

Thomas Kwok encourages young people with marathon analogy

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Sun Hung Kai Properties (SHKP) cares about young people and has implemented many programmes to promote their healthy development over the years. Vice Chairman and Managing Director Thomas Kwok is staunchly behind this initiative and recently spoke to nearly 70 young people at the Ma Wan Park Noah's Ark about life. He encouraged them to persevere in the face of difficulty like a marathon runner, and gave everyone a pair of trainers to symbolize the life marathon ahead.

Never give up

Many in the audience faced difficulties including family problems, failing at school and drug abuse. Mr Kwok said he recognized the challenges young people have, explaining: "My primary one class had 40 students and my scores were always the lowest, so I understand how bad it feels to be an underperformer." He told the young people to avoid negative thoughts when feeling down, because in hindsight people often realize that things were not as bad as they imagined. He urged the audience not to give up.

Like a marathon

Mr Kwok started running marathons in 1983. He used that as an analogy to encourage young people: "A marathon is a test of your limits. You can be very tired half way through a full 42-km marathon, and think that it makes no difference if you are in 500th or 1,000th at the finish. When fatigue takes over, you may want to give up, but you have to keep going to the end. Life is the same." Mr Kwok let every member of the audience pick a pair of training shoes as a reminder that they need to choose their own path in the marathon of life.

Avoid drugs with exercise

He told the young people to try three things if they feel unhappy: "First, do some exercise and you'll be so invigorated afterwards that the unhappiness is gone. Second, don't hide. Share your problems with good friends and stay away from drugs. Third, identify your strengths to discover your unique qualities and don't look down on yourself."

One youngster asked Mr Kwok which animal at Noah's Ark he would compare himself to. He said: "I feel like a lion at work, always wanting to charge ahead." He encouraged everyone to take the perspective of an eagle flying high in the sky and have the resilience of a camel crossing the desert.

SHKP youth programmes

SHKP has staged many programmes to help young people build positive attitudes over the years:

1. Built Noah's Ark to promote positive values. The Ark offers employment training programmes for as many as 20 young people, with mentor-supervisors steering them to healthy growth.
2. The Modern Apprenticeship programme with Breakthrough provides practical training for young people within the SHKP group. Participants receive coaching from experienced staff to help them build confidence and discover their potential and interests to face future challenges. Nearly 100 students have graduated from the programme in the past five years.

3. The SHKP Book Club stages many activities to stimulate an interest in reading and knowledge among Hong Kong's youth.
4. SHKP has supported a homework tutorial programme for the past ten years, helping over 10,000 disadvantaged students with better learning environments and encouragement to study hard. Many of the beneficiaries have gone on to university.
5. Sponsorship of the Northwest New Territories Elite Students Programme for over ten years, improving teaching facilities and encouraging students to learn.
6. Anti-drug videos shown in SHKP malls.



1. Thomas Kwok says life is a long journey like a marathon and encourages young people to have courage and not give up.



2. Each student gets a pair of trainers from Mr Kwok, as a reminder that they should keep running in the marathon of life.