Ciao, 2019-20!
This year was tough but made us stronger.
Contents

Message from Our Master
Elevating Happiness, Balancing Diversity, and Conquering Crises 4

Interview with the Support Team
Your Safety and Happiness are Our Top Priority 8

Meal Gatherings
Come Take a Bite. I Wouldn’t Miss It for the World! 12

Let’s Party!
Halloween Party: Dress up and Hunt Your Treasure! 16
Christmas Party: Carnival Fun Spinning Around 18

Hands-on Workshops
Halloween Workshop: Make Your Own Jack-O’-Lantern! 20
Eat and Health Workshop 21

Interest Group Gallery
Feature Story: Music Group
Online Music Show 22
Singing Contest 24
A Glimpse at other Groups 26

My Story with the House
The Place where Our Story Began 28
Embolden Cultural Diversity in the House 29
A Cozy Harbor for Talents to Blossom 30
Confidence Built in My Days of Self-Quarantine 31

Acknowledgements 32
Message from Our Master

Elevating Happiness, Balancing Diversity, and Conquering Crises

It is a breezy Sunday afternoon, and we sit in the P1 Common Room of Graduate House, together with Master Wei-Ning Lee. “Research life is hard enough. I just hope that our residents can have fun with their friends when back to our family!” Master Lee opens our pleasant talk with a warm smile in all her sincerity.

Master Lee, while serving as a leader of Graduate House, is an associate professor of the Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering. She joined the House in January 2019 but has already won extensive favor from both her colleagues and residents. “I had so much fun when I attended those fascinating activities held in our House. I still remember our Christmas party last year, when residents told me with a big smile how appetizing the buffet dinner was, gave a large variety of outstanding talent shows and pulled me to join their after-party dances. The atmosphere was great, and I could feel happiness and friendship everywhere.”

She thinks the true essence of activities at Graduate House is to have residents spontaneously participate and enjoy themselves. “Joyful memories we experienced together are the best means to bond us, to improve understanding among different values, and to genuinely exercise, what we call, the familial culture of GH (Graduate House).” When talking about the High Table Dinner that got regretfully cancelled this year due to the pandemic, Master Lee says that she plans to make up for it next year by also inviting those who either were unsuccessful in this readmission round or had graduated. “Do count us in! Hahaha!” We are giggling with a deep feeling that the House is our “home” away from “home”, and our connection with each other will remain regardless of time and space.

As a female leader, Master Lee would like to exert her influence not only on delightful events but on tricky issues closely related to residents’ interests. “It’s never easy to coordinate with stakeholders, who, although towards the same goal, perform their duties from various positions. I find myself constantly busy with collecting and conveying messages among our residents, Residents’ Committee, GH Management team and higher authority while revisiting and setting the vision and mission of Graduate House. The most challenging part of my work is decision-making, that is, to figure out the delicate balance where both cultural and social diversities, House policies, and University missions on postgraduate education are respected and exercised on a democratic level.” She says in a mild but firm voice.

When it comes to the touchstone of readmission for current residents, Master Lee explains that the House intends to encourage residents to strive for a balance between work and relaxation, which is a main point of hall education. “Academic research lies at the core of our life at HKU; however, networking with fellow residents from diverse cultural backgrounds shall also be given proper weight. I am a great believer in cultural communication. By attending activities, our residents can find new hobbies, establish friendship, and further learn from each other. Therefore, we provide such a platform for residents, and adopt the rule of “contribution to the House”, rather than “academic achievements”, as
readmission criterion. It is my sincere hope that our residents can recognize the significance of time management and cultural communication, apart from academic research. I was very glad to see some residents practice together for the online show held spontaneously by the Music Group in May. They all enjoyed themselves, while the whole activity had nothing to do with readmission. Hope this little “trick” can help each of you find lifelong friends! Haha!” Master Lee blinks with a bubbly smile on her face.

