

## Nomination by HKEA

We are nominating Ms Kwong Ka Yan, Emily who is a young member in the Hong Kong Epilepsy Association for the International Golden Light Award. Emily has epilepsy for about 22 years since her childhood. Epilepsy was a very devastating experience to her physically and psychologically. Her study and school life were affected adversely. Nevertheless, she has a motto supporting herself and others: 'Never give up'. She has finally completed her academic pursuit with a diploma. She has demonstrated her perseverance in leading a positive life which is a very good example for other persons with epilepsy.

Her strong will, supported by the unfailing love of her parents, she has passed the toughest time with epilepsy in her adolescence and early adulthood. She is one of the few fellow persons with epilepsy who are willing to face positively with the public against the fear of being stigmatized. She always used her personal experience to encourage others and raise public awareness and understanding of epilepsy during the media interview.

Emily is a very gentle, kind, friendly young lady with a helping heart and strong sense of humor. When her physical condition allows, she will participate in different volunteer work and giving support to others. She is an active member of our support group. As she grows up, she is more independent, caring and mature. Finally, she has adopted very good self-management skills to live with her epilepsy such as medication management and seizure management. She has a healthy mindset and living style in mastering her epilepsy.

## Nominee

My name is Emily Kwong. I am a member of Hong Kong Epilepsy Association. I am now 31 years old.

I have epilepsy since I was nine years old. Epilepsy has been with me for twenty-two years and it has changed my life from a happy student with good achievement to be a person with epilepsy or a person with chronic health conditions who needs medication on a daily basis and live with seizures by all means.

Secondary school brings me the best and the worst experience. My seizure activities are not well-controlled. I usually have seizures at day and night. I have to take many types of medications regularly. Side effects on epilepsy had great impact on me like tiredness, drowsiness, difficulty in concentration, as well as poor memory. I gradually lagged behind to other classmates on my school performance. The situation was even worse that after my nocturnal seizures, it was very difficult for me to get up as early as before for classes. Late attendance and absence from classes became frequent.

Though a lot of attempts have been made to help the school authorities have more epilepsy and my situation, I was very frustrated by the reactions of the teachers and classmates. Going to school was like a nightmare to me at that time.

Finally, I changed to another school which have more support on inclusive education. I restored my confidence with support from teachers, social workers and classmates. With positive understanding, care and concern, I rebuilt my trust of people again. Though I was still struggling every morning, I became motivated to go back to school on time or even I was a little bit late with communication with the school authority.

One of the great challenges came to me in 2010. One day, I felt a severe headache. CT scan showed me that there was bleeding in the left hemisphere of my brain. An urgent surgery was conducted smoothly. I am grateful that my recovery was speedy and I continued my study.

In 2016, I had got very serious seizure activities one night. Again, I was sent to the emergency unit of hospital. After very intensive care, I finally regained consciousness. I am grateful to have my life saved by the medical professionals.

Though life is posing different great and small challenges to me, I am making my best

effort to overcome them. I hope to lead a normal life like other teens and peers. Upon graduation of secondary school, I was very happy to advance myself with the HoSTS Foundation Diploma of IVE. HK. All these school years enriched my life with a lot of knowledge, learning, friendship and personal growth.

As my seizure is still active with different adverse effects on my functioning, it is not easy for me to get a full-time work. I have kept myself learning and doing volunteer work. My strongly stick to my motto of 'Never giving up'. I will live well with my epilepsy through taking medications and adhering to good lifestyle management including good sleep.

I have kept on attending vocational classes by rehabilitation training agencies to open myself for different job opportunities.

In addition, I have been active in volunteer work including Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation especially Centre on Research and Advocacy, Hong Kong Epilepsy Association especially Hong Kong Island support group.

In our epilepsy self-help group, we have ample information exchange, in-depth sharing and support which further give impetus to our living with epilepsy. Having experienced difficulties in my life, I am empathetic to difficulties of other peers with epilepsy and other people with disabilities. I would like to share my happiness, optimism, encouragement and helping hands to others.

I understand that only when the public know more about epilepsy, they will have more proper understanding and the know that we are normal people as they are. I am one of very few persons with epilepsy who are willing to share my experience in the TV and newspapers. I trust this will dispel misconception, stigma and fear of epilepsy. Through media education, I am also advocating for the community concern on issues like school support for students with epilepsy, vocational difficulties of persons with epilepsy, renaming Chinese names of epilepsy in Hong Kong as well as medical programs on Epilepsy Inclusive Mobile Applications on self-management practices. I have also shared my experiences to university students to raise their awareness on epilepsy.

Besides, I also establish healthy living and enjoyable pastime including practicing calligraph, learning language (like Korean), reading, writing, playing badminton, cooking as well as having walks. I strive to make myself healthy, happy and independent every day.

Living with epilepsy is never an easy nor one-off matter in my life. I am really grateful to my parents and relatives who are very dedicated to support, help and love me especially for the last twenty years during my struggle with epilepsy. Their endless love and care has given me enormous support. I am also thankful to the great support from members of Hong Kong Epilepsy Association, my friends and peers, helping professionals including doctors, social workers and teachers who provided me much encouragement and care in my life.