
ALUMNI NEWS

JAN 2019



HAPPY NEW YEAR

2019: A YEAR OF GIVING BACK





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A STAR ALLIANCE MEMBER



FOREWORD



On behalf of everyone at ESF – a very Happy New Year to you and your family.

A new year is a chance to reflect and to look forward. The past 12 months were another period of enormous success for our schools, our staff and our students. The academic results that were achieved at all levels across the ESF family were

remarkable, with students blowing away the global average in the IB Diploma, IGCSE and in the Middle Years assessments. While the headlines were, understandably, about the extraordinary young men and women who achieved full marks in the Diploma, success stories were to be found in every class, in every school.

Even although the end of this Academic Year is still a few months away, our senior students are already thinking about what comes next. For many, it will be further studies – either here in Hong Kong, or at other prestigious seats of learning around the world. Others will be taking a year off and some will be thinking about either starting their career or, perhaps, setting out in business on their own. No matter what decision the next group of graduating ESF students take, there is one thing that all of them will require: good advice.

That is where you come in! Nobody knows better about what it is like to strike out into the world after leaving an ESF school than those who have already done it. That is why, this year, we will be looking for your help. We are busy working on a new brand new Alumni networking tool that will help us to bring together the

thousands of ESF Alumni who can be found in every part of the world. When we launch the new platform later this year it will allow you to share your experiences with your fellow Alumni and with those graduating students who could benefit so much from your guidance and support. One of the most common things that our Alumni ask us is 'how can I help.' The new networking tool, we hope, will help provide an answer to that question.

We know that so many of you want to give something back to ESF and to your fellow Alumni – be that through your time, offering some mentorship to a new graduate or just by sharing your story. We are going to work with you this year to make that possible. It is the first of what I hope will be a number of exciting new initiatives we will launch that will help bind together all of the thousands of people who have had their lives changed by being at an ESF school.

Once again, a very Happy New Year.

Rob Shorthouse
Director of Communications



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KGV ALLIANCE A COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Giving Back to the Community

King George V School (KGV) has launched a new initiative to give back to the whole ESF community. Yasmeen Ashraf, KGV Communication and Community Development Manager, shares with us this new exciting project.

The 'KGV Alliance' is an idea designed to strengthen and deepen the connection between school and community. The KGV school vision statement talks about creating a 'school for one', a place where each and every student can feel a sense of belonging and connection. It also promotes the notion of KGV as an agile school, where we collaborate and innovate to make a difference in the communities we serve and lead.

Student Creativity

The KGV Alliance makes this vision come alive and aims to:

- Bring the business community, alumni, parents, community partners, teachers and students together on regular occasions across the year;
- Provide a networking opportunity for stakeholders to communicate, connect, and collaborate;
- Afford students an opportunity to 'pitch' a leadership project to the audience with the aim of creating partnerships between the school and the community that supports students in supporting others.

Essentially, the goal of the KGV Alliance is to create a partnership of today's and tomorrow's leaders, acting upon the shared belief that education is the foundation of positive change.

The KGV Alliance provides an opportunity to showcase the creative ideas, passion and leadership of KGV school students. So far, they shared their leadership 'big ideas' such as:

- Building a classroom for disadvantaged students in Cambodia;
- Acting to reduce plastic waste in Hong Kong;
- Sharing a new 'app' and seeking start-up advice and support;
- Initiating a mental health awareness campaign.

Amazing Success

One Alliance project involved 12 KGV senior students participating in an internship with a local start-up business, MeeOpp. What happened was quite amazing, as our students:

- Were placed in an exciting entrepreneurial environment
- Collaborated with entrepreneurs and experienced different aspects of the business
- Were encouraged to come up with their own ideas for innovation
- Engaged in real work challenges and learning opportunities

- Were coached and mentored through the experience

The outcome was incredible. Through the collaboration, MeeOpp and our students created a new online education product to accelerate Chinese Language acquisition at IB Diploma level. The school is now working with MeeOpp and our students to further develop, test and iterate the product which is ready soon for commercial release.

