



INSPIRING FUTURES

ALUMNI NEWS

English Schools Foundation
May 2018

Not Just For Pets — ESF Alumni tackling global health issue

Dr Howard Wong



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FOREWORD

Welcome to the May edition of Alumni News.

It is hard to believe, but another academic year is about to draw to a close. Another year of hard work, of fun and excitement and, of course, success — for our students, our faculty and you, our alumni.

Now that you are no longer a student with us, you may not follow an academic year. The work that you are doing in your chosen field doesn't stop when the bell rings for the final time in our classrooms. Although, I'm sure, we would all love the chance to recreate the long summer holidays of our childhood.

Our alumni are spread out all over the world — and are making a difference in many ways. None more so in the fields of health and medicine. So many of our former students have gone on to become hugely successful scientists, doctors and veterinarians.

In this issue, we turn the spotlight on the work that ESF members are carrying out to, among other things, find a cure for cancer, encourage a culture of volunteering within healthcare and strengthen the connection between humans and animals.

The stories that we have uncovered are typical of many ESF alumni. They tell of people committed to their world, dedicated to making things better for those around them and, of course, of the hard work and dedication that is a fixture in all of our schools.

On a personal note, I hope you enjoy being connected to ESF through our alumni network. We are at the start of this journey — we want the network to take on a life of its own. There is so much scope for homecoming events, reunions around the world and for you to contribute towards our continued success in the years to come.

If you are interested in becoming more involved with us — or if you just have some ideas about the types of things you would like to see happening, please, do let us know.

Wherever you are in the world, I hope you have an amazing Summer.

Terri Appel
Director of Advancement



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Amit Aggarwal
South Island School

The international outlook

“Challenge yourself but don’t overburden yourself.”

- 2015-Present Director of Corporate Partnerships, Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity
- 2009-2015 Trustee, UK Branch of The Abraham Fund Initiatives
- 2011-2015 Head of Corporate Partnerships, British Heart Foundation
- 2011 Interim Chief Executive, No Smoking Day
- 2004-2011 Business Development Director, Australian Trade Commission
- 1996-2004 Consultant, PricewaterhouseCoopers
- 1996 BA in Philosophy, Politics and Economics, University of Oxford
- 1993 South Island School
- 1986 Bradbury School

Amit Aggarwal had all the reason to stick with a safe, stable job in finance — he was doing well for himself on the City of London’s consulting circuit.

But for the civic-minded South Island School graduate, born and bred in the open, cosmopolitan, boiling pot of Hong Kong, this had never been the ideal career. He had always wanted to do something that would make a difference.

“I had always had an interest in politics and diplomacy but I never had enough confidence to explore going into politics,” Amit tells ESF Alumni News.

“I was interested in international development. There was a growing realisation that I was brought up in a very prosperous and well-run city that a vast majority of world’s population was not experiencing.”

Wouldn’t it be great to work for a non-profit organisation like Oxfam or Save the Children, he pondered to himself, as he reached the end of his undergraduate studies at Oxford University.

Alas, international NGOs like these did not have graduate entrant programmes. Amit ended up taking a more conventional career path. He became an accountant and entered the private sector.

New challenges

After stints at a big four consultancy firm and a few years at the Australian Trade Commission, based in London and Sydney, he decided that it was time for a new challenge.

“I felt I had spent all this time building my finance and accounting skills, but was not really making good use of them,” he says. “One day, someone suggested that I join a charity.”

Amit took that advice. He discovered a website that helped small British charities find volunteers and was eventually attached to one called No Smoking Day. The charity had been stuck in a financial rut after being cut off from government funding.

Amit helped steer No Smoking Day through the storm. Later, he even helped find a large medical charity, the British Heart Foundation, to take over.

Call it right place, right time. After the takeover was complete, the foundation told him that they were looking for a new head of corporate partnerships to work with the business community and raise funds. “I felt I had the right skills to do it and took a leap into the unknown.”

Making a difference

Leveraging on his ability to build a rapport and interact with people from different countries and backgrounds, Amit has carved out a niche for himself - helping to raise money from around the world for important life-saving medical research.

He is currently Director of Corporate Partnerships at the Great Ormond Street Hospital Children’s Charity in London, one of the leading children’s hospitals in Britain, if not, the world.

“My primary role is to work with the team to raise as much money as possible to help medical researchers all around the world pursue their dream of making breakthroughs and discoveries in medical research,” Amit says.

“Ultimately we are helping people who are unfortunate, children who through no fault of their own developed a medical problem.”

He has always maintained a sense of empathy and interest toward the world around him. Part of it, he says, has to do with his upbringing in the ESF system, first at Bradbury School and then at South Island School (SIS).