From the hardships we have been through in the past academic year, we are all fully aware that balancing diversity could sometimes appear far more than a strategy, but an art, i.e. the art of humanity. The raging of COVID-19 has rendered our residents scattered around the world ever since the end of 2019. Some residents remain in Graduate House the whole time for either academic or economic reasons; some struggled to come back, though left our campus for a period of time, to continue their busy research; others stayed in their home countries for public health concerns. The situation faced by the GH Management team could not be tougher. “Our top priority is for sure to secure a safe environment within the House. This is no ordinary challenge,” she says with a strong sense of solemnity in her eyes, “I’m really grateful for the dedication of our staff in working on a 24/7 basis during the tough times. We also successfully recruited a group of volunteers from our in-house residents. They have really offered a huge help for our basic level coordination with self-quarantine residents. I’m glad that people in our House, every one of us, dare to risk their own benefits for the purpose of securing the interests of the whole House. It is every one of you who gives me the courage and energy to relentlessly continue my work. Facing this once-in-a-lifetime crisis, we have weaved our own silver lining hand in hand, as a family. Though the pandemic has yet been dissipated, I see the beam of humanity shedding light on our House and us conquering the crisis with stronger spirits.”

At the end of our conversation, we ask Master Lee about her ongoing plans for the development of Graduate House. She answers with a big smile on her face: “I always believe communication and understanding make us closer to each other. I will work with our Resident Fellow to hold or support ad hoc activities to strengthen bonding. It would also be nice if our bond could benefit our academic research. I will continue our 2019/20 initiative of “Tuesdays with GH” for our residents to brainstorm and inspire each other. Also, Zoom meetings will be provided at the same time for events held in the House, so more residents can get involved. The ultimate goal is to deliver cultural, social and intellectual education to our residents. Hopefully, we could learn and grow together as a family that cares and contributes to our society, environment, and humanity.”
Interview with the Support Team

"Your Safety and Happiness are Our Top Priority"

The year of 2020 came with one of the most severe crises in the world, but witnesses some of the most beautiful moments of human virtues, and hopefully will lead us to a brighter future where we turn crises into opportunities, regrets into gratitude, and painlessness into courage. Here, we conduct a comprehensive and fruitful interview with some Support Team members who constantly provide unconditional help to our residents during those difficult times, including our Fellow (Resident) Dr. Kurtee Chu, Resident Advisor Ms. Mengxia Gao, and a Resident Committee member Mr. Shaik Abdullah Nawabjan.

Q: What is your responsibility in the House after the outbreak of COVID-19?

Kurtee: I work very closely with our Office, Master, and Resident Advisors, to come up with effective measures against the pandemic. Given the massive amount of messages received every day, we communicated on a very frequent basis to make sure that the House has strictly followed the rules issued by HKU and the HK Government. The period from February to March when many residents returned to the House was the most challenging, while none of us, nor the entire world was prepared for the outbreak of COVID-19. Therefore, led by Master and with the support of RC, a volunteer team composed of in-house residents were recruited to support the returning residents who were to undergo self-quarantine. That was very crucial. We thank all the resident volunteers for their contributions to the House.

Mengxia: I was on duty in February, when most people came back from places outside Hong Kong. My major responsibility was to follow up and update the guidelines of self-quarantine at Graduate House. At that time, I also needed to attend meetings to discuss how to deal with specific issues and how to fulfill residents' personal needs.

Shaik: My responsibility was to support Office staff as well as our residents. I took a leadership role in coordinating with volunteers and helping Master with the arrangements.

Q: For Kurtee, how do you make relevant policies regarding COVID-19?

Kurtee: We receive suggestions extensively and deliberate on them cautiously. For example, the idea of setting up a volunteer team was first raised by one of the residents. It was regarded as helpful so a volunteer team was set up instantly after recruiting a confident number of residents who remained in the House during COVID-19. Besides, we have also taken into account suggestions submitted by one resident from the medical school. She had provided us very useful information regarding the precautions against the pandemic, which were later formulated into our guidelines.

Q: How would you describe your collaboration with your colleagues in fulfilling your duty?

Mengxia: Supportive, responsive and warm-hearted.

Shaik: Our team was very supportive and fast-acting. As a team, we discussed and implemented strategies with all possible measures that could be taken in a given scenario. We also considered suggestions from residents regularly. Their feedback was very helpful to us.

Q: What is the most challenging part of your work here?