We were also excited to have several global speakers at KGV alliance events, including Rob Lilwall, a national geographic adventurer. Rob's message about embracing challenge, overcoming fear, and having a collaborative mindset resonated strongly with the audience.

Next Level of Partnership

And now KGV Alliance has moved to another level of community partnerships. We have partnered with INFINITI LAB to deliver an 'entrepreneurial boot camp' for 30 King George V School and Island School Year 12 Business and Economics students.

The audience left the first INFINITI event inspired by the quality of our students and the power of their dreams. The presence of a large audience sent a powerful message that we value our students and their big ideas.

“It was an evening with heartfelt warmth, having brought the community near and far together.”

Yasmeen Ashraf

KGV Alliance Organiser



A PASSION FOR PLANTS

Some people work out to relieve stress. Others might paint, get lost in some music or binge on TV dramas. For Toby Chan, there is something immensely therapeutic about pruning flowers and digging up soil.

Gardening does not sound like the typical hobby of a 20-something college student, but Toby has somehow found a passion in this most rustic of pastimes.

“At college, I might think too deeply about things, I might feel lonely, I might be in a bad mood. So whenever I’m feeling down, I will spend an extra second or two just looking at flowers, just to think and daydream,” he said.

Recently, Toby has set his sights on spreading gardening’s magic to others. In 2017 he returned to his secondary school, Renaissance College (Class of 2016), to set up an after-school gardening workshop for students called Hua Garden.

Promote Well-Being

Together with his mentor Mr Chung, the school’s resident gardener, he built a rooftop garden from scratch. On the day ESF Alumni News visited, the harvest of the month was the roselle, a hibiscus plant which produces deep crimson-coloured flowers. “They’re great for tea or making jams,” said Chung.

Toby, currently a second-year business student at Hang Seng University, spends about once a week at the workshop.

“I needed to do some volunteer work, so I thought to myself: what could I do that I was interested in and could make use of what I know? So I started writing the proposal [for Hua Garden].”

“I believe gardening can help students get in touch with the natural world,” he said. “Watching plants grow, I hope people can find some fun and meaning in life.”

He did his research on the benefits of gardening and learned from some studies that regular gardening work could help elderly people and students ease their pressure, improve their diet, and with physical activity, ease stress.

It also helped him develop as a person. “I came back to RC to host this activity, to learn how to communicate with others better, teach others what I know and open them up to new interests.”

Green Thumbs Came Later

And like many of those who take part in his workshop, he didn’t grow up with an interest in gardening at all. “I live in a Ma On Shan flat, we never had or grew any plants.”

He has Mr Chung to thank for this new-found horticultural passion. The two met during secondary school and developed a mentor-apprentice-like relationship. Toby was interested in what he did around the campus and started to tag along as Mr Chung carried out

gardening work around the school. Later, Toby’s friends started to join too. Toby then decided to form a club.

“Every week, my friends and I would visit Mr Chung to learn new things. He would teach us new skills like aerating the soil and making sure that it was not packed too tight. Or what substrate was comprised of.”

Students were required to do volunteer work for CAS (Creativity Activity Service) this quickly became it — an after-school gardening crash course with Mr Chung around the school grounds.

“The school let me host this activity and I was so happy that I went straight to the library — and I’m not the type that spends a lot of time there — to do my research on how to grow things, like roses.”

“Growing is all about experimentation and research”.

“Personally, I am more of an appreciator of plants and flowers. Every time I grow something, I anticipate the beauty that will come of it.”

Toby Chan

Renaissance College (Class of 2016)



THE MAGIC IN ORGANIC

Many people would argue that the sun has long set on Hong Kong agriculture. But the Kwongs of Kam Tin don't see it that way — they've managed to turn vegetable farming into a hip, thriving family business.

