

## Ms Candy CHEA Shuk-Mui

“CHEA Shuk-Mui” is a household name in Hong Kong. Like many of her generation, she came from an underprivileged family. At the age of four, she was sent to live with a foster mother, and so from a young age she could understand the pain of feeling neglected and having to live under someone else’s roof. Soon after, Ms Chea and her foster mother, a domestic worker, moved to a village in Yuen Long, where she quickly became the target of bullying by other children because she was an outsider. To protect her, her foster mother locked her inside the house with only a transistor radio as her company. It was during this time that the young Ms Chea began to dream about working in radio broadcasting. She wanted to bring joy to those like her, who would otherwise be alone with their sadness.

While living with her foster mother, she learned to speak the Hakka dialect fluently. Upon returning to her birth family four years later, the eight-year-old Ms Chea had difficulty readjusting, and was blamed for constantly requesting to return to Yuen Long. At the time, her only companion was her older sister, Ms CHEA Sum-Mui, in whom she confided her dream of a career in radio. With her sister’s encouragement and guidance, she eventually performed a children’s story on the radio in fluent Cantonese. Her performance so impressed the producer that she was invited to play the lead character in a children’s drama. Unfortunately, as she received more and more scripts, she felt increasingly stressed, and her Hakka accent crept back in. In the end, she was dropped from the schedule, and felt as though her dream had been shattered. Worse still, she was sent to work in a factory after finishing primary school to help meet family expenses. There she realised that only knowledge could change her fate, so she decided to find a way to study in the afternoon while working part-time in the morning. She went to school with all her fingers dyed with paint from the factory.

By Form 4, Ms Chea had become very envious of her sister, who was then working at Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK). Her sister advised her that correcting her accent was a prerequisite to becoming a broadcaster. Under the guidance of her sister, she spent half a year practising standardised Cantonese. After matriculation, she joined RTHK to work as a production assistant for a show targeting young people. She still dreamed of becoming a programme host, and even thought up a name for her programme. All she needed was a good opportunity. Finally, in 1978, Ms Chea was assigned to host a 5-minute weekly slot. But this amazing opportunity did not mean it was all smooth sailing thereafter. Ms Chea was criticised for her animated style and high-pitched voice, which only motivated her to work even harder to address her weaknesses.

After becoming a radio host, she continually enrolled in courses in pursuit of higher academic qualifications. She forgot about time while working, spending her days and nights collecting information and seizing every opportunity to interview news figures. Her compelling yet unobtrusive interview skills have been widely recognised. For decades, with her friendly and sincere voice, she has accompanied the people of Hong Kong through countless mornings.

Throughout her long and distinguished career, Ms Chea has received many awards, including a “New Women’s Award” from Asia Television, and a “Radio Broadcasting’s Most Outstanding Performing Artist

Gold Award” from the Hong Kong Performing Artistes Guild. She was elected “The Most Popular DJ” in Hong Kong for eight consecutive years. Currently she hosts a talk show called *Footprints in the Old Days*, which aims to tell uplifting stories and which has received high ratings from radio audiences.

Reflecting on her several signature shows, Ms Chea finds *Dreams Come True*, a programme segment, one of the most memorable parts of her career, in addition to *Morning Suite*. The idea behind *Dreams Come True* began with a letter Ms Chea received from a listener, telling her about a three-year-old child who suffered from leukemia and who had only half a year to live. The child’s dream was to visit Disneyland in Tokyo, but his family couldn’t afford the travel expenses. After reading the letter on her programme, Ms Chea received an outpouring of positive responses from listeners. As a result, the whole family could make the trip to Disneyland. Disney even sent Donald Duck to accompany them during the visit. Despite his short life, the child gained good memories. This experience deeply moved Ms Chea and inspired her to create a regular segment, *Dreams Come True*, devoted to helping the disadvantaged in the community by bringing together donors and beneficiaries. Thanks to the show, Ms Chea became known as the “mouthpiece of the unfortunate”. Another unforgettable memory for Ms Chea was when she invited Mr TANG Siu Pun (the quadriplegic euthanasia advocate known as “Ah Bun”) to write a short weekly segment called *Bun for Tomorrow* for her show, so that he could have income to realise his wish of providing financial support to his parents. Even though it was a nominal amount, Ah Bun felt very delighted.

Ms Chea truly believes leading by example is the best way to influence others. She often serves as an emcee for charity events and doesn’t miss any opportunity to help the disadvantaged, having offered her time to charities including the Hong Kong Kidney Foundation, the Hong Kong Disabled Youth Association, Tai Shan International, the Intellectually Disabled Education and Advocacy League, and the Hong Kong Youth Arts and Speech Association. Ms Chea is an enthusiastic proponent of turning words into actions. This explains why she has won numerous awards, including the “Ten Outstanding Young Persons Award”, “Yan Oi Tong Outstanding Charitable Artist Award”, the “Excellent Social Contribution Award” from the Regeneration Society, and the “Hong Kong Volunteer Award”. She has also received a commendation for community service from the Chief Executive, and a commendation from the Secretary for Home Affairs. As the founding chairperson of the Hong Kong Volunteer Awardees Society, Ms Chea plans to continue to reach out to people from all walks of life, building a strong volunteer force to create positive energy through personal bonding. After the difficulties of her childhood, she is able to understand and connect with the less fortunate. It was through her refusal to accept setbacks that she was able to make her dream to become a broadcaster come true. It is due to her humility and her belief in the human spirit that she continues to inspire people to strive for their dreams despite adversity.

Mr Chairman, in recognition of her extensive contributions to the broadcasting industry and the community of Hong Kong, may I present Ms Candy CHEA Shuk-Mui to you for the conferment of an honorary fellowship.

*Citation written and delivered by Professor Annie CHAN*