

Daffodil Day

Chinese volunteers joining forces with the local community to help a good cause



CASS volunteers selling daffodils at Hurstville Station

People of Chinese background have a special love of daffodils. These golden flowers are often part of annual Lunar New Year celebrations. During that special time, people tie a red ribbon around a pot of daffodils and add a red *hui chun* note with the message: *Good fortune arrives as flowers bloom*. Daffodils, flowering early in the season, are believed to bring luck and peace, new life and hope.

Bright yellow “Western” daffodils are different from those grown in China. In Australia in August, as spring begins and the flowers bloom, the Cancer Council organises its fundraising Daffodil Day.

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Flowers and souvenirs are sold to raise funds for this worthy cause. This is an activity widely supported by the Australian community. Volunteers can be seen all over the country selling fresh daffodils in public places, and businesses such as supermarkets and petrol stations join in.

CASS has been supporting Daffodil Day for many years. Souvenirs are displayed and sold at our Head Office and among our different Activity Groups. In 2012, eight of our volunteers joined forces with others to sell flowers at Hurstville Station, contributing their time and energy to this good cause.

By seven in the morning, four CASS volunteers had already arrived at the station to join other dedicated volunteers. Stationery and teddy bears were also on offer, but the star was of course the bunches of fresh daffodils.

Most of our volunteers were seniors, but their work was just as productive as that of younger volunteers. Many Chinese Australians use the station and our volunteers could communicate easily with them in fluent Cantonese or Mandarin. When greeting travellers, they charmed them with lovely smiles and *Good Morning* in their first language. They were able to explain to potential customers the meaning and benefits of what they were doing. And their hard work paid off.

The meaning of volunteers' involvement cannot simply be measured

by sales. There was a palpable sense of pride among our volunteers. One volunteer spoke of how thankful she was for the opportunity to give back to the community. She had come to Australia from Hong Kong only three years ago. When she first arrived, she had felt lonely and isolated because of not being fluent in English, so unable to understand what was happening around her. Every day when family members went to work or school, she was left alone.

By chance, she attended one of CASS Activity Group meetings, and her life began to change. She met new friends and her social network expanded. Talks organised by the Group gave her information on health, and revealed how she could become involved in community activities. Her life has now become much more fulfilling. On Daffodil Day, she was so excited she got up at six in the morning and was the first volunteer to arrive at the station. After a hard morning's work, she was exhausted, but also flushed with pride, elated because she at last felt genuinely part of the Australian community.

Now she is no longer isolated. She is a true Australian citizen, working hand in hand with others to make a valuable contribution to health in her new country.

Next August, when the daffodils bloom again, we hope many other members of the Chinese Australian community will come out and help support this vital cause.

Originally published in September 2012

Our Compelling Obligation

Chinese Volunteers Recruitment Project



Some CASS volunteers, showing the organisation's commitment to volunteer training

Many people from non-English-speaking backgrounds feel lucky to be able to live in Australia, this Western country down under, with its people from so many different backgrounds. Such diversity of language and culture, however, means that some people from ethnic backgrounds find it difficult to fit in without feeling foreign.

Volunteering is highly valued in this country, both by the community and the government. While many of Chinese background wish to contribute, they may find it difficult to find the right place to start. With increasing numbers of clients coming from different backgrounds,

local community organisations also face difficulties in matching volunteers with clients of similar ethnicity. There is a growing need to recruit volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Unfortunately, lack of resources and appropriate skills have made it difficult for small local organisations to recruit, train and supervise appropriate volunteers.

Dr Lee Fay Low of the University of New South Wales has worked towards providing a solution to the problem of matching multicultural volunteers and local organisations. In a research study, she wrote: “One of the channels to help local community organisations finding Chinese volunteers is through the help of an established Chinese community organisation.”

CASS was quick to respond to Dr Low’s idea. At a press conference in March 2012, Mr Mark Coure MP launched the innovative project: *“Our Compelling Obligation”: Chinese Volunteers Recruitment Project*. CASS said it hoped that this could bridge the gap between community organisations and volunteers.

CASS has since played a significant bridging role. It registers people interested in becoming volunteers and also local committees of organisations such as the Red Cross, Meals on Wheels and Community Transport, which need Chinese Australian volunteers. CASS matches the needs of the organisations with volunteers with the required skills. At the same time, it provides training and support for the volunteers.

