

## ALUMAN English Schools Foundation NEWS March 2012

Shaper of opinion reveals her path to success

Executive director of a charitable organisation on a mission for the needy

Young graduate determines to blaze a trail in the world of law





It is my pleasure to write the foreword for the second issue of ESF Alumni News. As Education Director, I recognise the importance of mentorship and knowledge sharing and am thrilled to see that in this issue we have interviews with two inspiring mentors and a young graduate.

March is a special month to celebrate International Women's Day. This time, three generations of exceptional alumnae who attended different ESF schools share their stories. The subject of the feature story is Christine Loh, who is now a well-recognised social commentator in Hong Kong and the CEO of Civic Exchange think tank. She recalls her fondest memories of Island School in the 1970s. Another dynamic graduate and a fan of netball at South Island School, Pia Wong, tells us how she makes time for reading to her kids while being the Executive Director of Bring Me A Book, a charitable organisation that promotes reading. Last but not least, we have Michelle Li, a recent graduate of Renaissance College now studying law at the University of Hong Kong. She shares her practical advice for those stepping out into university life.

On top of that, don't forget to check out the "What's Happening?" section in this issue. There you will find out how different ESF schools are taking their fundraising efforts to the next level. There is also updated news about alumni reunions organised by Island School and KGV which I am sure you will not want to miss.

Enjoy reading!

Alyan

Pam Ryan Director, Education English Schools Foundation





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www.esf.edu.hk/alumni

We welcome your comments and enquiries regarding alumni matters and development.

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# A Green Campaigner and Shaper of Opinion

Dr. Christine Loh Kung-wai, JP, OBE, Chevalier de l'ordre National du Merite (陸恭蕙) CEO of Civic Exchange Graduated from Island School in 1970s and attended the University of Hull, City University of Hong Kong (Masters of Law in Chinese & Comparative Law) and was awarded the degree of Doctor of Law honoris causa by the University of Hull. She was trained as a lawyer but worked as a commodities trader for 12 years from 1980–1991.

Christine Loh attended Island School in the 1970s and remembers a campus with small classes and highly inspirational teachers. Here the CEO of public policy think tank Civic Exchange chats to us about her parents, pollution and the importance of précis.

#### Politically Correct

To some in Hong Kong, Christine has the image of a hard-headed businesswoman and politician. It's an image the former legislator believes is inaccurate. "I don't think I set out to create a tough image. It's important to be competent and this requires an understanding of the issues involved in whatever subject you are dealing with."

Deeply influenced by her own parents, Christine is now enjoying the role of parent herself. "I love my daughter and I love playing with her. I think playing is very important for children. In fact we should all play more."

Despite a busy lifestyle, Christine finds time to appreciate the arts, an interest she developed when she was young. "I don't think I have sufficient talent to be a professional artist although I do have the capacity to appreciate the arts. I enjoy going to exhibitions and shows. I also like to write, and may try my hand at fiction one day".



#### Few Facilities - Great Teachers

Christine attended Island School in what she describes as the early years when there were relatively few students and no facilities to speak of. "I can't say I loved the swimming pool because we didn't have one. PE meant running on Bowen Rd. We may not have had great facilities but we had great teachers."

The former LegCo member is quick to credit her teachers for encouraging her inquisitiveness and desire to learn. "They made so many subjects interesting and helped me to understand things that I still carry with me today. Mrs (Wendy) McTavish taught us about the history of Tudor England, and the Italian Renaissance (I still have an essay I wrote for her.) Then there was Mr (Keith) Garner who taught us geography. He made places come alive and I seriously thought of being a geographer or geologist at one time."

Christine enjoyed her school days but does have one regret. "I wish I'd realised how useful what I was being taught at school would be later in life. The fundamental skills of listening, comprehension and précis, in writing and speech, are all crucial in my work but I didn't really think about why we were doing them at the time."

