



# Odyssey

2025 FALL NTPU FLAL NEWSLETTER

# Foreword

《2025 Fall NTPU FLAL Newsletter》 is a summer journey .

Sixteen different life stages, and sixteen stories that may seem ordinary at first glance—but each holds real weight. Every article comes from someone who chose to do something meaningful during the summer of 2025.

“Meaningful things” are rarely grand or glamorous.

They are the moments that help us take one more step, understand the world a little better, or move a little closer to the dreams we’ve been holding onto. Maybe it was a project that finally began. Maybe it was a trip that allowed someone to see life with fresh eyes. Or maybe it was simply the day you told yourself: “I want to give it a try.”

These small but genuine choices are the quiet strength of our generation. So as you read through this newsletter, you won’t only see other people’s summers; you’ll find a sentence, a moment, or an experience that gently reminds you: I can do it too. I am moving forward as well.

Thank you to everyone who shared their story, and thank you to you—holding this newsletter in your hands right now.

May we all have the courage, in the coming semester, to continue doing the things that truly matter to us, and may every path lead us closer to the person we hope to become.

《2025 Fall NTPU FLAL Newsletter》

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## CRUISING LIKE AN EGYPTIAN ON THE NILE



BY JERRY HSU

College was supposed to be a time of freedom and discovery. However, for Bentley Lai, a junior at FLAL, it turned out to be a period filled with uncertainty and self-doubt.

“That was the gloomiest chapter in my life,” said Bentley. Struggling with relationships, lacking confidence, and losing his way, he began losing motivation in his studies and, as a result, his academic performance declined during his freshman year.

One day in a general education course *Life education*, lectured by professor Kuan-Sheng Wang, Yo Huang, an alumna named Yo Huang was invited to share her experience of embarking on The Way of St. James, a journey taken because she felt aimless and hit a snag in relationships.

Bentley resonated with her and gained insights from the lecture. To eliminate the gloom in his heart and step out of his comfort zone, he determined to go abroad someday. It was not until this summer vacation that he seized an opportunity to fulfill this dream. He applied for one of AIESEC’s projects “On the Map” in Egypt, starting from July 1 to August 12.

Arriving in Egypt, Bentley was bewildered by a sea of people and unable to find Habiba Monty, the leader of his project. While he was waiting for Monty at the airport, many Egyptians came to offer assistance only to demand money in return. Despite not falling into the traps, he felt insecure in this country.





After the diving coach reassured him of safety, Bentley resolved to take the plunge. Once submerged, he was stunned by the corals and schools of fish gliding through the water.

“Bentley used to seem a bit reserved and out of place,” said Sahan. “But now he can overcome his fears and even enjoy diving. I think he’s changed a lot, and I’m really proud of him.”

To watch the sunrise, Bentley and his team members ascended a mountain over 2,000 meters high in Saint Catherine at midnight. The trail steep and without guardrails, the temperature about 15 degrees Celsius, Bentley struggled with every step.

“After all the difficulties I encountered, I realized how precious the ordinary things we took for granted were,” said Bentley. When he reposed in a mountain hut, he was dismayed to find that the blanket meant to keep him warm was soiled with stains and foul odors, and the drinking water seemed questionable. However, the material discomfort was forgotten as soon as dawn broke. “Thankfully, seeing the breathtaking sunrise, I felt that effort was rewarded,” said Bentley.

Bentley was astonished by the salt lake in Siwa. Despite knowing it was not hygienic, he could not help taking a sip of the water. “It’s like many people would be curious about whether seawater is truly salty,” explained Bentley.

“Don’t stay in the salt lake for too long, or your skin will hurt,” cautioned Habiba. However, Bentley was so captivated by the coziness of floating on the lake with pleasant sunlight that he stayed in the lake for about thirty minutes. As expected, his skin ended up painful and reddish. “I thought he was stung by bees,” joked Sahan.





At the end of this journey, Bentley made his first attempt at editing clips to complete their project requirements. As a novice, he was bereft of direction and felt strained.

When he was in a state of distress, one of his team members requested him to film a short clip sending birthday wishes in Mandarin. The members combined all the clips filmed by members from different countries. Upon viewing this final product, Bentley was moved by the power of videos and was spurred to learn editing.

Bentley returned to Taiwan with numerous insights gained in Egypt. The experiences enabled him to overcome his past timidity. “After stepping out of my comfort zone, I found that most of my old worries weren’t really that big a deal,” said Bentley. “Sometimes, even when you’re not ready, you can still take a leap of faith.”

With this belief, Bentley started to challenge himself more often. Before, he needed others accompanying him to conduct a project or partake in an activity. However, he has been attempting to enroll in empowerment sessions on his own. “I want to grasp all the chances for improvement, even if sometimes I have to do it solely,” he said.

Bentley’s passion for video editing also grew stronger. The birthday video he helped film during the project stirred his curiosity in digital storytelling. He has been watching tutorials on YouTube and practicing editing clips for his friends. “I want to create videos that can convey my thoughts and move others,” he said.

His transformation did not go unnoticed. “Bentley looks much more confident now,” said Emma Liu, his classmate and close friend. “He used to wear plain clothes, but now he dares to try sunglasses and trendy outfits. He is courageous to stand out and make a difference.”

Looking ahead, Bentley hopes to continue stepping out of his comfort zone. “In the future, I want to be more sociable and travel to more countries,” he said. “I want to meet people with different cultural backgrounds, experience different customs, and eventually make my dream of traveling around the world come true.”





## THE TRICK OF HORSEBACK RIDING: NO FEAR TO FAIL



BY KIKI CHUNG

After having a drill of equestrian, Annabeth Huang, a student who is preparing to pursue a master's degree at University College London and already graduated from National Taipei University, not only learned the three gaits but also gained confidence and courage in facing the challenges of riding.

"I've become more confident in driving," she said, mentioning the biggest influence on her, "Because horses have their own personalities and aren't that easy to control."

Once seen as a sport for the elite, equestrian is now drawing a new generation of enthusiasts. For young riders, it becomes more than just a hobby— it's not only a way to build self-confidence and courage but also a way to enhance concentration and patience.

In Taiwan, equestrian sports gain popularity in recent years. Since 2014, they have been officially included in the National High School Games, indicating a steady rise in youth participation. According to the Chinese Taipei Equestrian Association, the number of young riders under 25 has nearly doubled in the past five years, and there are now more than 70 registered riding centers across the country.

In the past, equestrian clubs catered to professionals. Today, more training centers offer a variety of courses and trial classes, making equestrian more accessible to the public.





Annabeth took the lessons at the DADI Equestrian Club, which is a training ground with a canopy and sand located in Tucheng, with a total of ten lessons that lasted for a month, costing NT\$30,000, and the training curriculum focuses on three basic gaits – walk, trot, and canter.

The walk is the slowest and most stable gait, allowing beginners to practice balance and rein control. The trot is a two-beat gait that requires riders to rise and sit in rhythm with the horse's motion to stay balanced and reduce impact. The canter, being faster and smoother, requires riders to maintain coordination and confidence while moving at a quicker speed.

The complete training process started with putting on leg protectors, a safety vest, and a helmet. Meanwhile, the coach, Chia-Jen Chang from DADI Equestrian Club, secured the saddle and reins on the horse.

The lesson started with walking the horse around the arena twice to get familiar with its movements and reviewing the previous lesson. Once the rider shows good control and confidence, the coach introduces new techniques or exercises.

Then, the coach and learner lead the horse to the wash area and rinse off the sweat and dust, which is also Annabeth's favorite process since it's a way to build trust between rider and horse. Moreover, the cool water can help the horse's legs relax after the ride.

Attending a one-month training, Annabeth thought the biggest difference between equestrian and other sports is that horses are creatures with their own personalities. No matter how well a rider performs, things don't always go as planned — one must always take into account the horse's temperament and the unpredictability of its behavior.

When she practiced with a horse, things took an unexpected turn. Without warning, the horse bolted forward and gave a sudden jump, sending Annabeth flipping through the air before landing on the ground.





“The horse probably got a little too excited,” said her coach, who has been teaching for ten years. “Because the class was almost over, it just couldn’t contain its playful energy.”

Unfortunately, at that moment, some sand blown into Annabeth’s eyes, leaving her unable to notice the horse’s sudden move. “At that moment, my mind went blank. Before I knew it, I was already on the ground,” she said.

“Everyone falls off when learning to ride,” Chia-Jen said, noting a must-go-through process when learning horse riding. “It’s just a matter of happening sooner or later.”

When practicing posting trot, Annabeth found it hard to catch the rhythm of the horse’s movement because it requires riders to rise and sit in rhythm with the horse’s movement. Thus, she kept wanting to stop and readjust, but the coach said, “If you stopped every time, you would never find the rhythm.”

The physical demands were greater than she expected. Balancing on a moving horse required both leg control and core stability. At first, her legs would tremble after just a few minutes of trotting, and maintaining posture while keeping the reins steady felt almost impossible.

In contrast, when mentioning a breakthrough, Annabeth said it was the first time she was able to ride in a figure-eight pattern, requiring the rider to guide the horse through tight turns while keeping her balance, coordinating her legs and reins, and staying in rhythm with the horse’s steps, which is challenging for a beginner.

The coach took the time to explain why certain corrections were needed, pointing out what can be improved and how to do it. Also, he offered encouragement to help Annabeth build up confidence and make each lesson not only a chance to learn but also an enjoyable experience.







King Chung, a cryptocurrency trader, experienced learning equestrian for three months in Italy when he went there as an exchange student. “At first, I was terrified every time the horse sped up,” he said. “But once I learned to relax and trust the horse, riding became much smoother and more enjoyable.”

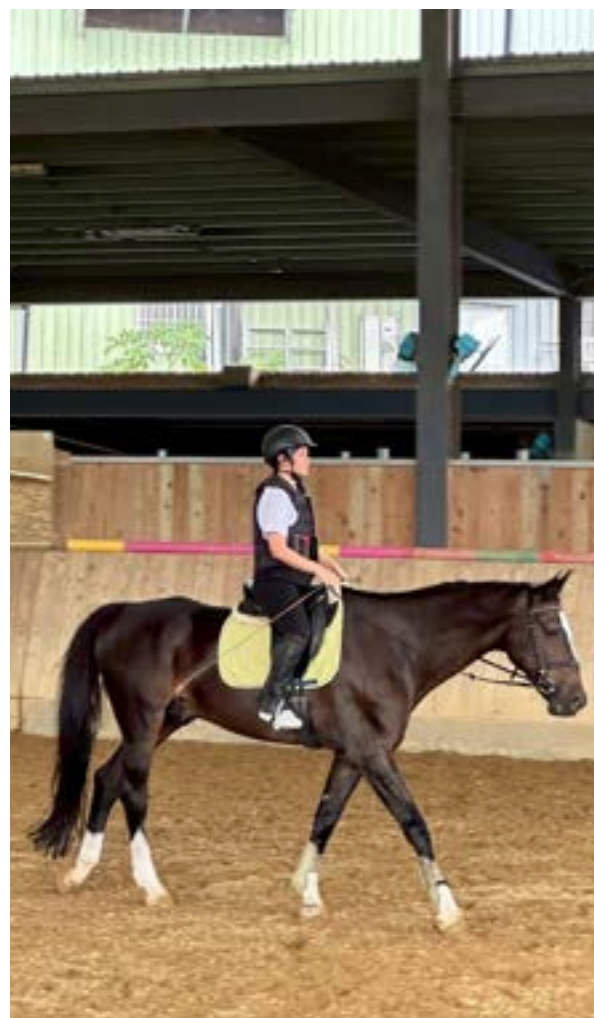
Looking back at the month-long experience, Annabeth changed not just physically but mentally. “I used to worry too much about getting everything right,” she said. “Riding taught me that control isn’t everything. Sometimes you just need to trust the process and go with the flow.”

The bond she built with the horses reminded her that confidence doesn’t come from perfection but from persistence. Thus, learning equestrian was not only a summer activity but also a lesson in resilience — something she believes will help her adapt to challenges when studying abroad at UCL.

Annabeth’s passion for equestrian continued to grow. “I plan to join the equestrian school club at UCL,” she mentioned. “Since I want to keep improving and explore more advanced skills.”

From these experiences, Annabeth not only gained courage but also learned skills in equestrian “You can’t let the horse know that you can’t ride, or it might start to act naughty,” she said. Besides, learners cannot force the horse to follow them. It’s about subtle communication — posture, breathing, and even emotions can affect how the horse reacts.

This summer wasn’t just about learning a new skill. It was about discovering an interest and enhancing Annabeth’s inner strength. Through riding, she learned to stay calm under pressure and to focus on one task at a time. Also, Annabeth Huang learned a very crucial life lesson— “Don’t fear to fail.”





## FOR DIGITAL NOMADS, HOMELAND IS WHERE YOUR HEART IS



BY CHING KE WANG

The fresh, salty air blowing on his face, Yuson Teoh and his friends sailed on a small raft on the sea and played games around the beach of Lovina. Dusk came, and the surface of the sea glittered with silver and warm orange light, spinner dolphins swimming alongside Yuson's raft. He admired the scenery in awe and filmed it down.

