

The Sparkling Jewel Of CASS

Our precious volunteer – Dr Leng Tan



Dr Leng Tan has won numerous awards in recognition of her active participation in community affairs over the years

The present Chairperson of CASS, Dr Leng Tan, has been a General Practitioner (GP) for over 30 years. She listens and spends time with her patients, showing she has their wellbeing at heart. She has earned their trust and respect with her compassionate, loving care and sound advice, based on long experience. There is always a long queue at her clinic.

She is an elegant lady, respected by all. She attracts attention because of her warmth and charm. She is very down-to-earth and efficient in her work.

Another important role Leng plays is as a community leader. Ever since her university years she has shown strong leadership skills. When CASS was established in 1981, she was a founding member, looking after its finances. Together with the Foundation Chairperson, Mr Henry Pan and others, she dedicated time and energy to providing

VOLUNTEERS DEDICATED TO COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

a service similar to family day care. She worked hard to seek government funding to establish the child care services of CASS.

When the opportunity arose to buy a place that could be used as a child care facility, CASS did not have sufficient resources. Leng and her husband, together with Henry Pan and Cecilia Fong, used their own properties as security to secure a bank loan to buy the warehouse. Without the generosity of these founding members and their willingness to take the risk, the building of the Activity Hall, today used by so many people, would not have been possible.

While she was the Treasurer of CASS, Leng upheld her principles of thrift and hard work in running the organisation. Because it was in its initial stage of development, she knew limited resources should be employed wisely and efficiently. Leng never uses public money for personal use; instead, she often pays for things for CASS. As well as leading, she also likes to mix with members and provide help where needed. She does not just attend Board meetings, but many CASS gatherings and activities, chatting heartily with others, always showing care and concern. She can often be seen washing dishes and cleaning venues after CASS functions. She is the “big sister” of the CASS family.

For a while, Leng left CASS to attend to other community roles. However, she readily stepped in when the organisation was in crisis in 2006. Amidst all the turbulence, she remained objective and fair, playing an important role in bringing people together.

In September 2008, she was elected Chairperson. Working with the Honorary Executive Director, Henry Pan and other Board members,

remedial work began and they were able to turn the finances of CASS from deficit to surplus. Under her leadership, new services were developed and CASS began expanding.

Leng is also involved in other community organisations. Since 1990, she has been the Vice Chairperson of the Chinese Youth League of Australia. She was also involved in co-ordinating the work of community organisations such as the Australian Council for the Promotion of Peaceful Reunification of China, the Australian Council of Chinese Organisations and the Australian Hokkien HuayKuan Association.

She has also played a key role as humanitarian ambassador for Australia by volunteering her professional medical services. Through her involvement in “Eyes on China”, she has assisted in providing free cataract surgeries to people in remote and poor regions of the country. For many years she has joined these annual expeditions, and helped change the lives of hundreds of people with the gift of sight. Whatever role she plays, she shows prowess, efficiency, love and passion.

While Leng commits herself to communities, she never forgets her important role in her own family as a loving wife and caring mother. Her husband is also a GP and an influential community leader. The couple shares a common passion and commitment to community affairs. At home, she makes sure her family has healthy meals and supports her children in all their pursuits.

Leng carries out all her different roles faultlessly. Her dedication and compassion make her an admirable role model. She does not simply talk; she takes action. She is loved and respected in the CASS family and in the community. This sparkling jewel is the pride of CASS.

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Knowledge And Dedication

*Dr Bo Zhou – a person with
profound knowledge and high qualifications*



Mr and Mrs Zhaoxu Ma, Chinese Ambassador to Australia, with Mr and Mrs Bo Zhou

Dr Bo Zhou, Deputy Chairperson and Treasurer of CASS, is full of far-sighted wisdom. Bo graduated from Peking University and came to Sydney in the 1980s to undertake postgraduate studies in Geology at the University of Sydney. After obtaining his PhD degree, he completed a three-year post-doctoral research project on the geology of Antarctica, at the University of New South Wales. He later received a MBA from the Australian Graduate School of Management, and is currently a senior management executive of an international company.