#### A Greener Future

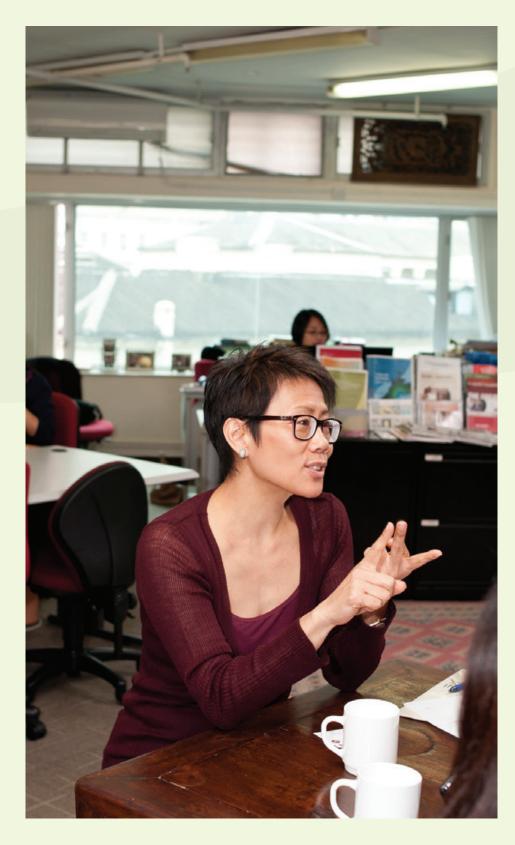
Well-known for her work in environmental protection and climate change, Christine first began learning about ozone depletion, deforestation and global warming in the 1980s. "I joined Friends of the Earth and from there I began a long journey of learning what we can do to protect the environment." The CEO of Civic Exchange has a schedule of projects and initiatives that would daunt lesser mortals. These include using ecological restoration to compensate for resource exploitation; looking at "well-being" in various Asian cities; and ways to make public health the key driver for air pollution. "I'm also responsible for setting the strategic direction of the organisation and still do research directly, which involves a lot of reading, writing and stakeholder engagement."

As the air quality in Hong Kong shows little sign of improvement, Christine acknowledges there may come a time when she is pressured to leave. "I see myself as very firmly rooted here. I don't want to move overseas but I might be driven out if my family members, both young and old, are unable to deal with the negative effects of pollution and its impact on their health."

#### A Hard Day's Work

Civic Exchange offers internship opportunities, and students with an interest in public policy should go to the organisation's website for more information. The work doesn't suit everyone however. "We take relatively few interns each year and they tend to be more mature students because of the nature of our work. Our interns should enjoy research and politics and must write well. Having said that, those selected get a lot out of it. We stretch them – they won't end up just photocopying and making tea."

She has advice for ESF students keen to play their own part in raising environmental awareness. "First you



should attempt to understand the issue in general terms. Then learn how it affects you. Next think about what you can do as an individual."

The former lawmaker keeps in touch with a small band of former school mates although some live overseas. "We have had reunions. It's always fun seeing them again." Christine feels it's important for alumni to give back, whether in cash or kind. "In many countries people donate generously to their schools and universities. Schools shouldn't be shy about asking because if you don't ask, you don't get. It's also important that we give back to society as a whole and I do that. It's one of the core values we learned at school."

"It's also important that we give back to society as a whole and I do that. It's one of the core values we learned at school."

Awards received by Christine include: Outstanding Young Person's Award 1988 Communicator of the Year 1994 Stars of Asia, Businessweek 1998 Stars of Asia, Businessweek 2000 Entrepreneur of the Year (Women of Influence Award 2003) Hong Kong Business Woman of the Year 2006 Woman of the Year 2006 Heroes of the Environment 2007 Ethical Leaders of 2007 Woman that make a difference 2009 Woman in Asia Awards 2011

# Going by the Book

ia Wong discovered the joys of reading at a young age. Now the former Bradbury and South Island School student is Executive Director of Bring Me a Book Hong Kong (BMABHK), a non-profit organisation that promotes family literacy.



