Make Dreams Come True this Christmas!

Operation Santa Claus is the annual fundraising campaign organised by the South China Morning Post and Radio 3 of Radio Television Hong Kong. The campaign seeks to raise funds and awareness for Hong Kong charities over Christmas. From a modest beginning in 1988, Operation Santa Claus has now collected a total of $8 million in cash, goods and services including $9 million for tsunami victims in 1999, thanks to the many Santa Clauses in the Hong Kong community.

Now we're on to Operation Santa Claus 2006. Join forces with the many Santa Clauses to help break another record!

Operation Santa Claus has innovated again and selected five priority themes for this year's campaign. Through these themes, we wish to reach out to more charities than ever before and raise awareness and funds to help their important causes.

As always, these charities were carefully chosen and they need your support. Let's spread their wishes come true!

1. **Mental and Physical Disabilities**
   - People with mental and physical disabilities need your support to integrate with society and lead a happy and healthy life. This year's selected organizations benefit people with Down's Syndrome, hearing-impaired children, people with moderate and severe physical disabilities, as well as injured workers.
   - Their wishes include the provision of vocational training and income-generating activities for people with physical disabilities to help them rejoin the labour market; art therapy for people with Down’s Syndrome and other disabilities; facilities for integration of hearing-impaired children at school; and life-enhancing equipment for people with severe physical disabilities.

2. **Children and Young People**
   - Children and young people from low-income families often find it hard to integrate into society and enjoy school activities. Children from ethnic minorities and refugee families have the added challenge of learning new languages and culture. They are also at risk of violence, drug use and crime.
   - This year's projects aim to give children and young people a chance to have a social life and leisure through dance performances, story-telling activities and the setting-up of libraries made specially for them. With your support, the self-esteem of these groups can be enhanced and we can prevent them from falling into society's margins.

3. **HIV/AIDS**
   - Twenty years into the worst epidemic the world has ever faced, the denial, stigma and discrimination of HIV/AIDS still affects people living with the disease.
   - The selected organizations work with children and young people living with HIV and AIDS in Hong Kong as well as in Henan province, Central China. They are working to improve the children's lives, but your support is equally important. While the wish for some is to provide care through physiotherapy, others need basic food. On the preventive front is help needed with sexual health education for young people. One of our selected charities reaches out to young people with important prevention messages.

4. **Age-related issues**
   - Hong Kong has one of the world's biggest ageing populations. While this is a good sign of long life expectancy in the territory, it also poses a number of challenges. Elderly people living alone sometimes can become isolated. People with Alzheimer’s disease need constant care and attention.
   - The selected charities wish to address these issues through the formation of elderly groups and create community visits and organize social events; and the setting up of a therapeutic weekend activity centre for people with Alzheimer’s.

5. **Healthcare and Disability**
   - Age is also an issue for unemployed middle-aged women. Rejoining the labour market is not easy, often leading to frustration and depression. The formation of a support network for these women is one of the suggested activities to help them get back on their feet.

6. **Medical issues**
   - Operation Santa Claus traditionally supports medical issues that involve high treatment costs for low-income families. Patients with kidney disease and epilepsy are the focus of this year's campaign.
   - Provision of physiotherapy support through play for children with kidney disease who need on-going or repeated stays in hospital; replacement of three old dialysis machines in centres that provide lower-cost treatment for underprivileged people; and alleviation of the financial burden of underprivileged families who care for children in need of kidney transplant are some of the examples of activities that you can support.

Building the self-esteem of children and teenagers with epilepsy and assisting parents cope with the condition are also activities to which your contribution could make a difference.

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