Such experience is the kind of memory one would recall fondly and view as the highlight of the trip. However, when Yuson was telling his story, this occasion only came to his attention near the end of the conversation.

During his re-telling of the trip, Yuson mostly focused on the culture shock he had. To him, the hospitality industry on Pulau Bali is impressive.

"Even the taxi driver was wearing a smile," he said. The sense of welcoming at Pulau Bali, from locals and service workers, is the part Yuson cherished the most.

Growing up in Malaysia and pursuing higher education in Taiwan, Yuson is a senior student at FLAL. Heremarked on his life during his past academic years, "Life here is similar to what I get at home, but at least here we have some nightlife activities," he said. "Life here around the campus is much more cheerful than in Malaysia."

However, things changed for him during the summer vacation, when he paid a visit to Pulau Bali, a tropical forest island at Indonesia full with Indian culture. "People at Pulau Bali are very passionate, simple, and self-contained," said Yuson.





“They are not as well-off as us, but they are contained. Everyone there wears a smile constantly”

He compared the atmosphere at Pulau Bali to his hometown's and remarked on the differences. “Those birdcages, condominiums, are everywhere, and you can't speak out loud at night either, or someone can call the cops on you,” said Yuson, describing the atmosphere back home at Ipoh, Malaysia.

Yuson spoke fondly about the culture he experienced and is planning on staying at Pulau Bali. He mentioned digital nomad and brought his criticism on Chinese, Confucian cultures. “I think what matters the most in life is the atmosphere, if given the chance, I will definitely move there,” said Chang.

While Yuson's yarns for a life outside of metropolis and East Asian cultures, for someone who grew up outside of metropolis, the experience living in one may be different.

Angelina Yan, a senior student at FLAL coming from Penghu, thought living in a university town like Sanxia, a foreign place to her, is an eye-opening experience. “It is very convenient living here, every few minutes comes a bus, and one can go anywhere as one pleases.” Comparing a developed city like Sanxia and Penghu, a rural island town, Angelina gave her praise to the city.

The negative side of living in a busy modern city did not go under the radar for Angelina. “Sometimes the crowd could be quite overwhelming, especially when I am riding a motorcycle.” She commented.

Angelina recalled her daily conversation with the security guard at her apartment, saying that she thought people are nice in the city. However, she admitted that she did not know much about her neighbors nor know their names. “It is quite terrible,” she said.

With the knowledge of different cultures and three academic years living in Taiwan, both students of FLAL considered staying in Taiwan after their graduation.

Yuson said he gave the idea some thought and expressed that, if given the chance, he would choose to adapt a digital nomad life style and stay at Pulau Bali or find work at his homeland. Staying in Taiwan is low on the list for him.

Studying at a Taiwanese university does open opportunities for staying for work. However, according to data, not the majority of students from Malaysia choose to do so.





Zhou's comparison of his own town, Taoyuan, Taiwan, Old, and new Cairo resembles Yuson's opinion on the down side of city life and the more passionate rural people.

Zhou also learned a lot about Egypt culture. When asked about the best and worst parts of his trip to Egypt, his answers are both its people. "Being an Asian in Egypt attracts a lot of attention in a good way," he remarked. "But people there are generally more cheerful, compared to Taiwan, and the atmosphere was nice."

People in Egypt also shocked him. "Egyptians will take advantage of you, or straight up scam you," said Zhou. "If the meal was 18 Egyptian Pound, you could not pay twenty, they will not give you the change."

A survey in 2024 by the *Economic Innovation Group* in U.S. shows that among the international students, including bachelor's, master's, and doctoral, who graduated from U.S. universities between 2012 and 2020, only 41% still lived in the U.S. in 2021.

Do people who study abroad want to live abroad? At least in Angelina's case it is. However, for Yuson, his heart yearns for a different place after his trip. Now he is exploring other options, too.

Ting Jie Zhou, a sophomore student at FLAL, spent his last winter staying in Egypt for 40 days and last summer in Chengdu, China, for seven days. After his trips, he came to a similar conclusion. "New Cairo, a modern city, is not as interesting compared to Old Cairo, which is less developed," said Zhou. "People in Old Cairo are chill, but in New Cairo it is just rich people in another modern city, with more department stores, and it still feels empty."

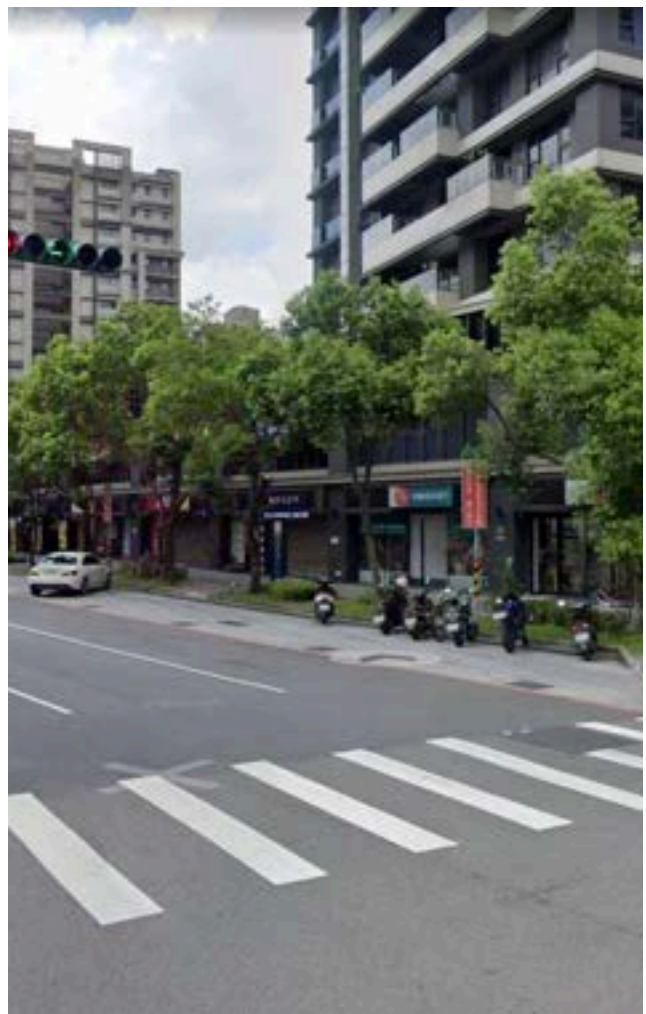




The three accounts of students' abroad living experience are tied together with their self-reflections. Yuseon realized how much he appreciated a place with slow tempo, nice people, and a good atmosphere. Angelina observed the pros and cons of Taiwan and saw opportunities. Zhou learned the dual nature of humanity—the nature of man is multifaceted and diverse. Living outside of their cultures helped them understand themselves more and possibly shaped their outlook in the future.

Zhou gives his time in Egypt a 7.5 out of 10. Although he liked the culture there, the poor environment, for example the trash bag mountains in Old Cairo, left a bad taste in his mouth. However, he gave his 7-days trip to Chengdu a 9 out of 10 for its slow tempo of living, contrasting the highly developed city itself, a preference similar to Mr. Chang's.

When asked about work aspect, Zhou said Egypt is out of question for sure, but he is looking after the chance to stay at Chengdu for longer.





## HEARTY SMILES SHINE LIKE GEMS IN THE PHILIPPINES



BY EDDA CHANG

Two years ago, volunteering abroad was just a distant dream. Now, Chia-Yu Liu, a sophomore at National Taipei University, still remembered how it all began. It started back in high school, when she saw a video of young volunteers teaching children in Africa.

Not having the opportunity back then, Chia-Yu later discovered the International Volunteer Group at NTPU. Despite initial worries about fitting in with the team or being suitable for the work, she decided to step out of her comfort zone and follow a dream that had been with her for years.

Most people might expect excitement about traveling abroad, but instead, she spoke about the team's preparation before departure.

Having received basic training, the eleven volunteers worked in pairs to design creative lesson plans that covered topics ranging from language and music to finance and sports.

The trip was organized by the NTPU International Volunteer Group. This was the group's sixth trip overall, and its fifth overseas service since the pandemic.

Led by Professor Rae Lan from the Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics, a team of eleven students from various majors spent two weeks in the Philippines, providing education and community care.





The students also joined Professor Lan's Chinese class for local teens and held fundraising and trial teaching sessions. While others spent their summer on vacation, Chia-Yu chose a different path, one defined by preparation and service.

The program took place at Children's Mission Philippines in Rodriguez. The goal focused on supporting local children and youth through basic English lessons, life skills courses, and creative art activities. All of them were designed to inspire confidence and curiosity through joyful learning.

The center collaborates with the College of Social Work and Community Development at the University of Rizal System (Rodriguez Campus), serving children and women in local assistance programs.

The organization was founded by a volunteer from Sweden, who, after witnessing the hardships children faced in the Philippines, dedicated himself to long-term support. Their efforts include distributing donated supplies, introducing basic medical services such as mobile clinics and dental check-ups, and continuously providing educational resources.

One of the volunteer group members, Emma Tseng, a junior student in the Department of Real Estate and Built Environment, said, "The drive from Rodriguez Province to Manila took about two hours. You can tell you're in the city when you started seeing traffic lights, around CMP there were none. Entering Manila felt completely different. The city was more organized, and tricycles were few. It really showed how different life is in the capital compared to the rural areas where we were working."

The first thing wasn't the scenery or excitement, but the heat. Chia-yu described the air in the small classroom as thick and heavy, with fans barely turning.





“Life there is difficult. Some families don’t even have clean water or steady electricity. But the kids still come to class smiling, greeting us like none of those hardships matter,” Chia-yu said. That was how her volunteering story began.

When she arrived, Chia-Yu was greeted by children rushing toward her with bright smiles, eager to shake her hand and practice English. Their pure joy, she said, made her forget how little they had compared to what she was used to.

That morning, staying with one little girl reminded her that happiness can exist in the simplest moments, and resilience often shines brightest where life is toughest.

However, the hardest challenge for her was the language barrier. The children often spoke Filipino, and even when they used English, their accents sometimes caused confusion.

“On the first day, I watched local teachers talk to the kids in Filipino, and they immediately lit up,” she said. “For a second, I couldn’t help but wonder, do I really make any difference here?”

At first discouraged, she soon realized that language wasn’t the only way to connect. Some kids would run up and hug her out of nowhere, or wave excitedly when she left. A few even gave her small handmade gifts — a hair clip, a bracelet, or a folded note.

Once, after an activity, a little boy kept shouting goodbye from the narrow village road. Peggy Wen, a junior student in the Department of Business Administration, recalled later translating his words and realizing he had said, “Will you come back again?” That moment, she said, made her forget the language barrier. All she felt was the warmth of being cared for.





When Chia-Yu spoke about how the children's joy made her forget their hardships, she wasn't alone in feeling that way.

The group leader, Lily Tai, a recent graduate from the Department of Accountancy, who joined the project for the second time, shared a similar reflection. "Every trip felt new," she said. "The shift in roles, the new people, the constant changes all brought challenges. But one thing never changed, that is the children's smiles, pure and full of life."

When Chia-Yu returned to Taiwan, the transition back to everyday life wasn't easy. The sight of crowded malls and people rushing between appointments felt strangely distant.

"For weeks after returning, I kept thinking about those children," she said. "Happiness there wasn't about having more, but about appreciating what was already in front of you."

She began journaling more often, recording memories of the trip so she would never forget how it reshaped her understanding of gratitude and privilege.

"The most genuine friendship isn't about giving material things. It's about sharing a simple belief that even in a life of scarcity, everyone deserves the right to be happy."

Chia-Yu also said the experience reshaped how she viewed communication. Without relying on perfect words, she learned to listen with empathy through gestures, eye contact, and presence. "Sometimes, a smile or sitting quietly beside someone can speak louder than any language," she explained.

For her, this understanding of human connection became the most valuable lesson of the entire journey. Before ending the interview, she shared a message for future volunteers: "Come with open ears, an open heart, and don't expect to do something dramatic. Simply show up and be present."