#### **Bedtime Reading**

The mother of two young children is on a mission to encourage reading for pleasure in Hong Kong - both for enjoyment and as a means of improving academic performance. English isn't the first language of either of her parents so Pia's introduction to the world of story books came from snuggling up in bed with her older sister Emma.

"She would read to me every night when I was small. I loved it. Then at school my best friend got me even more hooked on books and we'd spend hours reading together and talking about our favourite ones."

This appreciation for the written word helped Pia when she was at Bradbury School. "My teacher Mr (Jonathan) Straker always offered me lots of encouragement. I remember he organised a spellathon and I managed to score 100 percent. That made me

Pia Wong (黃秋山)

Executive Director of Bring Me A Book. Attended Bradbury School and graduated from South Island School in 1992. Obtained a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy language at the University of Hong Kong



Reading to students at JCSRS

feel that I had a special ability to read and write, even though I realise now that much of my success was due to my mum's support - testing and practising difficult words over and over again."

#### Learning to Love Books

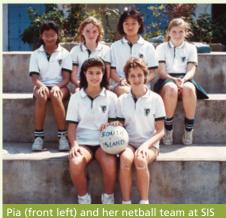
Books may have played a significant part in her own childhood but Pia is disappointed that reading for pleasure is the exception rather than the rule in Hong Kong. This is reflected in some of the lowest rates of family literacy in the world. "You rarely see children engrossed in a good quality story book, even though the city has plenty

of well-stocked libraries." Pia is fully aware of the reasons why reading for fun is neglected. "Parents say they're too busy to read to their children and teachers spend all their time preparing students for exams," she acknowledges.

For Pia, the education system is less important than the attitude of students and parents. "One thing you can't outsource is bonding and one of the easiest ways to do it is to read children a story at bedtime." Children can only read for pleasure if the materials are available. To this end, BMABHK has installed 140 libraries across the territory (including one at Jockey Club Sarah Roe School). The organisation also provides training workshops that place a strong emphasis on educating parents, teachers and caregivers about the importance of reading aloud.

"What I love about my job is that once people see what we're doing, they're converted. Parents everywhere are dedicated to doing the best for their children and it's a case of us helping to show them how important reading is."

Pia also tries to explain to parents that they don't need to choose reading material with pages and pages of text. "Picture books are fun as well. I'm a fan of traditional books but I understand that kids are going to be reading off their iPads and Kindles more and more. This is fine but cuddling up to read a bedtime story on an iPad isn't quite the same."



#### Sporting Schooldays

It's not just spellathons that Pia remembers fondly from her schooldays.

She loved sports, particularly netball and swimming.

"Inter-school competition is such a positive thing. You're competing to win but there's also a chance to get to know people from other schools. I'm still part of a close-knit ESF community and I even ended up marrying an ex KGV student!"

Pia recalls two very inspirational teachers from South Island School. "Diane Bohm taught religious studies. She was amazing and made us think and work analytically. And I still meet up with Martin Radford who was my mentor for many years. I would never have studied philosophy at university if it wasn't for him."

Times have changed since she was at school however; both in terms of pressure and curriculum. "I think it's much tougher and more competitive nowadays. I hope students are able to find time to enjoy themselves despite their increased workloads."

#### Broadening Horizons

In 2000 Pia completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Chinese at HKU. This was the first time she had formally studied the language. "Chinese is now a central part of the ESF curriculum yet it wasn't an option when I was at South Island School. Those were different times and (under British rule) we never really thought that we'd need to speak Mandarin."

The former deputy head girl left Hong Kong to complete a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy at University College London in 1997. As part of her BA, she spent a year at Tufts (in Boston, USA) on an exchange programme. "The teaching methodology in the States was enlightening. Rather than lecturing, they encouraged participation, which was similar to what I'd been used to at South Island School. I think that getting students talking and encouraging discussion is good preparation for the real world."