He says, “I read in the newspaper about CASS running a ballet class. Since I wanted my daughter to stay connected with Chinese culture while growing up in Australia, I enrolled her. CASS ran the classes

with limited resources, parents volunteering for various tasks such as setting up the venue and collecting fees. As one of these volunteers, I met Henry Pan. I later accepted nomination as a member of the CASS Board.”

Bo became the Treasurer. Over the years, he has focused on scrutinising each month’s financial performance. He also does translation work. He represents CASS at external events organised by governments or other community organisations. At a reception in 2016 organised by Federal MP, Mr David Coleman, for community leaders, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull spoke of his 20-year friendship with Bo; they had worked together at an international company. Bo was also the only Chinese community representative to be invited to the farewell reception for the former Chinese Ambassador to Australia, Mr Zhaoxu Ma.

But Bo does more than represent CASS at important events. He travels frequently between Australia and China for his own work, and often helps carry materials from China to CASS or vice versa. No one at CASS will forget how he carried thousands of biodegradable bags in several batches over a period of six months from China to Sydney, during his frequent flights between the two countries. His generous efforts helped CASS save lots of money, since the bags are made in China at low cost—and there were no delivery charges.

Times have changed since Bo noticed the newspaper article about CASS ballet classes. With developments in technology, new media platforms have become more popular. With Bo’s support and guidance, CASS has begun to use multimedia platforms to communicate with the community and its members.

What has fostered Bo's relationship with CASS over the last 20 years? It is heartening to know that he had tried volunteering for other community organisations, but in the end chose CASS. He is inspired by the CASS philosophy of serving the community, and its commitment to the welfare and rights of Chinese Australians. His is not a family connection, and nor is it a matter of career advancement or financial reward. There must be another strong force that sustains his dedication. He comments, "Perhaps it is the spirit of altruism."

Bo has vivid memories of the three dark years of internal turmoil within the organisation that began in 2006. He stood by Henry Pan when he was unfairly treated. He does not mention much about the injustice he himself experienced.

Bo has served on the CASS Board for 18 years, and is always working for the good of the organisation. He notes that it has suffered because of unnecessary internal conflict, but hopes it will continue to broaden its services, at the same time building its expertise, to become a leader in its field.

Different people use different criteria as measures of success. Some would point to having a happy family and career; others would say spiritual contentment and feeling at peace; still more seeing children growing up and spreading their wings to soar high. Bo fits all these. He is a man of profound knowledge, with a strong sense of what is right.

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The Resilient Gardener

Henry Pan – a man without sight yet full of vision

Former NSW Premier Morris Iemma presenting the Quong Tart Lifetime Achievement Award in Community Service to Henry Pan, accompanied by his wife, in 2007



On 8 January 2006, the Foundation Chairperson of CASS, Henry Pan, was attacked while helping a disadvantaged member in her home. Without warning, a thug violently attacked Henry and, in less than a minute, blinded him. Ever since he has been living in a world of darkness.

Many people were horrified at this tragic misfortune and bewailed Henry's loss of sight. Many offered their help. But not everyone. A small group within the management of CASS asked, "Can a disabled man lead CASS to its next stage, building on our last 25 years?" Some began to spread rumours about Henry's capability, using this chance to rob him of his Chairperson role. He was devastated, both physically and emotionally, by this treatment.

Some people would continue to blame fate for its merciless blow. Facing the brutal reality of the greatest challenge of his life, Henry

stood firm, sustained by unflinching willpower. He may have lost his sight, but he used his ears, his heart and his brain to make sense of his new dark environment. He used special software to control the keyboard to access his computer, typed, sent emails and listened to news on the Internet, just like everyone else.