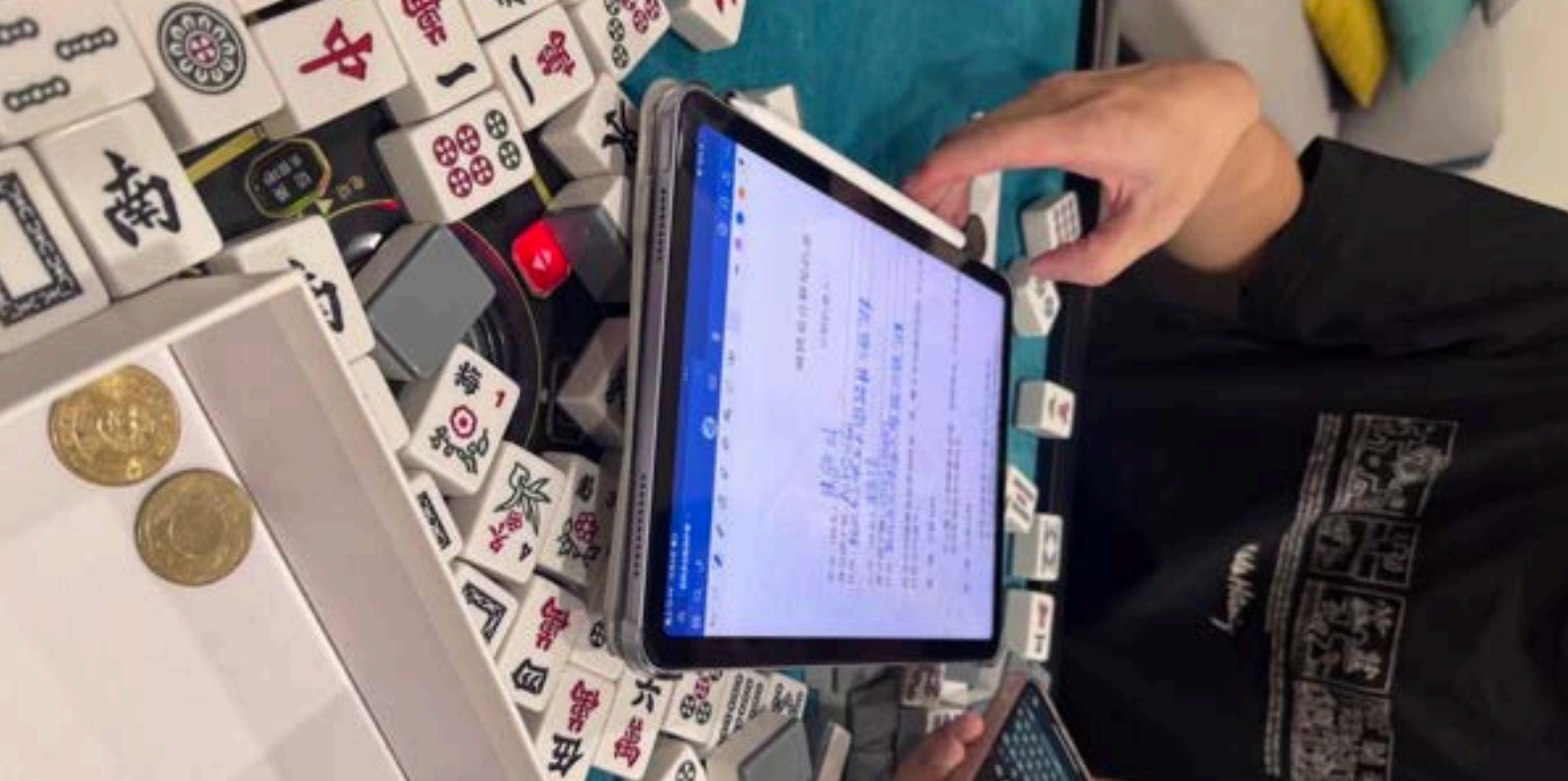
She smiled and added, "Sometimes, the smallest gestures can mean more than we realize."

For those planning to volunteer abroad, Chia-Yu believes the key lies in humility. She emphasized that volunteers should see themselves not as saviors, but as learners, people who come to understand, exchange, and grow.

"Real change starts when you stop thinking you're here to fix something and start thinking you're here to learn," she said. To her, the experience wasn't just about volunteering. It was about connection. Places that seem to have the least often remind people of what truly matters most.

Looking back, Chia-Yu said she hoped to return someday, not to relive the same moments, but to continue building the bridges that experience began. To her, the trip was never just about giving or receiving; it was about discovering the quiet but powerful truth that kindness speaks every language.





## BUILDING A DREAM, ONE STOCK AT A TIME



BY AMY WANG

It all started with a number—a figure so small it seemed almost unreal. On a hot July afternoon in Tainan, gathered with high-school friends who were laughing over melting ice cream, Wesley Chang, a second-year statistics student at National Taipei University, stared at his phone: his bank balance had slipped below NT\$10,000.

“That was the day he changed,” said Shao Tseng, a longtime friend who has known him for ten years and now studies electrical engineering at Fu Jen Catholic University.

For the first time, the future felt heavier than the summer air. The moment did more than wake him up—it lit a fire: a resolve to earn, to learn, and to change his life before graduation.

“He used to be easygoing—the kind of guy who said ‘whatever’ about everything. After that summer, he got serious. Now he checks the stock market instead of playing games,” said Shao.

That night, while everyone else slept in the guesthouse, Wesley lay awake, staring at the ceiling fan turning above him, the number 9,742 looping in his head. No longer just money, it had become proof of how little he had built. Returning home, he set a first rule for himself: that number would never go down again.



At first, money had been only digits on a screen; then it became personal. His girlfriend, Amy Wang, a third-year student at the Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics, often told him, “You’re smart. You should learn to invest.”

The words, sinking in, stayed with him. Each night, checking his portfolio before bed, he saw not only red and green lines reflected on his face but also two fused images: the two of them studying abroad, and his hand, one day, placing a ring on her finger.

“I told him that it was not because of money,” Amy said. “I knew he had a good brain—he sees things clearly when others can’t. To me, his investing isn’t about getting rich. It’s about taking control of his life, or our lives.”

Friends noticed the shift. “He’s always been logical,” Shao said. “But after she started talking about investing with him, he focused. She gave him a reason bigger than himself.”

Like many young investors, Wesley started small—listening to finance podcasts such as Gooaye, studying market trends, and reading online analysis. The show, Gooaye, centered on investing, money management, and stock commentary, became a hit by pairing relatable stories with plain-spoken explanations.

“I didn’t know where to start,” Wesley said, “and I didn’t have much money.” Little by little, he learned, buying 0050—the Yuan-taiwan Top 50 ETF tracking giants like TSMC and Hon Hai—and later adding 2330, TSMC itself, the world’s largest professional integrated circuit manufacturing services company.

In 2024, Taiwan’s Financial Supervisory Commission reported that nearly 40% of college students had invested before graduation—a record high—with ages 20–29 accounting for over 42% of new accounts.







Most, preferring steadier paths, choose low-risk ETFs such as 0050 and 00878 for dividends rather than quick gains. According to Cathay Securities, young listeners' engagement with financial podcasts has risen about 120% since 2020—Gen Z, learning money through earbuds rather than textbooks.

Still wanting something both fun and different, Wesley did what most students wouldn't: he invested in someone else's mahjong table. "It started as a joke," said Ryan Chu, his investment partner and a sophomore in Leisure and Sports Management at National Taipei University.

Pooling their money and formalizing their plan with a written agreement, they bought a secondhand mahjong table online, hauling it up three flights by themselves, borrowing chairs from Ryan's aunt, and setting up the room piece by piece.

"The first month, no one came," Ryan recalled, laughing. "In the second month, too many did. That's when I realized Wesley was onto something." Charging a small entry fee and tracking the take, they made back the cost in about eight months.

"Wesley isn't a gambler," Ryan said. "He's a thinker. He even loses on purpose sometimes, just to study other people's strategy."

To fund his investments, Wesley worked—sorting parcels at a Shopee warehouse until midnight on some nights, staffing Taekwondo events or exhibitions on weekends—most jobs found through friends or online postings.

"No money, no capital," he said. Yet each paycheck, however small, inched him toward a target of NT\$3 million—enough for a master's degree abroad with his girlfriend.







The broader picture is sobering. A 2025 survey by ITRI Job Bank showed 98% of Taiwanese students work part-time, earning about NT\$21,800 monthly on average; 70% say it isn't enough, and only 7% save regularly.

"Students today feel more pressure than before," a Ministry of Labor researcher noted. "They want independence, but living costs make it hard." Even so, more than half report saving at least NT\$1,000 a month—if only to feel in control.

At home, his mother watched the change unfold. "To be honest, I was worried when he first started," she said. "I was afraid he might lose money or get tricked. But seeing him read and listen to podcasts every night, I realized he was serious."

"He told me he doesn't want to rely on anyone," she continued. "That moved me. He's still on the road, but he knows where he's going—that's enough for a mother to be proud."

Education data from Taiwan's Ministry of Education in 2024 estimates annual study-abroad costs at NT\$1.5–3 million, depending on the destination—the U.S. being the most expensive, the U.K. and Australia slightly less. Nearly 60% of students cite money as the main obstacle, yet about one in five still plan to self-fund. Wesley is among them.

His outlook mirrors a wider shift among Taiwan's youth, who are redefining success: financial independence not as greed, but as choice.

The Financial Supervisory Commission reports that young investors now hold more than NT\$80 billion in assets—roughly triple the total five years ago—and over 30% say their motivation isn't profit, but a desire to understand money itself.

Each night before sleep, checking his portfolio one last time—numbers rising or falling—Wesley returned to the same line, not as a boast but as a compass: "Money is not everything, but without money, you can do nothing."

For him, the point isn't greed; it's freedom—the kind that will let him study where he wants, live how he wants, and someday, buy the ring he once promised.

Smiling at the quiet smile of someone working toward something larger, he said, "Every stock, every job, every tired night—it's not about getting rich. It's about being free to live the life I want."



## A DISCIPLINED PROP FIRM TRADER WITH A PHILOSOPHICAL MIND



BY EVELYN KAO

“Change never happens when repeating the same actions. If you want a different outcome, you must take a different path from now on,” Wan Wan said. As a university junior student, Wan has already earned over six figures in a year—not through his luck, but through his curiosity, perseverance, and determination.

It was early September in Tokyo when Wan received an unexpected mail while traveling between interviews. Relaxing at a quiet coffee shop, his phone popped up a notification. When he clicked on it, what he saw was an email with “Job Offer” on the subject line. At that moment, all the effort he had done—trading exams, resume writing, and study sessions—felt worthwhile. It was not only a career success but symbolizing how much he had grown.

Behind that single email was a long journey of persistence and preparation that defined who Wan is. Every daily study session, every trade analyzed, and every moment of self-discipline contributed to reinforcing his mindset and determination.

Wan is now a junior at the Department of Foreign Languages and Applied Linguistics at National Taipei University. Although most of the students aren’t familiar with him, they knew that every time when they saw Wan, he always looked busy and had a clear sense of what he wanted in his future life.



“He is either working or on his way to the gym,” said Aggie Chung, one of his university friends. Although he’s not the outstanding student in class, he’s one of the most disciplined and motivated people I know. There are many things we can learn from his life, mindset, and personality.”

In spite of his major in foreign languages, Wan has chosen to focus on finance and trading. “I believe that only learning language skills is not enough,” he said. “By adding financial expertise, these skills compound and become far more impactful.” He explained, “Both areas contribute to my growth, and their value increased with experience. I would like to invest in abilities that will serve me for life.”

His decision reflects a growing trend among modern university students.

According to a survey by the online job bank called yes123 in July 2017, 63.4% of full-time office workers in Taiwan believed their job did not align with their college major. Wan believed this shift shows that practical skills like finance, communication, and critical thinking are becoming more valuable in his evolving job market.

While many students travel or relax during summer vacation, Wan sat with his tablet studying and improving himself. “During this summer vacation, I focused on several goals,” he said, “including preparing for trading exams, studying short-term trading strategies, working on my resume and interview skills, following a fitness and muscle-building plan, and studying philosophy.”

This summer, Wan dedicated himself to turning these goals into actions. His journey can be divided into three key areas: mastering trading and financial strategies, developing time management and self-discipline, and strengthening both fitness and philosophical skills. These three areas had their challenges and hardships, yet each played a significant role in Wan’s personal growth.







One of Wan's main focuses this summer was studying short-term trading strategies and preparing for the Prop Firm trading exams. The most challenging part for Wan was that he often found it difficult to put what he had learned into practice. His biggest obstacle was his own mindset and discipline.

To overcome this situation, he practiced self-reflection every day, monitored his trades carefully, and scheduled daily routines to keep him disciplined. These challenges taught him that success in trading or any career depends not only on technical skills but also on a positive mindset and perseverance.

Balancing multiple goals demanded high perseverance and self-discipline. Wan had to plan his daily life routine, dedicating hours to finance, workouts, and philosophical study. This wasn't easy; he might feel exhausted some days, and he might be distracted by various external factors.

Nevertheless, by maintaining a regular diet and routine, he cultivated time management skills, learned to effectively prioritize tasks, and realized that sustained effort was far more important than short bursts of activity.

Physical training and philosophical study might seem unrelated, but for Wan, they complement each other in cultivating both body and mind. His fitness goal is to achieve his ideal physique. In addition to regular strength training, he uses ChatGPT to plan for his weekly meals, tracking the protein, calories, and other nutritional contents. With persistent training, there is no doubt that he had gotten his great physique as he wished.

At the same time, he dedicated time to studying philosophy, which can help him think more critically, ask precise questions, and refine his reasoning. He usually learned by online resources such as the open courses taught by professors at National Taiwan University, and also practices using the AI tools. For Wan, philosophy is not only just an abstract idea—it's mental training.





