

Dream comes true for quake pupil

When I grew up, I decided to make the most of my life. I am dedicated to helping the disadvantaged

LEONIE KI MAN-FUNG

Colleen Lee

Just over two years ago, Sichuan quake survivor Yin Quanfei was still mourning the loss of classmates buried under the rubble of their Beichuan high school.

Yin has emerged from the tragedy to become only the second student from his Macao village to make it to university, thanks in part to a scholarship by Unicef advocacy and public relations committee chairwoman Leonie Ki Man-fung.

For Ki's part, she was merely keeping a promise made to Yin in July 2008 — two months after the May 12 earthquake that laid waste to the lives of tens of thousands of people — in return for his pledge to help with rebuilding if he made it to university.

"He also promised he would sponsor a poor student to finish university in 10 or 15 years after he graduates and goes to work," the community service veteran recalled.

Yin cleared the final hurdle last year when he took the national college entrance exam, his second time since graduating from Beichuan Secondary School.

He is reading flora reserve for a major at Sichuan Agricultural University.

Born into a farming family, Yin did chores at home from a young age. His father, now a laborer in Chengdu, earns about 1,400 yuan (HK\$1,660) a month while his mother, a farmer back home, makes just 200 yuan.

The financial pressure on Yin's family has been eased by the 9,000 yuan handed over so far by Ki and a charitable foundation set up in memory of her late parents eased his family's burden.

He also kept his word to Ki about visiting parents of schoolmates killed in the quake.

"They [the parents] looked much better than during my previous visits. Their grief has been replaced with laughter. We are thrilled to see that," Yin wrote in an e-mail to Ki.

"I am pleased that he is keeping his word," said



Ki, an advertising executive turned businesswoman. "I want him to spread the spirit of service and help those in need."

Well-heeled as Ki is, the New World Development non-executive director still spends about a third of her time on volunteer work.

Ki has been a Unicef council member for about 20 years and is a life member of the Children's Cancer Foundation as well as honorary secretary of Wu Zhi Qiao (Bridge to China) Charitable Foundation.

"I love community work that helps children. They are lively... I have feared death from a young age. When I was small, I came down with malaria and I thought I would die," Ki said.

She survived, but "at times I still cried and asked my parents what would happen if I died."

"When I grew up, I decided to make the most of my life. I am dedicated to helping the disadvantaged."

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Leonie Ki of Unicef helped Sichuan quake survivor Yin Quanfei, inset, with a university scholarship.