

ZHUHAI

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Good will do benefit both givers and getters

2015-09-14

IT'S not about the contributions of time and money, which this year rocketed to a new height; it's what the funds are being used for -- providing paths for autistic children and orphans to have better lives. Perhaps even more than that, it's about uniting the community for a common good.

The 2015 Come Together Charity Music Festival set records with nine international bands and thousands of spectators. Over 200,000 yuan (\$31,420) of corporate donations were raised for the Charity Promotion Association Zhuhai (CPAZ) and Zhuhai Autism Society (ZAS) prior to Saturday.

Over the past three weeks, Bruegmann Group, Zhuhai Weichuang and Lianzhong Hardware became the first Diamond Sponsors by donating 30,000 yuan (\$4,680) each. MTU donated 15,000 yuan (\$2,357) to become a Gold Sponsor along with Saft, TDK Epcos, Coloplast, Bowers & Wilkins and Bosch, each of which gave 10,000 yuan (\$1,564) to the charity event at Beishan Theatre from 3-11pm on September 12, according to Mark Clayton, a founding members of Come Together Community (CTC) and operator of London Lounge in Longzhouwan of Jida.

In the meantime, Ormazabal Velatia, Profilex, Yatfai Rockwood, Experience Art Hotel, Harbour View Hotel & Resort, SGE- Sean Global Education, Shenzhen Yatfai/Rockwood Logistics, Profilex, Sapici, ECO Schulte Doorsystem Zhuhai, Guolong Technology (HK) have become Silver Sponsors by donating 5,000 yuan (\$782.50) apiece.

Half of the admission income and 40-50 percent of sales revenue from catering on the day will be donated to the Charity Promotion Association Zhuhai (CPAZ) and Zhuhai Autism Society (ZAS) with 100 percent transparency, the organiser announced at a press conference weeks ago.

Charity causes

CPAZ is a registered Civil Society Organisation which promotes social activism and public welfare through a range of projects that provide compassionate assistance to vulnerable sectors of society. This includes supporting the morally and financially destitute, and disadvantaged people -- particularly young students living as orphans or with single parents. Just 550 yuan (\$90) will provide one student with tuition, transport, educational items and food. A donation of 5,500 yuan (\$900) will provide for 10 students.

ZAS is a non-profit organisation set up by the parents of autistic children under the auspices of the Zhuhai Civil Affairs Bureau. They provide specialised classrooms part or full time for appropriate education and to help children and young adults gain the skills they need to have fulfilling lives on both a personal and professional level.

CTC organisers

Apart from Mark Clayton, who is British, CTC founders also include Luke Niederhofer, an American graphic designer dedicated to philanthropic activities and endeavouring to give back as much as possible to the city; Sunny Sui, former InternChina's customer relations manager

and now working for Delta Bridges; JJ Verdun, founder of Delta Bridges and organiser and co-organiser of many local charity and social activities; and others.

Active in organising the second, third and fourth CTC music festival, Mark believes that China, especially Zhuhai, has been generous and has given him a lot, but there are a lot of people in Zhuhai who don't have such a nice life. "So If I can help them in my position, I will always try to do so," he said.

In fact, Mark grew up within a family culture to help people. For example, his mother, a housewife with equestrian expertise from being reared on farm, has for many years taught mentally challenged children how to ride horses, he explained.

Furthermore, when Mark's group visited children in villages of Pingsha Town in Jinwan District of the West Wing, and the autistic kids downtown, he felt enormously moved by the rural children's living conditions, and the art of music training session and what the autistic children were learning. "It's really good to see that all the generous donations are really going to good use," he said. "I hope this year it could be even bigger, and I'm already thinking of the 2016 CTC event. We'll be very big."

Paul Bailey, InternChina Zhuhai office manager, has been involved in the organisation for two successive years.

"We feel that we owe some to the community, because people here are so friendly and genuine. They welcome us to that community and so we don't live in isolation -- it's about merging and breaking these boundaries. Whether you're foreigners or Chinese, it doesn't matter. Everyone can help out. A lot of foreigners want to do something good and to give something back to the way people treat us here," he said with expressed emotion.

Part of the organising team for three years, Luke said it's really tough when five or six try to do anything and are running around in their spare time. "We need a ticket manager, design manager, security manager and so on for all these positions, and to put each other on small teams, and so you don't have to work so much on everything," he smiled.

Nonetheless, he's relieved to be on a great team. "It's definitely a tough job, but it's easy for us, for we get along very well; we never have arguments; we never fight about any of these things; and we agree with each other on almost everything -- that makes things quick."

The biggest challenge every year, not a one-point challenge, but the whole storm of challenges that the organisers always have to think about, is to make sure more people join through enough marketing, word of mouth, and spreading the word as much as they can, he said.

Luke was moved when he and the organisers visited the houses of the children they help and their school. "When you see that, and when you see exactly what the funds are going towards, you feel that's no trouble at all."

After living in Zhuhai for more than a dozen years, JJ said Zhuhai is lucky to have such great people willing to do things together. "It's not just me, there're always many, many people around to do it. The great thing for now is more and more Chinese are joining us, and it's so nice the event is becoming really international."

Over the years, a change in China is that people are really, really caring about the community. They care more now, he pointed out.

ZAS President Charles He, who is the father of an autistic teenager, expressed sincere appreciation to the organisers and donors for their love and care towards ZAS. The funds raised this year will go to start a social enterprise, Creative Workshop, where 16-year-old autistic youth will work and the workshop will industrialise their artwork, he disclosed.



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