

Creating a drug-free community for our youths

The government has long put in a sustained effort to fight against drug abuse but the success of the campaign will only be achieved through a concerted effort from the community. To tackle drug and other youth problems, Path Builders was launched in September 2008 by the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau and the Action Committee Against Narcotics and has established a community network that offers care and assistance to young people to withstand the temptation of drugs.

Fostering a healthy attitude

"Path Builders" has established a network of 290 individual and institutional members from different sectors such as schools, non-governmental organisations, professional bodies and corporations to work together in offering care and support to youths to fight against drugs. In the past two years members have come up with interesting and innovative ways to reach out to those who have so far not been exposed to drugs or are at risk, to offer them hope, cheer them up, give them guidance and strengthen their resistance to adversity and temptations, as drug abuse is often a result of other family, growth, learning or career problems. It is through understanding young people's needs that they can be steered towards a healthy lifestyle, with the right attitude to tackle life problems.

Starting from family

While the campaign has successfully raised community awareness towards drug abuse, it should be noted that its prevention is at its most effective starting from home, which is where most drug abuse cases of young people occur.

The first step: parental awareness

Young people mostly take drugs under the influence of friends at home in the absence of adults. Unfortunately most parents fail to identify early signs of drug taking as their children spend most of the time inside their bedrooms. Although recent figures have shown a decline in youth drug abuse, it is no time for complacency due to the covert nature of the problem. There is no apparent physical symptom at the early stage of abusing psychotropic drugs and such habit may go unnoticed for several years. By the time symptoms surface, the abusers would have already inflicted irreversible damage to their bodies.

Parents play a crucial role in guarding their children against drug abuse by beginning preventive education at home. It should not be regarded as a thorny issue that is only faced by underprivileged families as many well-off families suffer immensely because of their oversight or negligence.

"Path Builders" encourages youths to pursue a positive lifestyle to empower them in the face of adversity and temptations but the care of family members lays the groundwork in the fight against youth drug abuse. Last year, "Path Builders" organised a number of workshops for working parents to arm them with the right knowledge and skills so that they can offer care and instill positive values to their children for the prevention of drug abuse.



To project the bright and energetic image of Path Builders, the logo is freshened up with dynamic colours -- greens and orange. The icon is composed of six leaves in three different green shades, which represent the youth spirit glowing from teenagers with different backgrounds, sprouting out from an orange ring, which symbolises the bonding among Path Builders, and stretching out to the world.

The Government has all along pursued the five-pronged strategy to beat drugs, viz. education and publicity, treatment and rehabilitation, legislation and law enforcement, international cooperation and research.

"We are pleased to see a continuous drop in the total number of reported drug abusers in the previous year, which shows a sign of easing in the local drug abuse situation. This is the result of the support and co-operation of different sectors of the community," said Mr Lai Tung Kwok, the Under Secretary for Security.

"Although the drug situation has improved, we will not slacken our anti-drug efforts," Mr Lai reiterated. "The fight against drug abuse should be persistent. To tackle the youth drug abuse problem at root, we must identify the underlying problems faced by young people. It is essential to mobilise various sectors of the community to foster a caring culture for the youth, to show them the positive value of life and to strengthen their resistance to



Mr Lai Tung Kwok, the Under Secretary for Security

adversity. All these measures are effective in keeping young people from drug temptations. We have provided here a platform for all people who are keen to contribute to the healthy development of the younger generation in any suitable ways."

Last year, a wide spectrum of youth programmes have been carried out by many enthusiastic organisations from different sectors to support the anti-drug cause, such as mentorship programmes, seminars on parenting skills, various kinds of inter-school competition which aim at conveying the anti-drug messages, offering financial support to youth programmes by sponsorship and fund-raising, helping the rehabilitants to reintegrate into the community by offering them on-job training and job opportunities, etc. All these programmes aimed at raising the awareness of the young people and the community about the adverse effects of drug abuse, thereby strengthening their resistance to drugs.

Mr Lai also indicates that "family" is on the frontline in the fight against drugs. To this end, many corporations, chambers of commerce, professional bodies and organisations at district level have taken the initiative to show their care for the youth, strengthen them against drug temptations and prevent them from abusing drugs as a way out from difficulty.