Openness and engagement

“As you get older, you start to hear about your classmates and teachers’ experiences in other countries. There’s something special here — the multicultural environment, the growing up in an open-minded, fast-moving city.”

He describes ESF as an open, friendly, tolerant education system which provides high-quality international education, but “not pushing academics so hard that students are constantly stressed.”

He himself was a case in point. Amit excelled in his studies, but still found time to swim and play football. He was active in drama class and took part in school productions such as Oliver and West Side Story. One of his more memorable experiences was participating in the Model United Nations (MUN).

“One challenge of growing up in Hong Kong in 1980s to 1990s was that there was low awareness of politics and international relations,” he says. “Many people just kept quiet. MUN was invaluable at building awareness of the world around us, as well as improving our debating, public speaking skills and confidence, which are very useful in one’s life and career.”

The road to Oxford

His interest in world affairs, social and political issues, as well as economics, led him to the decision of applying for one of the world’s most illustrious undergraduate programmes — Philosophy, Politics and Economics (PPE) at Oxford University, best known for producing British political leaders and captains of industry.

The experience of application process, he recalls, was nothing short of daunting.

For one, he did not have the luxury of Facebook or LinkedIn at the time, to seek advice from alumni around the world.

“I sat alone in the hall as I was the only person from SIS doing the Oxford examinations that year.”

He remembers having to fly to cold, wet England and getting on a bus to Oxford by himself, for a whole week of interviews. He then had to leave without knowing whether he’d been admitted. “It was a daunting experience,” he says. “But it was very good for character building.”

Amit, who now lives in London with his wife, and two children Sophie, seven, and James, five, urges young sixth-formers and leavers to keep an open-mind and take calculated risks when opportunities arise. Apart from the academic side, students should do more extra-curricular activities too.

“Challenge yourself but don’t overburden yourself,” he says.

“We’re lucky that we live in a world where people are less interested in qualifications. Most people just want to know about your life and career experiences.”



“Don’t be a conformist, there’s no fun in that!”

2010 – Present Doctor (NHS) and Post Doctoral Research Fellow (KCL, UCL, Francis Crick Institute)
 2004 – 2010 MBPhD (Clinical Medicine) UCL
 2001 – 2004 BA (Preclinical Medicine) University of Cambridge
 1996 – 2001 West Island School

Dr Yin Wu
 West Island School
 A quest for a cure

Moving back to China from the United States was a transformative experience for Dr Yin Wu. After spending eight years living in the naval town of Norfolk, Virginia, the Wu family packed their bags and headed to Hong Kong, where Yin’s father had accepted a job as a university lecturer.

It was a rather sad experience. From blissful weekends catching blue crabs down at Harrison’s Pier (which has been destroyed in a hurricane) to getting “insidiously brainwashed” in class daily by pledging allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, Yin had spent the better part of a childhood in America. Now he was moving to a different continent.

He would soon be dealt an even bigger blow. Just one year into their arrival in Hong Kong, Yin’s mother was diagnosed with metastatic lung cancer. She passed away in the same year after a brief period of remission on chemotherapy.

Yin says: “She had never smoked a cigarette in her life.”

Looking for answers

Millions across the world have similar stories to tell. Alas, cancer is one of the leading causes of death in developed countries. There were 14 million new cases in 2012 and, according to the World Health Organisation, the number is forecast to rise by about 70 percent over the next two decades. But there is still a world of unknowns when it comes to the biology of carcinogenesis — the initiation of cancer formations.

Yin, now an intrepid researcher at the Francis Crick Institute and University College London, has made it his life’s work to discover how to manipulate the immune system to protect people from ever getting cancer. And he brings good tidings from the front: science is making big advances.

“Currently we can manipulate our immune system to reject established cancers like melanoma and lung cancers with some efficacy — approximately 20 to 40 percent,” Yin tells ESF Alumni News. “In many of these patients, we can even cure them of their metastatic cancer when only a decade ago, cure was unthinkable.”

His eyes are on the ball. “The aim is to eradicate cancer so that in the future it becomes a historical textbook disease like smallpox or polio.”

Time and space

Yin’s interest in the sciences is probably inherited. He comes from a family of medical practitioners. “My father was a medical doctor and then a neuroscientist so I guess that had quite an impact on me subconsciously,” Yin says.

But up until university, Yin had actually been more interested in the workings of the universe rather than the pathology. Inspired by his maths teacher, Roy White, and driven by his own passion for maths and physics, Yin set his aims on becoming a particle or theoretical physicist.

“Mr. White used to go well beyond the course into areas like Einstein’s theory of special relativity. He was also able to chuck a whiteboard eraser behind the back with amazing accuracy,” Yin recalls.

First in class, not the next Einstein

In 2001, Yin made West Island School (WIS) history by becoming the first student to be admitted to the University of Cambridge. WIS was then still a young school under the English Schools Foundation and had never had any of its students accepted into either Oxford or Cambridge.