Dr Low’s assessment of our project has been positive. She says that

CASS is well placed to partner with local groups. Volunteers have played a vital role in the development and daily operations of CASS. It has been providing services for the Chinese community for over 30 years and has earned the wider community's respect and trust.

For some years, the far-sighted Board of CASS has adopted a professional approach to the management of volunteers. It is one of only a few ethnic organisations willing to put self-funded resources into the management of volunteers. It is probably the only ethnic organisation which made a submission to the government inquiry into volunteering. Such actions show that CASS has the vision and experience to manage and promote volunteering in the Australian community.

At the 2012 press conference, the Research and Policy Manager of the Centre for Volunteering, Mr Tony Frew, shared the touching story of a Chinese volunteer, Ms Lam. She said, "I am only one of the thousands of migrants from Hong Kong who now live in Sydney. For Ann, a 95-year-old Chinese lady living in a home where staff members speak only English, I am the only friend who can speak her language. For four years, I have been visiting her regularly. While Ann can no longer remember the faces of her children or grandchildren, she recognises me! Because I have spent time with her, she returns my care with love and gratitude."

CASS is always looking for new volunteers. Give us a call and come and join our team.

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Vision Without Sight

A conversation with Henry Pan

A 2013 report in the alumni newsletter of the University of New South Wales described how Mr Henry Pan of CASS has been supporting education in Australia by donating \$2,000 each year to a scholarship for talented students.

Henry is best known for his contributions over three decades to community services. His support for education is less well known. He has a long relationship with the University of New South Wales, coming from Singapore when he was young to study there. He spent four years studying Mechanical Engineering and graduated with First Class Honours, top of his class and the winner of a University Medal. His alma mater made a deep impact on his later life. He is forever grateful to the lecturer who opened up the world of kinetics and power mechanics to him.

In the beginning, Henry could understand only 20 per cent of the lectures. But he was gradually drawn into the world of mechanics: the angle formed when objects fall or the friction generated when a spaceship meets air during take-off. He became so fascinated by the field that he immersed himself in studies and research, trying to find out as much as he could. His outstanding academic success did not come through luck, but was a result of his diligence and persistence.

Many people reminisce about the past, emotionally inflating their memories. Henry, by contrast, is a person who acts. He shows appreciation for the University, his respected mentors and his

Henry Pan's interview on the UNSW alumni newsletter, as shown on the University's Website



profession not by praising them, but by doing something. “If I have the means, I would like to support diligent and outstanding students,” he said. His donations to the scholarship show not only appreciation for his University, but also reflect his firm belief in hard work. Modestly, he often says, “I am not smart, but I am a very diligent person.”

In the modern world where repetitive learning and persistent practice are not encouraged, he hopes that his message concerning the importance of a “diligent attitude” can be heeded. He is also grateful to his parents, who always supported his learning, instilling in him a sense of self-discipline and initiative.

He is concerned that many modern parents rely too much on coaching for their children. While sending them to coaching colleges may improve short-term examination results, these will not be sustained if parents are not also involved in laying strong foundations for their children’s growth and learning.

Since the loss of his eyesight, Henry no longer has paid work. As the Honorary Executive Director of CASS, he manages the overall operation of the organisation – but as a volunteer, with no

remuneration. Many people, concerned about how he funds daily living expenses, feel that his generous donations are reckless.

Sighted people can only imagine his gloomy and lonely world of darkness, with all its potential dangers. Henry dismisses these concerns and worries with one word: simplicity. By living a simple life, he can save what he has and donate to those in need in the community.

“I need only two basic meals a day,” he says. “I never think of going to movies or travelling. In my life there is little need of money since there is not much to spend it on.”

He continues, “I will continue to use what I have to help where it’s needed, for example, in education and the building of aged care facilities. I hope others can do the same.”

The life he leads is not something Henry has undertaken lightly. He has chosen to act out of genuine altruism. While he lives with a physical disability that makes him disadvantaged, he has never given up his ideals. He continues to put others’ needs first.

While life may be seen as giving him a poor run, the tragedy has also emphasised his noble character. Though he has lost his sight, he has clear vision. He continues to contribute to society through his volunteer work and generous donations.

