

PEOPLE

SOCIETY



Nicole Hon, pictured celebrating a perfect score of 45 in this year's IB educational programme, says it is humbling to be able to make a difference to somebody's life. Photo: CDNIS

# TOP OF HER CARING FORM

Nicole Hon may have achieved maximum IB Diploma results, but she has always been a success in the eyes of those helped by her voluntary work

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One could find 17-year-old Nicole Hon up at midnight avidly baking hearty treats to share with her friends, a peculiar hobby she discovered during examinations as a way to ease stressful times.

Occasionally she may even be found at the local ice-rink, figure skating.

But most likely, one will find her dedicating her weekends volunteering to improve the conditions of the poor in Hong Kong and beyond.

"It's humbling to be able to do something and make a difference to somebody's life," she said.

Hon has just achieved maximum marks in this year's International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme, one of 25 Hong Kong pupils who scored a perfect 45 marks.

But her academic achievement is only a small part of her life since she began her years of voluntary work at 14 years old.

That was when her father took her on a Lions Club International service project to properties in the city containing infamous cage homes.

"Honestly, I was embarrassed that I didn't know some people in Hong Kong were forced to live like this," she admitted.

"I've been sheltered from the huge wealth gap in Hong Kong, it's not something people really talk about."

The properties are usually 500 sq ft flats filled with cages measuring approximately 15 sq ft. Nearly 200,000 people live in these types of places, according to government data compiled in 2016.

Hon, who attended the Canadian International School of Hong Kong (CDNIS), said most of the people she had met on such visits had lived completely different lives to her own.

Since her experience, she has been volunteering with "Habitat for Humanity", which is linked to a society, Habitat for Humanity at CDNIS.

The charity believes that everybody must have a decent home to live in. Striving to improve living conditions, Habitat aims to provide affordable housing and resources to assist struggling families or communities across the Asia-Pacific region.

The commitment is huge, and volunteers help physically or financially restricted families and elderly people to repair their homes on the second and fourth Saturday of each month.

Hon still fondly remembers her first project, which proved to be of great benefit to a sick elderly man.

"The first excursion I went on in Hong Kong was to the house of an elderly man ... to clean and fix up the kitchen. I got to speak to him and he was so full of interesting stories," she said.

"He was in the war ... he even had to steal bread for a while before becoming a taxi driver."

In March 2015, Hon and a team of fellow students embarked on a building mission to a remote village in Guangzhou.



Pupils at Canadian International School learn about cage homes. Photo: Nicole Hon

**Honestly, I was embarrassed that I didn't know some people in Hong Kong were forced to live like this**

NICOLE HON ON CAGE HOMES

The houses at their destination lacked the basic infrastructure and desperately needed to be rebuilt to be made safe.

The middle child of three, Hon said she had always wanted to be a doctor from a young age. And now, with top IB marks, she has yet to choose between attending the University of Toronto or the University of Hong Kong.

Hon has always had a desire to make others self-aware. At CDNIS she advocated and held fundraising events for trips to Cambodia and Thailand to build decent housing.

She hopes that one day her service efforts will inspire others in Hong Kong to reflect on how they can help others.

"It would be nice if people took a moment to just stop and think for a second," she said.



## WHO'S HOT WHO'S NOT?



Actress Lily Collins appears in *To The Bone*.

### Who's HOT

**Name:** Lily Collins

**Background:** The UK-born Hollywood actress is known for many roles, such as the lead heroine in *The Mortal Instruments* or the main actress in *Love, Rosie*. The actress's latest film, *To the Bone*, premiered on Netflix yesterday and at the Sundance Film Festival in January. The film already has an 83 per cent approval rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

**Famous moment:** Her newest film follows a girl (Collins) as she fights anorexia, bringing to light the intensity of the battle against eating disorders. The film was performed, written and directed by people who overcame eating disorders themselves, with hopes to raise awareness and start conversations about the topic.

**Most recent public appearance/activity:** The new film has already created a storm of debate on social media, both in support of and against the idea behind the film. Collins, who has struggled with anorexia in the past, told *People Magazine* that she thinks the film "has the potential to make a difference and promote open conversation about a topic so often considered too taboo to discuss". Collins and Marti Noxon, the film's director/writer, were honoured by eating disorder support non-profit Project Heal in May, and the cast of the movie recorded a video for World Eating Disorders Action Day to raise awareness. Collins also published her biography *Unfiltered* this year, in which she discusses her past struggles and how she overcame them.