“It was really a new experience for all of us who applied to Oxbridge,” says Yin. “In some ways the pressure was less because no one from the school has succeeded.” Another classmate of his, Michelle Ho, went on to read Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford.

But after looking into the requirements for studying physics at Cambridge — the same institution that produced the likes of Ernest Rutherford, Charles Wilson, JJ Thomson and Isaac Newton — Yin was forced to reconsider.

“I found out that STEP (Sixth Term Examination Papers in Mathematics) was a mandatory entry requirement. My first attempt at a STEP paper was also my last. Medicine was a much easier plan B!”

Doctor and a lab rat

And so, “Plan B” it was. Yin followed in his father’s footsteps and entered medicine and academia. He is now a Clinical Lecturer at UCL in London but also a teaching fellow at Fitzwilliam College, the same college at Cambridge he attended.

He currently spends half of his time working in the lab researching how the immune system protects us from cancer and the other half in hospital seeing patients with cancer and treating them.

“The aim is to eradicate cancer so that in the future it becomes a historical textbook disease like smallpox or polio.”

“I do quite a lot of teaching, mostly of the basic science of cancer and immunology, as I believe that having a good grounding in basic science is absolutely crucial to being an excellent physician.

“This view, is very sadly, not shared by many doctors nowadays as more and more emphasis is placed on being able to communicate.”

Yin says it is all too common to find doctors who know very little about medicine but are experts at communicating.

The non-conformist

At Cambridge, Yin now sits on the other side of the interview table. He shares some insider advice with ESF: “I currently interview for medicine admissions at Cambridge and I can tell you that we look for students who can think on their feet, solve problems and are generally curious about medicine or science.”

His formative years at WIS have left a lasting legacy on his career. “Teaching is really important to me because I was inspired by excellent teachers at West Island School and I always try to inspire my students. It is also a good way to try and change the world as your disciples go forth and spread your thought.”

The mix of different cultures and the ease with which they blended is something unique to international schools in Hong Kong, he adds.

“It exposed me to different cultures and different ways of thinking. The quality of teaching was also of high standard and there is no doubt that the inspirational teachers and high achieving peer group really pushed me to develop.”

In terms of advice, he urges all ESF students to pursue careers that they enjoy and not to fear veering off the beaten path from time to time. “If you will be doing it for the rest of your life, you might as well have some fun. Also, bend the rules a bit sometimes (in a nice way). Don’t be a conformist, there’s no fun in that!”

Einstein himself put it best: “A foolish faith in authority is the worst enemy of truth”



Dr Kelvin
LUK
Sha Tin College

Bitten by the science bug

“Little by little, science is making progress.”

- 2013-Present Research Assistant Professor of Pathology And Laboratory Medicine, University of Pennsylvania
- 2013 MTR (Translational Research), University of Pennsylvania
- 2004 PhD (Pathology), McGill University
- 1997 BSc (Microbiology and Immunology), McGill University
- 1994 Sha Tin College
- 1987 Kowloon Junior School

There is still a lot the world does not know about neurodegenerative diseases. The cause of Parkinson's disease, for example, which affects millions of people around the world, still remains a medical mystery.

Thankfully, there are people like Kelvin Luk around to help search for answers.

The ESF graduate, now a translational researcher based in the United States, has been working tirelessly over the years to help bridge the knowledge gap. Essentially, his job is to take the most cutting edge, groundbreaking research and apply it to developing new treatments.

The research work he is currently leading aims to improve understanding of the causes of Parkinson's disease, a progressive neurodegenerative condition that affects over one million individuals in the U.S. alone, and for which there is currently no cure.

And it all started here

For him, it was never the clinical or policy side of the medical field that interested him. It was always about discovery.

“I got into the field out of a love for science,” Kelvin tells ESF Alumni News, recalling how the seeds of his passion were sowed in the science labs of his secondary school, Sha Tin College.

“It's funny because it all started when I was at Sha Tin College, probably in around Year 10 or 11. I had some very inspiring teachers. Mark Coombs was very inspiring and instilled in me a love for the sciences, especially biology.”

He remembers his chemistry teacher Dr Geoff Lofthouse telling how the “science bug could bite” and cause one to catch a science fever that could last a lifetime. “It's been 25 years and those words have really carried me a long way.”

Kelvin eventually studied biology, chemistry and mathematics for A-Levels and charted a course toward the medical field.

New directions

Things could have turned out quite differently. When Kelvin went to McGill University to pursue his undergraduate studies, he studied microbiology and immunology. Neuroscience had never been on his radar.

“I was interested in infectious diseases at the time and I entered graduate school thinking I would do research in AIDS,” he says. Alas, “certain things happened and the group I was working with lost research funding. I found myself thinking again what I wanted to do.”

