



李秀梅女士
Ms. Ida Li

無私無求 只求真善美的義工典範

李秀梅女士是一位全職義工，甚至可說是“超時義工”，而且一做便做了20年。自告別香港如日方中的事業，移民到加拿大以後，便由一位愛購物、好玩樂、講求生活享受的事業型女性，轉化成一位只求行善、樂於助人、不求回報的義工。時至今日，她除了擔任國際佛光會多倫多協會副會長，成為佛光山與社會的一道重要溝通橋樑，也同時參與多個慈善團體的工作，默默耕耘，把每一件工作做到盡善盡美；這種精神，堪稱義工的典範。

李秀梅說“紅楓傳奇”是她一生中第一次獲得的獎譽，聽來有點難以置信；由此亦可見她從不在乎是否受到讚許或表揚，只在乎不斷的付出，而且她擔任的義工職責，往往是幕後工作；別人看到的都是她的“傑作”，而非她的臉孔，她也笑言多年來因為很少拍照，一下子要找相片，選擇實在不多。

她說自己的一生並沒有甚麼峰迴路轉的“傳奇”可以述說；她形容自己的人生恍如航行在一條運河上，平靜無波。然而，對於每一個大小經歷、每一天接觸的人和事，她總會懷著一份“歡喜心”投入其中，細心體驗，用心學、用心做。

一邊聽她回憶以往走過的路，發覺她曾經踏出的每一步，都好像為了準備她日後要完成的使命，就是作為一位全時間義工。而這些經驗、知識與才能，亦在種種義務職責中派上用場，幫助有需要的人、造福社群。

從美的追求出發

李秀梅在香港出生及長大，父母由街頭小生意做起，經歷

了香港六、七十年代的磨練，才逐漸建立了一盤穩定的家族生意，是典型的香港中產家庭。成長中唯一憾事，是爸爸在她十四歲時去世，但幸好她生長於一個傳統相親相愛的中國家庭，六兄弟姊妹中排行最小，在母親，哥哥及姊姊的悉心關懷及照顧中成長，她感到自己是”身在福中”。

完成中學課程後，她在1977年負笈加拿大；1983年於多倫多約克大學取得藝術系學士。畢業後回香港工作，第一份工作是任唱片公司製作經理，經過十年青雲路上的努力實幹，晉升至一間攝影器材公司的廣告推廣部經理。

問她是否從小熱愛藝術，有否夢想成為藝術家？她表示並沒有定意要從事藝術行業，只是天生喜歡美麗的事物，於是隨心選上視覺藝術。這份對美感的追求和培養，儘管沒有引領她走進藝術界，轉而晉身商界，然而，在她走進“義工界”以後，這方面的天份、興趣和專長，卻得以盡情發揮，並推動她更進一步發展及發掘自己的潛能。

在過往參與的不少慈善活動中，李秀梅都是負責場地佈置、設計，以致親手製作場內擺設，而最大挑戰，就是如何帶領一班義工同心合力，以有限的人力、物力、財力炮製出最具震撼力，並且與活動主題配合的場景和氣氛，使活動生色不少。另一難忘體驗，是為智障人士安排一個聖誕花藝工作坊及“花藝頌親恩”活動，讓智障兒童過一個特別節日。令她最為感動的，是看到智障人士的母親接到兒女自製心意禮物時，臉上流露的欣慰和喜悅。

其後，她亦開始認真學習插花藝術；過去五年，更專攻日式小原流(Ohara)插花藝術，為的也是可以在佛光山舉辦花藝興趣班。

移民才是回歸、皈依

李秀梅丈夫的家人早在80年代已移民加拿大，加上她的姐姐和哥哥亦於90年移民多倫多，於是她在1993年隨丈夫移民多倫多；要放下的，是當時在香港一個舒適的家、一份安穩高薪的工作，以及非常吸引的前景；還有司機、傭人，一種令人羨慕的生活。

移民初期，她與丈夫及姐姐一起創立軟水工程公司，跟許多新移民一樣，嘗試融入本地生活，日常的生活是工作及家庭；娛樂就是唱歌、跳舞和逛街，生活不算富裕，但經濟還算穩定。在順遂的生活中，她對社區的關注，亦僅限於“出錢”捐助一些慈善機構。