For Henry, a further challenge was resolving the internal conflicts within CASS. He was heartened that people rallied around him, with a group of CASS and other community members organising a gathering, *Community Spirit of Henry Pan*, with over 500 people attending to celebrate his achievements and contributions. Afterwards, Australian government officials and successive Chinese Ambassadors and Consul-Generals conveyed their warmest concern. The Australian Council of Chinese Organisations presented him with an award in recognition of his achievements. In 2007, at a Lunar New Year function, he was presented with the Quong Tart Lifetime Achievement Award in Community Service by the then NSW Premier Morris Iemma.

In December 2007, the persistence of Henry and loyal CASS members finally paid off. A new Board was elected at the Annual General Meeting. While Henry had no wish to take the Chairperson position again, he continued to offer his skills, talents, vast experience and expert knowledge as a volunteer, to help the organisation further its development. With Leng Tan, Peng Bai, Bo Zhou, Dominic Sin, Peter Fong, Louise Wu, Tao Bai and Chuck Hong working as a team, CASS recovered gradually.

Henry's soul glows. He often has his wonderful wife by his side, lovingly taking care of him. Mrs Pan takes Henry to work and quietly supports him. Together, the couple has contributed to CASS for as long as it has operated. CASS has become their second home. Seeing Henry and his wife holding hands as they walk through the gate of

CASS, people are touched by the serenity of the couple and their sacrifice.

Henry's work takes no account of day and night: he simply keeps going. He has high expectations for CASS. It is not uncommon for colleagues to receive emails from him in the middle of the night. While everyone else is enjoying a good night's sleep, Henry is still working. He wants to use every minute. While he has a huge workload, he is highly efficient, causing people around him to forget his disability. He never asks for remuneration; instead, he pays for his lunch and never claims for transport expenses. He even pays his own phone bill.

Henry says he lives a simple life with few needs. While people describe him as the architect of CASS, he counters that he considers himself a hard-working gardener. He is now surrounded by admirers and supporters and has worked with this team to formulate a blueprint for the development of CASS for the next decade.

Henry might lack sight, but he is a visionary. He is relentless in his pursuit of his goals, aided by his intellect and wisdom, his exceptional memory, his extensive knowledge, his unwavering persistence, and his positive attitude towards life. He will not be beaten by tragedy brought by fate, and never stops believing in the value and meaning of what he is doing. He fights against all odds and battles upstream. Those around him are in awe of his indomitable spirit. He is indeed a great role model, for all at CASS, his children and grandchildren and the community.

The concerted efforts of CASS leaders have paid off. Like a beautiful garden, CASS is flourishing, full of colour and vitality.

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A Radiant Gem

Our committed volunteer George Poon

Summer is fast approaching. As this is not the season for apples, it is very difficult to get tasty ones at this time of the year. Every time when I have an apple, the sweet memories of the 10th Anniversary celebration of CASS Hua Xing Activity Group in 2014 creep into my mind. It was around noon on that day. Lunch had started. Apart from dim sum, everyone got an apple. With just one bite, you would be amazed by how crunchy, sweet and juicy the apples were.

A participant pointed to a short, unadorned elderly man and said, “You can’t get these apples easily in the markets. George and his wife



CASS volunteer George Poon – a humble, down-to-earth and caring gentleman

Julie have driven 4 hours to Orange to get them especially for us. Since George lived in Orange before, he knows the good soil in that area produces exceptionally good apples. Apart from the yumminess of the apples, we are also tasting the savour of kindness and love.”

George is a member of the CASS Council of Elders, and an Elder of the Hua Xing Activity Group. He is like a loving father, witnessing the birth of the Group. He is there all the way during its different stages of development, giving what he can without asking for anything in return.

In view of the growing population in Bankstown, CASS started the Hua Xing Activity Group there in 2004, providing a social venue for the lonely seniors to network and bond. Since day one of the Activity Group, George and Julie have been actively volunteering. They are there every Wednesday to look after the needs of participants. Butterflies will flock where flowers bloom. George and his mates believe that people would be attracted to the Group if they could provide a wide variety of activities that cater for their physical, social and emotional health: Tai Chi, aerobics, singing, snooker and chess games, etc. etc. George even visits the Chinese Consulate regularly to borrow Chinese movies for Group members to watch. The movies always bring back memories and connections for the viewers on their mother country.