This was late 1990s to early 2000s and the field of neurosciences was up and coming with many transformational discoveries being made.

At the time Kelvin began studying how a certain part of the human brain developed in babies. This happened to be the same part of the brain affected in adults with Parkinson's disease. In early development, cells in the brain were constantly being remodeled in ways that resembled what occurs in neurodegenerative diseases.

“Science always takes interesting turns. I thought I'd give it a try for a year to see if it was worth pursuing,” he recalls. One year turned to five and in the end, Kelvin stuck with it. In 2004, he obtained his PhD in pathology.

Kelvin eventually moved to the United States to further his research at the University of Pennsylvania's medical school and eventually joined its faculty as a research assistant professor of pathology and laboratory medicine. Now 40, he leads a group of students and young scientists to understand a group of proteins that triggers Parkinson's and other related, but rarer, disorders.

Greying world

Indeed, neurodegenerative diseases are of growing significance as more people are living longer and populations across industrialised countries age as a result. Dementia refers to symptoms of neurodegeneration such as deterioration of memory, thinking, behaviour and mental functioning. Globally, over 50 million people are sufferers and every year 10 million new cases develop, according to the World Health Organisation (WHO). Worldwide, 80 million people worldwide suffer from either Parkinson's, Alzheimer's or Huntington's disease, and that number continues to grow. These are staggering numbers.

Apart from the psychological and physical distress to patients and burdens of care to their families and carers, Kelvin points out that societies borne huge social and economic costs too. The WHO estimates that the total global costs of dementia alone in 2015 were US\$818 billion, or roughly 1.1 percent of the world's combined GDP.

Developing countries will not be spared. “The problems are going to hit them so hard and they're not going to have much of a choice [but to tackle it], especially with ageing populations,” Kelvin says.

There are obstacles in research too. Problems are compounded by the fact that many drug companies still believe that without sufficient knowledge about these diseases, the risks of drug development are often “not that favourable” when compared to the costs involved, Kelvin adds.

“And as with any disease associated with ageing, a key challenge is they take a long time to form. This means answers come very slowly and require a lot more financial and other resources.”



Kelvin (rightmost) attended a STC reunion in 2014

Passing the torch

Will we ever find a cure? Kelvin says it is hard to predict the trajectory for the future. But little by little, science is making progress.

He gave an example of a groundbreaking research he took part in several years ago showing how symptoms of Parkinson's were caused by the accumulation of abnormal proteins that also spread through the nervous system to other parts of the brain.

“We were the first group to provide direct evidence for that. People suspected it but few believed it, but the data we provided pushed the research over the hump. They now teach this concept in basic neuroscience classes and medical schools.”

Kelvin's hope is to train the next generation of scientists and clinical scientists by arming them with the knowledge and technical skills to “survive and thrive in research”.

“I would really like to achieve two things in my career. The first is to make discoveries that have impact...to advance treatment of these diseases. Second, I hope to reshape our understanding of Alzheimer's and Parkinson's disease.”



“It’s not just the pet stuff. It’s about the issues of global public health that vets really have to tackle.”

- 2012-Present Executive Director of College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences, City University of Hong Kong
- 2011 Principal Veterinary Officer, Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory Service, the Animal Management Division, Hong Kong Government
- 2007-2011 Head of the Veterinary Public Health Section, Centre for Food Safety, Hong Kong Government
- 1996-2007 Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department, Hong Kong Government
- 2016 CertAqV, Certified Aquatic Veterinarian, World Aquatic Veterinary Medical Association
- 2016 MSc. (Sustainable Aquaculture), University of St. Andrews
- 2003 Master of Preventive Medicine, University of California Davis
- 1997 M.A., University of Cambridge
- 1996 MRCVS, Member of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
- 1996 Vet.MB. (Bachelor of Veterinary Medicine), University of Cambridge
- 1993 B.A. (Hon’s) Biological Anthropology, University of Cambridge
- 1985 King George V School
- 1983 Beacon Hill School

Cute puppies and kittens usually come to mind when most people think of “vet”.

Dr Howard Wong, Director of Centre for Animal Welfare at City University of Hong Kong’s College of Veterinary Medicine and Life Sciences, baulks at such thinking. He has been working hard to change this.

The paradigm that the college – Hong Kong’s first – is trying to instill in its students is “One Health”, a learning ethos that combines veterinary health, human health and environmental health. “They’re getting it from day one,” Dr Wong says.

“It really puts into perspective their profession and instills some responsibility in them.”

Pets — just one part of the job

Vets, he stresses, are going to become more important than ever before. “It’s not just the pet stuff. It’s about the issues of global public health that vets really have to tackle.”