"Path Builders" has a long-term mission of offering care and protection to the younger generation. Only by perseverance can the caring culture be made sustainable. In order to stimulate public participation in support of this worthy cause, "Path Builders" will launch a series of incentive programmes in appreciation to those who have contributed to this platform. A brand new icon for "Path Builders" will be launched to signify those who have taken part to champion the youth-caring and anti-drug front.

Last year, Mr Lai Tung Kwok took part in various "Path Builders" activities. He hopes such initiatives would gain wider support from the community in the coming year and more people would share the joy of offering care to the youths.



Unicorn 701 Sports Association Mini Wargame Exhibition

Introduced by the "Path Builders", the volunteer group of the Unicorn 701 Sports Association worked with the Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups by staging a mini wargame exhibition at Tseung Kwan O Sports Centre.



Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce Visit to the Christian New Being Fellowship

The Board of Directors and members of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Chamber of Commerce visited the Christian New Being Fellowship to show their support and care to the teenagers.



Rotary Club of Kowloon East and the Brighter Future Foundation Anti-Drug Essay Competition

The response to the competition was overwhelming with over 27,000 entries of essays, in which 6 were shortlisted for the final round of stage performance competition. Mr Lai Tung Kwok, the Under Secretary for Security, was an officiating guest at the final.

Pledging Ceremony of Young Anti-Drug Ambassadors

This pledging ceremony was held at the Hong Kong Disneyland on July 3 last year, in which over 1,400 students were appointed role models to fight against drug abuse.



"Path Builders" of the Narcotics Division, Security Bureau Path Builders Lunchtime Parental Talk Series

Mr Eric Lee (right), Principal Assistant Secretary for Security, expressed gratitude on behalf of "Path Builders" to Ms Barbara Chan, Founder of "Parenting Forum", for her professional sharing in parenting tips.



Economic Synergy 'Knotting Hearts Action 2010'

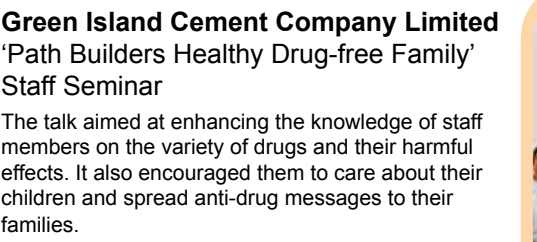
This campaign aimed at enhancing students' resistance to drugs through activities, such as video competition, design and making heart knots as gifts to friends and families. The launching ceremony was officiated by Mr Henry Tang, the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Lai Tung Kwok, the Under Secretary for Security, and Mrs Michelle Wong, Deputy Secretary for Education, among other notable guests.



ExxonMobil Hong Kong Limited & Barnabas Charitable Service Association 'Path Builders + ExxonMobil "Beat Drugs Master" Project'

This 2-year project aimed at enhancing the awareness of teenagers on the hazards drugs might bring to individuals, families and the society with personal sharings by ex-drug abusers.

Ms Sally Wong, Commissioner for Narcotics, was invited to officiate at the launching ceremony.



Green Island Cement Company Limited 'Path Builders Healthy Drug-free Family' Staff Seminar

The talk aimed at enhancing the knowledge of staff members on the variety of drugs and their harmful effects. It also encouraged them to care about their children and spread anti-drug messages to their families.



Federation of Parent-Teacher Associations of Yau, Tsim & Mongkok Districts Anti-Drug Talk for Primary School Students

Dr Tsang Fan Kwong, a psychiatrist, gave an interesting presentation to students on the adverse effects of drug abuse, followed by an experience sharing session.

Visit to the Customs and Excise Training School

This visit to the Customs and Excise Training School allowed secondary students to widen their exposure and enrich their knowledge on the duties of the Customs Officers.



T.W.G.Hs CROSS Centre Southern District Talk

Dr. Pan Pey Chyu, a psychiatrist, gave a talk to parents on the adverse effects of youth drug abuse in the Southern District.



Harmoneevergreen Service Association Ltd Path Builders Mid-Autumn Festival Variety Show

The organiser disseminated anti-drug messages to Tin Shui Wai families through a mid-autumn variety show. The opening ceremony was officiated by the Hon Miriam Lau Kin-yeung, Member of the Legislative Council, and Mr. Jeremy Young, Political Assistant to the Secretary for Education.

