

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Letters of Hope

**20 young people prove that the pen is mightier than the sword
in a new Hong Kong cancer care project
1 & 8 March 2014**

Despite the fact that more than 25,000 people in Hong Kong are diagnosed with cancer every year, cancer is still a subject that most of us prefer to avoid. With the cancer care project, *Letters of Hope*, the Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation hopes to launch a creative and colourful support programme that enables young people to help those in need of care and support.

This March, 20 young people will be paired up with young cancer patients from the adolescent ward of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital. Using their creative writing skills, they will become the pioneers of Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation's *Letters of Hope*, creating personalised handcrafted messages that they will send anonymously to their hospitalised 'buddy'.

This project will take place over two weekends and will be led by Hong Kong artist and cancer veteran, Rae Leung. Taking inspiration from the successful US-based volunteer initiative, *Chemo Angels*, *Letters of Hope* is designed to inform the young participants about cancer and treatment methods and inspire them to create scrapbook-style letters to be opened by their cancer buddies during their treatment period. The letters will be filled with informed and inspiring words and images with the goal of fuelling a positive attitude and aiding in the road to recovery.

Programme leader Rae Leung says, "Cancer can affect people of all ages and shouldn't be a taboo subject. We need to learn to communicate openly, so that everyone can honestly and effectively speak from the heart. Through *Letters of Hope*, we hope to expand the support for Hong Kong's cancer community – usually limited to families, friends and colleagues – to include complete strangers." She adds, "As a cancer veteran myself, I've found that receiving support from someone I don't know is surprisingly powerful. Every gesture of care helps, but effective words magnify the messages. We don't need to be 'fighting' and 'battling' all the time – how much energy does that cost? By being alive, we have already won."

Lindsey McAlister says, “The US-based programme *Chemo Angels* enables people to send messages of hope and brighten up a patient’s day. We wanted to create a similar initiative in our own community – and who better to cheer others up, than young people? Through *Letters of Hope*, our young participants learn to put themselves in another person’s shoes, and to find their own words to express themselves and help others through tough times. Empathy is key to all human social interaction, and creative writing is a great way to teach and learn about values.”

NOTES TO EDITORS

Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation’s *Letters of Hope*

Dates: **1 & 8 March 2014, 9.30am – 1pm**

Venue: **YAF Studio**

Free of charge, registration required by 14 February

Suitable for young people aged 15 to 25

Registration and enquiries: shek@hkyaf.com / 2214 0177

Visit www.hkyaf.com for more details

Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation

Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation (YAF) www.hkyaf.com is a charity that provides high quality, non-competitive arts experiences for young people aged 5 to 25. Established in 1993 by Lindsey McAlister, OBE, YAF organises inclusive and inspirational projects that reach out to young people of all cultures, backgrounds, languages and abilities, and actively creates opportunities for those who are disadvantaged and underprivileged. Each year we reach over 800,000 children, teenagers and young adults through our projects, exhibitions and performances.

MEDIA ENQUIRIES

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