While nine out of every ten veterinarians still end up going into pet medicine, there are shortages of vets in all fields. Howard hopes more students will consider contributing to

the more important fields requiring veterinary input such as public health, food production and food safety.

That’s the other side of veterinary science. And it is a far cry from cuddly.

“Take a dairy farm for example,” says Dr Wong, a KGV and Beacon Hill School graduate. “You’re getting up at 2am in the morning and putting your hand up a cow’s bum.”

His first big job out of vet school is another case in point. In December 1997, 18 people in Hong Kong died from the world’s first recorded human infections of bird flu. And his first task, a year into his job as a government vet: a mass cull of Hong Kong’s live chickens.

“These are things we can’t get away from. Over 70 percent of our emerging diseases are from the same type of animals [we eat]. Think about it – bird flu, swine flu, ebola, you name it. All these are of animal origin.”

Howard says infectious diseases will only get more pervasive as urbanisation accelerates and the global population expands which encroaches on more wildlife territory.

We are what we eat

Food safety is another issue that keeps him up at night. That’s because veterinarians play an important role as gatekeepers.

“There’s going to be nine billion people on the planet by 2050. How are you going to feed all those people with safe food? There’s only one profession in the world that can ensure livestock and meat produced in this world is safe – that’s vets,” says Dr Wong.

Given the somewhat unsanitary conditions of Hong Kong’s wet markets, he admits that he is sometimes surprised at why these people don’t get sick in Hong Kong. “The way animals are slaughtered and the way meat is kept at wet markets would not be acceptable in many parts of the world,” Dr Wong says.

And yet, we’re not all falling over. He has a hypothesis: traditional Chinese cooking, which traditionally involves small pieces of meat cooked thoroughly at very high heat.

“It probably helped, but it doesn’t detract from the fact we have to improve our food safety.”

As the Food and Health Bureau’s principal veterinarian officer, he helped revise and draft the city’s food safety law because it was “so out of date”.

Before the overhaul, surveillance and testing of food imports was all done at the end stage – supermarkets, restaurants. “It’s a very inefficient and expensive way of testing.”

Dr Wong helped revised the laws so that more surveillance would be required upstream, such as at farms and slaughterhouses, reducing risks at every stage of the supply chain, before the produce gets anywhere near the end consumer.

It runs in the family

Dr Wong comes from a family of medical professionals. His dad was a doctor, among six brothers who were also doctors. There are altogether 19 doctors in his extended family and at least two vets.

He advises those who are interested in entering veterinary medicine to be prepared for a long, hard slog.

“My father, being a doctor, said he has never seen so much information in any curriculum. Because we have so many species to deal with, there’s no choice. When you’re licensed you have to cover all animals — large and small.”

But Dr Wong thinks it is a meaningful and important job, with huge impact for society. The profession, after all, did spawn from the care of horses, which were the wheels of economies before the advent of cars.



Growing up an aquaphile

And for as long as Dr Wong can remember, he wanted to be a vet.

“It was an interest in animals, wildlife and biology,” he says. “Supposedly most vets decide they want to be vets when they are around six years old, but maybe even earlier for me.”

He recalls an old anecdote passed on to him by his mother about the time he attended an interview for kindergarten.

“They showed you a painting of an animal and made you talk about it. I only made one comment, which was that the water the puppy was drinking in the painting didn’t look clean enough for it to drink. For some reason, that’s what I picked up on.”

As a KGV student, he developed a love for all things aquatic. He had three passions: fish, swimming and water polo. Howard swam for Hong Kong team until he was 15 and played water polo for Hong Kong from the age of 18, representing the city in events such as the Asian Games.

“At KGV, the swimming pool was very small. But that’s where I started water polo. As a serious sportsperson, I did not have much time for anything else, apart from my fish. It was sport, fish, sport, fish, sport, fish”

It was his beloved fish – and a few turtles – that really piqued what would become a lifelong interest in all things aquatic and ichthyological. “Doctors are quite funny. They’re not very fond of people having pets because they’re seen as not very clean. Our house was the same. It was always just turtles and fish. I made the most of that.”

At a high point, Howard had six fish tanks filled with over 200 fish as well as numerous tortoises and turtles. “Fish has always been my interest. I wanted to be a fish vet and it’s still my interest now,” he says.

“When you look at farming and you only have one species of cow or one species of pig, even dogs are really just one species. In fish farming alone, you are dealing with over 500 species around the world. To me it’s more interesting and challenging than terrestrial animals.”

HELP OUR ALUMNUS GAVIN

Jennifer, Gavin and their girls have been part of the Glenealy family for years. Gavin (Dad) is an ex-Glenealy and KGV student, and daughters Felicity and Natalie are Glenealy alumni too. Jennifer (Mum) is currently teaching in a supply capacity in GS for 3 days per week and is also a valued supply teacher within the ESF community. Sadly Gavin is very unwell and the family are reaching out to all networks for support. Please see the flyer below for further information.