Kurtee: The COVID-19 outbreak took place right after I moved into the House. Some of the residents might get extremely nervous and anxious. For me, I didn't have such experience either. At first, I would try to calm down the residents and understand more about their situation so that I can provide them with suggestions duly. If the issue was not within my knowledge, I would try to locate relevant community resources. For instance, the University Health Service (HKU) and the Centre for Health Protection (CHP), Hong Kong Government, were my first stops of getting professional medical advice. At that time, we knew only very little about the pandemic. Thanks to this, I have learned a lot about setting up infection control policies and guidelines during the process.

Shaik: I believe, gathering with a group of people from a specific geographic community and addressing issues within their local area has been a challenging experience for me. During the outbreak of COVID-19, the most difficult task was to avoid the panic among residents and convey newly imposed rules to all non-quarantine and self-quarantine residents. Some quarantined residents were taking the situation very lightly which caused panic among the non-quarantine residents. When this came to our attention, we contacted Master for her advice and Office for drafting strict rules and regulations. The regulations were delivered to everyone via email, messages, hard copies, etc. Floor volunteers were appointed to help in implementation and monitoring the regulations on their allotted floors. Finally, the situation was under control. None of the residents was infected and quarantined residents successfully completed their quarantine period.

Mengxia: The most challenging part of my work is to balance the workload between my house residents and the returning residents.
responsibility as a resident advisor and my research. This year has been a really tough year as we have gone through the social unrest in last November and the COVID-19 beginning in January. The Management Team has to update self-quarantine rules timely based on government guidelines. At the same time, we need to consider our residents' personal needs. I did spend a lot of time dealing with many issues during this period but I appreciate that I have the experience in handling tough situations with help from the Management Team.

Q: Why did you apply for your position in Graduate House? What is the most satisfying part of your work here?

Kurtee:
I am a social worker by training who would normally provide psychological counselling to others. While my full-time position at the University is mainly teaching, I would like to extend my passion in helping others in this part-time position as a Resident Fellow here at Graduate House. I used to serve as a senior resident tutor at an undergraduate Hall and provide pastoral care to students there as well. To be able to help others is one of the most rewarding things to do in my life. That is the reason why I chose to undertake a similar role in Graduate House.

Shaik:
I believe that as a Resident Committee member, I could immensely support residents through coordination between residents and the Management Team, and manage to organize entertaining events. The most satisfying part of work was when we receive positive feedback and appreciation on activities we conduct, I felt more satisfied.

Mengxia:
I like to contribute myself to the House in helping residents deal with their personal issues. Also, I like to work with a group of people who have passion to make our House better. I work with a great team of people here, which I appreciate a lot. Everyone in the Management Team cares a lot about our residents, and responds quickly to help with others. Besides, I worked with amazing people in the Children Social Service Team. We led several activities in the past two years, in which we had learned a lot from each other.

Q: How would you describe the spirit of Graduate House after the difficulties we have gone through?

Mengxia:
United, resilient, cooperative.

Shaik:
COVID-19 was unexpected and suddenly the daily life and everything else changed following the outbreak. Graduate House was a home for both quarantine and non-quarantine residents, which could be somehow scary to many residents. However, the regulations and measures were implemented in a prompt manner. Our residents could also enjoy online workshops conducted by interest groups. These activities did keep the spirit of residents on high. I am very happy with Hong Kong people who acted very early and started taking measures to avoid the spread. Hope the situation becomes normal again and we can enjoy the activities in the coming residential year at Graduate House.

Kurtee:
It is an innate ability that human beings can learn from experiences. Moreover, growth is being observed in some people in the aftermath of some significant life events. After fighting the pandemic together, I believe the House residents would grow up as a stronger family with greater care and love among us. Apart from dealing with the challenges, every one of us can make use of this opportunity to better understand our own selves. For example, by reflecting on how we cope with the threat of the pandemic, perhaps we can discover something new about ourselves, or inner potential that has not been actualized earlier. With better self-awareness, personal growth and advancement becomes more achievable. Hope we all can find something gainful during and after this long fight.

Graduate House

Drinking water provided by the House for residents in self-quarantine
Yu-Ming Lu:

These two dining events were fun and meant a lot to me. I can still clearly remember what happened after 10 months.

