AMITY



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A FUTURE WITH DREAMS

- A Promising Future for Vocational School Students
- Together for a Shared Future
- "A promising project to improve people's wellbeing"



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Amity Future Engineers workshop in Yangzhou





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Give every youngster a chance

very year, millions of young Chinese people change their lives by doing well in their college entrance examinations. However, there are large number who do not have a chance to sit the college entrance examinations, and end up living their lives almost invisible to the public. They are vocational school students.

Vocational education used to be a marginalized part of the Chinese education system, with the preferred path of education being progression from compulsory education, regular secondary school to higher education. However, social and economic development has led to an increased demand in outstanding blue-collar workers, which makes vocational education much more attractive than before.

Amity Foundation has been engaged in education development for more than 30 years, with the belief that the development of vocational education cannot be achieved without the support of social forces and the raising of social awareness. In 2016, Amity launched the Amity Future Engineers Program, aiming to "give every youngster a chance". This program provides student grants and capacity building services for vocational school students with financial difficulties, so that more youngsters will be able to become outstanding practitioners in various industries in the future. Today, the "Future Engineers" supported by Amity can be found in more than ten vocational and technical

General Secretary The Amity Foundation



schools across 9 cities from 5 provinces such as Yunnan, Sichuan and Gansu. With Amity's support, more than 90% of these students have graduated and started their careers.

Not long ago, the Amity Future Engineer Program won the "The Most Influential Charity Project" of the sixth Jiangsu Charity Award, which represents not only an honor and recognition for Amity, but also an encouragement and inspiration for the development of vocational education.

A famous excerpt from the 1998 revised edition of the Xinhua Dictionary reads: "Zhang Hua has been admitted to Peking University; Li Ping is in a secondary technical school; I am working as a salesclerk in a department store. We all have a bright future." While some may find this ironic in a society where passing a college entrance examination is the expect path, the rise of vocational education may be the next norm in a society where the education system is growing more complete and mature.

Vocational education has promising prospects in a modern society. Amity continues to join hands with all the loving forces of the society to make work towards this beautiful future.

Focus



A promising future for vocational school students

u can clearly recall the cloudy day when he came to Yangzhou Tianhai Vocational Technical School in a gloomy mood.

"I could have studied at an excellent ordinary high school in Huai'an, a city in Jiangsu Province. However, my family situation prevented me from chasing my academic dream." His eyes turned red when we talked about his family: his mother is bedridden with illness, his grandma is old, while his sister and he are still at school. His father is the only worker and takes on the burden of supporting the whole family. Due to his family's harsh financial condition, Wu had to give up high school studies and attend vocational school regardless of his good performance in the high school entrance examination, as it was a much more direct way to land a job.

On the first day of school, the normally stoic Wu couldn't hide his sadness and disappointment. He ran out of the dormitory and cried.

"I felt that I was there without a choice," he recalled one year later.

Before going to vocational school, Wu knew nothing about his major "Electronic Technology Application". Wu had been out of sorts since the beginning of the semester because he knew he was bound to attend a vocational school, and the fire of passion inside his heart had yet to be reignited.

However, everything changed when he joined the "Amity Future Engineers Project" workshop. The ice-breaking game held at the start of the workshop successfully captured his attention. Staff from the Amity Foundation invited the students to evaluate themselves as 'positive' and 'negative'. If they held a vague self-recognition, they could leave it as 'blank'." This "blank" option aroused Wu's interest: "I felt like choosing 'blank' in most cases. For instance, I couldn't decide whether my characteristic calmness was a positive or not."



During a break, Wu took the time to ask the teacher for help

In his ensuing conversation with Amity staff, he was surprised at not being interrupted or denied throughout, and that his words were taken seriously. It gave him a long-lost feeling of respect.

Yangzhou Tianhai Vocational Technical School is one of the schools under the Amity Future Engineers Project. The workshop which Wu participated in is an important component of the project, aiming to guide vocational school students to study happily through group games, gain confidence, build character, express their emotions and seek external support. These were beyond Wu's expectations: "I came here intending to escape from the classroom. I was able to gain a lot."

After a day of workshops, Wu met new friends, and more importantly, introduced him to a "new self", and the biggest reward was that he finally accepted himself: "one coin has two sides; life is the same."