直至1998年，佛光山在多倫多舉辦世界會員大會，需要大量非會員幫忙，有人拉她幫忙，自此開始了她第一次“出力”的義務工作。當時參加這大會的會眾有千多人，並且來自世界各地，她負責預備一些“加拿大特產”作為紀念品，由此亦引發她在手藝於設計方面進一步投入和發揮。

歸根究底，她說最初吸引她成為義工的，是處身其中感受到的那份歡喜心；開心的事當然要繼續做下去。雖然她當時還未信佛，但也樂於正式加入了佛光山成為義工，第一樁任務是在會員茶室“滴水坊”負責泡茶、煮麵，一煮便煮了十多年，每星期一次，風雨不改。

自加入佛光會後，她看到佛教不單是講一己的修行，也講“人間佛教”；要走進社區，回饋社會。於是她也開始在多方面參與佛光山在社區內推展的善事，並且擔起領袖的角色，例如，帶領青年參與政府舉辦“街頭節”、“公益金百萬

行”，又參與頤康與萬錦市政府辦的Harvest Gala籌委會、“和諧網絡”(HarmonyNetwork)靜態拍賣的佈置、士嘉堡醫院籌款晚宴的會場中央擺設。她又帶動團隊參加加拿大幹細胞登記活動的義務工作；多倫多安大略亞裔文化月華人音樂及表演藝術節等等。

2000年，她正式皈依，成為佛光山的中堅份子。2009年，更成為佛光會的副會長，推動這團體更多地參與社區，幫助新舊移民融入社會，例如對多倫多大學的社工系獎學金計劃的資助、孟嘗會的“孟嘗義跑頌春暉”、耆暉會的“社區一站式服務”會址籌款、社區義工及環保工作安排等等，都有影響性的裨益。

行善無國界 只問平常心

李秀梅的義工生活隨著年日開花結果，她也不斷擴展自己的眼界和義工生活圈“，參與其他慈善團體的活動和工作。除了本地慈善及文化工作外，2005年亦加入了福慧教育基金會，十年來參與籌款工作，幫助在中國廣東和四川的大學生，以及在涼山的孤兒，其後她亦成為基金會理事之一。

2007年，當她得悉巴西貧民窟的小孩課餘淪為街童及毒販的招收對象，便坐言起行，推動及跟進“巴西貧窮兒童——如來之子計劃”籌款活動，讓他們在課餘可以有健康活動。

2009年，她加入了金水仙晚宴的義工行列，主要負責場地佈置工作。金水仙基金會每年四月都舉辦金水仙晚宴，為加拿大防癌協會籌款。

最近，她又參與正在始創階段的一個原住民營養飲食計

劃，積極推動年青人加入為此計劃籌款的工作。

她屈指一算，表示最高峰時期，她同時有五、六項活動的義工任務要負責，而且全都不分大事小事，親力親為。若問她的成功之道，她說：“做義工最重要是用心、真心…即使是有困難，也是一種磨練。

她也坦言，多年來自有經歷過高、低潮，尤其是看到一些人事上的問題，或有時慨嘆好的義工不易找。在她眼中，義務工作無分貴賤與大小，即使是掃地，也有其價值。她也認為義工並非“喜歡則來、不喜歡則去”，又或是把“我只是義工而已”掛在口邊；作為義工，其實更需要有承擔。

20年來，李秀梅一直身體力行這份義工應有的精神，細水長流地抱著平常心，以出世的心做入世的事，既帶動自己的家庭及親友，鼓勵身邊的移民家庭，不分老幼，共同從金錢以至義工勞力時間的去參與及回饋社會。從自己的改變，讓身邊的朋友認識到，將金錢用在別人的身上會帶來更多的快樂和滿足，體會“施比受更有福”的真諦。

二十年的義工路，她沒有白走，也要繼續走下去，並且沿路分享她的人生座右銘：

“樂觀滿足生歡喜，看破放下得自在”。



佛光山“一字筆”展覽：星雲大師（2012）
Exhibition at Fo Guang Shan featuring
Master Hsing Yun



與前總理馬田（2002）
With former Prime Minister Paul Martin



到四川探訪福慧贊助的學生（2010）
At Szechuan visiting students sponsored by
Fu Hui Foundation



“加華幹細胞”骨髓捐助場地義工（2011）
“One Match Stem Cell” campaign



頤康“健頤行”（2005）
Yee Hong “Walk and Roll”