As a first-year graduate student, I had to work very hard on my research project at first, and had no time for activities or interest groups, thus I barely knew anyone living on my floor; to be honest, I did not even know what “Master” was until the dinner. Thanks to the Wednesday Dinner Gathering with Master which was held on the terrace of Master’s apartment, I got to know every new “kid” living next door. We could fully enjoy the amazing view of Victoria Harbor while having food and chatting. I remembered that a Russian resident who studied dentistry introduced the only first-year student who had heard of it. Another Indian resident, Mukesh, invited me to go hiking with him, but I worked in the lab every day. “Okay,” he paused for a moment and then said, “It’s actually Sunday.” “Oh, I still work on Sundays,” I replied, and everyone laughed.

We talked a lot about Indian and Chinese cultures and languages. I asked if they spoke Sanskrit, and they were surprised that I had heard of it. Conversely, we were surprised that they could name some Chinese provinces, then we taught them the meaning of Canton/Guangdong and Guangxi. Another interesting part was that my roommate, Yi, did not have breakfast because he did not want to lose his appetite for lunch. Yi studies Physics and I always find him funny glib-tongued. During lunch, Mukesh kept arguing with him about some physics questions, such as the refraction in the glass of water, which made all of us laugh.

You want to chit-chat with your neighbors and enjoy gourmet food at the same time? This is the right place! To make our (new) residents know each other at the beginning of an academic year, Graduate House. The first one is Master held from September to November, because our Master likes talking to our residents in person. The second meal gathering, Fellow’s (Academic) Gathering, invites all residents from the same faculty and takes place at Postgraduate Hub inside the House.

Let us hear what our two residents, who are roommates, have to say about the meal gatherings.

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I am a typical science guy who is quite introverted in nature. Most of the time, I have trouble fitting in big events and hanging out casually with people. However, my experience of Dinner Gathering with Master turned out to be a pleasant one.

The laid-back atmosphere that night encouraged me to interact, to speak up, and to appreciate people’s kindness there. It was the first time that I got invited to the balcony of Master’s flat, where the last puzzle piece of the breathtaking scenery of Sai Wan Pier was collected, combined with the sights I normally get from the French window on the 11th Floor, to form a complete picture of glamorous Hong Kong in my mind.

That first impression had soothed me well. After finding myself a cozy spot, I started to look at all the delicious food nicely laid on the table. To be honest, my original plan was to prepare for my sharing stories while waiting for other residents; but my attention was totally dragged away by the cream frosting on the cake and the crystal lemon juice dripping down the paper parasol.

‘How should I split the pizza so that the girl sitting next to me won’t find out I get the better slice than her? What if I make a noise when chewing the food? How should I behave like a gentleman?’ Just when my mind was busy wandering in space, the Dinner began. Master’s excellent opening speech pulled me back into the true world. People started to talk and introduce themselves. ‘Hey guys, I’m Zhang Yi...’ I couldn’t believe how those words hopped out of my mouth, but I did feel natural and comfortable. Maybe I wasn’t able to enter everyone’s heart with my somehow clumsy speech, my own heart had definitely opened up for those nice friends around me. When I was there, I felt I was one of them. It is such magic!

God knows how many brilliant research projects could be thus generated! This Lunch Gathering with research fellows offered us great opportunities to talk with people whom we admired but dared not to contact at ordinary times. I would never imagine a fierce but exciting debate among me, Mukesh and Abdulla, when we were acquaintances and just politely nodded heads toward each other an hour ago in the elevator.

Also, for my roommate and dear friend Ming, effective and meaningful conversations between us are rare because of our crazily busy schedules. Even just with a thin door that separates us, it is not easy for us to find some time for a dinner gathering. Therefore, I am more than grateful for what this dinner has brought to me.

By the way, the food there was of top quality, which no one would ever want to miss a try. After all, how hard would it be to establish friendship with such fantastic food provided!

Our Fellow’s Gathering was held in Café Roma on the P3 Floor. It provided us with such an excellent chance to connect with fellow researchers working in similar fields. At first, I didn’t have that high an expectation for this lunch gathering because I thought it was similar to Dinner with Master.