Just as fitness builds physical strength, philosophy builds clarity and resilience. His critical thinking skills also influence the way he trades, helping him stay calm under pressure and view problems from different perspectives.

“Philosophy taught me that there’s no absolute right or wrong answer,” he said. “It’s about asking the right questions and understanding how people think.”

One of Wan’s classmates at Zhong-zheng High School, Wei Zhao, recalled how much Wan has changed over the years. “Back in high school, he was always playing basketball or making music,” Wei said with a laugh. “He used to be the least outstanding among us, but now he’s the one earning the most and chasing his dreams the hardest.”

Through these experiences, Wan gained a deeper understanding of the financial market, strengthened his job-seeking abilities, and made progress in his physical strength. Meanwhile, studying philosophy sharpened his critical thinking and helped him develop a more thoughtful, analytical mindset.

“These experiences made me more self-aware and disciplined. I learned to face my weaknesses honestly and to approach challenges with patience and persistence,” said Wan.

His dedication and consistency eventually paid off. While traveling in Japan, Wan received a job offer to work on Search Engine Optimization (SEO) for a cryptocurrency exchange, earning around \$3,000 U.S. dollars per month. However, for him, the real reward wasn’t the salary—it was the realization that his persistence and self-discipline truly grew.

“What kept me going is my vision for the future,” Wan said. “I hope to become an independent person, and every bit of effort brought me closer to that ideal version of myself.”

His mother, Angela Chang, also expressed pride in Wan’s determination. “I’ve never worried about his future,” she said. “He always knew what he wanted and worked hard toward it. He’s also thoughtful and filial, which made me even prouder.”

His journey is a testament to his belief that time never wastes what you invest in yourself, shaping not only his skills and mindset but also his values, resilience, and the way he influences people around him.







## A SPIRITED SOLO TRIP ACROSS AMERICA FOR SELF-DISCOVERY



BY NAOMIE TELLIER

Holding her light gray backpack tight, Yijun Shen, a 20-year-old junior year accounting student at National Taipei University (NTPU), stepped into the chaotic roar of JFK Airport. Announcements echoed through the air, and the rumble of rolling suitcases sounded like heavy rain. Her heart was beating fast until she spotted a familiar face in the crowd, Sara Miller, her friend from the NTPU piano club, waving at her.

Before leaving, her parents had told her it was too dangerous to go on such a trip alone. Despite their concerns, Yijun was determined. She wanted to experience independence and discover who she truly was when no one was there to tell her what to do.

The New York heat wrapped the city in a humid blanket in June. For the first time, Yijun crossed the Pacific alone, on a one-month journey to visit, volunteer, work, and explore.

Her decision reflected a growing global trend. According to Skyscanner's Global Travel Trends Report in 2024, 62% of young travelers planned at least two solo trips in 2025, prioritizing self-growth over traditional internships.

In the warm air of Manhattan, Yijun immediately felt the pulse of the city: the honking of yellow taxis, the hum of the subway, and the scent of roasted nuts from street vendors. Neon lights reflected on rain-slicked streets, and every corner seemed alive.





Yijun and Sara headed straight to Central Park, spreading a blanket near the Bethesda Fountain under the summer sun. They shared cold lemonade, sandwiches, and cherries from a vendor.

“At first she was very shy,” said Sara. “But when we talked about music and her favorite night markets in Taipei, she relaxed. She has this soft laugh that just makes everyone smile.”

That evening, Yijun stood on a rooftop in the East Village, watching the skyline turn violet as the sun set. She moved along the railing, capturing the fading light with her camera. The moment reminded her of her childhood in Taipei, when she used to climb a hill after exams just to see the city lights sparkle.

Even far from home, she had an eye for quiet beauty, noticing the small, fleeting details that made each city unique. From that moment, Yijun’s confidence began to grow. “I told myself not to be afraid of meeting people,” she said. “Everyone has a story and now they want to hear mine.”

The next few days were a blur of exploration, Times Square, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and hidden jazz bars where locals played the saxophone until midnight. “I loved how open people were,” Yijun said. “Even strangers on the street smiled. It made me feel like a place I belonged.”

After a week of bright city lights and late-night jazz, she felt ready to face a quieter kind of adventure.

Yijun took a long bus ride to Niagara Falls — her first solo trip within the United States. Sitting by the window, surrounded by strangers speaking Spanish, French, and Hindi, she felt a strange mix of fear and freedom.





The road seemed endless, stretching through forests and small gas stations that reminded her of scenes from American movies. While walking along a mountain path near the falls, she noticed a woman struggling to climb the stairs. Her leg was hurt, so Yijun helped her up the mountain.

“That’s how I got to know her,” Yijun recalled. A few days later, she received a message from the woman on Instagram: “Before I left for the trip, I prayed to God to find a friend to share the journey with. You were the angel sent by God. You helped and cared for me when I needed it most.”

In her small notebook, she scribbled the mantra that defined her summer: “Being brave doesn’t mean not being scared. It means stepping forward anyway.”

To fund her travels, Yijun worked part-time at a cozy café in the East Village, surrounded by brick walls and jazz posters. During her first week, she kept mixing up orders.

Once, she accidentally gave a cappuccino to the wrong customer. She apologized, but he just laughed and left her a tip. She learned quickly; by the second week, she knew everyone’s orders and strived to make everything perfect.

Between shifts, Yijun explored the city, sipping iced coffee on park benches, sketching buildings in her travel journal, and listening to street performers at Union Square. Each small moment became part of her adventure, a mix of work, wonder, and the rhythm of New York life.





One rainy afternoon in Brooklyn, Yijun found herself working in a community garden, "the Brooklyn Community Garden (BCG)" beside Maria, an older woman from Puerto Rico. As they pulled weeds together, Maria began to share her story — how she once crossed the ocean by boat to start a new life in America.

Listening to her, Yijun thought of her own grandparents and their journeys across Taiwan. Despite their different backgrounds, the two women felt an unspoken connection.

In the quiet hills of Virginia, at the Appalachian Wildlife Center, Yijun spent her days caring for injured animals. At first, she barely spoke, preferring to watch and learn. "She observed everything," said Caroline Evans, one of the staff members. "By the third day, she was already guiding new volunteers."

One morning, Caroline placed a small owl into her hands. Its feathers were soft and trembling. "It looked up at me," Yijun said. "When I released it and watched it fly away, I cried a little. It felt like a goodbye and a blessing at the same time."

Her final stop brought her to San Francisco, where she volunteered at a local summer camp, teaching Python coding to teenagers. The classroom buzzed with laughter and frustration as students tried to make their programs work.

One afternoon, a young girl finally managed to get her code to run. Overwhelmed with joy, she ran to Yijun and hugged her. "I'll never forget her smile," Yijun said.

By the end of August, Yijun traveled more than 3,000 miles, from the crowded streets of New York to the rolling hills of California. The journey had transformed her. She returned more confident, speaking up in English class and taking initiative where she would once have hesitated.

Those miles were more than just distance; they marked her growth, a quiet proof of how much she had discovered about the world — and about herself. "I learned that being independent isn't the same as being alone," she said. "It's about knowing who you are when nobody tells you what to do."

For Yijun, that confidence wasn't found in landmarks or miles, but in the quiet courage to keep moving forward. "Everyone should try traveling alone once," she said. "Because when you get lost and still find your way — that's when you truly meet yourself."





## THE TRIO OF PALS RECONNECTED IN BUDAPEST



BY LILLIAN CHUNG

For most festivalgoers, Sziget Festival is about the music. For three longtime friends—Leonard Roger, Antoine Minjoz, and Antoine Stoll, this summer's edition of Budapest's world-famous event was about something deeper: reconnection.

Separated by careers and cities, the trio met again after years of seeing each other only in short bursts. Leonard works as an auditor in Paris, Antoine Minjoz holds a similar role in Lyon, and Antoine Stoll serves as a political analyst in Brussels. Despite their shared background and friendship enduring more than a decade, geography and professional life have often kept them apart.

Their decision to attend Sziget Festival 2025 became a symbolic reunion, one that blended music, travel, and nostalgia into a single, transformative week on the island of Obuda.

The three met during their university years at The Lyon Institut d'Administration des Entreprises (IAE) in France and quickly developed a bond rooted in shared interests, humor, and ambition. Over time, however, adult life took them in different directions.

As they began careers in demanding industries, opportunities to meet became increasingly rare. Coordinating a single weekend together often required months of planning. "I took the days when we saw each other for granted," said Antoine Minjoz, "Now as a busy adult, I know how precious those days were."



Still, they maintained their tradition of an annual gathering, often choosing a city or event as a meeting point. After years of postponements and scheduling conflicts, Sziget emerged as the perfect setting: central, international, and brimming with energy.

Held each August on an island in the Danube, SzigetFestival has grown from a small local event into one of Europe's largest and most inclusive music festivals, drawing hundreds of thousands of visitors from more than 100 countries. The mix of live acts, art installations, and a spirit of openness seemed to capture what the three friends wanted from their reunion: a reminder of youth and freedom amid their busy professional lives.

Arriving in Budapest, the friends set up camp near the main stage, choosing to stay within the festival grounds to fully experience its atmosphere. The week unfolded as a vivid mosaic of concerts, late-night conversations, and spontaneous discoveries

They spent their days exploring the island, wandering between performance areas, trying local food, and joining crowds that danced to everything from pop to techno to world music. Nights often ended with impromptu jam sessions or quiet talks along the Danube's edge. "I have never been happier. All the time working and saving money pays off." Said Antoine Stoll, who saved money for this trip while still paying student loans.

What might have been simply a holiday became an exercise in reconnection. Away from offices and responsibilities, the group rediscovered the easy familiarity that had defined their friendship. Differences in jobs and lifestyles seemed irrelevant in the face of shared laughter and collective experience.

For Leonard, the trip represented a pause from his demanding audit schedule in Paris. Antoine Minjoz found the festival's open, creative setting a welcome change from corporate life in Lyon. Meanwhile, Antoine Stoll, accustomed to the policy discussions and political debates of Brussels, appreciated the unfiltered simplicity of being among old friends again.







Though each had taken a distinct professional path, their conversations revealed the same aspirations and values that first brought them together—curiosity, ambition, and an enduring belief in the importance of being connected.

The reunion also highlighted a broader reality for many young professionals across Europe: maintaining close friendships despite mobility and demanding careers. With remote work, international opportunities, and long hours, social ties can easily become secondary to professional goals.

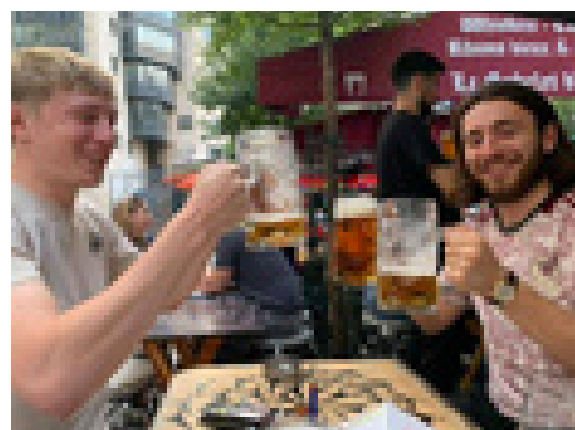
The trio's story reflected a wider generational pattern. Studies by Eurostat and the European Youth Forum have shown that individuals in their late twenties and early thirties increasingly report feeling disconnected from old friends due to relocation or career focus.

For Leonard and his companions, Sziget Festival offered a counterbalance. The shared experience of travel, music, and conversation reaffirmed that friendship can remain strong when effort and intention are present. Their approach — planning one meaningful trip a year — serves as both ritual and remedy against drifting apart.

Even as they discussed work, they did so in a different light. Instead of comparing promotions or deadlines, they spoke about how their professional choices had shaped them personally. In those discussions, the bond of mutual understanding proved stronger than any differences in occupation or city.

The Sziget Festival's atmosphere amplified that sense of unity. Established in 1993, the event has long promoted diversity and connection under its slogan "The Island of Freedom." Beyond the headline acts, the festival features art zones, workshops, social initiatives, and performances from across the world.

Among the crowds waving flags and speaking dozens of languages, Leonard, Antoine Minjot, and Antoine Stollfelt part of something larger than themselves. The festival's ethos: inclusivity, cultural exchange, and shared experience — mirrored the essence of their own friendship.







They attended performances by international headliners and discovered smaller, lesser-known artists from across Europe. They also joined workshops on sustainability and social issues, impressed by the festival's commitment to awareness as much as entertainment. The event's rhythm, alternating between celebration and reflection, seemed to mirror the rhythm of their reunion.

As the final night arrived, the island shimmered with lights and music one last time. Fireworks burst over the Danube while tens of thousands of people sang and danced in unison. Amid the spectacle, the three friends stood side by side, aware that their week together was coming to an end.

They didn't need to say much; the shared experience spoke for itself. Each knew that when they returned to Paris, Lyon, and Brussels, the routine of work would resume. But they also knew that the connection had been renewed and strengthened by memories of music, laughter, and the rare chance to simply be together.