After attending the Future Engineers Workshop, Wu began to accept himself as a "vocational school student" from the bottom of his heart. Vocational school life was full of beautiful discoveries. For example, the teachers were devoted and gentle. "Our teacher, Miss Lu, is so nice. Whenever I feel confused, I turn to her with my feelings or even complaints. I always feel better afterwards."

A blueprint for the future gradually unfolded in front of him. One of the most critical people in it was his mother. "I want to learn skills, find a stable job, and give mum a better life," he said.

The passion in Wu's heart was reignited. Soon, he became an outstanding student in all aspects, and later he was admitted to the vocational education college entrance examination class, which meant that after completing his vocational school studies, he could participate in vocational education college entrance exams and further his college studies, enhancing his capacity and competitiveness." Wu is a good student, conscious, proactive, and thoughtful," his math teacher said of him.

Wu couldn't hide his youthful pride when asked about his academic ranking.

"Are you the top 10 student?"

"Sort of..."









"Top 3?"
"I think...yes."

In addition to the workshop, the project provides stable grants for Wu. "It does help me a lot! It allows me to devote more to my studies."

Expenses related to learning and life used to lay an invisible burden on his shoulders.

However, he wouldn't shift this burden to his family - he did not want to ask his family for money. On one vacation, his arm was injured in an accident while interning in the factory, leaving

a scar. He didn't tell his family since the internship salaries could somewhat relieve the family burden.

In the view of the principal of Yangzhou Tianhai Vocational Technical School, the grant from this project is economic assistance, but more importantly, a spiritual affirmation and support. Due to various factors, most students in vocational and technical schools are currently faced with family financial and academic difficulties. In most cases, flowers, applause, and awards are of little use. "Few

vocational school students have enjoyed such attention and support before," said the principal. "Many of our students have never taken a role as a team leader. These grants can remind them that vocational school students are also recognized, expected, and needed by society."

Positive feedback is of great significance for one's growth, but hard to come by on the long journey of vocational school development.

Xiaoguo, who graduated from

Yangzhou Tianhai Vocational Technical School, is a former beneficiary of the project. Xiaoguo majored in elderly service and management, and is now an intern at an influential elderly care institution in Nanjing. He feels that the Future Engineers Project significantly contributed to his successful completion of education and gradual entrance into society after growing up in an underprivileged family. He expressed his gratitude in the letter to the sponsor: "Since the day I received the grants, I have been thinking about how to live up to this help and expectation from society. My answer is to cherish the present, move forward with gratitude, seize opportunities, and acquire knowledge and professional skills like a sponge. I will be a torch bearer who conveys love through my work, giving back the help and love from society to the elderly who need my service and help, and becoming an excellent elderly care service practitioner." Since then, he has gone on to make his words a reality.

Being a torch bearer to convey love is also a common aspiration of Wu and many beneficiaries of the Future Engineers Project. "I'd like to be someone like you and help the people in need," Wu expressed his determination to the staff of the Amity Foundation calmly and firmly. "Because I've been caught in the rain, I want to be the one who gives others an umbrella."



► Xiao Guo (left) and his classmate



Together for a shared future

ur curriculum includes Automobile Formation and Material, Automotive Electrician, and Performance Testing of New-Energy Automobile. We alternate between theoretical learning and practical training every two weeks." Feifei, a lovely young lady from Chongqing Mechanical Senior Technical School, excitedly shared the everyday life of a major in the New Energy Automobile Inspection and Maintenance program. Her decision to enroll in the program baffled many people around her who thought it was typical for girls to head into fields such as Preschool Education or Nursing.

Feifei's performance in the senior high school entrance examinations had left her shy of qualifying for a regular high school. She chose instead to enroll in a vocational school and fell in love at first sight

with her major: "When I was a kid, I had been to auto shows and thought it would be quite cool to be an automobile sales consultant. So I told myself that it wouldn't be bad if I could do this job." To be a competent automobile sales consultant, a sufficient understanding of automobiles is a must, and inspection and maintenance is the best way to learn about automobiles. Thus when this major was offered in Feifei's school, she chose it without hesitation.

