

Thursday, November 19, 2009

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Cancer patients find hope in art project

Hongkongers' donations to support free workshop for sufferers and relatives

OPERATION SANTA CLAUS

Dan Kadison
Nov 14, 2009

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Look at Rae Leung Wai Hon and you would not know the 34-year-old has cancer.

"I feel great," said Leung, who was diagnosed with the disease in September 2007.



"I'm not symptomatic. Right now, I'm choosing a kind of treatment that does not impact me deeply with ... side effects," she said. "On a day-to-day basis, I work, I live, I have fun."

Leung will be the artist in residence for the Hong Kong Youth Arts Foundation's new programme, "The C Word", a coming free workshop for 18- to 30-year-olds who are living with the disease, and relatives who are struggling to deal with their own feelings.

"The C Word" will be open to about 100 people, run for approximately six months, and comprise numerous art workshops, including lessons on audio recording, writing, photography and collage.

The project, "a creative journey", will culminate with an exhibition of the participants' work, said Leung and Patricia Chiu, project manager for the foundation's community-based Art Angels programme.

Leung has experience with writing, voice-over recording, photography and interior design. She said she dreamed up the idea for the programme after noticing there was not much support for cancer patients in her age group.

"Yes, there are support groups, and there are people who care, but what I have felt is I have not found another person experiencing cancer with a similar perspective as would someone within my peer group," Leung said.

Donations from Hongkongers will fund the project. The foundation is one of 13 beneficiaries of Operation Santa Claus, the annual charity campaign jointly organised by the **South China Morning Post** ([SEHK: 0583](#), [announcements](#), [news](#)) and RTHK.

"Cancer is kind of something that we all hear about but we don't ever really confront or deal with," Chiu said. "So it's interesting to put together a project that addresses cancer, the issue of cancer and having cancer, and what is it like, and also tells you about the stories behind it, the people behind it."

Cancer is still a subject that is talked about in hushed tones, Leung said. "We want to break that down and let people know ... it can happen to anyone you know. It can happen to the person you are going to school with. It can happen to the person sitting next to you at the movies.

"It's something that happens to everyone around us. But there is light at the end of the



1 of 1

Artist Rae Leung (right) and Patricia Chiu, project manager for the Art Angels programme, promote their new initiative 'The C Word'.

Photo: Oliver Tsang

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tunnel.

"There is hope out there for us all because there are ways to deal with this. There is strength within us all, if we just find that voice and find that expression to deal with the darkness, to deal with the negative."

Leung and Chiu said the project would help put the disease in perspective for participants, as well as those who attended the multimedia exhibition.

"Yes, everyone who's created art in the exhibition is living with cancer or knows someone who has cancer," Chiu said.

"And so there is that sort of common thread and theme within the work that's created. But I do believe that ... while on the surface the exhibition seems to be about cancer, you [will] come to it and it will evoke emotion and awaken ideas within you that are not cancer-related."

The art is "going to be honest expression in creative medium ... It will be thought-provoking, it will be inspiring, it will motivate you, it will move you," Leung added.

For more information about "The C Word" call 2877 2207 or e-mail cword@hkyaf.com.

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How you can give

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- You can donate by cheque, payable to "SCMP CHARITIES LTD - OPERATION SANTA CLAUS" and mailed to: Operation Santa Claus, Morning Post Centre, 22 Dai Fat Street, Tai Po Industrial Estate, New Territories, HK
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