

April 2015

My dear friend

Four years ago, Ah-ho for the first time in his life, had to face up to a series of difficulties both in his own family, with the children's home and in his own life. He says that now that everything is past, he can see that it was Youth Outreach who gave him a family during that period and struggled through the difficulties together with him.

We first met him, when he was 16 years old. He began coming to the Hang Out. But the social workers noticed that he always seemed to have a bag of "luggage" with him. As they got to know him better, they found out that his parents were very superstitious and believed that Ah-ho was possessed by a spirit who would harm them. So they kicked him out of the house and Ah-ho spent his nights drifting from place to place. One of these places was the Hang Out.

Our social worker immediately arranged for him to move into our Crisis Center and then arranged a children's home for him. However, when he turned 18 years old, he was legally an adult and had to leave the Home Yet his own parents would still not let him return home. Ah-ho said that he felt totally abandoned. He felt that since he was unwanted by anyone, he must be worth nothing. What was worse, overnight he had to learn to stand on his own feet. He had no money, no job and no where to stay. Some friends were willing to give him shelter but only for one or two days at a time.

During these turbulent days, one of his "so-called" friends offered him to money to work as a "look out" for a drug peddler. His job was simple. When the drug dealer was actually selling drugs Ah-ho had to make sure there were no police in the area and if he saw anything suspicious he had to sound the alarm. He thought it was a simple task and that it involved little risk. Unfortunately, on his first day, he was caught up in a police undercover operation, was arrested and sentenced to a period in a training center. He now had a criminal record.

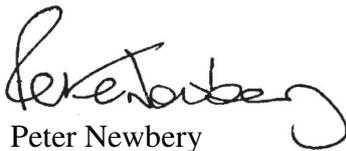
After he got out of the training center, he felt lost. He was now 20 years old. He had no form of support and now had to face up to his life alone. It was certainly not an easy road. He originally thought of applying for a job as a Program Assistant in the Hang Out but the rent where he was living was high and the salary of a Program Assistant was not enough to cover his outlay. He finished up renting a bed space in a partitioned apartment and even though he reduced his other expenses he still found it difficult to make ends meet.

We still kept in regular touch with Ah-ho and he comes back to the Hang Out regularly. We can see that he needs continually to feel valued and needs caring support. We have involved him in various programs such as football training and volunteer work and slowly he has begun to rebuild his self image, self-confidence and sense of personal value. He has begun to plan his future. After several turbulent years, he has found a job as a sales assistant and is able to rent a decent place to live. And so after four years, he has begun a more stable life.

He still comes to Youth Outreach regularly in his spare time. He says that Youth Outreach is now his family where he can feel wanted and valued. This is where he finds his friends.

We hope that we can stay with him in the coming days and help him meet new any challenges and walk into his new life with confidence and courage.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Newbery". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Peter Newbery
Executive Director

PS: On the 18th of April we have run our annual fund raising event " YO! Dance it UP! 2015 " at Shatin Town Hall. It provided our at-risk youth an opportunity to showcase their various talents such as dancing, music, stage design and audio & lighting production. For the highlights of the show, please visit www.yodanceitup.org.hk.