Another reason behind Feifei's choice is her believe in the future of new energy vehicles in the automobile industry. In 2022, the retail sales volume of new energy vehicles in the market was 5.674 million, a year-on-year growth of 90%. Statistics from China Passenger Car Association showed the penetration rate of new-energy vehicles reached 27.6% in 2022, meeting ahead of schedule the target



▶ Feifei works as an sales trainee in a car shop



▶ Feifei (first from right) attended a professional skills competition. She often takes part in different professional skills competitions. Regardless of the results, she believes that "every participation is a practice of my ability and experience".

proposed in the New Energy Vehicle Industry Development Plan (2021-2035). That's why Feifei believes her major, "New Energy Vehicle Inspection and Maintenance", will furnish her with bright prospects.

Even though some people around Feifei didn't understand her choice, her mother was very supportive. The support of the Amity Foundation's "Future Engineer Program" gave her more confidence. "At first, I thought vocational school was about taking it easy from day to day, but the more I learned after joining the program, the wiser I found the decision of going to vocational school. I am taking my studies serious and trying my hardest to be responsible for my own choice."

"The difference between vocational schools and regular senior secondary schools only lies in the content of learning." This is how Feifei feels and the message that the Amity Future Engineer Program wants to convey to the general public: Vocational schools and regular schools should be of equal importance.

Wang Yuqian, Project Specialist of the Future Engineers Program, joined in May 2021. Having organized all kinds of workshops in schools under the program, she is well known and loved by many of the supported children. According to Wang Yuqian, when choosing students from a variety of majors offered by the



▶ Wang Yuqian (right) leads the workshop of Amity Future Engineer Project

vocational schools, the Future Engineers Program team prefers traditional majors significant to the local project area, such as Agricultural and Animal Husbandry, Jade Carving, Huaiyang Cuisine Cooking, Arts and Crafts, or modern majors relevant to the latest social needs such as robotics, new-energy automobiles, elderly care services, and minority languages of countries related to the Belt and Road Initiative.

In Wang Yuqian's opinion, the Amity Future Engineers Program responds to the national policy of "building a quality education system" by linking companies, donor groups and other social forces to help solve the shortage of technicians and build capacity for the industries. At the same time, it calls for public attention to and participation in the development of vocational education, endeavoring to change the public's stereotypical perception of vocational education and encourage related individuals, majors and industries to work "together for a shared future".

"A promising project to improve people's wellbeing"

he Amity Future Engineers Program was first launched in Tengchong City, Yunnan Province, in September 2017. Since then, Ma Shaofu from the Committee of Education, Science, Health, and Sports of Tengchong Municipal Committee of CPPCC has been responsible for the preliminary research, coordination and implementation, and evaluation and tracking of the project in the local area. According to him, he has participated in and witnessed the development of the project from the very beginning. Over the past six years, over 400 vocational school students in Tengchong have completed their academic studies with the support from the Future Engineers Program, found jobs and become self-reliant.

"Oh, Zongyan is from the jade carving major; Ziyi is from the wood carving major; Xiaoyan and Zhengtao are from the automobile repair major; and Anlong is from the mechanical and electrical major..." Ma Shaofu can easily recall the backgrounds and stories behind the supported students. Having been devoting to this project for a long time, he collects information, sorts out feedback materials, and conducts follow-up visits. Due to his long-term interactions with the children, Ma Shaofu has established a close relationship with the children; many of them call him "Uncle Ma".



▶ Ma Shaofu (in red) is making home visits for Amity Future Engineers Program



In Ma Shaofu's view, the significance of the Amity Future Engineers Program lies in its inheritance and promotion, which are essential in improving people's well-being. "This program is blessed by all walks of society. It shows the inheritance of traditional Chinese virtues, that is, we help and love each other. It allows students to complete their studies and improve their families' living conditions. At the same time, it raises public attention on vocational education, emphasizing its positive role.

Ziyi was a wood carving major student in Tengchong supported by the Future Engineers Program. He now works at a local wood carving factory, processing all kinds of wood carving products. Ma Shaofu has a deep impression of him: "Ziyi was outgoing and hardworking. His works even during his school years enjoyed great reputation, winning a number of prizes in competitions."