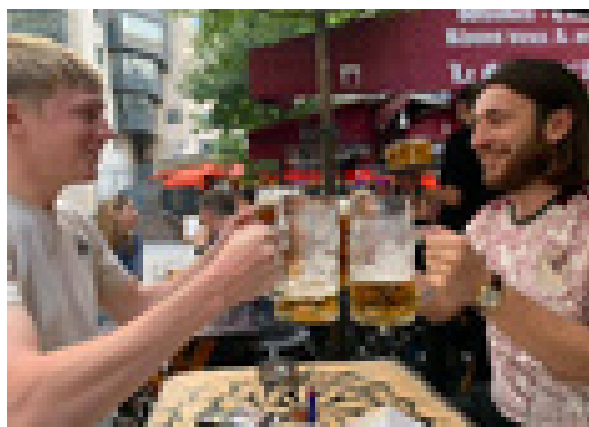
Before parting ways, they agreed to choose next year's destination early. Ideas ranged from a road trip along Portugal's coast to another major European festival. Whether or not the plans take shape immediately, the intent remains clear: to ensure that distance does not define their friendship.

For Leonard, Antoine Minjot, and Antoine Stoll, the 2025 Sziget Festival was less a vacation than a reminder — that even amid adulthood's pressures and separations, friendship can be sustained through shared moments and deliberate effort.

Their story, while personal, resonates with a generation navigating the tension between professional ambition and human connection. The festival, in its blend of chaos and community, offered the perfect backdrop for rediscovery.

As one of Europe's largest celebrations of culture and togetherness, Sziget Festival became not just an event but a metaphor — for bonds that survive distance, for music that bridges differences, and for the quiet power of simply showing up for one another.

When asked later what stood out most from the week, Leonard said, "It wasn't any one concert or performance. It was being there, all three of us as if no time had passed."





## HONG KONG'S DYNAMISM MADE ALL THE DIFFERENCE



BY CINDY LEE

During the summer of 2025, Lory Huang visited two destinations —Hualien and Hong Kong. While each place made a strong impression, it was Hong Kong that left the deepest mark on her.

“It wasn’t just a camp — it was something that changed how I see myself,” said Lory, a sophomore at FLAL.

From July 19 to August 16, 2025, Lory attended the Summer Short-term Programme 2025 (the Programme) hosted by The Education University of Hong Kong, aiming to enhance cultural diversity and promote integration between local and non-local students on campus.

A total of 105 non-local students from 24 overseas partner institutions participated in the Programme, including Mainland China, Korea, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, Russia.

“Living in a new city for a month and making friends from all over the world allowed me to step out of my ordinary life,” said Miranda Wang, another sophomore at FLAL who also attended the Programme.

Participants engaged in two genres of courses. One, run by the Department of Mathematics and Information Technology, helped them gain a deeper understanding of artificial intelligence (AI) and its applications, especially in education. The other, offered by the Department of Literature and Cultural Studies, immersed students in Hong Kong’s culture.



“I think it’s an opportunity for me to explore a new field and to experience culture in Hong Kong,” Lory said. “But honestly, I took part in the Programme because it was free — courses, accommodation, even the flight were all covered.”

“At first, I looked forward to taking artificial intelligence courses, intending to learn skills. However, I found that assignments were more difficult than I expected,” Lory said.

The cultural studies courses consisted of 12 sessions, each lasting three hours. The content of cultural courses includes introductions to the poetry, history, drama, geography, and hydrology of Hong Kong. Besides, students attended 12 three-hour-long AI courses, covering the methods to make an AI tool for education.

Among all the cultural sessions, “Hong Kong poetry in English” had the most profound impact on Lory. Inspired by the literature works and the professor of this lesson, Lory felt a strong desire to read more and become a person with deep understanding.

“I never thought I’d enjoy literature, since literature is considered difficult,” Lory said, pausing to gather her thoughts as she went. “But after this, I realized there are many possibilities, and I don’t have to limit myself.”

In addition to academic courses, there were a variety of local excursions, museum visits, and cultural workshops. Students visited famous landmarks, engaged in hands-on activities such as crafting traditional Chinese paper kites and designing minibus signs. These activities not only enriched students’ exposure to cultural diversity but also allowed participants to build lasting friendships across borders through interactions.

Cross-cultural experiences also emerged while communicating and interacting with people from different backgrounds. For Miranda, who wasn’t used to physical contact, was surprised by European classmates who greeted friends with hugs.







Bumping into the same person at the public bathroom of the dormitory three days in a row, Miranda and her classmate from the UK, Riann Chagonda, were surprised by such a coincidence. They decided to hang out together and gradually become good friends sharing lots of memories.

For Lory, personal growth came in small but meaningful moments. One day, she accidentally overslept and missed a meeting with a friend from Zhejiang, China. Feeling guilty and worried that her friend would be upset, she apologized right away. To her surprise, her friend told her not to worry about it. Lory was taken aback by how calm and understanding her friend was, since she knew she would have been angry if the situation were reversed.

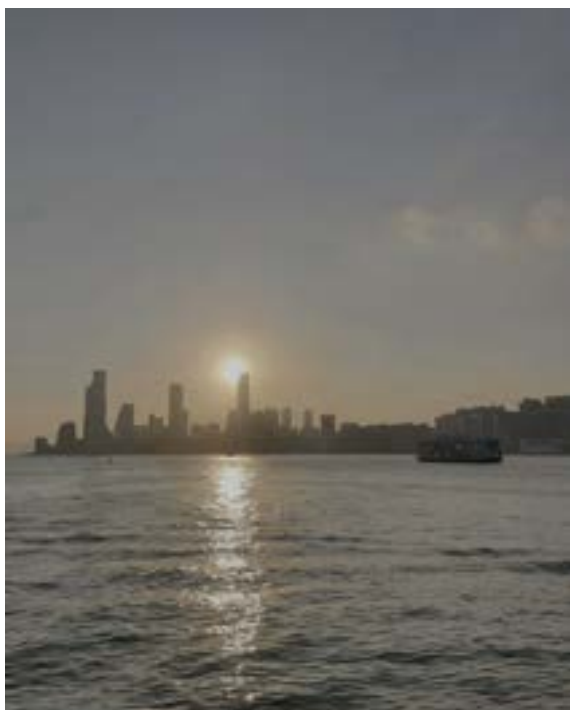
"I think I've become more open-minded because of this experience. It's easier for me to adapt to unexpected situations than before," Lory said.

One night, Lory, Miranda and friends, Celia Tsai and Kelvin Chan, stayed up chatting until 5:30 a.m. Miranda suggested watching the sunrise together, and on a sudden impulse, they went up to the rooftop of the dormitory before dawn. Staring at the sun and being with friends, Lory felt free. Riding that same wave of spontaneity, they caught the first bus to Kowloon for dim sum at a well-known restaurant Luk On Kui.

"I had never done such a crazy thing before," Lory said, eyes sparkling as if she were still there. "I can't do wild things like staying up late chatting with friends, or going wherever I want in Taiwan, since my parents keep a close eye on me," Miranda added. "So this felt like a true getaway."

For Miranda, Hong Kong also ranked among her top three favorite cities of the world. "With local friends' help, I got to know this city more," Miranda said, recalling her memories in Hong Kong, "But what made it truly special were the people I met," she said.





In addition to knowledge takeaway, Lory also gained deeper appreciation for Hong Kong itself. Wandering through New Territories and Kowloon in her leisure time, she observed local people's lifestyle and scenery, feeling closer to this city.

She also made local friends when taking courses at EduHK. "Hong Kong becomes my favorite city after this one-month stay," said Lory. "The city was full of surprises, yet its cultural background shared similarities that made me feel at home," Lory said.

During her stay in Hong Kong, Lory was touched by the sincerity of her local friend, Terry. One evening, while dining in a hotpot restaurant, the group suddenly discovered that one of them was celebrating a birthday that day. Terry then slipped out to a nearby convenience store and returned with small cakes — for the friend whose birthday fell on that day and those born in August — turning an ordinary dinner into a moment of warmth.

"People often say that Hong Kong locals are not that hospitable or friendly toward foreigners," Lory said. "But after spending time with my local friends, I realized that couldn't be further from the truth."

To describe this experience that affected who she is, Lory used two words: colorful and dynamic. 'Colorful' for her friends who brought joy and vibrancy, making her life more colorful. 'Dynamic' for the stimulating events and conversations that awakened her mind.

These impacts brought by Hong Kong and people she met there has lasted until Lory came back to Taiwan. She stepped out of her comfort zone to do something new, such as reading Mandarin or English literary works and enrolling in literature courses.

Reflecting on her summer in Hong Kong, Lory quoted Taylor Swift's lyrics "Never have I ever before." For her, the line perfectly captured how the experience made her feel — something new, unexpected and unforgettable.







## MOSAIC MOMENTS IN EUROPE COLLAGED AS FAIRY-TALE MEMORIES



BY PERLITA LIN

The summer of 2025 was both educational and inspiring for Abigail Choi, a third-year Malaysian student at National Taipei University, majoring in Business Administration. She spent two unforgettable weeks in London as part of the Summer English and Culture Program at London South Bank University (LSBU).

While studying there, she explored iconic landmarks, experienced new cultures, and learned how friendship and adventure could turn ordinary moments into lasting memories.

Abigail joined a study group of over twenty students from various universities in Taiwan, led by tour guide Judy Wang, who has guided over seven study tours to the UK and more than twenty travel groups across Europe.

Though they hadn't known each other before, Abigail soon bonded with Cheryl Cheng, a third-year nursing student from Tzu Chi University, and Nico Ko, a first-year student majoring in Food and Beverage Management at Shih Chien University. The three quickly became close friends, sharing laughter, and a few challenges along the way.

They stayed in a student dorm near Elephant and Castle, just a short walk from the campus. On the first day, Abigail and her friends went shopping for daily necessities. Since they weren't used to drinking tap water, they carried bottled water from supermarkets. "It was tiring but somehow fun — like part of daily life abroad," said Cheryl.





Before class began, all students took a placement test to determine their English level and class. Abigail joined a course focused on daily English, which she found manageable but still engaging. Most of the time, teachers arranged group activities that mixed students from different countries to encourage real conversation practice.

Before class began, all students took a placement test to determine their English level and class. Abigail joined a course focused on daily English, which she found manageable but still engaging. Most of the time, teachers arranged group activities that mixed students from different countries to encourage real conversation practice.

Besides students from Taiwan, there were classmates from Romania, Japan, Peru, and France. “Everyone had different accents,” Abigail said. “Sometimes it was hard to understand, but it made the lessons more interesting and pushed me to listen more carefully.”

Each morning began in the classroom, while the afternoons were for planned exploring London. From the Tower of London to Buckingham Palace, the British Museum, and Westminster Abbey, every landmark offered something new. “Every corner had something to tell,” she recalled. “Even taking the underground felt exciting.”

Among all the sights, two stood out most. At Buckingham Palace, she joined spectators gathered to witness the Changing of the Guard — a centuries-old British tradition. Later, she climbed the 528 steps to the top of St. Paul’s Cathedral for a panoramic view of London’s skyline. “My legs were shaking, but the view made every step worth it,” she laughed.

Not every moment went as planned. One afternoon in the cafeteria, Abigail was savoring her first proper Asian meal when the fire alarm suddenly blared. “Everyone out — now,” Judy shouted, as students rushed to the exits, leaving trays behind. Amid the chaos, one classmate grabbed his entire plate of steaming chicken rice and sprinted outside.





“I saw him running with that plate, and I couldn’t stop laughing,” Abigail recalled. He stood eating in front of the cafeteria and became the envy of everyone. “That’s when I realized travel isn’t just about seeing places — it’s about learning to laugh through the unexpected.”

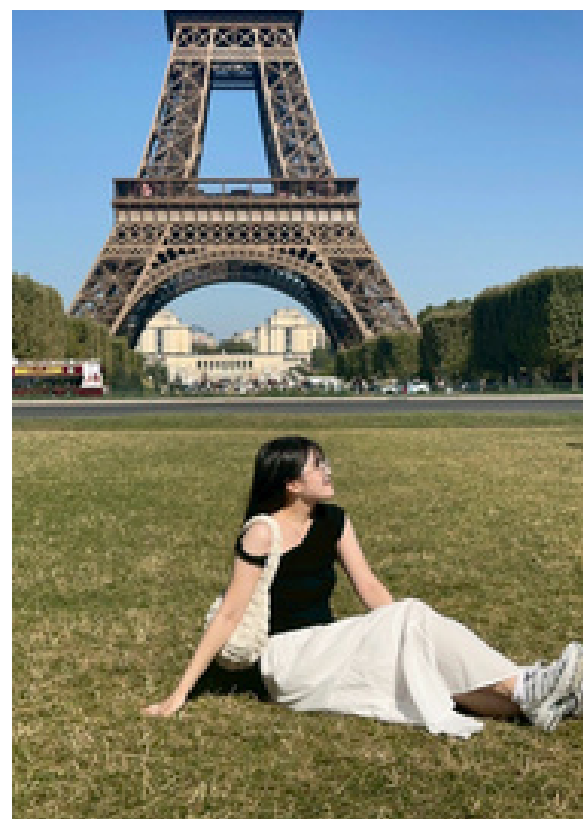
Before leaving England, Abigail and her classmates watched *The Phantom of the Opera* at Her Majesty’s Theatre near Covent Garden — their first time seeing a live musical. “The music and lights gave me goosebumps,” Abigail said. “When the curtain fell and the audience stood to applaud, I was overwhelmed — it was one of those moments that stayed with you.”