**Social media comments:** "Proud of Lily for raising awareness of an illness she herself struggled with." "*To the Bone* is great, I mean there is a 'happy ending' in a movie about anorexia, and I feel it's very important BECAUSE THERE IS A WAY THROUGH"



The man stole and replaced breast milk in office.

### Who's NOT

**Name:** Mr Yiu, breast milk thief

**Background:** The 42-year old is scheduled to go on trial this month after stealing and drinking his co-worker's breast milk from their office refrigerator and replacing it with cow's milk.

**Famous moment:** The 26-year-old female co-worker called the authorities on Monday to report that the contents of two bottles of her breast milk had been stolen and refilled with another form of milk. After the police arrived, Yiu confessed to stealing and replacing the milk and was arrested. Both parties work at the Office of the Communications Authority in Wan Chai.

**Most recent public appearance/activity:** *Apple Daily* picked up the story after the Hong Kong Breastfeeding Mothers' Association brought the story to light on their Facebook page, "strongly condemning" the man's actions and advising other women on how to handle breastfeeding at work.

**Social media comments:** "How could he do this? Shameless! Breastfeeding is hard as it is!" "This man has no brains."

TECHNOLOGY

# Is photo printing dead? Not according to him

Co-founder of tech start-up Elabs, which creates photo books for customers by using their Instagram pictures, says it has received a sizeable number of orders

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In a digital era when you can easily store and delete pictures by just pressing a few buttons on your computer, smartphone or digital camera, a photography enthusiast has opted for a rather old-fashioned method of documenting his life, and those of others.

To former auditor and finance analyst Wel Sun Wai-hong, print is not a dying media form. In fact, he found the style so appealing that he left his job to start up a photo printing business.

The 32-year-old Sun has had a love affair with photography since he received a DSLR camera during his years in university.

But his passion for print in particular was sparked several years ago – during a regular cleaning of his room.

"I found piles of old family photos under my bed. I couldn't stop flipping through them and looking at them one by one. Then I realised photo prints are actually

more meaningful and valuable than those taken on a digital device because of their scarcity," the co-founder of technology start-up Elabs said.

In early 2016, the company launched a project called Ciderbook, which offers printing services for Instagram users who want to create a photo book out of their digital pictures.

Sun said he believed that a series of photos, and not just one, was necessary to tell the story of someone's life.

"Only one picture is not enough so we wanted to make a photo book that could reflect someone's life within a certain period," Sun said.

"We chose Instagram because it's a photo-oriented platform. When I studied it more, I understood young people or celebrities share their daily lives through it. Basically, it's their diary."

Sun said that he was surprised by the number of orders received since the project's launch, as he initially thought photo printing was going through a downturn.

The business was profitable, he added, as the photo book was priced at HK\$150 each.

Its customers are mostly young people aged from 18 to 24, according to Sun. Apart from Hong Kong, some of its orders come from Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore and Australia.

Sun said the money he was earning now could not match his previous auditing job, adding that he would have been able to afford buying a flat if he had continued in the field. But he said he became less materialistic after starting his own business.

Before trying his hand at becoming an entrepreneur, the accounting graduate thought his path would be the same as many others: to get a decent job, and, hopefully, buy a flat some day. But that all changed after a 10-month work experience in Australia.

After four years in auditing, where his hours sometimes lasted from 9am to 2am, and another in finance, Sun decided he needed a break.

"I couldn't find meaning in

auditing. I made sure every number was correct, but then what?"

Sun then went to Australia for a working holiday programme where he met some people who inspired him, including a cherry-picking worker.

"I asked [the cherry picker] if he wanted to make a living by picking cherries, and he said no. He picked cherries because he wanted to buy a boat so that he could travel around the world. And a few years later I saw on Facebook he did get a boat, even though it's a small one," Sun said.

"Looking at these people, I realised how narrow my dream was. So when I got back, I just forgot about auditing completely, and made my life more meaningful by creating something that belonged to me."



Wel Sun left his auditing job to start his own business. Photo: Xiaomei Chen

ANNOUNCEMENT

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CHEUNG

May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved and preserved throughout the world now and forever, Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. Saint Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us.