"Today, machines can handle many complicated carving processes," said Ziyi. "Nevertheless, in many cases, only our human touch can give life to a wood-carving work and make it perfect. This is the unique value of traditional crafting."

Ziyi is grateful for his experience studying in the vocational school where he developed outstanding carving techniques. Without the Future Engineers Program and the economic support and spiritual encouragement it offered him, he would not have been able to focus on his studies.

Ma Shaofu cares about every

student like Ziyi. He looks forward to more phases of the Future Engineers Program to be implemented in Tengchong, providing more love and companionship for more students. "I am especially impressed by the workshop under the program. I expect it to be more tailored to individual students, and to better stimulate their confidence and creativity by optimizing and enriching the activities and functions."



▶ Ziyi was practicing as an intern engraver during his study in the vocational school

I like what I am



▶ Hongming loves working in Amity Bakery (Kunshan). His story encourages many trainees like him at the bakery.

ike all children, Hongming was born with a name bearing the best wishes from his parents. Yet an operation to remove a hydrocephalic tumor at an early age caused irreversible brain injury to Hongming, casting a shadow over his family.

From then on, Hongming's life took on a different course.

When the time came for Hongming to go to school, his mother sent him to Kunshan Special Education School, where he could acquire basic life skills and general knowledge without feeling the pressure of a mainstream school.

To his mother's relief, Hongming did quite well at Kunshan. However, she was still worried about social stigma against Hongming's condition, which could prevent him from entering society when he would



eventually graduate. "Where could my son go?" Hongming's mother became anxious to find a place where the pace of life could be slow enough for Hongming to adapt to.

It was then that she learned that the Amity Bakery had opened another store in Kunshan that same year, offering a ray of hope for Hongming's mother.

A New Future at Amity Bakery

After professional evaluation, Hongming was recommended by his school to join the Amity Bakery, where trainees are affectionately nicknamed "happy smilers" by the staff. . . Hongming's mother encouraged him to join, thinking it would be better for him than staying at home all day long. At least, she reasoned, Hongming could make good use of his time while earning some money in a safe environment.

The pace of life is slow at Amity Bakery. Here, accompanied and helped by special education teachers, social workers, and skilled bakers, Hongming and several other trainees receive training at a proper pace



▶ Many trainees are learning to bake at Amity Bakery (Kunshan)

and intensity. Sometimes, simple procedures in ordinary people's eyes need to be taught and learned many times. "Our bakery is truly unique. We adjust our pace according to the receptivity of our trainees, thus we rarely cite production and sales as the crucial performance indicator." Said Shen Shuzhen, the director of Suzhou Amity Social Work Development Center.

At Amity Bakery, Hongming started with the simplest tasks. Every working day, he arrives at the bakery on time, helping bakers pack the pastry and bread to be put on the shelf that day and recording the quantity. At first, Hongming described himself as "error-prone and incapable", but his great passion brought surprise to all. "He was willing to do whatever he was asked to do, over and over again, with no complaint," remarked the bakers and the teachers.

After a long learning process,
Hongming lived up to
expectations and became an
assistant baker. He has fallen in
love with baking and aspires to
be a fully-fledged baker someday
– and the Amity Bakery is the
place where his dream could
become reality.

From a "Baker" to a "Selfimprovement Model"

The bakery staff knows that despite their limited receptivity and speed, the "happy smilers" have one thing in common: an above-average level of patience and perseverance, which means that once they have learnt a skill they will keep practicing and steadily until they master it.

Ever Hongming resolved to be a baker, he could be seen standing every day at the counter, concentrating intently on kneading the dough under the guidance of his senior baker, so focused on his work that he doesn't even notice the sweat on his brow. "I want to roll the dough well and improve my skills." Improving along with his skills is his confidence. Thanks to the step-by-step nature of this

learning process, Hongming has gradually become less errorprone and can be seen offering help to his fellow trainees on many occasions.

Good things come to those who wait. After half a year of training, having mastered solid basic skills and professional baking ability, Hongming officially became the assistant baker of the Amity Bakery. Creating simple baking



▶ Amity Bakery trainees are receiving musical instrument training together with a group of children during their spare time



➤ Volunteers from companies and communities involve a lot in art trainings, performances and activities for people with learning difficulties

products has become "a piece of cake" for him. In early November this year, Hongming was named as a "Self-improvement Model" by the Kunshan Disabled Persons' Federation. He is very proud of the title, which he considers an acknowledgment of his efforts.