However, the results ended up being rather fruitful. After a brief introduction of everyone’s research interests, we started to switch seats with one another and exchange ideas with potential collaborators.
Halloween Party: Dress up and Hunt Your Treasure!

The Halloween Party is always an impressive social occasion held in the Common Room in October. “Ahhhh!” Screams flew over the House when residents pushed the door open and then a lifelike toy spider dropped right in front of their eyes. What a splendid way to start a night of horror fun!

Surprisingly, objects turned out to be oddly peaceful inside the Common Room: delicious snacks and drinks spreading all over the table, cute neon light bulbs beaming out soothing illumination, and some laid-back guys lying on the couch watching Halloween movies. Though the space was decorated with “sticky cobweb”, sharp witch hats and creepy pumpkin lanterns, everything there seemed to forebode the “lull before the storm”.

However, residents’ attentions were soon dragged away by an exhilarating treasure hunt game. People were excitedly looking for the Pumpkin Cards hidden by our organizers, bumped on others’ head and laughed together. Anyone who got the luck to find a Pumpkin Card could then attend the guessing game, the winners of which would attain cute souvenirs and Polaroid photos.

Just when everyone was happily immersed in the game, Fred, one of our Resident Committee members, dressed up as the Plague Doctor and barged in. His sudden appearance and horrifying outfit sparked a round of burning cries from participants. “This is what Halloween Party is about!” Some guy yelled. Our Master who dressed as the Prophet that night quickly went up to hold the peak of the Plague Doctor. While people were busy laughing at this hilarious scene, the photographer managed to capture the moment.

Some girls dressed like adorable elves in the forest and asked the photographer to take cute photos of them. For those who didn’t “properly decorate” themselves, the organizers had also prepared for them funny decorations and colorful masks if they would like to join the fun photo-taking.

Every year’s Halloween Party is a celebration of creativity. Participants always find themselves caught by surprises from our ingenious cosplayers. Just come join us and have fun! We also welcome your one-and-only talent for more creative and interesting games!
Christmas Party is considered as the grandest event to celebrate the holiday season at Graduate House every year. “Let’s Carnival” is an everlasting slogan of this party, where the only task of our hard-working graduate students is just to forget yourself and have fun!

This year, organizers set up an interactive Photo Corner for residents to take festive pictures with their friends. When some people were busy taking cute selfies, others indulged their stomachs by gorging the appetizing buffet. Those residents who were not in Hong Kong could also join us by sharing their video recordings of seasonal greetings.

You might ask, if you are a newcomer, “Where should I start? How may I fit in?” Well, relax, my friend. Even if you are not a big fan of selfies or have a full stomach, you will still enjoy the party show presented by our talented residents! Starting with a series of thrilling K-pop dances, the show managed to lift the audiences’ mood over the roof at the first few seconds. For a moment, you might feel like sitting in a top-class KBS live show that you don’t even have to pay for! “Wow! How could they look so smart and dance so powerfully! I am really jealous!” said Wang Ziman, an exchange student from Mainland China studying in the Faculty of Law. “I am always busy with my research work, but the show had really refreshed me. Now I have decided to join them in next year’s show.”

See? The party itself has magical powers to drag you into the relaxed atmosphere. “Hahaha!” A sudden laughter from the audience signaled the start of a hilarious parody. Two performers walked up the stage and stood in front of a dark board, with their legs covered by black plastic bags. Several workers hid behind the board and controlled those two performers’ fake arms and legs by swaying plastic bags and a set of strings. Only after another performer who dressed as a Ping-Pong ball ran in the middle of the stage, the audience realized that this was a parody imitating a Ping-Pong contest. Their adorably awkward moves made the audience laugh their heads off. Casual dances and light music followed one by one. The song “Love Circulation” pushed the night to a climax, when residents started to join each other in a dancing queue led by a mascot performer dressing as the cutest-ever Kumanom!