George is also generous in both money and time. He is famous for his healthy homemade dim sum. He often uses his own money to

make dim sum which are low in fat and sugar. Under the nurturing care of George and his mates, the Group has matured and grown. The Group has become so popular that another gathering time has to be arranged on Thursdays. Around 120 people attend the Group activities every week.

As a kind and loving gentleman, George is always looking after those in need. Once, there was a man who lived alone and injured his shoulder, making it difficult to look after himself. When George knew about the matter, he offered to visit this man regularly to render him whatever assistance needed, such as cooking for him and cleaning his place. He had taken this up for two years until the man was fully recovered. Another illustration of his kindness was that George once made fresh buns for an old lady who had difficulty in swallowing. His kind act led to a miracle. The old lady was able to eat the soft fresh buns and said she had never tasted such nice buns in her life.

George is just like the apples he bought for us. While they may look plain and ordinary, there is something spectacular hidden inside. You will not be attracted to George by his looks or his height, yet his kindness and love will draw you in like a magnet. There is always positive energy that radiates around him. This humble, down-to-earth and caring gentleman is someone we can always trust and will always treasure!

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The Human Magnet

Dedicated volunteer Colin Chen

Someone once said, “There is a kind of seed, no matter where it is sowed, it will survive, spread its roots, bloom and bear fruits.” Colin Chen, the Group Leader of CASS Hua Xing Activity Group in Bankstown, is one of this kind.

I was invited to the Hua Xing Activity Group’s 8th Anniversary cum Dragon Boat Festival celebration in June 2012. When I entered the hall, I was greeted by an elderly gentleman with eyes brimming with vigour, and movement as nimble as a squirrel. With composure, he was attending to preparation work in details, while at the same time receiving the guests at the function.

Under the leadership of Colin, the Hua Xing Activity Group has become a new force in the wider Australian society in recent years. Whenever the local Council organises large-scale community events, the Group members often play an integral part, whether in performing or acting as volunteers – and they never fail to deliver!

The cohesiveness of the Group is largely due to the excellent leadership



CASS volunteer
Colin Chen works
hard in building
a harmonious
family for Hua
Xing Activity
Group members

of Colin. It is one of the largest among all the activity groups of CASS, with a regular attendance of 80 to 90 participants. Group members come from different walks of life and a mix of ethnicities, including Chinese, Caucasians, Vietnamese and Filipinos. It is not easy to manage such a diverse group. When members have different opinions, Colin is always able to unite them, convincing them with reasons, and securing a bond among members. He draws people together like a magnet.

Colin often reminds his Group members to show gratitude to those who have helped them. He fully understands the purpose of CASS in setting up the Hua Xing Activity Group – providing a venue for activities, form-filling service and a platform to help participants, especially migrants, solve their problems. Thus, whenever there is a need, Colin and the Group support CASS wholeheartedly.

As a caring person, Colin always puts the interests of others before

his own. Once, when the Group went on an excursion to the Art Gallery, he gave up the precious moments in accompanying his beloved wife to enjoy a cup of coffee surrounded by the glorious view of the harbour. Instead, he stayed with those who did not like coffee on the grass area and looked after them. At the Open Day celebrating the 30th Anniversary of CASS, Colin stayed with his Group members until they finished performing the last item at the conclusion of the function. He spent a total of 7 hours at the event!

When CASS commenced its Residential Aged Care Facility building project, Colin was appointed as a Benevolent Ambassador, entrusted with the responsibility of raising funds for the project. He was so committed to promoting the good cause – he even postponed the overseas trip his daughter had planned for him and his wife. The change of travelling dates had incurred extra cost for the trip, but he insisted on making the project his priority. He initiated the fundraising efforts in the Group and received a very enthusiastic response. Apart from the Group, he also worked hard seeking donations from friends and relatives. He showed his loving care to the project for the elderly through his great efforts.