Hong Kong Tertiary Institutions Health Care Working Group

Joint-campus Anti-drug Campaign of tertiary institutions

The Hong Kong Tertiary Institutions Health Care Working Group, constituted by representatives from ten tertiary institutions, launched a 7-month joint-campus anti-drug campaign in September last year aiming at educating students about drugs and their harmful effects.

About "Path Builders"

"Path Builders" is a platform for the community to show their care, to walk side by side, and to build better paths for young people, thereby contributing to the future of Hong Kong.

In September 2008, the Narcotics Division of the Security Bureau and the Action Committee Against Narcotics launched the platform with an initiative to tackle drug and other youth problems at their root by mobilising various sectors of the community to foster a caring culture by providing assistance to young people at different levels, and through innovative ways.

"Path Builders" has over 290 registered members from different sectors, who offer volunteering service to activities, including anti-drug talks, visits, mentorship programmes, offering opportunities of training, internship and employment and sponsorship etc. Enthusiasts are welcome to join "Path Builders" to help build a drug-free and healthy environment for Hong Kong's younger generation.

www.pathbuilders.gov.hk pathbuilders@sb.gov.hk Inquiry: 2867 5976 / 2867 2766

Get involved in "Path Builders"

There are many ways to help combat youth drug abuse. These are some of the programme's initiatives aimed at nurturing a healthy, drug-free culture for the youths:

1. Workshops for corporate employees to help working parents educate their children about drug prevention.
2. A mentorship programme in which volunteers become mentors to young people to broaden their exposure to society and instill a positive attitude among the youths.
3. Spread the message about drug prevention through a variety activities, e.g. visits, community works, experience sharing.
4. Provide professional training and consultation as well as volunteering service to care for youths.
5. Offer internships, training and employment opportunities for youths.
6. Support drug prevention through donations and sponsorships.

Lawyers as mentors

The Law Society of Hong Kong was one of the first professional organisations to participate in the mentorship program of "Path Builders". In 2009, the Law Society started to recruit lawyers to become mentors for secondary school students.

"We chose to focus on students from F.1 to F. 4 because it's an important transition period from childhood to young adulthood. In our first year, we worked with schools in Yuen Long because according to statistics announced by the Government, it had the highest rate of youth drug problems. Since then, we have expanded our reach to the North District, and also Tai Po this year," said Philip Wong, Chairman, Community Relations Committee, The Law Society of Hong Kong.

Training and briefing are provided to the volunteers before the program. Each volunteer is then paired with two students and lead them through a series of educational and social activities. Apart from drug-related knowledge, mentors also share their expertise in law,

and give them advice in career choices and other life problems.

"Being a mentor has been a learning experience for me as much as for the students. There was no way I could communicate with the students as if I were in court! In this role, it's more important to cultivate a true friendship and enjoy the sharing. It's a real satisfaction to see that my mentees have made some positive changes afterwards," said Mak Hon Ming, one of the first solicitors to join the program.

Judy Yam, another solicitor volunteer, had been helped by community volunteers when she was young and is determined to give back now. "Being a mentor is more about listening than lecturing. We need to set a good example such as keeping promises. The results may not be immediate but you will learn to appreciate the experience and see this as a learning opportunity," she said.

This year, the Law Society of Hong Kong has successfully sought help from other professional organisations to recruit volunteers as the number of volunteers needed has risen to 150. "We are pleased



Philip Wong, Chairman of The Law Society's Community Relations Committee (middle), together with lawyers Judy Yam (left) and Mak Hon Ming, have dedicated their time to help youths lead a positive and drug-free lifestyle via the Path Builders Mentorship Programme.

that other professionals such as barristers, town planners and surveyors have put their trust in us. This is quite a long-term commitment but also a very meaningful one that has a positive impact on our society," said Mr Wong.



Wu Zhi Qiao (Bridge in China) Bridge building project of the Paomapi village in Yunnan

The project set out to build a bridge for the local kids who had to endure heavy rain when crossing the river on their way to school. A young female from the Bamabas Charitable Service Association was recommended by the "Path Builders" to take part in this meaningful project.



Direction Association For The Handicapped Life Education talks

The talks were given to youths at schools and in the community. The "Life Fighters" shared their experiences and encouraged youths to embrace their lives positively, be strong when facing difficulties and "say no" to drugs.