He never laments his loss because his heart is filled with a sense of satisfaction in his work. His physical limitations have not restrained his generous heart.

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Seniors And Children Together

CASS Residential Aged Care Facility

winning an architectural award



Interaction of seniors and children at Campsie Child Care Centre

“Intergenerational programs” and “intergenerational living” have recently become popular concepts in aged care provision. Intergenerational living communities have emerged in countries such as the United States and Germany where the population is rapidly ageing. By offering seniors opportunities to interact with younger generations, they reignite their joy in life. Children learn how to relate to, and care for seniors.

There is something special about the location of the CASS Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF) in Campsie. From the outside, visitors

can appreciate the modern design of the building and the abundant plants in the garden. Looking out from a balcony, residents can see the CASS Campsie Child Care Centre next door, full of children laughing as they play. Nearby, the CASS Activity Hall is crowded with middle-aged people meeting and doing what they enjoy. The happy sounds of their voices float up.

Three different services for three different generations are so close that participants can see what is happening next door. Although there are safety fences between the areas, it is clear at all times what is happening in each. When RACF residents relax at their windows, on their balconies or in the gardens, they can see and hear everything.

The CASS RACF won the 2015 Urban Development Institute of Australia NSW Award for Excellence. The Foundation Chairperson and Honorary Executive Director of CASS, Mr Henry Pan, commented, “We had intergenerational interactions in mind when we were planning the construction of the RACF. While CASS has been providing aged care services over the years, apart from adhering to Australian guidelines and regulations, we have always paid attention to new concepts and developments in the industry. When we found innovative ideas or experiences from other countries that would benefit our seniors, we would try to integrate them into our services.”

“The design of our RACF also has connections with our cultural roots. In Chinese culture, intergenerational living is common and is a symbol of happiness and wellbeing. When people of different generations live together, seniors can find a smile every day and experience constant

stimulation from younger people. Children and young people can learn from seniors' experience and wisdom, while at the same time learning to understand the difficulties they experience in their daily lives. They can understand the traditional Chinese value of filial piety as they look after their seniors."

"In our service provision for seniors, we have gained understanding of their needs. Before the building of the RACF, we had run activities for them in the Activity Hall while providing day care services in the Campsie Child Care Centre. We saw how the seniors' faces lit up when they saw children playing. So we have regularly organised joint activities for seniors and children to enhance their interactions."

"Since intergenerational programs have been well received by both groups, we decided to implement that model when we designed the RACF. We were not aware then that many recent studies in aged care services had also pointed a similar way."

"The experience of CASS shows that when we watch and listen to seniors while caring for their needs, we will understand them better and be able to provide the best services."

Watching children and seniors interacting at CASS is heart-warming and comforting. The seniors who receive such loving care in the RACF are truly blessed.

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Cleaning Up For Everyone

CASS Ashfield Environmental Care Team



CASS Environmental Care Team Women's Group taking part in Clean Up Australia Day

On the first weekend of March every year, people all over Australia participate in a community event: the annual Clean Up Australia Day. It aims to raise awareness of the importance of caring for our environment, and to motivate people to take action.

What role do Chinese organisations and migrants play in such an event that is embraced by the broader Australian community? In Ashfield on Clean Up Australia Day this year, people can see a team

of Chinese seniors, mostly over 70, wearing pale blue t-shirts with the CASS logo, hard at work. They are the members of the CASS Ashfield Environmental Care Team, part of the Ashfield Activity Group.

They excitedly describe how they formed. In 1998, Activity Group members discussed how the main street of Ashfield and its mall were full of litter and cigarette butts. They were appalled by how dirty their surroundings were. They took the initiative to help clean the streets every week, a voluntary act that not only helped improve the cleanliness and amenity of the area, but also aimed at changing the attitude of those who drop rubbish.

CASS was supportive of their efforts. It approached Ashfield Council for approval for the formal establishment of the CASS Ashfield Environmental Care Team.

The Team has since become an active force in the area, literally bringing in a breath of fresh, clean air. Their work has earned a positive response and recognition from the wider community. The Council provided funding to purchase uniforms and equipment and the Mayor met Team members to show his appreciation. Some local cafes reward members with meal vouchers, as a token of support. And Team members are proud that many have been presented with awards by the government.

