

Speech by CS at Operation Santa Claus 2018 launch ceremony (English only) (with photos/video)

Following is the speech by the Chief Secretary for Administration, Mr Matthew Cheung Kin-chung, at the launch ceremony for Operation Santa Claus 2018 at Tai Kwun this evening (November 13):

Gary (Chief Executive Officer of South China Morning Post, Mr Gary Liu), Ka-wing (Director of Broadcasting, Mr Leung Ka-wing), ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It is my honour to join you all here tonight for the launch of this year's Operation Santa Claus.

The legend of Santa Claus goes back to the fourth century, to a Christian bishop named Nicholas. Saint Nicholas, as he eventually became, was a man known for his generosity, for giving gifts to the poor and needy.

The legend of Operation Santa Claus does not go back quite that far. It began in 1988, through the efforts of two media corporations, the South China Morning Post (SCMP) and Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), with deep and longstanding community roots. Thanks to their unwavering commitment, Operation Santa Claus has become a cherished Hong Kong institution.

To date, Operation Santa Claus has raised a remarkable HK\$275 million, including well over HK\$16 million last year. It is built on the dedication of people from all over Hong Kong. From today through the end of this year, individuals and groups will organise dozens of fund-raising events. Their efforts will help disadvantaged children and youth, families and elderly in need, as well as those with acute medical conditions, learning disabilities and many more.

This year, the Friends of Asia HK-5-A-Side Football (ä"ä"è³çöf) Tournament under the theme of "Team Spirit" to be held on November 27 will be among this year's fund-raising highlights. Partnering with the Hong Kong Football Association and the Hong Kong Football Club, the tournament is open to footballers from corporations, junior football clubs and schools. All proceeds raised will be matched by Friends of Asia Hong Kong and donated to Operation Santa Claus.

But you do not need to kick a ball to take part in Operation Santa Claus. Be a donor, join a company, club or school fund-raising effort or set up your own. In the past, students have sold cupcakes and tossed pies to teachers, while business types have dressed up as superheroes, sung their hearts out and gone walkabout. Getting creative, having fun while helping people in need – that is the true spirit of Hong Kong.

On this positive note, I would like to express my warmest appreciation again to the organisers, the SCMP and RTHK, for their continuing dedication for "changing lives for good". I wish this year's Operation Santa Claus another ringing community success and all of you an enjoyable evening at Tai Kwun.

Thank you.