It was approaching midnight, but nobody would like to leave. The fact is that you can never have enough carnival fun; the next day you probably need to go back to your burdensome research life anyway. Nevertheless, the good news is that as long as you stand with Graduate House, you are always welcome at this carefree annual event!
We all loved this Jack-O’-Lantern Making Workshop, which was organized by several residents one day before the Halloween holiday as a warm-up activity. Residents could design and hand make their own festive lanterns to celebrate the holiday while meeting new friends. Traditionally, Jack-o’-lanterns are made out of pumpkins or other root vegetables. People would cut off the top of the pumpkin, scoop out its flesh, carve out a scary face on its rind and put a candle in the hollow space so that the light could beam out. To everyone’s surprise, our organizers creatively substituted real pumpkins with light clay that is easy to squeeze and shape. Participants were offered colored clay and funny emoji stickers. After shaping the clay into a pumpkin “model”, they could either put emoji stickers on it or proceed to knead eyes, hats, and even wings using the colorful clay. Since the clay lanterns are capable of being stored for a much longer time, this fascinating workshop attracted a lot of residents to participate and they all created one-and-only souvenirs. During the workshop, residents were happily exchanging design ideas and crafting materials. For a moment, it was felt that all of us had been soaking into our beautiful childhood memories, where there was no pressure or anxiety, but only laughter and happiness. We sincerely welcome you to have a sip of the pure pleasure offered exclusively by our House family!

The Eat and Health Workshop was organized by our resident Dapeng Shan via zoom. This workshop aimed at providing practical instructions for our residents regarding the preparation of healthy meals and daily workouts inside bedrooms. In the time of COVID-19, people were strongly advised to maintain social distancing from each other and eating out has ceased to be a wise option. Given the pressing need for people to stay healthy while working from home, Dapeng generously shared a set of diet plans serving different fitness goals, e.g. to lose weight or to gain muscle. He pointed out that most people had received false information from social media that might exert a negative impact on their health.

For instance, insufficient fat or carbs intake for the purpose of losing weight is in fact detrimental to health. Conversely, anyone with a fitness goal of weight loss shall decrease their carb consumption at a gradual pace and diversify their diet with food containing unsaturated fat, such as nuts and olive oil. Apart from tips for healthy diets, Dapeng also demonstrated several self-weight training moves that were easy to perform even in a small room. This workshop has received a lot of favorable feedback and we are glad to see our residents offering hands to each other in this difficult time.
As an active interest group at Graduate House, the Music Group organized up to 22 activities in the past year, most of which were beginner-friendly and required little musical background (e.g. the most popular Karaoke held in the P1 Common Room, regular music workshops which delivered basic knowledge about music theory and instruments, music appreciation sessions during which members watched classic musicals and then shared their thoughts). Many residents started to learn musical instruments or grow interest in certain music artistic styles after participating in these activities. In addition, the Group put on a series of excellent performances at Christmas party and for the elderly during social service, respectively.

Although many good shows were presented by the Music Group, the grandest ones must be the Singing Contest and the Online Show.

Spring is just about the time when everyone should have fun at Music Festivals on the beach, but the outbreak of COVID-19 panicked and stressed the public pitilessly. Inspired by the benefit concert “One World: Together at Home” curated by American singer Lady Gaga, the Music Group leader Sophia proposed a plan for an online music show at Graduate House, then other group members managed to put the show in full swing, in order to entertain our fellow residents with music during the difficult time of COVID-19.

A close call hit the group when preparing for the show. One performer, Xinxin Feng, suddenly found that the piano in the Common Room stopped working, which overwhelmed him. Just when people could not fix the urgent problem, and Xinxin probably had to regretfully quit the show, Master Lee learnt of the situation and offered to lend her own piano in her apartment. There came a funny yet touching view: group members went up to Master’s apartment, stuffed the piano into elevator, and moved it to the Common Room, all sweating, exhausting but laughing. Thanks to everyone’s relentless efforts, the show finally went smoothly. In total, 11 shows were performed, including piano, violin and Chinese zither playing, as well as choir singing and Chinese classic dancing.

Master Lee, a music lover, ended the show with a soul-touching song “There is a Sadness”, while playing the piano at the same time. “We need to adjust our mood when getting caught by frustration. This is indeed a difficult time, but it is also a temporary one. Let’s stay full of hope for the bright future!” Master Lee said in a firm voice filled with strength.