The busy executive director feels it is important to give back to society, particularly as she has such happy school memories of her own. "Not everyone has the educational opportunities that I did and I welcome the chance to do something for the local community. I hope that through Bring Me a Book Hong Kong, I'm helping to do that."



About Bring Me A Book<sup>™</sup> Hong Kong

Bring Me A Book<sup>™</sup> Hong Kong (BMABHK), the leading advocate of family literacy in Hong Kong, provides easy access to the best children's books and educates parents, teachers and childcare providers to read aloud with children for future success in school and life. Through innovative library and training programmes, BMABHK reaches underserved children and families in nurseries, kindergartens, community centres, shelters, health clinics and the workplace. Since inception in 2006, BMABHK has installed 141 libraries, served over 54,000 children and trained more than 6000 parents through their award-winning "First Teachers Training Program". For more information, please visit www.bringmeabook.org.hk.

## From Fountain Pen to MacBook

**Michelle Li (李沅琪)** Graduate of Renaissance College attending the University of Hong Kong.

Former Renaissance College student Michelle Li is in the second year of a law degree at the University of Hong Kong. Here she tells us why she's studying Oscar Wilde; how the IB has helped with time management and when she used a fountain pen in class.

#### The Law and Literature

Michelle's decision to study law was reached by a process of elimination. "Working in a professional field appealed to me but I'd never really



enjoyed maths or business." The RCHK graduate considered studying fine art and literature but picked law as she thought it would really help her critical thinking skills. "It also seemed like something completely new because you don't study law at high school."

18 months into the course and Michelle feels she made the right decision.

"It has turned out better than I expected. I imagined I'd be memorising lots of dull legal cases but it's much more interesting and fun." She is surprised at how the course interrelates with other disciplines. "We looked at an Oscar Wilde criminal trial from the 1890s and learned how a defence lawyer used quotes from novels such as A Picture of Dorian Gray in an attempt to convict him. So I've ended up studying literature after all!"

#### Work Life Balance

Her course is challenging and requires plenty of self discipline so Michelle is indebted to RCHK for teaching her about time-management. "I think the IB (International Baccalaureate Diploma) helped me become much more organised. I'm a member of the Executive Committee of the Law Association here at HKU which has been pretty time-consuming. My role as a special convenor involved organising the annual high table dinner. I've also helped to set up exhibitions, career workshops and I've even sold university merchandise."

To unwind, Michelle likes to paint. "I go to an art studio in Fo Tan or sometimes to Wanchai. I love the old buildings there." In fact she is so keen on painting that if a career in law doesn't work out; Michelle would like to open an art cafe. "They're becoming more popular worldwide perhaps I could open an outdoor one in Wanchai."



Painting by Michelle

Michelle has no plans to leave the territory after she graduates from HKU. "I'm happy here and if I qualify as a lawyer in Hong Kong then practising overseas would involve doing a conversion course. All my family are here so that's another reason for staying put. I'd certainly like to go back and visit England to see friends though."

#### From Old to New

The versatile 19 year-old spent part of her childhood boarding at the Godolphin School in England. "It was an all-girls school where lights had to be out at 9.30pm. There were longestablished traditions which we were expected to learn about and respect. We went pony trekking and used fountain pens to do all our classwork."

Returning to Hong Kong in 2007 when Renaissance College (RCHK) had just opened was quite a contrast to a centuries-old boarding school.

"It couldn't have been more different. I went from fountain pen to MacBook overnight and my classmates were from a range of different cultures and backgrounds."

Michelle was impressed with the opportunities and sense of freedom in RCHK.