KGV Alumni Association is organising a Donor Drive on 25th May (Friday) at the Causeway Bay Blood Donation Centre. Please join Jennifer and the Alumni team take action. Jennifer will be there from 6:30-8:30 pm. We hope you can help the family by joining this Donor Drive too.

Address: 14/F Plaza 2000, 2-4 Russell Street, Causeway Bay. Exit A CWB MTR station

Telephone: 2834-2084

HELP my husband Gavin LIVE to see his two young children grow

My husband Gavin Shiu, an ex-Glenealy boy, son of ex-Glenealy deputy headmistress has Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia. He desperately needs a Stem Cells or Bone Marrow Transplant.

Would you consider donating Stem Cells or Bone Marrow in the fight against Leukemia?

The chances of finding a match is 1 in 20,000. Gavin has the added challenge that he comes from a mix of Chinese and Irish DNA. Regardless of gender, race or blood type, you could save lives and give Gavin and other leukemia sufferers a second chance.

TAKE ACTION NOW:
If you are 18-65 (ages 16-17 parental consent required) years of age, we ask you to:
• Go to a Red Cross Blood Donation Centre.
• Complete the Blood Donation Registration Form.
• Donate a small sample of your blood.

You can be a potential donor by visiting:
<http://www5.ha.org.hk/rcbts/en/index.asp>

Please join me in **TAKING ACTION NOW** by registering to be a potential stem cells or bone marrow donor.

My children, Gavin and I are immensely grateful for your ACTION.

Thank you! Jennifer Lau

Our family

WIS ALUMNI OF THE YEAR - AKANKSHA HAZARI



West Island School welcomed back Akanksha Hazari (Class of 2000) in late March at the school's annual Award Ceremony. Akanksha was felicitated with the Alumni of the Year award at the event where she graciously received her award for her outstanding achievements and contribution to the global community and to her profession. Akanksha spoke to WIS students about her journey, accomplishments and how WIS played an integral part in her choice of pathways. Students and staff were very inspired by her words and many students stayed after the event to chat with her about her achievements.

After graduating from WIS, Akanksha left for Princeton University to study Politics with Certificate in Near Eastern Studies. Among her many achievements, Akanksha was honoured by former US President Bill Clinton with US\$1 million to implement "m.Paani"—the winning solution of the Hult Global Case Challenge 2011 which challenged students globally to develop a business model that could bring access to clean water and sanitation to 100 million people living in urban slums. Akanksha is also a Cambridge University alumna, Ashoka Fellow, and former competitive squash player ranked in the top 20 juniors internationally, among others. Akanksha won the Hult Prize 2011.



STC ALUMNA INSPIRES FUTURE FEMALE ENGINEERS



STC alumna Abigail Tam offered our female students a real world experience in engineering through "Dragages: Girls on the Move initiative", which was held on 3 March 2018. 9 girls across ESF secondary schools, 5 from other International Schools and 10 university students participated.



The day started with project briefing followed by a two-hour site visit at Tuen Mun-Chek Lap Kok Tunnel construction site. The girls were thrilled and inspired by the trip – especially a chance to visit a working construction site in full safety protective wear. They managed to go to where the tunnel boring machine stopped and witnessed what it was like to lower a 'gallery' piece onto the floor of the tunnel. After the visit, they proceeded back to the site office for more presentations as well as a very nice mini buffet lunch and a final sharing session with some female mentors including Abigail.

The event was an eye-opening experience and it provided them with keen insights into engineering the career within the construction industry – a career many young women and girls will not consider. One student mentioned that she didn't think it was possible to become a "female" engineer but after the site visit, she's very determined to pursue a career in engineering.

At the end, Abigail also offered a job intern / job shadowing opportunity to those who are interested. "I hope the event empowers and inspires female to enter the construction industry", Abigail adds.

"I look forward to providing more opportunities and events in the future from our industry to the ESF community – no doubt I will continue this as both my children are at ESF schools and I continue to mentor students every year at STC." Abigail promised.



KAYLIN CROWNED WORLD JUNIOR FENCING CHAMPION IN VERONA

16-year-old Kaylin Hsieh from Sha Tin College (STC) won gold at the Junior and Cadets World Fencing Championships in Verona, Italy in April. She defeated Emily Vermeule from the United States at 15-13 in the final and will be qualified to join the Buenos Aires 2018 Youth Olympic Games this October.

Kaylin is STC's first student to be enrolled on the three-year International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, as part of the IBO's partnership with the World Academy of Sports and the Hong Kong Sports Institute.