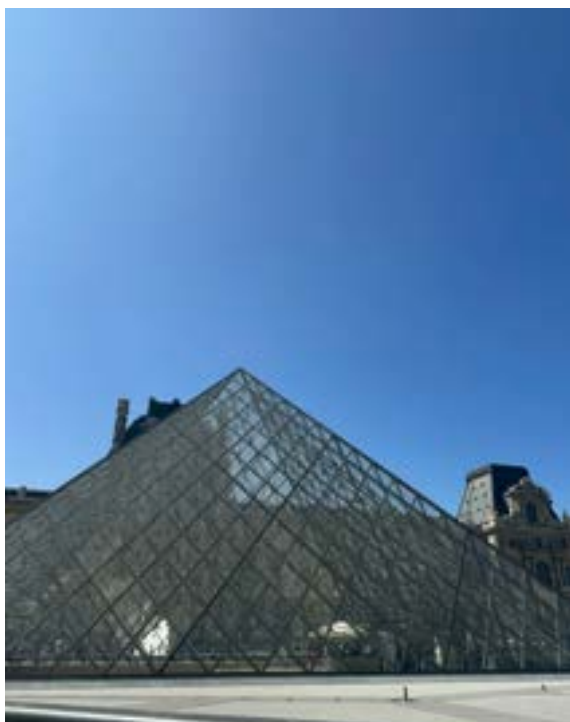
“My mother has loved that musical since I was a kid, so seeing it live felt like a dream,” Cheryl said. “The music, lighting, and costumes were breathtaking. When everyone stood to applaud at the end, I almost cried.”

Even Nico, who sat behind a pillar that partly blocked her view, said the experience was unforgettable. “It was my first time watching a live musical,” she said. “Even though I couldn’t see everything clearly, I was still amazed by the atmosphere.”

The group continued their journey through continental Europe. Their first stop was Paris. They visited the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre Museum, cruised along the Seine River, and gazed at the majestic Notre-Dame Cathedral. “Seeing the Eiffel Tower sparkle at night was magical,” Abigail said. “It’s something you can’t really describe until you’re there.”

That night, she and her friends stopped by a supermarket for snacks — but their short errand turned unexpectedly stressful when they lost their way back to the hotel. “We were walking in circles for about twenty minutes,” Abigail said. “It was already dark, and everyone was nervous.”





“The intersections in Paris all looked the same, so it was really easy to take the wrong turn. At first, it was funny, then it became scary. But in the end, we found our way back — and now it’s one of our favorite stories,” added Nico.

Their next stop was Belgium, where they explored Brussels, famous for its Royal Palace, Grand Place, and the humorous Manneken Pis statue. “Belgium was smaller but so elegant,” Abigail said. “The waffles, chocolates, and architecture made it feel like a fairy-tale city.”

She was surprised, however, that most restaurants didn’t have air conditioning. “It was hot, but the food and atmosphere made up for it,” she said.

Finally, they traveled to the Netherlands, a peaceful and scenic end to their journey. They visited Zaanse Schans, known for its traditional windmills, and explored Amsterdam’s Royal Palace and Dam Square.

“Amsterdam was calm and open,” Abigail said. “I loved seeing people riding bicycles everywhere — it felt like a different rhythm of life.” She added that the neat, narrow canal houses were incredibly charming, like a living postcard.

Originally, the group was scheduled to stay in the Netherlands for two days and visit nearby cities. Because their flight had been delayed, Judy told everyone that they could sleep in and enjoy a relaxing second day. However, things took an unexpected turn when the delayed flight was eventually canceled.

At five in the morning, Judy knocked on everyone’s doors, shouting, “Wake up. We have to leave by eight to catch the flight at eleven.” The sudden news startled everyone. “It was exhausting and a bit chaotic, but also unforgettable,” Abigail said. “Still, I felt really sad that we couldn’t explore more of the Netherlands.”

Looking back, Abigail described her three-week journey as a time of growth and discovery. She learned to navigate streets, communicate across cultures, and find joy even when things didn’t go as planned. From the lecture rooms of London to the lively streets of Amsterdam, every experience taught her something new.

“It wasn’t just about studying or traveling,” she reflected. “It was about learning to be brave, open-minded, and grateful for every moment.”





## CONFIDENCE BOOSTED AS A YOUTH AMBASSADOR BEYOND BOUNDARIES



BY EMILY HSU

For many young people in Taiwan, the Youth Ambassador Program offers a rare chance to step onto the international stage.

For Carolyn Ma, a senior at FLAL, this opportunity carried a deeper meaning. “For me, the 2025 Youth Ambassador Program had a greater impact on my personal growth—on my mindset and abilities—than on my career plans,” said Carolyn.

Carolyn, who double majors in Finance and Cooperative Management, was uncertain about her future career until her sophomore year. But she knew she had to try different things to discover what she wanted.

Before joining the program, Carolyn assisted at the State of Idaho—Asia Trade Office as an exhibition assistant and escort interpreter in 2024, and she also joined a winter volunteer program in Manila, the Philippines this year.

In April, Carolyn discovered a video on Threads by Jamie Chang, showcasing a 2024 Youth Ambassador. Having long been interested in diplomacy, she felt a mix of curiosity and anxiety as her senior year approached, which motivated her to apply for the program.

The program has been held since 2009, open to undergraduate and graduate students. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, around 600 people completed the online application this year, making it the most active cohort since the pandemic. This year, only 40 youth ambassadors will be selected.



The program required an interview, so Carolyn spent time researching the three countries the program would visit—Hawaii, the Marshall Islands, and Guam—and their relations with Taiwan. For example, both Taiwan and the Marshall Islands are island nations facing similar climate challenges, and Hawaii has a sister state relationship with Taiwan. However, during the interview, the officers were more curious about Carolyn herself.

When the interviewers asked about the advantages and disadvantages of having dual citizenship in the U.S. and Taiwan. She answered, “I have faced issues with identity in the past, as people from both countries may not fully recognize me as American or Taiwanese.”

Although Carolyn felt her performance was not ideal due to unexpected questions and nervousness during the interview, her international experience, fluent English, and good manners helped her to be selected.

The program consists of two categories: the English-Speaking Specialist Group and the Cultural Talent Group, each with 20 members. Carolyn applied for the former, which fit her major in languages. They had to take various training courses, such as etiquette and English presentation classes, as well as group performances like dancing.

However, during the training period, Carolyn went through a difficult time. She felt that everyone else was outstanding while she felt less capable than others. Losing confidence, she kept comparing herself with others. Under such pressure, Carolyn confided her worries to a 27-year-old youth ambassador, William Lee, who had joined the program twice after missing his first chance because he caught COVID-19.

Trying to encourage Carolyn, William said, “This program was designed for you to collaborate and learn from the others, not to compete against them.”





"I told her that as youth ambassadors, we represent Taiwan together. It's a rare opportunity to learn from one another, so we shouldn't see each other as competitors," William added.

From that moment, Carolyn began to change her mindset, regaining her confidence and happiness. Though this journey required more than just confidence—it demanded the ability to react in unexpected situations.

During the visit to Hawaii's Lieutenant Governor Sylvia Luke, Carolyn served as the youth ambassador's representative for the opening speech, the trip's first event. Lacking communication with the performance group, she invited them to perform a Hawaiian folk song that had already been presented. Upon realizing the mistake, Carolyn apologized to the audience.

Although she felt frustrated about the error, she reminded herself that this was the beginning of the journey and that she had to stay focused on the challenges ahead.

One of these challenges appeared at Laura High School in Majuro, Marshall Islands. There were about 240 students in total, and the youth ambassadors were responsible for leading activities. However, since the students' first language was Marshallese, they had diverse English proficiency levels, and they were not active during activities. Carolyn found it hard to tell whether the students were unwilling to participate or were shy and reserved.

Even though Carolyn couldn't ensure that all participants would engage in the activities as expected, she remained determined to present her best self and face these uncertainties with a positive attitude.

Despite the difficulties, Carolyn's persistent efforts culminated in success. Carolyn's performance was recognized at the Youth Climate Forum held in the Marshall Islands. She served as the master of ceremonies and was delighted when David Newnham, President of the College of the Marshall Islands, praised her.







“It’s been a long time since I’ve heard someone speak English so clearly,” Mr. David Newnham said. The compliment gave Carolyn a boost of confidence.

Being one of the good friends Carolyn made during the program, Ping Chou also highly appreciated her performance. Ping, a sophomore at National Sun Yat-sen University who had served as president of his high school Model United Nations club, had taught Carolyn a lot about public speaking. According to him, what impressed him the most was Carolyn’s performance at the Youth Climate Forum.

“Not only was she professional during the event,” Ping said, “I also saw a glimpse of her work ethic while preparing for it. She spent time fine-tuning her script to make sure she was the best host she could be. Every little detail was smoothed out and perfected.”

In addition to Ping’s compliment, Carolyn had demonstrated remarkable composure and stage presence at the university before joining the Youth Ambassador program. In the Technology English course, her groupmate Emma Chen, also a senior majoring in English, noticed her calm responses to sudden questions.

“During our final presentation, both the audience and the professor asked many spontaneous questions,” Emma said. “Carolyn answered them in clear English with composure and confidence on stage. That left a strong impression on me.”

What touched Carolyn the most was the first “Taiwan Night” held in Honolulu, Hawaii. At first, she thought that not many people would come to watch their performance. To her surprise, about 500 spectators came, and the audience was enthusiastic. Exhausted after the show, Carolyn bowed with the team, hearing thunderous applause and calls for an encore. She felt touched and lucky to be a Taiwanese youth ambassador.

In the future, Carolyn hopes to pursue a career that promotes Taiwan and strengthens Taiwan’s visibility on the international stage. The Youth Ambassador program has made her certain that she wants to do something meaningful for Taiwan. Also, the program helped her develop strong soft skills, giving her the ability and confidence to pursue such a career.

Carolyn believed the program’s greatest impact was on her mindset and confidence. It inspired her to stay positive and embrace future challenges with courage, reinforcing her personal growth.



## THE TRANSFORMATIONAL POWER OF AN ENGLISH SUMMER CAMP



BY JAMES YEH

Summer vacation, a three-month-long break, is a time when many things can be achieved. “I participated in the AWECAN camp from July 7 to July 9. Although it only lasted for three days, it was still one of the most unforgettable moments of my life,” Howard Yang said, smiling as he recalled the memories.

He considered the AWECAN camp one of the most interesting experiences of his college life. Through interactive workshops, teamwork challenges, and cultural exchanges with international volunteers, Howard only improved his team-leading skills but also gained confidence in expressing his ideas. “I’m glad I volunteered to join this camp,” he said. “I think I will always remember how much fun it was.”

“For me, I think the second day of the camp was the best since we went to Sanxia Old Street,” Howard said. “We didn’t just buy food or souvenirs; we went to many places in the Sanxia Old Street.”

Their first stop was a famous alley, where the wall has many cats painted on it. “This alley is pretty famous. Therefore, although we were just passing by, we still introduced the alley to them,” Howard said. “Then we bought some sausages on the road, because they needed energy to deal with the simulation game when we got back to the classroom.”

As they continued down the street, they admired the red-brick buildings and the old-fashioned signs above every store. Then, they stopped



by the Sanxia Qingshui Zushi Temple, where Howard was also impressed by the detailed stone carvings and dragon sculptures. “It was beautiful,” he said. After checking the pillars, they listened about the history of the temple.

Then, the next stop was the blue dyeing workshop. “When exploring the old street, I think we must visit the blue dyeing workshop,” he said, smiling proudly. “It’s a kind of traditional art”. They were introduced to the process of making blue dye, and they also got to see some of the creations.

Finally, they visited a local pastry shop famous for its golden Sanxia croissants. “The smell was amazing,” Howard said, laughing. “We all bought some croissants on the way back to the NTPU.”

Then, Howard and the volunteers played a simulation game with the group members. “In this game, they learnt what could happen when starting a business, and they also needed to provide proposals to solve problems they might encounter in order to strengthen their abilities of decision and problem-solving abilities,” Howard said.

Howard was not the only one who found AWE CAN unforgettable. Jason Huang is a quiet high school sophomore who always struggled with confidence when it came to speaking English. “I was scared that people might laugh at my accent,” he admitted.

In school, he often stayed silent rather than let his classmates hear his accent. When he first heard about AWE CAN, he hesitated for days, unsure if he could handle an all-English environment. “This was a good chance for me to step out of my comfort zone, although I was still afraid of speaking English in front of everyone at that time,” he said.