The Mission of Amity Bakery: Paving a Way into the Society

In Shen Shuzhen's eyes, providing the "happy smilers" like Hongming with a skill is not the final goal of Amity Bakery. Rather, the Bakery is a platform whereupon they can get help and connect with the world; they gain more attention and acceptance from society, which leads to a dignified life further down the line.

Thus the project "Benefit Hearts, Build Dreams" was launched. Based on the sheltered employment platform of Amity Bakery, this project combines efforts from schools, companies, social organizations, volunteers and other forces to provide one-toone services and assessment for young people with learning difficulties, build family growth groups, community supporting networks and life art groups. Consisting of components such as Love Education, Love Growth, Love Lesson, Love Experience, Love Display, and Love Resource, the project helps these young people build employment capacity and confidence in job-seeking. "In this sense, we help them 'truly integrate into society."

According to Shen Shuzhen, "Benefit Hearts, Build Dreams" is a systematic vocational rehabilitation program, all parts of which are distinctive, interlinked and have the same goals. In her view, what makes this program different is that it promotes a two-way journey. It helps young people with learning difficulties build skills and integrate into society, while

guiding the public to enter their world. This two-way journey is by no means easy, but the project team has never given up.

The most impressive component of the program for Shen Shuzhen is the Love Display. Young people like Hongming in the bakery would receive art training such as singing, dancing and painting from professional teachers in addition to daily baking skills. Then Amity would encourage these young people to show their talents in companies, schools and communities. "For the youngsters, the applause and recognition from the audience give them a great sense of accomplishment, which brings them happiness and confidence; and for the public, they get an opportunity to learn about this special group: they are just like ordinary people, and they can shine through their hard work." The sense of accomplishment, happiness and confidence, in turn, improve the youngsters' performance in baking, forming a virtuous circle.

While some believe that it is disrespectful for the label of disability to be entailed in this

kind of show, Amity believes that "tearing off the label" requires social consensus on a high level; before that, society should first learn more about the label itself. Only then can the public truly understand this special group, accepting and respecting them from the bottom of the heart.

During the years in Amity Bakery, Hongming has been growing and improving a lot. "He's more confident and optimistic," said his mother. "Hongming has made great progress in expression and communication, too!" For Hongming, as he is earning a salary, , he feels self-reliant and no longer sees himself as a burden to the family.

Now, Hongming lives an

abundant, fulfilling and orderly life. He works and learns hard at Amity Bakery. In his spare time, he plays basketball, helps his mother with chores, and even cooks simple meals for the family.

"I like what I am," said Hongming. "I like Amity Bakery, too. It has brought me all these wonderful changes."



▶ Nowadays, more and more companies and groups come to Amity Bakery to interact with the trainees. They sometimes experience the fun of baking together.



▶ Cambodian students attending Amity online Townhall

Enlighten our future: Amity Townhall

n 2nd December 2022, the Amity Foundation organized the 6th Amity Townhall* event at Bishop Hall Jubilee School (BHJS) in Hong Kong. The Townhall was the second in a series of online exchange events between schools in Hong Kong and Cambodia, facilitated by Amity Foundation (Hong Kong). Teachers and students from BHJS (HK), Boeng Thung Primary School (Cambodia), and Yuthithor Primary School (Cambodia) engaged in lively sharing on the topic of "Enlighten Our Future".

In 2021, BHJS donated HKD36,000 to support the construction of solar power facilities at Yuthithor Primary School, which were successfully installed in June 2022. At the Townhall, students from Yuthithor shared their appreciation and usage of the new equipment, happily stating that they no longer have to rely on candlelight to study at night thanks to new lighting installed in classrooms and on the roads.

Boeng Thung Primary School, located in Battambang province of Cambodia, still lacks a source of electricity due to local economic difficulties. At the Townhall, guests from Amity partner Living With Dignity gave a presentation on the needs faced by rural schools in Cambodia. Encouraged by the success of the solar power project at Yuthithor, BHJS has commenced fundraising to support the installation of similar facilities at Boeng Thung.