"We were allowed to initiate our own activities for Creativity, Action, Service for example, which was great. It's not even that flexible or free here at HKU. I studied visual arts as part of my IB which gave me an enormous sense of satisfaction and achievement. I think that was because I never really saw it as a school subject - I was studying something I love. "



On a volunteer teaching trip in Fu Zhou, China

### Inspirational Teachers

Two teachers in particular left a strong impression on Michelle. One in particular managed to enliven a subject that she had found dull previously. "My English teacher, Aletha Rossiter made our lessons fun and memorable. I'd never really enjoyed literature in England. At RCHK we studied Shakespeare as we'd done in England but we read plenty of other plays as well."

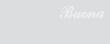
"My Chinese teacher, Miss Cheung helped me a lot too. I was never really good at Chinese and of course I'd been away in England for years. She gave me lots of help and became a good friend."

Michelle is busy with her studies but feels that she could find time to talk to students about her educational experiences. "I think mentoring is really important and I'd be happy to pass on what I learned from doing the IB. I'm sure current students would benefit from hearing about how I coped with what they're facing. The main thing is to enjoy what you're studying; don't think of it as schoolwork and you'll be fine."

#### **About Renaissance College**

Renaissance College (RCHK) is a worldclass co-educational independent school and an IB World School. Located in Ma On Shan, RCHK was established by the English Schools Foundation (ESF) in 2006 to serve the needs of the local and international expatriate communities in Hong Kong. Students are educated from Year 1 to Year 13 on one campus, guided and encouraged by experienced international educators. The student body comprises over 35 nationalities, with 25 languages represented. While English is the medium of instruction, the curriculum also has a strong emphasis on Chinese language and culture.

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## JOCKEY CLUB SARAH ROE SCHOOL FASHION GALA

## The JCSRS Fashion Gala was a resounding success!

Jockey Club Sarah Roe School held its first charity fashion gala on Friday, 16 March 2012. The event was attended by over 200 guests and raised over HK\$500,000 to support its "An iPad for Every Student" campaign. The school has introduced the first phase of the scheme by providing an iPad for each class but it is seeking support to provide one for each individual child. The funds raised will also enable the school to invest in other cutting edge technology.

This special event included a cocktail reception, live musical entertainment, an eleven course dinner, a performance of Irish dancing by the Echoes of Erin Dance Troupe, silent and live auctions, and prize draws, followed by the fashion show itself which was the highlight of the evening. The guest of honour, Dr Flora ZETA Cheong-Leen, led the show with style and grace and added a touch of glamour to the proceedings. She was partnered by several JCSRS and Peak School students who showcased children's couture by Château de sable. Flora was able to dispel any pre-show nerves with her warmth and gentle humour.

JCSRS and the Fundraising Committee are very grateful for the support of donors, sponsors and special guests in helping the school enhance

its provision for all of its students.





Vice Principal Mr Robert Szorenyi, Chair of Fundraising Committee, performed alongside JCSRS students



JCSRS student served coffee to guests with the assistance of Heidi Lee, Coordinator of Career Development at the school



Principal Mr Alan Howells with members of the JCSRS Fundraising Committee



Irish Dance performance by "The Daughters of Erin" from Clearwater Bay School



Dr Flora ZETA Cheong-Leen wore a classic gown sponsored by Salvatore Ferragamo and partnered student models, from JCSRS and Peak School, showcasing children's couture by Château de sable

(From left to right) Dr Flora ZETA Cheong-Leen; Mrs Dayna Cheung, parent of JCSRS and Fundraising Committee member; and Mrs Heather Du Quesnay, CEO of ESF



The Masters of Ceremony: Ms Laura Ferretti and Mr Andrew Work



Guests made generous donations to the iPad scheme

### CALLING WEST ISLAND SCHOOL ALUMNI

To celebrate the school's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, West Island School will be having a Gala Celebration for alumni and staff on 23 June 2012. Details are as below:

Date and time: 7 pm on Saturday, 23 June 2012 Venue: The Verandah, Repulse Bay Dress: Black tie

For more details about this event, please contact Ms Fleur Murdoch at fleur.murdoch@wis.edu.hk



### RENAISSANCE COLLEGE

On November 26, 2011, Renaissance College opened its doors to welcome students and alumni to its annual college fair. While the primary purpose of the fair was to raise funds for various learning and studying improvement projects, it also provided a great opportunity for alumni to visit the school and to reconnect with their former classmates and teachers. Compared with other ESF schools, RCHK is still very young but its alumni network is growing every year. So don't be surprised to bump into your former classmates next time you come back in for the festivities on campus!