佛光山滴水坊義工15年（2002）
Volunteering at Fo Guang Shan's tea house
for 15 years



佛光素宴（2014）
Fo Guang Shan's Vegetarian Banquet



前密市市長麥考蓮參加佛光園遊會（2010）
Former Mississauga Mayor Hazel McCallion
took part in Fo Guang Shan event



為“榕樹下”機構智障人士安排聖誕
插花活動（2008）
Christmas flower craft workshop for
mentally handicapped children



福慧青年團理事及義工（2013）
Fu Hui Youth Group's directors and volunteers



為日本地震籌款
Raising funds for Japan earthquake



哈珀總理到訪佛光山（2015）
Prime Minister Harper visiting Fo Guang Shan

Ms. Ida Li

Ms. Ida Li is a full-time or even 'over-time' volunteer, one who has been doing it for 20 years. Since bidding farewell to her flourishing career in Hong Kong, where she was a career woman who indulged in shopping and a life of pleasures, Ida has evolved into a dedicated volunteer who enjoys helping others without seeking any returns. Today, she is Vice-president of Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA) of Toronto, serving as a bridge of communication between Fo Guang Shan and the community. She also participates in the work of many charitable organizations quietly, taking pride in doing perfect work for every job she does. Her spirit is the role model for all volunteers.

Ida says the Chinese Canadian Legend Award is the first award she has received in her whole life. It sounds implausible, but at the same time, one can see that she does not really care whether she gets praise or endorsement from others. Ida is only interested in doing her volunteer work behind the scenes. Others see her “masterpieces”, rather than Ida herself. She says she has not taken too many pictures and does not even have a large selection of photos to choose from.

There have been no dramatic turns in the path that Ida has taken, and in fact she describes her life as smooth sailing on calm waters in a canal. However, she puts her whole loving heart into each big and small experience, each and every contact she makes in a day. She studies everything carefully and learns from her experiences with her heart and soul.

When one listens to Ida talking about her past, one discovers that every step taken seemed to have prepared her for her mission as a volunteer. Her experiences, knowledge and capabilities cumulated over the years

come into handy for her volunteer work to help those in need for the benefit of the community.

Ida was born and grew up in Hong Kong. Her parents started their business as street vendor and, after honing it through the sixties and seventies, gradually built up a stable family business. Hers was a typical middle-class family in Hong Kong. Ida's only regret was that her father passed away when she was only fourteen. Fortunately her family was a traditional Chinese family with tight family bonds. The youngest of six siblings, Ida feels she had a happy childhood, with her mother, four older brothers and sister taking very good care of her throughout those years.

After completing high school, she headed for Canada in 1977. In 1983 she received a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at York University in Toronto. Following graduation Ida returned to Hong Kong to work, her first position being a production manager at a record company. After a decade of hard work and efforts, she landed a senior position as Advertising and Marketing Manager with a photographic equipment company.

When Ida is asked if she has always loved art since childhood, or ever dreams of becoming an artist, she says she has never intended to pursue a career in the arts. She likes beautiful things, so naturally she gravitated to visual arts. Cultivating a sixth sense for what looks beautiful did not lead her into art, and she worked in the business world instead. However, once she entered the “voluntary sector,” she was able to fully utilize her talents and expertise in this area. Her interest has pushed her further to explore and develop her own potential.

Ida is responsible for the site layout, design, and décor at many charitable events. The success of a event, especially those with a theme,

is very much dependent on Ida and her team of volunteers creating a 'magical' atmosphere with the theme coming alive. Needless to say, being a fundraising event, this work must also be done at minimal cost within a pressing deadline. Those who work with Ida at events are often amazed at what she and her team can deliver with so little in such a short time.

A memorable experience Ida has is a Christmas 'Floral Celebration' workshop for mentally handicapped children, making it a special holiday for them. She was very much moved to see the outpouring of delight and joy on the mothers' faces when they received the homemade gifts from their children.

After the flowercraft workshop, Ida began to seriously study floral arrangements. In the last five years, she specialized in Japanese Ohara floral art, so that she could now teach flower arrangement classes at Fo Guang Shan.

In the 1980's, the family of Ida's husband, Glenn Chan, immigrated to Canada. After Ida's brother and sister also left Hong Kong for Toronto in 1990, Ida and Glenn began to think about their own plans for immigration. In 1993 they settled down in Toronto, giving up a comfortable home in Hong Kong, a stable high-paying job, an enviable lifestyle with chauffeur and maids, and a promising future.