This brilliant show has taught us that it is exactly in such tough times that we must hold our heads up and raise our hopes, in the company of a universal language that we all understand — Music.
The Crowning Activity Lifting the Curtain for a New Year

As a long-standing tradition, the Singing Contest of GH marks the beginning of each year with intoxicating tunes and enthusiastic performances. The year of 2020 turned out to be a bit distinct, for this year’s Singing Contest also hallmark our residents’ strength and courage under the shadow of COVID-19. Music has the power to bridge people’s souls. By belting out those beautiful melodies, our fellow residents bonded together with tears and laughter, anxiety followed by relief, and happiness soaked in love.

Several weeks before the competition, residents started to proactively look for excellent partners and practice their performances in the Common Room which is well equipped for musical training. Everyone was itching to win the limited trophies, which were specially selected by the Music Group leader Sophia.

The night finally came! Contestants were all busy checking their costumes and reviewing lyrics, while the audience was happily chit-chatting over who would hold the championship and who might come as their favorite. “Bang! Bang! Bang!” The stage was ignited by a warm-up K-pop dance performed by our Dancing Group, sparking the first wave of cheers from the audience.

“This mash-up is dedicated to the girl that I fell for because of a chance encounter at Graduate House.” Contestant Yingqi Liu said in a magnetic voice, affectionately looking at his girlfriend. Yingqi was a truly talented composer. He blended three songs together and ingeniously decorated the remix with thrilling syncopation. “A Hero's Song to His Girl in the Flower Room”, what a romantic title, perfectly matching its soul-stirring jazz genre! His talent and affection won rounds of thunderous applause from the audience.

“Wow! Wish I got a boyfriend like him!” A girl shouted out in a pitchy voice, triggering bursts of laughter in the Hall.

Of course, the story of our champions, Xin-er and Zuyi, was not any less interesting that night. They did a breathtaking duet “Light Years Away”, but no one knew that Xin-er suddenly felt too anxious to send any hints to her partner in the middle of their performance. Surprisingly, Zuyi noticed the situation and moved closer to Xin-er, mischievously blinking her eyes like she could read Xin-er’s mind. This comforting gesture reminded Xin-er of their first meeting at a music group workshop and how she got attracted by Zuyi’s stunning singing skills. Xin-er finally managed to calm down and complete the touching song with her dear friend. “I always admire good singers. Zuyi makes me feel like she is the unexploited alter ego to me,” Xin-er said after the show. Due to the Contest, these two residents become more intimate than ever before.

Friendship per se is beautiful enough, but with great music flowing through, it can convey happiness and strength to others suffering from sorrow. This year’s Singing Contest enlightens every one of us that no matter what happens, we should embrace it with a positive mind and a beautiful song!
**Table Tennis Group**

The Table Tennis Group is an energetic sports group which regularly organizes versatile activities at P4 of Graduate House every Wednesday night, such as doubles, mixed doubles and team competition. This year group members started to undergo multi-ball training which works for players at all levels and can greatly speed up personal skills. Unlike conventional table tennis training activities, multi-ball training is provided by the group leader who supplies multi-balls and work with each player.

Among the group’s regular activities, annual table tennis competition held in March at Graduate House is the most exciting one. It gives residents a good chance to enjoy table tennis and meet friends. All are welcome!

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**Spirituality Group**

During the academic year 2019–2020, the Spirituality Group hosted weekly meetings every Monday, including watching films following by discussions on their contents, and celebrating Deepavali (the Hindu festival of lights) on 21 October. The group also performed a play at the Christmas Party of Graduate House.

This year the Spirituality Group introduced some outdoor activities. For example, group members visited the Big Buddha and the Po Lin Monastery on Lantau Island on 29 September. The trip was full of spiritual nourishment as spiritual guidance was provided by Venerable Jingxin, the head of the monastery. On 12 January, the group collaborated with the Nature & Cultural Explore Group in organizing a trip to Macau. Through various activities, the group members will be able to find unity amidst differences, enrich themselves with the wisdom of other religious traditions and cultures, and forge lifelong friendships.
Graduate House is a place full of memories to many. It is where our story began — in an incredibly amazing way we never expected.