Encouraged by his teacher, Jason finally decided to sign up, hoping the camp might help him change. At the end of the camp, he was more courageous than before.

During the camp’s “Investment Simulation Challenge,” Jason’s team had to design a business idea and persuade foreign volunteers acting as investors. At first, he worked quietly, letting his teammates talk to the foreign volunteers. But when everyone except him talked to the investors, Jason made his first step.







Nervously, he explained their eco-friendly packaging idea and ended his speech with a smile. “My English wasn’t perfect, but at least they understood what I wanted to say,” he said. For Jason, that moment was a turning point. “I learned that courage matters more than perfect accent and grammar,” he said.

One of Howard’s group members, Emily Hsu, a cheerful student, wanted to make new friends. “I think this camp has given me a chance to communicate with foreign volunteers because I can speak English fluently,” she said.

During the camp, she realized that she sometimes might speak too fast, and not everyone can follow. Therefore, she thought that she needed to slow her pace, so that everyone could understand her better. “I had to slow down so everyone could follow,” she explained. “It wasn’t easy for me, but by changing this habit, I became a better group member.”

Her most memorable experience came on the first day of the camp, during a lively icebreaker game led by Howard and other volunteers. The teams had to complete funny missions like passing balloons without using their hands while speaking only English.

“It was chaotic but hilarious,” Emily laughed. In the middle of the laughter and confusion, she began to bond with students she had just met. “That was the moment I felt like I belonged there,” she said. “I liked how the atmosphere was, and I enjoyed doing everything with my group members. It would be good if this camp was longer.”

Jack Lee, one of Howard’s group members, before joining the AWECAN camp, thought that he needed to improve his speaking skills. “This camp seemed to be pretty fun, and it also provided a good chance for me to speak English,” he said.





Although he had studied English for years, speaking in public still made him anxious. “I was always scared about making eye contact or speaking in front of people,” he admitted. The thought of spending three full days communicating only in English seemed overwhelming. “I know it could be hard at first,” Jack said. “But I couldn’t escape all the time. So, I simply took it as a chance to train myself.”

On the first day of the camp, Jack tried to speak during icebreaker games. However, his volume was a bit low. But as he listened to others trying to confidently share their ideas, he felt inspired. “Everyone was trying, I was not the only one,” he recalled. By the second day, he started joining group discussions, and as three days went by, his speaking greatly improved. “I overcame the obstacle of public speaking, but I still need to improve my eye contact.”

By the end of the camp, Jason, Emily, and Jack all agreed that AWECAN had changed them in many ways. Jason left with more confidence; Emily learned a better way to listen or to communicate with others, and Jack has gained more confidence. As for Howard, he summed it up best, “AWECAN wasn’t just an English camp that let you practice English speaking. It was also a place where you can challenge yourself, making new friends.”

“I loved to interact with people, and I wanted to make the most of summer vacation,” Howard said. “We went through many things in the three days. I hope that they successfully improved their English Speaking.”





# THE SUMMER ON A FANTASY ISLAND BE GOT EPIPHANY OF LIFE



BY LEO LIN

Working holiday has become a ritual, symbolizing growing up in the Taiwanese teenager's community. College students have turned working holidays as an exit to city life and a way to gain independence.

Jackson Hong, a third-year student from National Taiwan Normal University, found a job on Facebook. The post read, "Free meals, six hours a day—enjoy your summer while earning extra allowance in Xiao Liquid!"

The island glowed under the morning sun, scooters humming past and tourists carrying surfboards down the road. "I had all kinds of imaginations about my work-exchange there," he said. "But it turned out a bit different than I expected."

Like everyone else, Jackson had some ideas about his summer vacation long before it began. He chose Xiao Liuqiu, a beautiful island full of tourists and students seeking work-exchange experiences.

"The owner was strict about every detail. I got scolded a lot in the beginning," Hong recalled. "I felt like I couldn't do anything right. Sometimes I even felt like I'm worthless."

"Maybe I should not have come here at all," said Jackson.

The very first week was tough. Jackson felt anxious about everything and couldn't sleep well. He even thought about giving up, asking his parents to pick him up multiple times.





Jackson went to Xiao Liuqiu for a summer work exchange. He had all kinds of imaginations building on the opportunity. However, the weather itself on the first day is like an omen.

“The guesthouse looks pretty clean and new,” Jackson said. “But the owner was strict and sharp-eyed, always complaining that the corner's still dusty.”

Jackson tried hard, but mistakes kept happening. The very first morning. Trying to fold the sheets quickly, Jackson accidentally dropped one into the sand. The owner said nothing, she just picked it up and refolded it. That silence was worse than nothing.

“The owner didn't yell,” Jackson said. “She just picked it up and refolded the sheet herself. That silence was worse than being scolded.”

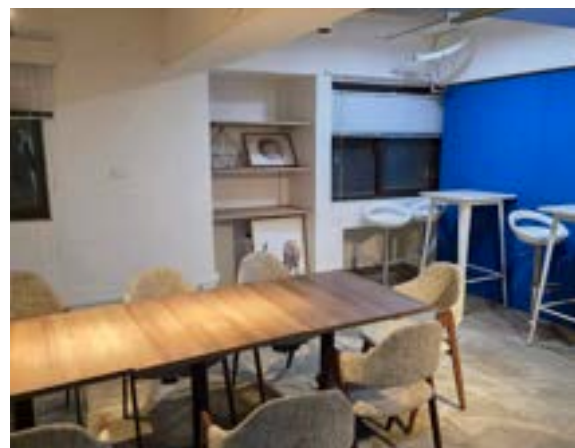
According to Susan Lu, a third-year student from Takming University of Science and Technology Department of Computer Science, this kind of work-exchange experience is quite common for college students. “I've had three working holiday experiences before,” she said. “Two of them went terribly.”

She recalled her worst experience in Hualien. “The guesthouse owner got drunk and yelled at me,” she said. “He even mistook me as his ex-wife.” Susan laughed as she told the story, but her tone quickly turned serious.

“It sounds funny now, but at that time I was scared. I didn't know what to do.”

While Susan's story happened in Hualien and Jackson's in Xiao Liuqiu, both of their stories revealed a similar pattern—work-exchange workers tend to experience disadvantages.

Some might say they feel sorry for Susan and Jackson, because they happened to have a terrible experience at a work-exchange. But according to a 2024 report *Visa on Arrival: Temporary Visa Workers in Australia* by the Migrant Workers Centre found that at least 62% of respondents reported experiencing some form of workplace abuse or exploitation, and 40% reported being underpaid.





The report showed that people who joined working holidays come from all age groups and also highlighted their vulnerabilities. Most people in the work-exchange are students or foreign travelers, making them easily deceived by local farm or guesthouse owners.

Another 2014 study by Weng Ying-Ting, a graduate researcher from Tamkang University Department of Education and Future Design further substantiated this. Her master's thesis "Work in Exchange for Free Accommodation in Taiwan and Its Futures" also showed that most of the work-exchange programs in Taiwan often involved mismatched expectations between hosts and participants.

She found that many Taiwanese work-exchange participants experienced a mismatch between their expectations of "cultural learning" and the reality of hard physical labor.

The study also pointed out that most hosts are small business owners who lack management training. These hosts expected these work-exchange workers to be professional or at least know what they are doing. This gap often caused tension on both sides.

By the end of the third week, Jackson's hands were full of small cuts from cleaning. But something inside him changed. That evening, Jackson sat by the door, watching the waves. He realized he wasn't angry at her, but at himself. The next day, she handed him a cold bottle of water.

"You're faster today," the guesthouse owner said. It wasn't praise, but it was enough. Jackson smiled for the first time that week.

"I started to feel proud when guests said the room was clean," he said. "It felt like I was part of something." When he finally left Xiao Liuqiu, the owner gave him a small shell keychain. "She just said, 'Take care,'" Jackson recalled. "It wasn't much, but it meant a lot."







Working holidays have become a rite of passage for many Taiwanese students. Some went abroad to learn languages; others stayed in local hostels or on farms. The motivations differed, but the lesson was similar—the world of work is rarely as easy as it looks online.

Both Jackson and Susan's experiences revealed the vulnerability of work-exchanging people. For Jackson, the summer was not about money or travel photos.

"I learned that even small jobs matter," he said. "If you can't handle pressure in a guesthouse, how can you survive in the real world?"

Despite the rough start, Jackson's story—and Susan's too—reflected the reality of many young people who entered the world of work through these exchanges. Behind every social media post showing palm trees and sunsets, there's a quiet story of exhaustion, learning, and resilience.

In the end, Jackson realized that working holidays are not holidays at all. They are tests of patience, communication, and maturity. What began as a summer escape turned into a lesson about responsibility and self-worth. For students like him, the island was not just a workplace, it was a mirror reflecting who they truly are.







## FOR POLICE OFFICERS, PATIENCE MEANS STRENGTH BEHIND KINDNESS



BY KEVIN WANG

During this summer vacation, Hoho Ho, a student from the Taiwan Police College and a close friend from high school, undertook an internship at the Daan Substation under the Dajia Precinct in the Taichung coastal region.

The placement ran from July 1 to August 24, lasting two months. It began as a curiosity-driven attempt to observe the daily life of police officers, and developed into a period of steady learning and personal growth.

Hoho had come with an image of policing shaped by movies and headlines. He expected swift action and a dramatic moment, but instead he found long hours, detailed paperwork, and a steady requirement for alertness.

He described the work as exhausting but valuable. “I thought it would be full of excitement, like chasing bad guys or driving fast,” he said. “But in reality, most of the time, it is about patience, paperwork, and people.”

“I was curious about how the police worked in that area. I wanted to see what their daily life was really like,” he said. That curiosity led him into a summer that reshaped how he saw duty, teamwork, and courage.

“It was exhausting,” he admitted, “but every day I learned something new. It was not as cool as people think, but it was definitely valuable.”



Each morning began early. Officers gathered for a briefing, discussing where to patrol, what to watch for, and which neighborhoods needed attention. He usually went out with a senior officer on patrol. “At first, I was nervous,” he said. “I was scared I would mess up or ask stupid questions. But my mentor told me, ‘Don’t worry, everyone starts somewhere. What matters is that you keep your eyes open and your heart steady.’”

On patrol, he began to notice small but meaningful acts: helping an elderly person cross the road, reminding a rider to wear a helmet before he rode a motorcycle, and listening to someone complain about noise at midnight. “These are small things,” he said. “But they are what real police work is. You cannot change the world in one day, but you can make one street a little safer.”

Afternoons were quieter but no less challenging. “I did not expect so much writing,” Hoho laughed. “Reports, statements, logs, it never ends. But I realized it is important. Every word you write could matter in the future. You cannot just kind of remember. You have to be precise.”

He mentioned that after several mistakes, his mentor once told him gently but sternly, “Paperwork is your second badge. It shows how serious you are.”

One night, he joined an expanded inspection operation in local entertainment areas. “The lights, the music, the noise, it was nothing like the classroom,” he recalled. “I remember thinking this is the side of the city most people never see.” He paused. “That night, I realized how much unseen effort was required for keeping peace. People rarely notice, but the police are always there, standing quietly in the background.”

Later that week, he took part in arresting a wanted suspect. “I was shaking inside,” he said. “But once the moment came, training took over. Everyone worked together perfectly.” Afterward, he reflected, “When justice is served, you feel the meaning behind all your hard work. That feeling is unforgettable.”

Much of the learning came from ordinary moments. “One senior told me that policing is not about power, but about service,” he recalled. “I observed how he talked to people—calm, patient, never raising his voice. That’s when I got it. People remember how you made them feel more than what you said.”





He remembered one afternoon when an old man came into the station, upset about losing his wallet. “We helped him check the nearby area and call a taxi company,” Hoho said. “In the end, he found it at home. He came back just to say thank you. It was a small thing, but it made me feel warm inside.”

He smiled while recalling it. “That day, I understood why the officers always say that patience is the strongest form of kindness.”

There were also tough moments. “Sometimes people yelled at us,” Hoho recalled. “At first, I felt angry, but my mentor reminded me that they are yelling at the situation.” That piece of advice became one of the most valuable lessons he took from the internship.

Over time, Hoho started to see the invisible side of police work. He saw the pressure, the paperwork, and the emotional toll. “People think police are always strong,” he said. “But they also felt tired and stressed. What surprised me was how the officers supported each other. After a tough case, they would sit together, talk, and check if everyone was okay.”

He explained that even laughter had meaning inside the station. “Sometimes after a long shift, someone would crack a joke, and everyone laughed. It sounded simple, but that laugh released all the pressures. You realize that behind the uniform, we are just men trying our best.”

In the last weeks of the internship, Hoho started to feel the weight of leaving. “It was strange,” he said. “At the beginning, I counted the days until it ended. But near the end, I started wishing I had more time.”