Their proposition is simple: to provide fresh, healthy and affordable organic vegetables to Hongkongers' doorsteps without them having to step foot in a wet market or supermarket.

"The demand for green, healthy products is going up," said Alvin Kwong, an alumnus of Island School (Class of 2007) and now the "Head of Lettuce" at the family firm, Magic Season Organics.

"Green is one thing, but people are increasingly asking 'where is the produce coming from?' and 'is it safe?' The transparency in our business is what makes us stand out."

Sowing the Seeds

It was his father Raymond, who started it all. Having led an organic fertilizer project for the waste management firm he worked for in the early 2000s, he decided to go it alone when the company scrapped the venture.

"We officially started in April 2015. It was just a one-man band, with my sister and I going on Facebook, saying we had these products and finding ways to deliver them" he recalled. "It was a small operation, we were handling about 15 to 20 customers in a week, a database of about 50 people and one driver."

It took them about two years to find their footing.

"We basically identified a few characteristics of our customer base and that they could be categorised into three groups: new mothers concerned about what their children eat, ESF parents with kids, and then there's the group comprised of young people wanting to buy veggies for their parents in hopes they'd eat better."

Green Upgrades

"Right now, vegetables go into a plastic bag, a foam box with some water bottles for ice, comes down [to Hong Kong], gets cut up, goes into a cardboard box, into homes, and then it basically ends up in a bin. That's the lifespan of these durable single-use items."

"We've changed our product supply chain — it now goes into a basket, a refrigerated truck and to our distribution centre."

The company is looking at alternative packaging such as beeswax wraps or using cotton from "upcycled" textiles. The goods can then be packed into a reusable cooler and sent to the customer.

"As long as the customer is regular, we can collect it all back," he said. "There are recyclers that want this stuff anyway and the truck can take the waste to one on the way back."

Alvin hopes the transition to greener logistics can provide new opportunities for the business. Customers are demanding it too. Recently, he made a return to Island School to talk to students about the business and logistics behind Magic Season Organic and the issue of food waste. He hopes to spread the word that online businesses can do green too.

"Who can actually say to their customer: I can guarantee you our products are chemical-free and I can prove it to you in any which way you want, and if you buy it, I can also deliver it without any single-use material."

"Now this is where things get exciting."

“Healthy eating is simple – just put fresh stuff in your mouth and mix it with a healthy lifestyle.”

Alvin Kwong

Island School (Class of 2007)

WHAT'S HAPPENING

STC ALUM LAUNCHES HIS NEW BOOK "ENOCH'S MUSE"



Sergio Monteiro (Sha Tin College, Class of 1996) has recently launched his new book called "Enoch's Muse". It is a family saga spanning five thousand years. The book is published by Proverse Hong

Kong and was a finalist for the 2017 Proverse Prize for Unpublished Fiction, Non-Fiction or Poetry.

"Many of the supporting characters in the book are real historical figures. Depicting them true to life and not as I needed them to be meant a year of research before I wrote one word."

Sergio Monteiro also came back to Sha Tin College and ran an after-school coding course through BSD Design and Coding Academy. It was held on 20 November 2018.

"Sometimes you don't know what you know. People's doubts will waver your knowledge. That's why you have to be sure about what you know – because you do know."



LOOKING FOR MORE AUTHORS

We are having alumni author book areas in school libraries. If you have also published a book, let us know! alumni@esfcentre.edu.hk



KGV ALUM WRITES ABOUT HONG KONG FADING INDUSTRIES

Lindsay Varty (King George V School, Class of 2006), recently published a book called Sunset Survivors. It tells the stories of Hong Kong's traditional tradesmen and women through stunning imagery and candid interviews.

Lindsay noticed the local places which she grew up with, dai pai dongs, old traditional barbershops, wet markets, are closing down and replaced by more glamorous and globalised alternatives. Through the book, she tells stories about these people who run their business for pure joy and contentment before they were gone.

