

FOCUS

The Three Musketeers of AKA, Advancing over Time for the Neighbourhood
 Interview with Ir William Chan, JP, Chairman of Social Service Management Committee,
 Aberdeen Kai-fong Welfare Association Limited

The Aberdeen Kai-fong¹ Welfare Association Limited (AKA) was founded in 1950. Its social service arm, AKA Social Service (formerly known as "Aberdeen Kai-fong Welfare Association Social Service Centre"), was later established in 1976 with the mission to "promote mutual concern among neighbours, nurture the youths and serve the community", and the belief in "care, helpfulness, accessibility, reliability, and mutuality". The organization has long been rooted in the Southern District, offering diversified social service to the neighbourhood.

Ir William Chan has been serving on AKA's Executive Committee (ExCo) since 1987. He was the ExCo Chairman from 2001 to 2007, and is now the Chairman of the Management Committee of AKA Social Service. Ir Chan got in touch with AKA when he moved into the district and his wife registered their family as a member of AKA's community centre for joining its activities. From a service user to ExCo member, Ir Chan has taken part in steering the advancement of AKA over the past thirty years.

In the 1950s, many kai-fong welfare associations were set up in different districts under the support of the government, all bearing the four mottos to "give mutual help, share joys and sorrow, show support at difficult time, make changes in customs and traditions".² These associations provided services such as education and medical support for the poor in their neighbourhoods. When Ir Chan joined the ExCo, he felt that AKA must evolve from the traditional mode and culture of kai-fong welfare associations to suit the society's changing needs in order to maintain its competitive edge.

Ir Chan said that, in recent years, the ExCo has brought in corporate governance culture to AKA, upholding the values of fairness, justice and openness in their leadership. For stakeholders to be aware of AKA's transformation, the organization reconstructed its image and brand in 2012 with a more precise agency name and new logo. The identity of "Aberdeenians" was also strengthened to illustrate the characteristics of AKA's ExCo and staff members – having clear goals, client-oriented, committed to the principles of corporate governance, pragmatic, seeking continuous improvement, dedicated to providing quality services through community development approach and integrated social service mode.

To keep up with the times, Aberdeenians have to keep learning. Ir Chan himself is a role model as he believes that "There is no limit in learning. One should learn as long as he lives." In the past few years, Ir Chan actively participated in governance related activities organized by HKCSS, networking with other agencies' directors. As an engineer, he is clear about the importance of information technology to social service organizations and enrolled AKA in the Council's "Information Technology Governance Advisory Service",³ where volunteer IT advisors provided solutions after assessing the organization's needs. AKA's ExCo finally accepted and allocated resources to implement the recommended enhancement. The ExCo also joined the "NGO Governance Health Survey 2018"⁴ to have a self assessment. The result was encouraging and reflected AKA's persistence in good governance.

The size of AKA Social Service's staffing team was increased from 8 employees in 1970s to over 350 now. As the organization scaled up, it was not easy to align different stakeholders. Ir Chan described AKA's ExCo, staff, and beneficiaries as the "Three Musketeers". The spirit of the "Three Musketeers" is to "face challenges, strive for innovation", representing how AKA engages professionals and neighbours to develop quality services.

Ir Chan has passed on the values of Aberdeenians to his son who has also joined AKA's ExCo. The father-and-son duo inherited the sense of belonging for AKA, infusing the organization with new blood for rejuvenation, becoming more modernized, technological, and professional. The two generations are going hand-in-hand, innovating on the basis of AKA's traditions, serving the kai-fongs of the Southern District with hearts.



Ir Chan (1st from the right) observing at the "eHealth" station



Ir Chan (5th from the right) chairing meeting

¹ Kai-fong is the Cantonese saying for "members of the neighbourhood".

² The Aberdeen Kai-fong Welfare Association Limited. (1990). 40th Anniversary Commemorative Publication.

³ "Information Technology Governance Advisory Service" <https://governance.hkcss.org.hk/node/234>.

⁴ "NGO Governance Health Survey 2018" <https://governance.hkcss.org.hk/node/362>.