Colin has won the respect and support of others because of his honesty and integrity, his careful consideration of others, and his selfless altruism. He has brought his experience and leadership skills to the Group, building a harmonious family full of fun and laughter for members of Hua Xing Activity Group. He is a human magnet that draws members together!

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A Well-Loved Role Model

*Hartono Arifin – veteran volunteer of
CASS Indonesian Activity Group*

Every weekday, we can see people from all walks of life going through the gate of No. 50 Sixth Avenue, Campsie: children escorted by adults skipping happily towards the child care centre; people of all ages making enquiries about community services at the Reception Office; and the seniors eagerly attending activities at the Activity Hall. This place is the Head Office of CASS.



Group Leader of
CASS Indonesian
Activity Group –
Hartono Arifin

There is a special scene on every Thursday morning. A tall handsome man stands at the gate entrance heartily welcoming the elderly participants. He helps unloading heavy goods from the van, or assists seniors out of the vehicle, or escorts those in wheelchairs to the Activity Hall. No matter how busy he is, he always greets people with a hearty smile. He is a CASS Board member and the Group Leader of the Indonesian Activity Group – Hartono Arifin.

Hartono and his mates begin their busy day early in the morning, preparing the venue and other tasks such as setting up tables and chairs, making tea, organising the sound system and preparing lunch. He is like a parent, looking after the family with tender loving care. He does not take things for granted and is aware of the tough road the Group has travelled. The Group was initially set up in Ashfield in 2003 with government funding for settlement services. However, when the funding ceased, group activities were terminated in 2007. The Foundation Chairperson of CASS, Henry Pan, revitalised the Group in 2008 by providing a small venue for the Group to continue its activities. In 2013, in view of the large number of participants, the Group moved from a 40-square-metre classroom to the CASS Activity Hall.

Hartono and the Group members were all grateful to CASS for its support. When some members tried to split the Group a few years ago, Hartono and the Group's Elder Shunniang Chan handled the situation resolutely. To enable more Indonesians to join the activities, he took the initiative to drive participants to the activities every week.

He also mobilised those who drive to do the same. While the Group reimburses him with transport allowance, Hartono has donated the money to the CASS Residential Aged Care Facility (RACF). As a strong leader of the Group, Hartono mobilised it to participate in the Dragon Charity Walk to help raise fund for RACF. The Group was the one with the most number of participants in the Walk.

Hartono shows loving care to all Group members and is quick to render assistance to anyone who needs a helping hand. There was an incident when a Group member had a stroke during the Group session. Hartono was quick to take action and managed to have the member safely transported to hospital without delay. There is also a member who has difficulty walking. Hartono makes sure the member can continue to join the activities and prepares a wheelchair to take him to and from the vehicle every week. He treats Group members as his family and often prepares yummy lunches for them.

Businessmen are often described as unscrupulous and corrupt. However, Hartono is not one of those people. While he was very successful in his business in the past, Hartono chose to give it up in his prime and decided to spend time giving back to the community. He has devoted his time and energy to serve his mates and the elderly. He has been very committed to the Indonesian Activity Group and has earned the love and respect of Group members.

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The Power Of Many

Ms Teresa Chu – winner of Highest Number of Sponsors Award in Dragon Charity Walk



Teresa Chu receives her award from Councillor Jeanette Wang at the Dragon Charity Walk Award Ceremony in 2014

At the end of 2014, the annual CASS gathering for aged care services clients and their families was held. Awards were also presented for the Dragon Charity Walk for that year. An elegant lady received two awards. She is Ms Teresa Chu, the passionate and talented leader of Hua Kang Seniors Group, which has hosted many CASS activities.

The Dragon Charity Walk is a big annual event of CASS. It was established to raise funds for the first CASS Residential Aged Care

Facility. Several awards were set up to reward eager participants. Teresa won those for the Highest Number of Sponsors and the Second Highest Amount of Sponsorship – two of the six. The Hua Kang Seniors Group that she led was presented with the Award for the Group/Organisation with the Highest Amount of Sponsorship.