The Ashfield Environmental Care Team sits perfectly within the

framework of Clean Up Australia Day. It participates every year in this national event. Early in the morning of a recent Clean Up Day, Team members gathered at their meeting point, even the member who was suffering from knee problems and had difficulty walking. After a short briefing by CASS staff, Team members immediately busied themselves with collecting rubbish to add to that collected by other participants across the Australian community.

The night before the Day had been overcast, but the enthusiasm of the Team seemed to affect even the weather: the sky brightened, as if wanting to encourage them. After two hours of hard work, Team members dragged heavy bags of litter back to the meeting point. Their bright, rosy faces ran with sweat, but every drop was a reflection of the cleaner, fresher streets of Ashfield.

Chinese Australians in Ashfield have moved from the self-centred attitude of minding one's own business to taking the initiative to clean up their community. Chinese migrants have taken the giant step of showing they understand other Australians' care for their environment. Clean Up Australia Day has given them the opportunity to participate in activities which are a vital part of the wider culture. This helps build positive images and shows how they can join together with other Australians.

CASS will continue to help migrants contribute to the Australian community.

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Dragon Charity Walk

Helps The Wider Community

Reflection on the eve of Dragon Charity Walk 2015

The Dragon Charity Walk 2015 was a breakthrough. As well as fundraising for CASS, others also benefited from the money raised, including Harcourt Public School, the Heart Foundation and the Special Children Services Centre. CASS, the initiator in 2013 of the Walk, has always wished that it would not only benefit its own members and area, but also eventually extend its reach to the wider Australian community.

As long as 20 years ago, CASS helped other organisations in the community, including the Elderly Australian Chinese Homes Co-operative, the Children's Hospital and Canterbury Hospital. Now, through the dedicated efforts of participants, volunteers and organisers, the Dragon Charity Walk has established a good reputation in the community. This is reflected in the increasing number of participants.

Those gaining from the 2015 Walk represented the education, health and disability services sectors. Harcourt Public School is a well-regarded primary school in Campsie which provides venues for community language schools, including the CASS Chinese School. The Heart Foundation is dedicated to providing information and assistance to people suffering from heart disease. The Special Children

Services Centre assists those with developmental and speech delay and intellectual disability, by providing support and training. In strengthening the abilities of children with special needs, they are able to foster their potential and help them adapt to daily living. All of these organisations have made outstanding contributions in their respective fields.

The goal of CASS is to develop the Dragon Charity Walk as a regular event in the wider community. Using it as a platform to promote its services, CASS hopes that people can learn what it does and make an effort to support and contribute to it and the other organisations, either financially or through participation.

For two years, the route of the event passed the site where the CASS Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF) was being built. In 2015, walkers saw a brand new, elegant building on what had been muddy ground. The RACF has already been providing quality care in a modern setting for seniors. It won a prestigious award from the construction industry for aged care facilities.

A large group of people, including men, women, and children, are participating in a charity walk. They are walking along a paved path that runs alongside a green golf course. Many participants are wearing hats and carrying bags, suggesting a warm day. The path is bordered by a metal fence on the right side. The background shows a misty or overcast sky.

Community members participating in Dragon Charity Walk for a good cause

While delivering excellent services, CASS was, however, also shouldering the heavy financial burden of paying for the RACF's construction. Its cost exceeded 15 million dollars, an amount only partly supported by a low-interest loan from the federal government. The balance came from commercial borrowing arranged by CASS itself.

Since it started operating, CASS has tried to admit a greater number of low-income seniors to the RACF. As a result, the accommodation bonds so far received amount to much less than originally expected, increasing difficulties with repaying the loans. The CASS RACF needs generous donations from the community via fundraising activities such as the Dragon Charity Walk.

Using the slogan *Walk for Community Charities*, the Walk will be a continuing community development project. Through it, the altruistic values of Western culture can be extended from those in the Chinese Australian community to others. The event also promotes a healthy lifestyle encompassing exercise and recreation.

With more local organisations involved, CASS hopes that greater number of people of different ethnic backgrounds will participate in the Walk. Taking part in the 2015 event were not only the descendants of Chinese “dragons”, but others who knew that it would benefit people across the whole community.

Let's all walk together for a better future!

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