Through meticulously produced videos and a dynamic Q&A session, the Townhall provided the opportunity for the guests from Cambodia to learn about student life in HK schools and how solar power is used there. Furthermore, students from BHJS were able to witness their solar power project for Yuthithor come to fruition, while learning firsthand from Boeng Thung of the challenges still faced in Cambodia's education system.

By the end of the fruitful exchange, the students were able to come away with a richer understanding of sustainable development and their respective cultures, as well as the strengthened desire for global solidarity as reflected in BHJS's closing statement:

"In the modern world that we live in, sharing the warmth and love that we have is the only way to sustain human civilization."

Since 2019, the Amity Foundation has implemented projects aimed at improving the living and learning conditions of rural Cambodia, including health care, solar energy, water sanitation, as well as providing volunteer teaching and education grants.

*First held in 2021, Amity Townhall events are designed to bridge communications between communities from a wide array of backgrounds and nationalities, utilizing the power of the internet. Townhall events enable direct and live interaction between parties separated by distance, encouraging the sharing of ideas and experience through audio and visual media. This form of experiential learning helps raise awareness on global issues and most importantly broadens the horizons of young people around the world.



► A Cambodian student answers questions from HK



▶ Students learning by candlelight



▶ Students from BHJS participating in their 2nd Townhall



▶ The newly installed equipment lights up the night



Hong Kong Government approved grant for Pakistan flood relief

he Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region approved, on 11 November, a grant of HK\$6,245,000 from the Disaster Relief Fund to Amity Foundation Hong Kong for providing emergency relief to flood victims in Pakistan. Amity worked with CWSA, our local implementation partner in Pakistan, to deliver much needed relief to at least 17,270 families in Sindh, one of the most affected provinces by the devastating floods in summer 2022, in Pakistan.









The Amity Foundation won renowned charity awards

n December 23, the FTI2022 press conference for the China Foundation Transparency Index was held in Beijing. In the FTI2022 Transparency Index ranking, the Amity Foundation was among the top foundations with a full score. This is the 10th full score Amity has achieved under the index.

In addition, on November 17, 2022, the third Southern Weekend Dream Builders Charity Conference was held in Beijing. During the meeting, the "Observation Report on China Charity Brands (2021-2022)" was released, and the Amity Foundation was selected as one of the "Top 10 Chinese Charity Brands in 2022".



▶ Certificate for full score under FTI2022 Transparency Index



▶ Amity ranked the 7th on the Top 10 Chinese Charity Brands in 2022



Amity hosts the Qixia Summit Forum on Actively Responding to Aging Population and the 7th Amity Elderly Services Seminar

n December 11, Amity Foundation, together with Alibaba Charity and School of Social and Behavioral Sciences of Nanjing University, held the Qixia Summit Forum on Actively Responding to Aging Population, and the 7th Amity Elderly Service Seminar in Nanjing. Government officials, professors from universities, and professionals from social organizations were present at the seminar. At the same time, the event was streamed live to the public with an audience of over 100,000. Ling Chunxiang, General Secretary of the Amity Foundation, presided over the opening ceremony.









At the seminar, speakers shared opinions on and discussed the topics of new paths, new forces and new development in coping with the aging population.

An important achievement of the seminar was the release of the Report on the Development of Services for At-risk Elderly in China: Observations and Reflections on Amity Papa and Mama's Canteen Meal Services. In 2014, the Amity Foundation and Alibaba Charity jointly launched the Papa and Mama's Canteen Program to provide meal services for the elderly. Over the past eight years, 167 canteens have been established in 25 provinces and autonomous regions, providing 1.95 million meals in total. The total expense on these meals is RMB 19.2 million. There is an old Chinese saying that "people regard food as their primary want". Among all services for the elderly, food assistance is the most urgent need for the elderly, alongside medical assistance. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the project and fully understand the needs of the elderly, a research team composed of researchers from the Amity Foundation, Nanjing University and Nanjing University of Finance and Economics led by Chen Youhua, professor and doctoral supervisor of Nanjing University, conducted an evaluation research on the Papa and Mama's Canteen Program in November 2021. Through field visits and questionnaires, the team completed their report based on information collected from 70 canteens and 310 elderly beneficiaries.



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