STC ALUMNUS HOLLYWOOD ACTOR

STC alumnus (2005) Wesley Wong, who is an up-and-coming actor, has a role in the new *Pacific Rim Uprising* movie, starring John Boyega. Wesley appears in the official movie trailer:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhiLLOhVis>

Pacific Rim Uprising was showing in HK cinemas since 29 March.



RCHK LONDON REUNION 2018

The RCHK London alumni reunion was held on Friday 19 January 2018, at Liman Restaurant. Dr Harry Brown was pleased to see almost 20 alumni attendees, and it was a great opportunity for everyone to mix and mingle with familiar faces again.

WHAT'S HAPPENING

REMARKABLE ACHIEVEMENT: BENJAMIN CHAN (KGV 2017)

KGV Alumnus Benjamin Chan (Class of 2017) is attempting to become the youngest person in the world to accomplish Explorers Grand Slam – to reach the seven highest summits on all seven continents plus the North and South Poles.

He has completed two of the seven summits, Aconcagua in South America's Andes and Mount Kilimanjaro in Africa. Now he is at Khumbu icefall!

Support Benjamin to make history through the link below:
<https://www.gofundme.com/youngest-explorers-grand-slam>



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ISLAND SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION PRE-7S REUNION DRINKS

Island School Alumni Association held its annual Rugby 7s reunion drinks event at the Globe Restaurant in Central Hong Kong. As always a great time of reconnecting, mixing and mingling was had by all.



KGV GRADUATION CEREMONY 2018

KGV Graduation Ceremony 2018 was a triumphant success this year. We were privileged to have our distinguished alumnus Mr Neville Shroff (Class of 1967), Ms Loletta Chu (Class of 1977), Mahesh Harilela (Class of 1981), Selma Masood (Class of 1996) and Dr Peter Woo (Class of 1999) to present the mortarboards to all our graduates.

KGV has also presented Ms Loletta Chu with this year's **KGV Principal's Outstanding Alumni Award**. She has an excellent reputation in Hong Kong for dedicating her life to helping the underprivileged. Her philanthropic contribution has influenced many individuals and communities locally and overseas. She is an avid photographer and uses her art to raise funds for charities. She works tirelessly for Wai Yin Association, a charitable institute which she founded in 1982.



KGV MENTORSHIP

Laura Layfield (Class of 2013)

Laura came back to KGV and talked to BTEC Art and Media students about her current role at Third Culture (<http://tctthirdculture.com/>) and the Third Culture Film Festival (<http://www.tcff.tv/>). She also gave some advice to students regarding joining different art competitions.

Kaitlyn Hart and Amy Cho (Class of 2017)

Kaitlyn and Amy shared their university stories with Y13 BTEC arts students.



Natalie Cheung (Class of 2014)

She conducted a lesson with Year 12 students and shared with them some art techniques.

Gladwin Ho and Coco Ng (Class of 2017)

Gladwin and Coco talked about their life in The Chinese University of Hong Kong studying medicine.

KGV ALUMNI VISIT

Thank you very much for coming back.



Dr Victor Fung
(Class of 1957) and
Mrs Julia Fung nee Shen
(Class of 1963)

Dr Victor Fung and Mrs Fung came back to KGV in January and visited the Learning Resource Centre which they sponsored.



Chris Drew (Class of 2003)
This was his first visit to KGV since his graduation.



Calvin Quong
(Class of 1963)



Laura Reynolds nee Bray
(Class of 1987)
with her family



Robert England
(Class of 1977)



Adnan RAHMANI
(Class of 1980) with his sons

"My crew visited KGV on 7 March. The visit was hosted by our dear family friend (and KGV schoolmate who is now KGV Alumni Manager) Ms Yasmeen Ashraf. Yasmeen is the daughter of Regina and Mohd Ashraf (of famed Jhelum Custom Tailor on Hankow Road). I attended her parents' wedding on Hong Kong Island in the early 1970s before the first cross harbour tunnel was built, and now she is talking about retirement planning, makes me feel a little old....." says Adnan

KGV ANNUAL DINNER 2018



SIS SPORTS AWARD CEREMONY - DANIELLA MEANS

SIS alumna Daniella Means addressed at SIS sports ceremony and presented the sports team award as well as Sports Boy and Sports Girl of the Year. Daniella



spoke about her journey as a professional athlete. She started from a HK team rugby player when she left South Island School and played in a various Rugby 15s and Rugby 7s before retirement. After that, she restarted her professional sports career in powerlifting and is now Asia Pacific Powerlifting Champion.

Daniella explained the highs and lows as professional athlete and importance of self-belief and perseverance. Parents, students and staff were inspired by her speech.



Ankrish Gidwani

South Island School

No cakewalk



It's a Monday morning at Baking Maniac and the ovens are cold. The kitchen is quiet, bar the soft hum of the refrigerator compressors. Trace scents of cream cheese still linger in the air.

