

Great Un-Expectations

a Summer with Adventure-Ship

By Dawn Chan

Upon embarking my two-month internship at Adventure-Ship, I held the standard expectations of a summer abroad in Hong Kong. The striving, innovative Hong Kong culture that raised such a megalopolis, the city streets thriving on air-conditioning by day and neon signs by night, the famous peaks, harbors, and shopping; these images my friends and parents had prepared me for with postcards and stories from their childhoods, respectively. So I looked forward to the chance to be immersed in Cantonese, the chance to experience my parents' native culture, and, most importantly, the chance to work for an intriguing charity about which I hoped to find out more.

Indeed, these standard expectations were more than met. However while the expected grows mundane, it is the unexpected that continuously fulfills. As a certified collegiate curmudgeon, I had also begun my stay in Hong Kong anticipating the self-involved-ness that stereotypically accompanies any densely populated city. Contrary to these original expectations, Adventure-Ship surprised me, time after time, with one of its most outstanding qualities: the care and concern for others exhibited by all those involved. Although charities are many, such genuine compassion is rare. So that compassion, demonstrated through and through by workers, is a mark of the one-of-a-kind nature of Adventure-Ship. In fact, Adventure-Ship's caring environment even spreads to its participants. There was the group of blind children with whom I swam to shore, who encouraged and supported each other as if they were staff. There was another student who, un-prompted, encouraged us, the two interns, to join their on-

shore barbecue, even though they would have less food for themselves. There was the participant who held down a net for me, so I could climb up the side of the Huan. In fact, I later realized that all the students were taking turns holding the net for each other. No authority figures had instructed them to look out for each other. Rather, the caring environment fostered by Adventure-Ship must simply have inspired these students to be more caring in turn.

Thus, throughout my days spent in the office working on the details of my projects, the Adventure-Ship staff constantly reminded me by their example, that I was not merely "making a web site" or *just* "streamlining the application process" as listed in my original job description. Rather, I was ultimately working on these projects *for* the participants on the Huan. Witnessing Ms Yeung and Ms Lam dedicate such energy to coordinating trips, watching the crew encourage a child who feared the trapeze, seeing the directors take time out of their careers (and space out of their offices) for Adventure-Ship; these examples of dedication served as a good reminder to me that I was not just making a web page. Undeniably, I had the enjoyment of creating graphical ideas, or coaxing computer code to function. More importantly, though, we were working for a higher end: the good of the participants, even if it only be one child who is less daunted by his disabilities, or one child who is more eager to try new experiences.

All in all, my experiences were varied and interesting. At work, I had the chance to create Adventure-Ship's first bilingual web site. This project included allowing Adventure-Ship the option to use searching, downloads, online booking, calendars, and virtual tour features. Much effort was spent configuring (or subsequently removing) these options to meet Adventure-Ship's needs. Later in the summer, I pared down the application process to involve approximately one-third of the original paperwork, by streamlining some information and transferring other online.

Outside of work, I had the opportunity to see the generosity of Adventure-Ship staff continue overtime, through staff members who took time to show me Macao, Victoria Peak, and the best fish-ball noodles in Aberdeen. Above all, I had the chance to spend a summer as a part of Adventure-Ship, working alongside a uniquely caring and dedicated group of people.