### KENNEDY SCHOOL'S 50th BIRTHDAY

Kennedy School turned 50 this year. First opened in 1961 at a site in Kennedy Road, the school was first known as Kennedy Road Junior School. It became part of ESF in 1979 and moved into its current site in Sha Wan Drive in 1989. On 20 January, students and staff of Kennedy joined by Mrs Heather Du Quesnay, CEO of ESF, unveiled a plaque to commemorate this special year.







### THE DISCOVERY COLLEGE DIPLOMA SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMME



Discovery College is offering Diploma level scholarships to high academic achievers entering Year 12 in August 2012. Find out more and download applications from the school's website.

Scholarship Application Deadline is 6 April 2012 www.discovery.edu.hk

## ISLAND SCHOOL REUNION IN FEBRUARY

While the Principal of Island School, Chris Binge, was in London for recruitment, he organised an Islanders reunion in a function room above a pub on Fleet Street. It was very encouraging that over 120 Islanders turned up. There were students from the 1960s, who only remember being in the building across the road, all the way to a group of last year's graduates. There were two former Principals there, Colin Niven and David James, as well as Chris Forse, and several other former members of staff. All there showed their affection for the school, and traded their fond memories. Chris

gave a brief talk on the changes at Island School over the years and all were interested to hear the news of the planned redevelopment of the school. The reunion went on long into the evening as the snow settled on the London streets outside.

## KING GEORGE V SCHOOL REUNION

8 Feb 2012 saw nearly 100 KGVers from across the decades meet in London for the 3<sup>rd</sup> London Reunion. Alumni from 1953 right through to more recent graduates from 2008 gathered in 'Ye Olde Cock Tavern' on Fleet St to relive old times, to catch up with old friends and hear a little about life at KGV in 2012. Some travelled quite a distance for the occasion and spent the night in London to enjoy the event to its full. Principal Ed Wickins spoke to the alumni about the developments at the school and showed them the plans of the new buildings in a presentation. Later in the presentation there were a few gasps of surprise when photos of the attendees suddenly appeared onscreen as bright and cheery 17 year olds. For some, that was a only few years ago. All agreed it was a great night and ended with a rendition of the school song where the younger alumni more than held their own in volume and tunefulness.



## KGV Annual Gala Fundraising Dinner Friday 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2012 Holiday Inn Golden Mile Join the KGV Community to celebrate the school's successes and vision for the future. Enjoy a 4 course meal, free flowing drinks, and exceptional entertainment provided by KGV sudents.

The evening will feature the presentation of the Principal's Outstanding Alumni Award to Mr Jal Shroff

For more information on the Gold and Silver table packages or to make a booking please contact: Ruth Barnes - ruth.barnes@kgv.edu.hk / Tel: 2711 3029, Reyna Harilela - reyna.harilela@bvandbv.com / Tel: 9484 6288 or Varina Parmanand - varina@parmanand.com / Tel: 9800 3000



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Albion, Mauritius 6D4N (MK)

Kani, Maldives

2nd Adult: **HK\$10,480 up** 

1st Adult: HK\$16,480up

6D4N (SQ)

2nd Adult: **HK\$11,200 up** 1st Adult: HK\$16,000 up

\*Terms & conditions apply. High season surcharge is applicable during special period. All prices quoted are on Superior Room, twin sharing basis.



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