Ankrish Gidwani and his mother Renuka are kicking it back on their "day off" after another tireless week churning out batches and batches of cupcakes, cookies, cake pops and the odd feature cake or two.

"It's long hours," Ankrish tells ESF Alumni News, reclining in a sofa in his slick self-designed 1,800 square foot bakery / office / party venue for hire, nestled in an industrial building in Wong Chuk Hang. "We start early morning and finish at around midnight every day of the week.

"But on Mondays, we try to take it easy."

Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays are full days in the kitchen. On Fridays, the goodies are assembled, decorated and packaged. Weekends are when orders are delivered. That leaves only Mondays to forge the week's battleplans.

It is a rather hectic life - the kitchen is staffed by just him, his mum and a couple of part-time assistants. But Ankrish, a South Island School graduate and just 21-years-old, is living his dream.

Birth of a maniac

The young entrepreneur entered the baking business when he was just 12 years old. It all started with mum taking him to the baking classes she taught, where he would help out as her assistant. There, he began to soak up skills like a sponge.

To be fair, he does come from a family of talents. Ankrish's sister, Ishitaa, also an SIS alumna, is a Hong Kong cricketer who captains the Hong Kong women's team.

"I loved eating desserts. When I wanted to eat a dessert I would ask mum to make it. If she was busy, I would go and bake it myself," he says.

"At the time, I'd bake something only because I wanted to eat it, not because I particularly enjoyed baking. I've never even thought I could make a career of it."

While other classmates would be out playing rugby or heading to the movies after school, Ankrish's idea of fun was to rush straight home to hone his cupcake swirls and piping techniques.

As an outlet for his passion, he set up a blog to document his creations. This eventually culminated in his first order - a dozen cupcakes for a Christmas party for HK\$120.

"After the first party, another person contacted me, then another, and it literally just went word of mouth from there." It got to one order a month, then more. Magazines and newspapers started interviewing him. Before he knew it, he was running a full-fledged business.

"I would do emails in class everyday, go back home after school and do the orders. It became really busy and a lot of work. At that point I knew this was something I wanted to do for the rest of my life."

Icing on the cake

Struggling to decide whether he should go overseas for university - entering the Ivy League was his other dream - or continue with the business, Ankrish managed to find a compromise. He would study at The Chinese University in Hong Kong and keep Baking Maniac active.

"There are so many competitors coming into the market every day. If I had left for four years, that would have been a big problem," he said.

He cruised through his studies, completed his degree one year early in 2017 and even managed to fit a six-month exchange programme to Cornell University in the US, just to tick one off his bucket list.

No time was wasted after graduation. He rented out the space in Wong Chuk Hang and forked out nearly HK\$1 million to renovate and retrofit it. Baking Maniac was reborn and business continues to boom.

All or nothing

Ankrish is supportive of young Hong Kong entrepreneurs. He urges young people to pursue their dreams young, when there are fewer financial burdens and risks hanging over their heads.

"If you're willing to do it, you have to go all in," he says. "If you're not willing to go all in, there's so many other people who can come in and do the same thing, or something slightly different."

"The failure rate is so high in the Hong Kong [catering industry]. You see restaurants shutting all the time and it's so scary because the investment in the food business is ten times higher than any other business."

At times, this means sacrificing a social life and putting in the hours. He admits that he is only able to meet friends "once a month". There is barely time for sleep (emails and orders are done "after work" at midnight).

"I wouldn't start a business unless it's a real passion and you really wake up everyday wanting to do it."

A baker's secret

But surely there must be a secret sauce to Baking Maniac products? "There's really no secret to baking. I never learned from anyone. I constantly try to do better, try new recipes and develop new things, while using the best ingredients available."

"Ingredients make such a big difference," he stresses. "It's not worth saving HK\$2 on an egg if the end result of the cake is going to be so different."

Ankrish certainly does not scrimp. Icing sugar from England, fondant from the US and chocolate, strictly from Switzerland, "People in Hong Kong know what good quality is. If they are willing to pay the price for it, we want to offer the best."

Of course, another special ingredient is the support of his cherished South Island School network. Classes from SIS still use his kitchen for baking classes and workshops.

"Many teachers and friends came to my opening. Teachers were so supportive. Even while I was at school, they would order from me."

And then there's practice, passion and providing the customer with the best possible service. "We want the process of ordering a cake to be as individualised and personalised as possible. We want the customer to feel that they are ordering not just a cake, but an experience."





What's new - Where in the world are you - What's your favourite memory of your ESF school?
Send us a one liner, with your class year and school, and perhaps you will be featured in the next edition of the ESF Alumni News! www.esf.edu.hk/alumni_profile



*Have you considered
becoming a*

MENTOR?

Please contact **ESF Centre** or the **school alumni office**.



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