



## NEWSCLIPPINGS

- Date : 4<sup>th</sup> July, 2010 (Fri)
- Source : South China Morning Post 南華早報
- Re : Young visitors help bring cheer to the elderly

### Young visitors help bring cheer to the elderly



Ho Wai-fun, 87, and two volunteers who visited her as part of a programme to help depressed elderly people in Wong Tai Sin. Photo: Ng Yuk-hang

Ng Yuk-hang

Depression can strike at any age, but when it hits in life's twilight years, the suffering can be extra-painful.

However, for 87-year-old Ho Wai-fun, who became depressed after a fall at home brought into sharp focus the difficulties of growing old, help was at hand in the shape of young visitors who encouraged her to remember the happiest days of her life.

Now she proudly shows off her 'flight diary' to her friends. "Here are the pictures of places I have been to – I have travelled to many places in the world," she says with a smile.

Four months ago Ho was diagnosed with mild depression – a level

of eight on the Hamilton Depression rating which measures a patient's condition. But home visits from two teenagers as part of a treatment programme have helped bring her rating down to a normal level of three.

A Chinese University study last year estimated that 30 per cent of Hong Kong's elderly, or about 240,000, suffer from various levels of depression. About 300 elderly citizens took their own lives in 2008, a third of all suicides that year.

Ho was one of the 31 who took part in a treatment programme for mildly depressed elderly people organised by the Christian Family Service Centre and Kowloon Hospital.

Through home visits and meet-

ings with occupational therapists and psychiatric nurses, the elderly people were reminded of things that could make them happy. Tong Choi-ying, the centre's director of elderly care programmes, said.

Before the programme, the 31 participants had an average of 9.6 on the Hamilton Depression rating scale. After the programme, the rating dropped to 7.43 – indicating an improvement from mild- to borderline depression.

On the Hamilton scale, scores of seven to 17 indicate mild depression, 18 to 24 moderate depression, and above 24 severe depression.

Ho developed mild depression at the start of this year after a fall at

home. This brought on the realisation that her sight and hearing had deteriorated quickly.

"I always felt bored and did not want to go out. I felt that my handwriting became less clear than before," she said.

Ma Ting-ho, a teenage student who volunteered for the programme, said the visitors helped Ho rediscover happiness by reminding her of her travel experiences.

"Through chatting we realised that Ho loves travelling. We asked her to gather her pictures and make a 'flight diary'," he said.

Ma and another volunteer spent a month making the colourful diary with words and graphics.

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香港公益金會員機構  
A MEMBER AGENCY OF THE COMMUNITY CHEST

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