KGV TEACHER'S HK WW2 NOVEL — "THE SLIGHTEST CHANCE"



Paul Letter's new book "The Slightest Chance", HKWW2 is a thrilling ride through real HKWW2 wartime history, with a story that offers inspiration and shocking surprises. By the end of the novel, the reader will realise that this story is also subtly about commitment.

Paul Letters is a novelist, journalist, broadcaster and part-time teacher of history and politics. He moved from London to the jungled fringes of Hong Kong in 2001. His earlier World War II novel, A Chance Kill, topped the South China Morning Post book charts.

The book is available online and across Hong Kong in various bookshops.

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WHAT'S HAPPENING



WIS ALUM RECEIVES SCHOLARSHIP AS A FOOTBALL PLAYER

Calvin Harris (West Island School, Class of 2018) set a new standard for young footballers by becoming the first Hong Kong-based player to get a scholarship to the top-ranked American university for football — Wake Forest — in 2018.

"My dream is to become a professional footballer. That's all I want," said Calvin.

NEW SHA TIN COLLEGE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE

"We thank the ESF community for their continuous support and encouragement. In return, we strive to serve our community as best as we can.

We are especially proud that our 2019 committee members are an extremely tight-knit team comprised of graduates working in a wide range of professions including medical, education, aviation, finance, business and law. We also come from a huge range of years — from class of 1994 to 2015! That is a 21-years of difference!

New blood brings us new ideas and new events. We are very excited with our new team in place and looking forward to meeting you." Sha Tin College Alumni Association Presidents, Mark Chiu and Katherine Hui.



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GOLFING ACROSS MONGOLIA

Adam Rolston, (South Island School, Class of 2007) who has embarked on many interesting and different paths since graduating from university seven years ago, pursued a professional career in rugby and golf while taking on significant personal challenges to raise funds for charities.

Adam has recently produced a movie about his 'Longest Hole' golfing journey with Caddie Ron Rutland across Mongolia. They attempt to set a new world record for the single longest hole of golf ever played: 2011 km from a makeshift tee box high in the Altai Mountains, all the way across Mongolia for 80 days, to finally putt out on the 18th green of the only champion golf course in the country on the outskirts of the capital city Ulaanbataar.



WIS ALUM LAUNCHES SOLO MUSIC CAREER IN US

Following Disha Daryanani's (West Island School, Class of 2014) graduation from Pace University in New York, she got busy producing and promoting her music career. We wish her well in her endeavours!

NEW SIS PRINCIPAL TOM VIGNOLES

Mr Tom Vignoles joined us as the Principal of South Island School in August 2018.

Before joining ESF, Mr Vignoles was the Head of the Urca site at The British School, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, which he has led since 2014. He has 22 years of experience in education, including eight years in senior leadership positions.



WIS ALUM JUNIOR ACHIEVEMENT FEDEX INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGE

Over the summer 2018, Philippe De Manny and Colin Mak (Class of 2018) participated in the Junior Achievement Challenge sponsored by FedEx. Philippe and Colin got through to the final round in HK, then on to Singapore.

In Singapore, they were paired with other international students, 60 in all, and competed at the international challenge.

It was a remarkable achievement for the boys to go this far and additionally, Philippe and his Singaporean partner finished in third place.



WIS ALUMNI SHARING

Surmayee Tatarbe (West Island School, Class of 2010) and Zikita Makant (West Island School, Class of 2010) came back to West Island School on 30 May 2018 to speak to the Learning for Life students at WIS about university choices and career pathways. Their talk was very inspiring for the young learners.



WHAT'S HAPPENING



NINE ESF GRADUATES AWARDED HK SCHOLARSHIP 2018

Congratulations to our nine alumni who were awarded the Hong Kong Scholarship for Excellence Scheme! The ceremony was held on 23 August 2018, officiated by HKSAR Chief Executive, Mrs Carrie Lam. A total of 83 Hong Kong students were selected from 789 applicants to receive the award.

