

榮譽會長  
溫文儀先生，BBS，JP

榮譽委員  
蔡潘若棠女士  
岑大衛先生

榮譽總幹事  
李文烈博士，BBS，MH

執行委員會

會長  
黃紹基先生

副會長  
梁甜昭先生

義務秘書  
麥錦明先生

義務司庫  
尤好心女士

義務法律顧問  
梁雲生律師，JP

委員  
區環智女士，GBS，JP  
林焯瀚先生  
李文烈博士，BBS，MH  
鄧淑珍女士  
黃妙茵女士

Honourary President  
Mr. WAN Man-yeek, BBS, JP

Honourary Members  
Mrs. CHOI POON Yeuk-tong Stephanie  
Mr. David SHUM

Honourary Executive Director  
Dr. Peter John NEWBERY, BBS, MH

Executive Committee

President  
Mr. WONG Siu-kee Kent

Vice President  
Mr. LEUNG Tim-chiu Richard

Honourary Secretary  
Mr. MARK Kam-ming

Honourary Treasurer  
Ms. YAU Yu-xin Amelia

Honourary Legal Advisor  
Mr. Vincent LIANG, JP

Members  
Ms. AU King-chi, GBS, JP  
Mr. LAM Wai-hon Patrick  
Dr. Peter John NEWBERY, BBS, MH  
Ms. TANG Suk-chun Winnie  
Ms. WONG Miu-yan Cecilia

November 2020

My dear friend

Our Transitional Housing Project is supposed to be exactly that - a transition to the work place for young people who are not academically gifted. However, over the recent summer, we were surprised to see some of the residents of the Girls' Center (known to us as "THG") were students, not working youth.

Obviously since, the schools had all closed down many students were hanging around at home, others were hanging around on the streets. Some came from difficult families and had relationship problems, some had no one at home to support them and yet others refused to pay attention to programs run by the schools and were running wild on the streets.

We actually had girls from all levels of secondary school and even one primary student. Several of the most senior of the girls were in the final year of secondary school and had to prepare for the Diploma in Secondary Education exam (DSE). They were obviously serious and worked very hard at their schoolwork while they were staying with us.

The younger students originally seemed to think that they didn't need to do anything and could enjoy a long holiday. This was particularly bad for those girls whose parents were out at work all day leaving the girls at home on their own. Some of these girls were referred to us by social workers of various agencies who came across them in the course of their work. One girl actually referred herself because she was afraid of being at home alone all day. We accepted them all!

It was interesting to see the influence which the older girls, unknown to themselves, had on the younger girls. The girls who were preparing for the DSE were very serious about their studies, for obvious reasons. Our social workers did whatever they could to help them revise and keep up to date and tried to make sure that they had access to any learning material they required. They were very serious and sometimes asked to be allowed to stay up after lights out, borrowing one of the counselling rooms to continue their studies late into the night – burning the midnight oil.

By contrast, in the beginning, some of the younger girls seemed to think that they had come to a holiday camp. All they had to do was eat, sleep and have a good time. But slowly, slowly as they saw the older girls working so hard they began to dig out some exercises given them by their schools. Our social workers did not want to put pressure on them but encouraged them to do a little bit every day. It provided an interesting example of peer pressure and peer group leadership that we should all reflect on.

Youth Outreach is not a school and we did not want to imitate regular schools who drill the students in past exam papers, pressuring the students to aim for high grades and outstanding performances but we felt that encouragement should be given where encouragement was due and the results could be clearly seen.

Although the younger girls did not study for as long a time as the older girls, they spent a part of each day doing school work. We are sure that this will bode them well in the coming school year when the students can go back to meet their classmates, friends and teachers and get used to the regular school life.

It seems that the learning environment was the key, which was created almost single handed by the senior students without any prompting from us. Three girls in the center got more than 20 points in the DSE - one got twenty six! Seven girls were able sign up for various post-secondary courses such as Associate Degree programs or Higher Diploma courses.

Although I do not want to imitate the mass media printing on the front-page how many students from which schools got As or Bs but I do feel that we must show our support for the efforts of our young people. This year, in such difficult circumstances, twenty seven of our young people took the public exams - eight from THG, seventeen from City Challenge (ABC) and two from the School of Hip Hop. Sixteen of these have already signed up for post-secondary courses. We congratulate them all!

The situation this year is an interesting contrast with our experience of about 10 years ago. At that time, we would often suggest to our young people that they might like to go continue their education. One memorable reply we received at that time came from one of our boys who said "School? I prefer to die!"

Hopefully we have moved on since then, but as I said at the beginning of this newsletter, the program is supposed to be "Transitional Housing" not a student hostel. But during this present time, when we are already talking of the "new normal" we feel we must respond to the real needs of the young people as we find them and we are very happy to see them respond to our support and encouragement. It also confirms our firm belief in the resilience of our young people. With support and encouragement, they are strong enough to overcome their personal difficulties and become confident and mature adults.

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 of the last name.

Peter Newbery