Teresa was the central motivator and organiser, encouraging her family, friends and Group members to contribute money and effort for CASS.

The Hua Kang Seniors Group, which gathers at the Hurstville Senior Citizens Centre at 91 Queens Road, Hurstville, is an extended family for its members. It operates for two days every week. The Dance Group is held every Thursday and the Activity Group every Friday.

Teresa joined the Group in 2007. In less than two years, she was elected as a member of the Local Management Committee and the leader of the Friday Group. Her integrity, wholehearted service and commitment were evident to everyone.

As the Leader of Friday Group, Teresa was successful in creating a family environment for its members. From ensuring that the venue was clean to contacting the local government representatives, she is always present with her colleagues to take care of things. The problem might be an inadequate water supply or malfunctioning audio equipment in the Centre. So off she goes to inform the Council at once to fix the problem. If the Group is unfairly treated, she stands up and fights for their interests. Her caring attitude has won respect

and praise.

The common vision which she shares with CASS fuels her work. She knows it is to help the elderly and disadvantaged in the community and advocate for them, through providing multifaceted welfare services.

In 2011, Teresa was elected to the CASS Board as an Alternate Director. When the idea of raising funds to build a residential aged care facility was raised, she actively responded, encouraging Group members to make generous donations during the monthly birthday parties and celebrations. She knows that small amounts can soon add up.

Together with Jie Hua Li, Fat Leong and Polly Po Tang, Teresa raised more than \$30,000 in two years. For two years in a row, she won the Highest Number of Sponsors Award in the Dragon Charity Walk, adding each time to the people who donated. With her passion and determination, she has strongly demonstrated how she can lead and motivate.

Teresa often hosts CASS activities such as the annual Volunteers Thanksgiving Party, the Dragon Charity Walk performance program and the Aged Care Information Expo. Her calm grace on stage is noticed and praised by all audiences.

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Beneath The Blooming Flowers

Canterbury 2015 Australia Day

Outstanding Volunteer – Ming Xu



Ming Xu receiving the Canterbury 2015 Australia Day Outstanding Volunteer Award from Mayor Brian Robson

Those who witness and participate in the spectacular scene of one thousand people doing Tai Chi together at the CASS 30th Anniversary Celebration will remember it forever. At that grand performance, a lady dressed in white Tang costume stood in front to lead the audience performing the “Tai Chi 18 Moves”. Behind her, standing in a hidden corner was an unsung hero in charge of planning the performance. She is the teacher who visited various activity groups six months prior to the event to teach the exercises. Watching the performance from the back, she had an overwhelming sense of

satisfaction and joy. She was the Tai Chi teacher of Campsie Activity Group, Ms Ming Xu.

Petite but agile, Ming came to Australia in 1995. She joined the CASS Campsie Activity Group in 2003. The wise and farsighted Ming shared her thoughts, “While the Australian Government has provided a relatively good welfare system for the elderly, CASS has also been offering many other services for the community. The running of activity groups at various locations has provided a place for isolated and lonely migrants to meet new friends and network, giving them the warmth and support of a family.”

Believing that one should reciprocate a favour with gratitude, Ming dedicates herself wholeheartedly to organising activities for the Group. As a professional engineer before her retirement, she maintains her conscientious and enthusiastic attitude in acquiring new knowledge and skills, including dancing, Tai Chi as well as Qi Gong. Whenever Group members request to learn a certain dance, she will learn the dance quickly first before teaching members gradually to cater to their abilities. She understands the gist of teaching and guides her students step by step. Though she is nearly eighty years old, she shows agility and elegance in her performance. She is a humble leader, often asking others to take the lead role in performance while she guides the team from behind the scene.

When the membership of Campsie Activity Group remained stagnant while other activity groups were expanding in numbers, she and a few concerned members proactively visited other groups to learn

from their successful experiences, conducted market research and reorganised the activities. With new programs such as Tai Chi, Gong Fu Fan Dance, Health Dance and English classes, many people joined the Group, increasing the membership from ten plus to over 40.

