and education programmes.

The Hong Kong Jockey Club Community Project Grant: Ageing Well with Youth Intergenerational Programme – Program statistics

Elderly

160 elderly individuals from 13 elderly centres participated in 8 group work sessions on well-being, joining 4 inter-generational workshops facilitated by youth ambassadors.

Results:

Nearly 90% of the participants expressed their intention to apply the tips and skills they learned to enhance their own well-being, demonstrating an increased understanding of how to improve their overall state of well-being.

80% of the participants reported an improvement in their mental health condition.

More than 70% of the participants experienced a reduction in negative emotions.

Youth

165 youth ambassadors from 8 schools received 6 training sessions on mental health awareness and led inter-generational workshops for the elderly participants.

Results:

More than 90% of the participants were able to:

- apply the skills they learned to provide support to at-risk elderly individuals.
- apply the knowledge gained to organize life education activities at schools.
- demonstrate an increased understanding of suicide prevention and acquired active listening skills.
- gain a deeper comprehension of the emotional needs of at-risk elderly individuals.

More than 70% of the participants experienced an improvement in their mental health condition.

More than 60% of the participants reported an enhanced sense of self-confidence and a greater willingness to volunteer for suicide prevention efforts.

Public

4,200 members of the public, including children, youth, elderly individuals, parents, and teachers, actively participated in various talks and seminars aimed at raising awareness about well-being. These sessions provided valuable information on how and where to seek support when needed.