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April 10, 2008

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***Manulife renews support for leading Specific Learning Disabilities Centre
Olympic Games gifts and presence of “Fuwa” add fun touch to ceremony***

Hong Kong — With the presence of Olympic Games “Fuwa” Huanhuan and the gift of Olympic-mascot toys for some 30 children, the sponsorship-renewal ceremony for the Manulife Centre for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities (MCCSLD) was a particularly joyous occasion.

But the biggest source of pleasure was the confirmation of the insurer’s ongoing support for the Centre — to the tune of a further HK\$2.2 million for the next three years (2008-2010).

Set up with the help of the Manulife Charitable Foundation nine years ago, the MCCSLD at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU) has gone from strength to strength, becoming one of the most influential institutions of its kind

Michael Huddart, Manulife’s Executive Vice President and General Manager for Hong Kong, presented the cheque at the Chiang Chen Studio Theatre of the PolyU, in the presence of the University’s Deputy President Alexander Tsang, the Associate Dean of the Faculty of Health and Social Sciences Prof. George Woo, the Head of the Department of Applied Social Sciences Prof. Angelina Yuen, and Dr. Alice Lai, Centre-in-Charge of the MCCSLD.

Mr. Huddart expressed delight that the MCCSLD had grown to become a well recognised institution, doing pioneering work in the field of Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD). “Our aim is to empower the Centre to give immediate, practical help to SLD students and their parents here in Hong Kong, and to the skilled frontline professionals who are aiding them to cope with and overcome the disability,” he remarked.

“We want to bring out the best in these young people and put them on the path to a fulfilling life that will utilise the whole range of their potential.”

On behalf of the MCCSLD, Dr. Alice Lai said: “We are very thankful for Manulife’s continuing support. With its funding, we have been able to make a remarkable impact on our community and bring much-needed treatment to those in want of it.”

With a mission of taking a leading role in the holistic development of children with SLD in the territory, the MCCSLD has been responsible for helping some 5,000 students since its inception in 1999. It has held more than 300 seminars, workshops and training camps and provided specialist training for some 3,000 teachers and parents.

Ongoing research conducted at the Centre has led to better identification mechanisms for the problem and a deeper understanding of the characteristics and needs of its sufferers. With this has come the development of unique intervention models to support both school-based and home-based initiatives and more advanced resources and tools to put them into practice.

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The MCCSLD also regularly collaborates with other international bodies of experts in a bid to enhance our knowledge of what causes SLD and how best to deal with it.

Referring to the distribution of Olympic-mascot toys to the children present, Mr. Huddart said: “This is just a tiny part of the awareness campaign we have been conducting as the official Worldwide Life Insurance Partner of this year’s historic Beijing Olympic Games. As our campaign slogan has it, we are ‘Bringing Dreams to Life’ — and what could serve as a better example of this than the work of this magnificent Centre?”

About Manulife Charitable Foundation

The Manulife Charitable Foundation is a non-profit organization set up by Manulife (International) Limited in 1998 to support and promote educational, health and charitable activities for the betterment of public welfare in Hong Kong. It has sponsored the Manulife Centre for Children with Specific Learning Disabilities at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University since 1999 with a mandate to assist children with specific learning difficulties, and their parents and teachers, by studying how to identify children in need of assistance and help them develop to their full potential.

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