



Press Release
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When Retirees Wish Upon a Star U3A Programme Makes their Dreams Come True

A group of retirees live up to the spirit of the popular Disney lyrics - it "makes no difference who you are, anything your heart desires will come to you" - and was awarded the grand prize at a ceremony today celebrating their dream come true.

The "Journey through Story" project from Caritas Elderly Centre - Shatin came first at the "U3A Dream+" scheme organised by HK Electric and the Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS). Six other projects were also recognised.

Launched in July last year, the "U3A Dream+" scheme provides funding to retirees enabling them to realise their dreams. Seven projects focusing on physical and mental well-being, low-carbon living, artistic creations, and environmental conservation have been completed, serving 66 community units and 9,570 people. The U3A "dreamers" recapped their journeys today in a final presentation and competed for the grand awards.

Speaking at today's ceremony, Managing Director of HK Electric, Mr. Francis CY Cheng, said, "In response to the United Nations' '2021-2030 Decade of Healthy Ageing' advocacy, HK Electric hopes that the U3A Dream+ scheme will empower our retirees to leverage their capabilities and sustain their contributions to society, while injecting new vitality into the U3A programme." He added that topical issues, such as climate change and low-carbon living, were recently included in the U3A curriculum and participants were encouraged to share their knowledge with others.

The seven selected teams came from five U3A self-learning centres. The grand-award winning project "Journey through Story" captivated the judges and the audience with their heart-warming storybook about dementia. The team hoped to develop itself further and craft more meaningful stories for the community. "MENROR the Choir" which also come from the same centre, and "Elder Clowns in Town" from Island Harbourview Elderly Club were named first and second runners-up respectively.

Other awards were handed out to recognise "Outstanding U3A Leaders" including Ms. Wong Fung-ye from the Salvation Army Yaumatei Multi-service Centre for Senior Citizens; Ms. Lai Sau-ying from Caritas Elderly Centre in Shatin; and Mr. Tsang Kam-hon from Asian Outreach Hong Kong Island Harbourview Elderly Club. They were commended for their active service as tutors at their respective centres

in 2023. Particularly noteworthy was Ms. Wong who taught more than 340 students in over 130 courses, all initiated by herself.

At the U3A centre level, “Best Management Award” went to Caritas District Elderly Centre in Yuen Long; Caritas Elderly Centre in Shatin as well as Tung Wah Group of Hospitals Wilson T.S. Wang District Elderly Community Centre in recognition of their outstanding performance in organisational management and class quality.

In 2023, a total of 568 interest classes and activities were organised by 35 U3A centres, bringing more than 11,000 learning opportunities to local retirees.



Mr. Ho Kai-ming, Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare, who was on hand to present the grand award, expressed his gratitude to U3A for providing a unique platform for retirees to continue learning and serving the community. "Like the rest of the world, Hong Kong is facing the challenge of an ageing population and our senior citizens have diverse physical, mental and spiritual needs. I am delighted to see how U3A students are engaged to lead a fulfilling retired life and continue pursuing their passion and serving society". He also thanked HK Electric for investing in care for the elderly, and to HKCSS for their efforts and vision in the city's elderly services.



In his closing remarks, Mr. Chua Hoi-wai, Chief Executive of HKCSS, said that U3A has remained relevant by incorporating sustainable development and following social trends and development closely. He announced the launch of the "4th Smart Power Ambassadors Training Programme" in 2024, where U3A students will be offered new experiences in geron-technology, plus the latest updates on environmental protection and energy efficiency, helping them become smart and tech-savvy seniors.

The U3A programme is funded by the HK Electric Centenary Trust and co-ordinated by HKCSS. Elderly service agencies receive funding to run self-learning centres that provide courses conducted by the elderly and for the elderly. Since its inception 18 years ago, more than 9,500 courses have been organised, providing more than 162,000 learning opportunities for local retirees. For more information about U3A, visit <https://rb.gy/z14rwk> , or contact HKCSS at 2864 2959.

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Table 1: Winning teams of U3A Dream+

Award	Team	Project Description
Grand Award	Journey through Stories (Caritas Elderly Centre - Shatin)	<p>Using stories and illustrations all created by themselves, this team successfully produces a storybook aimed to raise public awareness about dementia.</p> 
First runner-up	MENROR the Choir (Caritas Elderly Centre - Shatin)	<p>This senior boy choir polishes their vocal skills and brings music and happiness to people in need, much like the local boy band “MIRROR”.</p> 
Second runner-up	Elder Clowns in Town (Island Harbourview Elderly Club)	<p>The team learns the art of clown performance, including clown makeup, balloon twisting, magic tricks, and juggling, bringing fun and laughter to wherever needed in town.</p>

		
<p>Merit</p>	<p>Highrise Greenery (Pok Oi Hospital Mr. Kwok Hing Kwan Neighbourhood Elderly Centre)</p>	<p>Up on their small rooftop garden, this group of urban farmers grows seasonal vegetables and shares with their neighbours as a showcase for low carbon diet and living.</p> 
<p>Merit</p>	<p>Walk Along Dream Along (Caritas District Elderly Centre - Yuen Long)</p>	<p>Utilising their own expertise and community resources, this team organises guided tours, workshops, and environmental activities encouraging seniors to acquire new knowledge and rebuild social lives.</p>

		
<p>Merit</p>	<p>E+ercise Anywhere (H.K.S.K.H. Chuk Yuen Canon Martin District Elderly Community Centre)</p>	<p>This sports-loving team motivates seniors with health risks to exercise regularly with the aid of geron-technology.</p> 
<p>Merit</p>	<p>Creative Caretaker (Caritas District Elderly Centre - Yuen Long)</p>	<p>At this workshop, carers engage themselves in various art activities to strengthen their mutual help network and release stress.</p> 

Photo captions:

Photo 1a



Photo 1b



Ho Kai-ming, Under Secretary for Labour and Welfare (6th from left) commends the contribution of U3A and presents the grand award of the "U3A Dream+" Scheme to the championship project "Journey through Story".

Photo 2



U3A Dream+ teams pictured with guests at the award ceremony (back row: 8th to 11th from right): Director of Research Centre for Gerontology and Family Studies of Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Prof. Bai Xue; Managing Director of HK Electric, Francis CY Cheng; Chief Executive of Hong Kong Council of Social Service, Mr Chua Hoi-wai; and Vice Chairman of Virtus Medical Group, Dr Luk Chi Chung.

Photo 3



Francis CY Cheng says topical issues like climate change and low-carbon living have been added into the U3A curriculum.

Photo 4



Winners of the "Outstanding U3A Leaders", Ms. Wong Fung-yee (1st from left), Ms. Lai Sau-ying (2nd from left) and Mr. Tsang Kam-hon (1st from right) award promise to continue serving the community.

Photo 5



The 1st runners-up went to "MENROR the Choir", from Caritas Elderly Centre – Shatin.

Photo 6



More than 200 U3A students and guests witness the beginning of a new chapter for U3A after the pandemic.