

# One man's trash is another man's treasure

When one Island School student was awarded HK\$1,500 by her teachers for completing a project, she decided to give it all away to an old woman she met on the streets, writes Nicola Chan

**A** luxurious shopping trip, a fancy meal at a hotel, a fun day out at Ocean Park ... when you're given a big handful of cash and told you can do whatever you like with it, the possibilities seem endless.

When Island School student Ivy Fan was given HK\$1,500 by her school for the completion of a project she did in Year Eight, she decided to donate it to an old woman who collects cans and cardboard off the streets for a living.

The student, who is now in Year Nine, decided for her project that she was going to look at the lack of recycling in Hong Kong, as well as the amount of plastic waste that ends up on the streets.

"At the start of my project," Ivy told *Young Post*, "I planned on creating an exhibition to show how a lot of people in Hong Kong simply don't care about recycling." To do this, she decided to go out on the streets to pick up what people are throwing away. In just six weeks, for example, Ivy managed to collect enough plastic bottles to build a three-metre tall plastic tower.

Ivy's trips out to collect recyclable waste meant she met a lot of people whose livelihoods depend on picking through rubbish. It was on one of her trips out to pick up trash that Ivy met 83-year-old Lam.

The old woman, who collects cardboard to supplement her income, told Ivy that her



Ivy Fan (left, above) felt like Lam needed the HK\$1,500 cash prize more than she did. Photos: Island School, Ivy Fan



husband has to live in an old people's home, and that their son had passed away. There was no one else around to support Lam, which is why she has to go out and sell cardboard. Ivy was shocked to learn that Lam's annual income was equal to that of her own monthly school fees.

"I decided then that I would try my best to help her, and to work hard to inspire others to help people [like Lam]."

Ivy decided to share Lam's life story because she wanted people to appreciate how lucky they are, and that there are always more people out there who need more help than they do.

"I think, as Hong Kong citizens, we ought to try our best [to offer a helping hand]."

So, when the school awarded Ivy the HK\$1,500 cash prize for her project, she knew exactly what she would do with it - she gave it all to Lam.

It was the right decision, she said, and one that had the full support of her parents, teachers, and friends. Ivy also decided to give away all the cans and cardboard she had collected from her project to Lam and some

**I decided then that I would try my best to help her, and to work hard to inspire others to help people like Lam**

other old ladies she had met during her project so they could sell it to the city's recycling plants.

Ivy said that the donation, and her project as a whole, was an example of how easy it is for a person to make a positive change in the world, and how much many of us take for granted. This mentality is one that Ivy hopes she can hold on to in the future.

Ivy is now looking forward to learning more about Hong Kong's social services, and seeing what she can do to help more people like Lam.

"I just hope that what I did can inspire others," she added. "I really do believe that, by helping others, we can make the world a better place."