We moved into the House without knowing that our husband (wife)-to-be was staying just two doors away. Our first acquaintance was at a Wednesday Dinner Gathering hosted by our former master, Prof. Ben Young, in October 2017. Prior to the gathering, we had both been praying separately for the opportunity of starting a fellowship in the dorm to share our Christian faith with others. It occurred to us that we not only had this same idea but also attended the same church in Sheung Wan. The Christmas Party a few weeks later got us a little closer as we decided to sing some hymns together. Several other opportunities that came along enabled us to know each other better, especially the fellowship that started in Graduate House. We started a relationship six months after we first met. We must mention that it is such a privilege to have our dorm located just at the foot of The Peak. It was like our backyard, where we would go hiking and discuss our future.

Last year, we tied the knot and some people from the House attended our wedding ceremony at St. Andrew’s Church in Hong Kong. We are thankful for all the friends we met here along the way, who have been accompanying us and being so supportive throughout this journey. We treasure the moments shared with many of you. This is our third year in Graduate House. Staying here may be temporary, but it is our very first home together. We are two imperfect people joined together who vowed to love, to learn how to love, and to continue to grow together. From here, our story continues...

Graduate House enjoys a highly-praised reputation of encouraging residents to organize and participate in events that enrich social interactions and cultural exchanges. Growing up in a diverse country like India, I have always believed and enjoyed multiculturalism as well.

In 2019-2020, I contributed to two key cultural events that had attracted extensive participation from various countries and regions, including India, China, Hong Kong SAR, Canada, Nigeria, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The first event was a community event organized by the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) and Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP). By coordinating with my fellow residents, I successfully organized and delivered a live performance on the occasion of Universal Fellowship Day 2019. Our team performed an Indian Hindi song “Vaishnava Jana To” in front of a diverse audience of more than 500 people.
A Cozy Harbor for Talents to Blossom

From my one-year experience of living in Graduate House, I find myself already deeply connected with this warm and comfortable family. Whenever I feel depressed or exhausted, Graduate House is always there, offering me a cozy corner to relax, reflect and grow.

In the last semester, I took part in the 6th Hong Kong University Students Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition. For a period of nearly three months, I was overwhelmed by an extremely tight schedule. Apart from running my regular research, I also had to squeeze out enough time to conduct experiments and to collect high-resolution images for my competition. Every time when I got back to the House after work, it was already midnight. I would routinely take a shower, grab some snacks and comfortably lie down on my bed. Sometimes when my work went well, I enjoyed cooking instant soup or noodles in the pantry and sharing food with my buddies whom I bumped into. With much gratefulness, I came in second place of the Competition by inventing a holographic detector, which can automatically identify microplastic particles in nature without physical contact. It has been a real pleasure for me to contribute to microplastic pollution control and environmental protection. Further, none of this could be done without the comfortable accommodation, friendly atmosphere and helpful fellow residents in Graduate House.

I consider myself one of the luckiest people in the world, for I get to share my achievements and happiness with my House family. Graduate House has my most sincere wish for a more prosperous future, where more talents can grow and blossom!

Confidence
Built in My Days of Self-Quarantine

Ruiyan Gao

After Chinese New Year, I travelled back to Hong Kong to continue my research. That time was also shortly after the outbreak of COVID-19 in Asia. Therefore, I was required to go through 14-day quarantine in my own room. Though my floor representative and neighbors had provided me with great help, the first several days of my self-quarantine could be more than nerve-wracking. I couldn’t help but stuff my mind with scary thoughts and constant worries.

To distract my mind from anxiety and depression, I downloaded an online karaoke app and started to record my singing every day. The process of choosing an interesting song and to appropriately perform it turned out to be considerably effective in channeling my negative emotions. In the beginning, I was pretty shy and just kept this experience to myself. However, after several online talks with my friends, I decided to post my singing on social media. Much to my surprise, many of our residents started to send me warm and encouraging responses. On one pleasant evening, I was invited to join an online Werewolf game with our residents. Laughter burst into the air whenever the screen got frozen but participants kept talking and made a mess. It was a totally different sort of fun from playing offline party games, but we did enjoy and cherish those beautiful moments when we strived to send out happiness to each other under the shadow of COVID-19.

The online bonding between me and my fellow residents in Graduate House have definitely recharged me with great energy and confidence. In times of crisis, we turn hardship into strong spirits by taking care of each other with our true hearts.
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