The nine ESF awardees are:

- Island School – Lau Chak Kei
- KGV – Natalie Yu
- Renaissance College – Mah Shao Qian
- Sha Tin College – Kaja Chan, Maja Chan and Sean Kwan
- South Island School – Belinda Ng and Leo Kim
- West Island School – Jon Cheah

Apart from academic achievements, selection was also based on key considerations, such as their leadership skills, potential as well as their commitment and contribution to Hong Kong.

In the photo: Lau Chak Kei from Island School and ESF Vice Chairman, Pauline Ng.

IS ALUMNI DEMONSTRATE CULINARY SKILLS TO STUDENTS

On 29 August 2018, four alumni visitors came to share their skills and recipes in the Island school kitchen.

Claudia Lau (Class of 2017) demonstrated her favourite cookie recipes to the Sweet Indulgence Elements class. She is now studying Music at King's College London; Nitin Hranandani (Class of 2015) and Natalie Chan (Class of 2014) showed off the culinary skills they developed whilst at university and on work placement at three Michelin starred restaurants. They were joined by Alvin Koo (Class of 2015), who visited the Year 12 and 13 BTEC hospitality class to speak about his role as an event manager, whilst on work placement in New York.



IS ALUM EXHIBITED HIS WORK AT THE AFFORDABLE ART FAIR

Martin Lever (Class of 1985) exhibited his work at the Affordable Art Fair in Hong Kong (18-20 May 2018 at HKCEC, Wan Chai). His other work can be seen at <http://www.artbymartinlever.com/>



STC CAREERS EVENING

Sha Tin College Careers Evening was held on 9 November 2018. There were 13 booths for various career fields ranging from art and design, business to medicine and science. Thanks to the 31 STC alumni who came to the event and inspired many of our student with their experience.

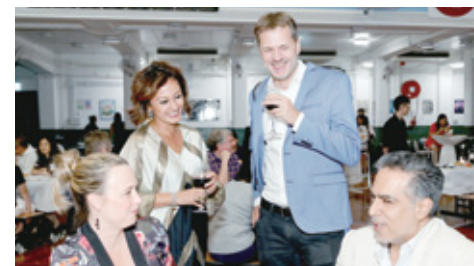


KGV ANNUAL GALA DINNER – A REMARKABLE AFFAIR

King George V School welcomed alumni, parents and students to their annual gala dinner — A Remarkable Affair on 5 October 2018.

It was a wonderful evening filled with laughter, great conversation and fabulous music. Our incredibly talented KGV student performers were the highlight of the night. Parents and alumni made new connections and strengthened existing ones. The strong KGV school spirit all came together; it was truly remarkable!

The event was a triumphant success and we are grateful to all who contributed. Also a massive thank you to the various businesses and individuals who donated gifts in support of the event.



POETRY SESSION FOR WIS STUDENTS

West Island School alumnus, educator and poet Henrik Hoeg (Class of 2005), visited the school on 2 October 2018. He had a poetry session with the students, followed by Q&A.

Henrik's poetry has been published and performed in numerous places. He is also the organiser and emcee of Peel Street Poetry, an open mic night that has been going for over 12 years in Hong Kong.



REUNIONS 2018

KING GEORGE V SCHOOL

Class of 2008 reunion on 24 August



Islander Pre-Christmas Drinks on 12 December

ISLAND SCHOOL

RENAISSANCE COLLEGE

2018 Reunion on 25 August



Class of 1998 Reunion on 12 October

KING GEORGE V SCHOOL



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THESE ALUMNI GAVE BACK

These alumni came back for a school visit in the last few months. If you are also interested in coming back to see your alma mater, please contact us at alumni@esfcentre.edu.hk



GIVING BACK TO EACH OTHER!

It is often said that the best friends you make in your life are those whom you meet at school. For two Sha Tin College alumni, friendship was not enough! These school friends are now husband and wife.





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