In the early days after arrival, she and her husband together with her sister Ada founded a water softening business. Like many new immigrants, she tried to blend into the community, spending her leisure time singing, dancing and shopping. It was not a luxury lifestyle, but they had a stable income. In her comfortable surroundings, her community involvement was limited to making charitable donations.

In 1998, Fo Guang Shan held a world-wide members meeting in Toronto, and called upon a large group of volunteers to help out. It was Ida's first exposure to volunteer work. Over a thousand people from around the world attended the General Assembly of this meeting, and Ida was responsible for the preparation of souvenirs unique to Canada. From that point onward, she was intrigued by the possibilities in designing arts and crafts and developing her own interest in that area.

Ida says what attracts her about volunteering is the joy she feels in giving, and of course one continues to do what makes one happy. At that time she was not a buddhist follower yet, but she officially joined the ranks of volunteers at Fo Guang Shan. Her first task was to make tea and cook noodles at the member teahouse. She has carried on this task once a week for over ten years now.

Since Ida joined Buddha's Light International Association (BLIA), she realizes that Buddhism is not only about a person's own religious practice, a Buddhist is also part of a community and society in the practice of 'humanistic buddhism'. So she began to participate in the many community events that Fo Guang Shan is involved in. She also takes on a leadership role. As an example, Ida led youths to participate in a government-sponsored "street festival" and United Way Walkathon. She helped organize various events: the Harvest Gala hosted by Yee Hong and the City of Markham, the silent auction at Harmony Network, centrepieces for the Scarborough General Hospital fundraising dinner event, just to list a few. She led her team of youth volunteers to participate in Canada's 'One-Match Stem Cell' campaign, and Chinese music and performing arts program for Asian Heritage Month.

In 2000, she joined Fo Guang Shan officially as a buddhist follower.

In 2009, she became Vice President of BLIA of Toronto, promoting greater involvement with community groups, helping old and new immigrants integrate into society through different initiatives, such as funding a scholarship program for the Social Work Department at the University of Toronto. Under her leadership, the association supported many events such as Mon Sheong 's Annual Fun Run, and the fundraising effort by Carefirst to build a "One-Stop Service Centre". Ida has made and continues to make an impact on community volunteerism and environmental protection.

Ida's work as a volunteer is bearing fruit as the years go by. She keeps on expanding her horizons and her circle of volunteers, to participate in the many events organized by other charitable groups.

In addition to local charities, Ida also joined Fu Hui Education Foundation in 2005. In the last ten years, she has participated in fund-raising efforts to help Chinese university students in Guangdong and Sichuan, as well as orphans in Liangshan. She is now on the Board of Fu Hui Education Foundation.

In 2007, when she learned that impoverished children in Brazilian slums were being recruited by drug traffickers, she sprang into action, advocating a fund-raising campaign 'Sons of Buddha' to help them. She also followed up by promoting healthy extracurricular activities for these children.

In 2009, she joined the volunteer organizing committee for the Golden Daffodil Ball, responsible for the décor and site layout of the event. The Golden Daffodil Ball Organizing Committee puts on a spectacular gala every year in April to raise funds for Canadian Cancer Society.

Most recently, she has joined in the development phase of a nutrition

plan for aboriginals, and actively encourages young people to participate in fund-raising for this project.

At times, Ida says she could have five or six volunteer events on the go all at once and that she is responsible for various parts of those events. She likes to have a hands-on approach, no matter how big or small the task is. She says her secret to success is: "The most important thing is to work hard and put your heart into it ... Even if the work is difficult, it is a discipline."

She also admits that over the years she has experienced many highs and lows as a volunteer leader. There are people issues, and it is not easy to find good volunteers. In her eyes, all voluntary work is equally important; there is no good or bad volunteer work. Even sweeping a floor has its own value. She also believes that volunteers should not come and go as they please, nor avoid responsibility by saying "I'm just a volunteer". Volunteers have to be held accountable.

For the last twenty years, Ida has been practicing this volunteer spirit day in and day out. Not only has she motivated and inspired her own family and friends, but she has also encouraged the immigrant families around her, old or young, to contribute their time and resources to the community. Her own transformation has influenced her circle of friends that money used to help others will bring more happiness and fulfillment, which is the true meaning of "it is more blessed to give than to receive".

Her twenty years of dedicated volunteer work have not gone unnoticed as she continues her journey. She shares her motto for life:

"Happiness grows from optimism and contentment; freedom comes from seeing beyond and letting go."