

Serving at the grassroots

People Association's Grace Chan views her job as a bridge between the people and the Government

Hazel Tan

BEING a recipient of the People's Association (PA) Youth Leaders Scholarship (Overseas) allows Ms Grace Chan En Ying to fulfil her career aspiration of serving the people on the ground and building in-depth relationships with them.

"The main draw of this scholarship is the direct opportunity to be on the ground," she says.

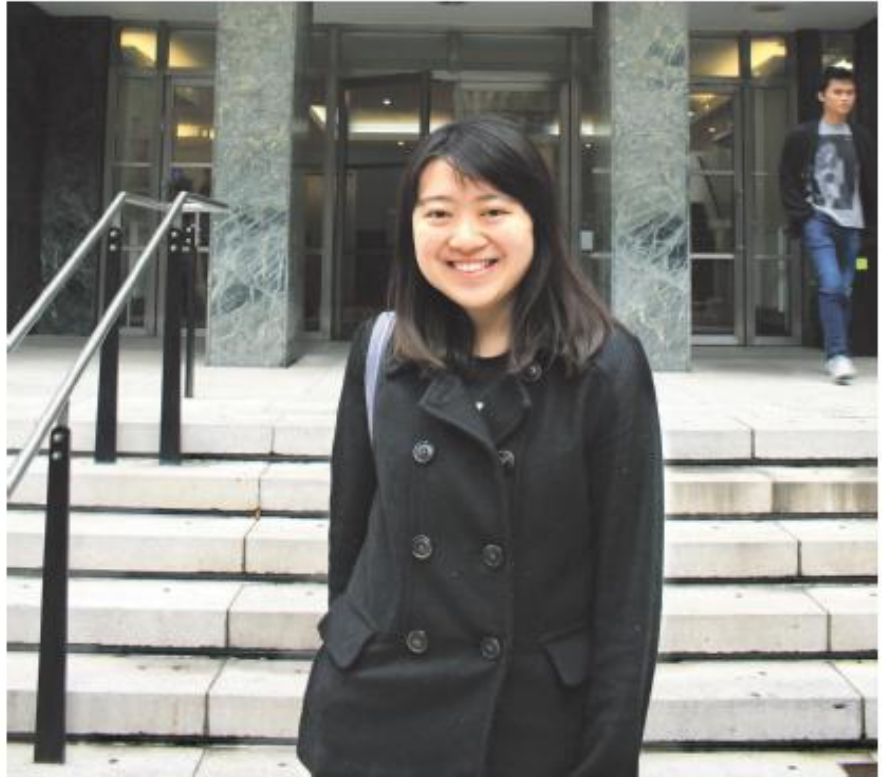
"Having direct contact and developing a long-term relationship with the residents every day gives me the greatest purpose of being in PA; you realise how much your job means to the people you directly interact with."

Ms Chan, 20, started volunteering with PA's Youth Movement's Youth Executive Committee in Mountbatten when she was just 16. It offered her great insights and understanding into PA's work.

First-hand experience

"After volunteering in the community, I discovered that I'm most driven to work with people on the ground where I can serve directly," she says.

"PA is the bridge between the government and the people. PA staff will communicate policies and schemes to the residents, and also bring the residents' concerns to the bigger arena for improvement and consideration."



Ms Chan's volunteer stint gave her insights into PA's work. PHOTO: GRACE CHAN

Before deciding on the PA scholarship, Ms Chan spoke to many PA staff members in her Community Centre, those in other Community Centres as well as those working at the PA headquarters. She also spent time volunteering and doing internships in other organisations.

"Do what your heart brings you to and work or volunteer in related fields before deciding on a scholarship, find the one thing that drives you," she advises aspiring scholars.

Working in the government sector enables her to shape the way the community is living, says Ms Chan, who is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Economics at London School of Economics and Political Science

(LSE) in the United Kingdom.

She is confident she will be able to put her economics degree to good use when she graduates next year. "Economics is a social science that teaches one to think of social issues using a wide range of models. Using econometrics as a methodology, I intend to do a mini-dissertation in my third year to analyse the impact of different variables on a specific community issue," says Ms Chan.

"It is helpful to find out what factors can cause a specific community concern, and how attention can then be focused on those factors, in order to seek new or improve upon existing community solutions."