Apart from her role as a volunteer teacher for activity groups, Ming also volunteers to work in the CASS Day Care Centre two days a week caring for seniors, including distributing lunch and washing dishes. The volunteers formed the “Care for the Seniors Team”, the backbone enabling CASS to provide quality elderly services.

Having experienced political turmoil in her early life and witnessing the internal turmoil within CASS in 2006, Ming had hesitation joining any organisation as a member. However, she is observant, reflective and alert to community affairs. She reflected not long ago: “Since Mr Henry Pan returns to the CASS Board in 2007, there are many positive changes in the services and activity groups. I am excited to see CASS continually adding new services to help the disadvantaged. Though Mr Pan has lost his sight, he is still taking the leadership role to develop CASS. He is amazing!”

Since then, she has dedicated herself wholeheartedly in the affairs of CASS. She changed her previous distrust of organisations and took up CASS membership. Recently, she is actively involved in organising activities for celebrating the 35th Anniversary of CASS. Certainly, she will accompany CASS to a flourishing future!

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A Life Full Of Gratitude

George Kang – a dedicated volunteer



George Kang receiving the CASS Long Service Award at the “Hundred Flowers Blossom” celebration

Within the Ashfield community service circle, George Kang’s name is well-known as he has been actively involved for a long time in serving the area. He is 86 years old now and has been an active CASS volunteer for 17 years. He describes himself as someone who speaks Chinese mixing with lots of English. He can brew a cup of coffee with an aroma which lures even those who don’t normally drink coffee. This is a snapshot of this longstanding volunteer with Western flair.

George grew up in Old Shanghai at the height of its glory in the

1930s. He graduated from a prestigious Catholic university, grooming him to be a cultivated elite, possessing style and taste. The political changes in China in 1949 altered the traditional societal values. The once highly respected man suddenly became an unemployed social outcast. After overcoming lots of hurdles, George finally managed to get a job as a high school teacher.

Everything happens for a reason! It is often through adversities that a person learns the preciousness of abundance, appreciates simple and good things in life, feels gratitude and contemplates giving back. When George migrated to Australia in 1994, he enjoyed all the benefits provided to seniors by this country, from financial subsidies to public housing. His heart was filled with gratitude, something he learned from a young age. He enthusiastically became a volunteer and actively participated in community services as he wanted to give back to Australia, a paradise for him.

Apart from volunteering for CASS, he is a member of “Ashfield Neighbourhood Watch”, passionately committed to enhancing the safety and lowering crime rates in the community. He also participated in the former Ashfield Council’s Community Service Committee and the Senior Citizens Association. He even left his footprints in the local police station as he had been on regular duty every week for a long period of time. Nowadays, he still insists on attending activities for senior citizens, helping with opening and locking the venues.

Of all his community participation, the one dearest to his heart is CASS, the first community organisation providing services for Chinese-speaking people in Ashfield. He says proudly, “I am a CASS

volunteer. People in Ashfield know that CASS provides services to help reading letters and form-filling. I am also a member of the CASS Ashfield Environmental Care Team!” For the past decade, volunteers of this Environmental Care Team have engaged in cleaning the streets of Ashfield regularly to enable a clean and hygienic environment. George is also a founding member of the CASS Ashfield Activity Group and is now a Group Elder, highly respected in the community. He is very grateful to Mr Henry Pan, the CASS Foundation Chairperson, who has always supported him.

George’s dedication to serving the community is reflected through his caring acts towards his neighbours and people of all ethnicities. He believes that a simple “how are you doing?” can bring people together at once. With his initiative in greeting people of different ethnicities, he has learnt to say “hello” in over ten different languages! His open attitude, his embrace of multiculturalism and diversity has enabled him to build a vibrant and exciting life, intertwined with rich friendships.

Hearing George’s life story and seeing the many Certificates of Appreciation for his volunteering work, one can easily sense the contributions a senior citizen can make. In George’s words: “Volunteering is more than giving. You receive more in return!” His contribution to the community has earned him pride, respect and a meaningful elderly life.

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