Good evening President Dave, distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Being here at the ACRA annual dinner is like coming home. Fellows and friends of the ACRA have been getting together every year for half a century, not because of the chill of the air conditioning or refrigerating plants, but rather the warmth and togetherness among us.

At a time when the Occupy Movement and the uncooperative movement in the Legislative Council are still going on; when friends, families and communities are painfully torn, tonight let’s take sanctuary for a moment. Let’s share thoughts as to how we can make Hong Kong more harmonious and inclusive.

Knowingly or unknowingly, we all benefit from the goodwill of others during our life journey, some more, some less. An encouragement when we are down, a comforting touch when we are in grief, a helping hand at time of need, and love and respect when we least deserve it. Many a times we remember and many a times we don’t even realise.

**Pay It Forward**

Catherine Ryan Hyde, the author of the book “Pay It Forward” lived in a neighbourhood where robbery, drugs and gangster fights were commonplace. One night, her car broke down and burst into flames. Instead of leaving the car for safety, she chose to stay inside with the doors locked because of fear of danger out on the street. At the moment when she was forced out by the choking smoke, she was approached by two strangers. They helped to put out the fire but not to rob, nor to harm.

She was overwhelmed and before she could even say thank you, the two strangers had left. Indebted with a favour that she cannot pay back, she decides to pay it forward. By doing favour for others, hopefully the favour will pass on. Since then, she has inspired the world to pay it forward through her bestselling novel, movie and the setting up of the Pay it Forward Foundation.
Ride for Future

Coming back to China, a gentleman called Bai Fangli (白芳禮) dedicated himself to ride for the future of the young. Bai was born in a village in Hebei in 1913. Life was difficult during war time and he fled to TianJin where he worked as a rickshaw rider. In 1986, Bai returned to his home village at the age of 74 for retirement. One day, Bai walked around in the village and came across children working for living instead of studying in school. On the innocent faces of the children, Bai recalled his childhood and the way he had gone through.

Although he was deprived the opportunity to study, he was a firm believer of the notion that knowledge could change destiny. As a rickshaw rider, every cent he earned came with sweat and labour. Despite his modest income, Bai’s two children had completed university study.

The very next day after the encounter, not only he donated all his retirement savings, he also went back to TianJin to continue his rickshaw ride until he died. Bai rode everyday year round and donated everything he had for the ensuing twenty years. His conviction and contribution have given hope and opportunity for hundreds of students who would otherwise be deprived. With a mileage that would circle the world eighteen times, Bai had indeed gone a long way with his rickshaw ride.

Cut for Respect

In Hong Kong, we have Vivian Tam the volunteer barber who has been doing haircut for the elderly, the wheelchair bound and bedridden people for more than twenty years. To Vivian, haircut is not just about appearance, it is also about dignity.

Hair dressing and hair cut are basic routines for most of us but not all the elderly, especially wheelchair bound and bedridden. To them, getting to the barber shop, lying on reclining shampoo chair and transferring to salon chair for hair cut are challenges. With little shop space to maneuver, extra effort and longer time required, many barber shops are reluctant to serve them. The idea of causing inconvenience to others and feeling discriminated also deter them from going for regular haircut.
As a volunteer barber, Vivian does hair cut with respect, patience and love. She pays close attention to emotion, takes care of individual preference in hairstyle, and customize according to age and taste. Vivian not only cuts to make them look good, she wants to make them feel good as well. To ensure everyone in good shape, she insists on doing haircut for them regularly. It is not the cut of the cold scissors but the warm tender touch of the fingers that make them feel being loved and respected.

Let’s carry on
Right in this banquet hall, I understand that many of us here tonight are also contributing in one way or the other for worthwhile cause. For instance, one of our ACRA members, Mr Joe LEUNG is sponsoring mainland students to attend university under the Twinklestars programme which has benefited over 900 students since 2008. Apart from financial sponsorship, Joe regularly visits them and offers guidance as mentor for life.

Let’s not forget fellow Members and Council Members of ACRA and other professional institutions. By upholding professional integrity, by advancing technologies and standards, by promoting best practices among the trade, we are all contributing to make Hong Kong a better place. As a matter of fact, every one of us can do something to make a difference.

The past weeks had been tormenting for Hong Kong and many of us. But ladies and gentlemen, let’s not lose faith. Let’s carry on making the difference. In closing, I would like to share with you a quote from Mother Teresa. She said “What we are doing is just a drop in the ocean. But without that drop, the ocean would be less.”

Thank you.

24 November 2014