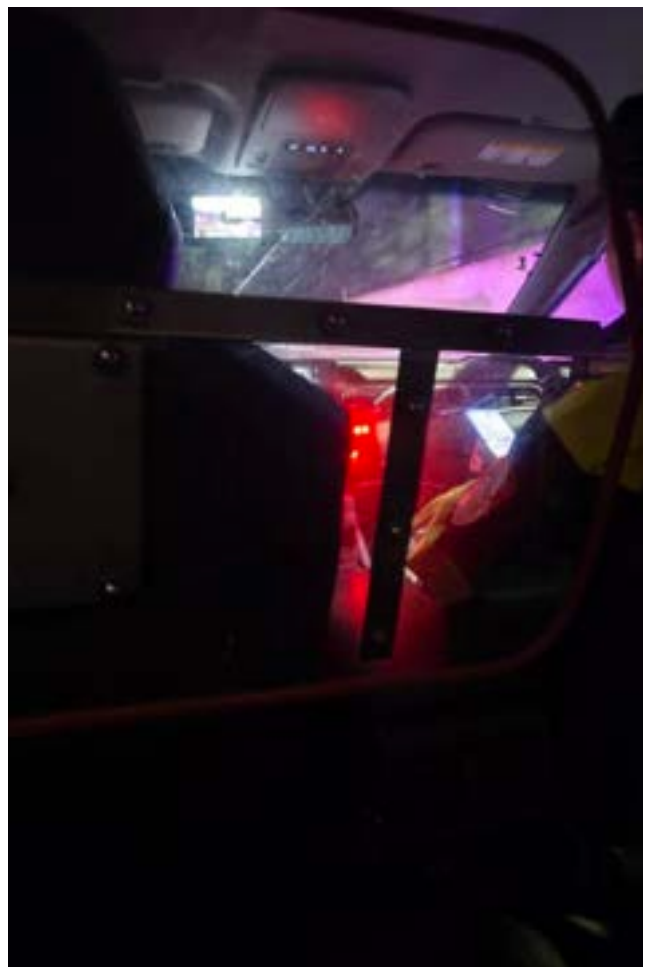
When asked about the most touching experience, he smiled and said, “Helping a lost child find his parents. The moment I saw the parents hugging him, I felt like, okay, this is what I wanted to do.”

He described it as the kind of simple joy that made the long hours and sleepless nights worth it. “You do not need a big case to feel proud. Sometimes one smile is enough.” He already has plans for the future. “After graduation, I want to go back to my hometown and serve there,” he said. “I want to become a sergeant one day.”

But first, I need to learn more, communication, leadership, maybe even psychology. I want to be the kind of officer people can trust.”

Looking back on his experience, Hoho offered a few words to the next group of interns. “Don’t just look for excitement. Look for meaning,” he said. “Be ready to listen, to ask questions, to take notes. Be humble, because every officer you meet has something to teach you.”

“Do not rush to prove yourself. Learn to serve first,” he paused for a moment. “Heroes don’t always wear capes; sometimes they are just around us, running for justice.” Then he looked away with a quiet smile. “And maybe, someday, I can be one of them.”





## THE SOUND OF SILENCE: A LESSON IN LISTENING TO LIFE



BY JASON SU

In the quiet counseling office of National Tsing Hua University, Dr. Grace Wu spends her days listening — to students in crisis, to colleagues fighting exhaustion, to strangers who need to be heard. Yet, when her grandmother passed away in the summer, she realized how rarely she had listened to her own life.

Dr. Wu joined Tsing Hua University in 2024 as director of the counseling center and an assistant professor in the teacher-education program. Like many young scholars, she, as a new faculty, must get promotion within six years or lose the appointment. Balancing lectures, counseling sessions, and administrative duties, Dr. Wu found herself working long after campus lights dimmed.

“Every year I have to apply for grants, write papers, attend conferences,” she said. “Even on holidays I’m editing manuscripts.”

According to the Higher Education Evaluation Center, faculty at research universities spend over 300 hours a year preparing proposals, while teaching and administrative work occupy nearly as much. Facing such demands, she often received late-night calls about student emergencies, driving back to campus at midnight.

Amid that constant motion, her grandmother was quietly aging in her hometown Keelung — a woman who asked for little and gave everything she had. “She was simple, honest, never wasteful,” Dr. Wu recalled. “For her, family meant love expressed through small acts — cooking, saving, waiting.”





Growing up, Dr. Wu was especially close to her grandmother. In a household of four children, she was the one her grandmother adored the most. “She always saved the best for me,” Dr. Wu said. “If I needed something for school, she found a way to get it. If I was sick, she stayed by my bed all night.”

Her grandmother’s quiet devotion shaped her earliest sense of love — steady, practical, and unconditional. “She never used big words,” Dr. Wu added.

One afternoon, Dr. Wu took her to Bafang Yunji, a neighborhood dumpling shop. Her grandmother had never eaten pan-fried dumplings before. Dr. Wu ordered the original flavor, watching as the old woman lifted one to her lips. “Do you like it?” she asked.

Her grandmother smiled, eyes bright. “This is the best thing I’ve ever eaten.”

Remembering that moment, Dr. Wu’s voice trembled, tears slipping down her cheeks. “It was just dumplings — so ordinary — yet she was so happy,” she said. “I can still see her face, that pure joy. I’ll never forget it.”

Her grandmother had wanted to call but never did; she didn’t know Dr. Wu’s number and feared interrupting her busy schedule. “I knew she wanted to talk,” Dr. Wu admitted. “But I never called first. I thought there would always be time.”

After the funeral, Dr. Wu spent months questioning what she had sacrificed in pursuit of success. “If I had understood sooner,” she said. “I would have taken her out more, taken more photos, made more memories.” Her grandmother’s simplicity became a mirror, reflecting what modern life so easily erases — the quiet importance of presence.

A 2023 survey by Academia Sinica found that over 60 percent of working adults in Taiwan felt their jobs left little time to connect with aging parents. For Dr. Wu, that statistic was no longer abstract. It described a dilemma she found herself trapped in.

Through Dr. Wu’s counseling work and public talks, her story has quietly reached many who faced similar struggles. Several of them, inspired by her reflections on loss and connection, shared their own experiences.







One of them, Ms. Chang, a 58-year-old retired teacher with both parents still living, first heard Dr. Wu speak at a university workshop. The message stayed with her long after the event.

“My parents are still here,” Ms. Chang said, “but sometimes I feel like I’ve already lost parts of them — the parts I never took time to know.”

For years, she postponed family visits, convincing herself that there would always be more time. After hearing Dr. Wu’s story, she began calling her parents every Sunday. “When Dr. Wu talked about her grandmother,” she said, “I saw myself in her story. I keep telling myself: I still have time — but I’m never sure how much.”

Recently, another listener, Mr. Hsu, a 65-year-old retired civil servant whose parents passed away more than a decade ago, spoke about how Dr. Wu’s experience echoed his own.

“When my parents died,” Mr. Hsu said quietly, “I stopped checking my watch so often. Time used to chase me; now I try to walk beside it.”

He paused, tracing his finger along the rim of his teacup.

“Guilt never really goes away,” he added. “It just changes shape. You learn to carry it differently.”

These voices, connected through Dr. Wu’s story, revealed how her personal loss has resonated far beyond her counseling office. For many, her reflections became not just words from a professional, but a mirror — reminding them of what it means to love, to regret, and to listen.

In the year since her grandmother’s passing, Dr. Wu has tried to live differently. She now spends weekends visiting her parents and parents-in-law, sometimes taking them on short trips. When they fall ill, she doesn’t hesitate to spend money or time. “They are the only elders I have left,” she said. “I don’t want gratitude from them. I just want memories — ones I won’t regret missing.”





Her shift, she explains, is less about guilt and more about choosing presence over productivity. “As counselors, we talk about empathy all the time,” she said. “But empathy means nothing if we can’t practice it at home.”

Dr. Wu now weaves these lessons into her teaching. In a recent lecture, she asked her students to reflect on the people who shaped them. Several wrote letters to their parents afterward. “Therapy isn’t only in the office,” she told them. “It begins with how we treat those closest to us.”

Asked what she has learned from grief, Dr. Wu paused before answering. “I used to think growth came from moving forward,” she said. “Now I know it also comes from stopping — from giving space to what hurts, to what matters.”

That idea has become her quiet philosophy: the courage to pause. In a culture that celebrates speed, she believes stillness is its own form of wisdom. “It takes courage to slow down,” she explained. “To listen when the world tells you to produce. But that’s when we finally hear the truth — in ourselves and in others.”

As evening settled over the campus, the light in Dr. Wu’s office glowed through the window. Inside, she listened to another student unravel a story of pressure and guilt. When the session ended, she didn’t rush to her next task. She sat quietly for a moment, hands folded, eyes distant — thinking, perhaps, of dumplings and laughter, of calls never made.

Quoting an old proverb, she says, “When the tree longs for stillness, the wind won’t stop; when the child wishes to care, the parent is already gone.” Her voice softened. “It’s not just grief. It’s a reminder — to listen, before the silence arrives.”







## FROM SKETCHES TO SPOTLIGHTS: THE SUMMER THAT REDEFINES



BY ANTHONY YEN

For some Industrial Design students in Taiwan, summer break means catching up on sleep or working on portfolios. But for Henry Lo, a junior at Tatung University, it means something different. Trading his design drafts for camera scripts, he stepped into the spotlight with a new image.

Over the summer, Henry immersed himself in casting for media production, accepted an ad invitation from Plain-me — a Taiwanese select shop known for its sense of style — to try its latest collaboration line, and later appeared as an actor in the new music video of Nell, a renowned Korean indie band.

“Entering the entertainment industry has always been my dream,” said Henry, smiling as he recalled. “Getting cast in student productions, commercials, and even TV series, I started to see how every role shaped how people see me.”

It all began this June, when a high school friend from Kun Shan University’s Department of Motion Pictures and Video invited him to play the main character in their graduation film project, Hammer.

In the short film, Henry portrayed Meng, a schizophrenic man with a dual personality — one side of him a murderer who unknowingly killed his own mother, and the other a son seeking revenge on the supposed killer.





The story reaches its chilling end when Meng realizes he has been hunting himself all along. Standing in front of the mirror, he giggled until his smile stiffened into a rictus before taking his own life with a poniard.

“When Henry first showed me the script, I was worried,” said Jerry Deng, Henry’s friend and a voice actor with four years of experience. “The role required him to go beyond imitation — to awaken something dark within himself, which isn’t easy for someone new to acting.”

Following Jerry’s advice, Henry began researching Heath Ledger, the actor behind the Joker. “I read that he locked himself in a hotel room for a month,” Henry said. “He filled notebooks with chaotic scribbles, practiced different voices, and experimented until he fully became that character with an antisocial personality.”

He then laughed, “Of course, I didn’t go that far. I have no plans to die young at twenty-eight.”

Although *Hammer* was a seven-minute film, the production stretched into nearly twenty-four hours of non-stop shooting. “It was intense,” Henry said. “We shot through the night, and by the time I got on the last bus back to Taipei, I was completely drained.” Henry turned to the director and asked how he had done. The answer, though blunt, went, “To be honest, your acting was pretty bad.”

A few days later, he posted an outfit photo on Threads featuring Plain-me, whose 176,000 Instagram followers make it one of Taiwan’s most influential select shops. To his surprise, the brand’s social media editor noticed the post and invited him to try their latest collaboration collection. “Who knew a casual snap could turn into a confidence boost,” he explained. “That ‘plot twist’ motivated me.”

Riding on his newfound confidence, Henry continued performing between July and September, joining three student productions, including a film project from Shih Hsin University’s Department of Radio, Television & Film, and taking part in six commercial shoots, one of which was for China Airlines.





While filming commercial projects, Henry confronted his anxieties about appearance. He recalled one day on set, surrounded by several well-known figures from Taiwan's film industry. His agent, Sam, introduced him to a veteran casting director with over twenty years of experience. "She just looked at me and said, 'Not bad. Keep working hard,'" Henry remembered. "But as I was leaving, I overheard her greeting another newcomer with excitement — 'He's so handsome. Who brought him in?'"

On the bus ride home, he found himself replaying the scene — the polite smile, the lukewarm comment, the overheard praise meant for someone else. "It made me wonder if I just wasn't photogenic enough to stand out," he admitted. "In this business, how you look seems to determine how people treat you, even before they know who you are."

Later that night, Henry recalled a scene from the Taiwanese TV series *Born for the Spotlight*, which won Best Drama at this year's Golden Bell Awards. In the show, the veteran actress Ms. Chubby told the rising star Shi Ai-ma, "Only when you're somebody, you earn the right to cry."

The line stuck with him. "I realized I wasn't there yet," Henry said. "Maybe I didn't deserve to feel dramatic about it. I just had to keep working."

Sam said, his face carrying the composure of someone seasoned by years of experience. "In the entertainment world, how far you go often depends on who sees your potential." Carrying that thought, Henry arrived on set for the China Airlines commercial with a mix of nerves and determination.

"The airline pays much more attention to detail than I expected," Henry said. "They wanted a businesslike, smart-casual image, and we went through three rounds of wardrobe fittings before shooting even began."





After the performance, one of the team members from China Airlines approached him, recognizing his potential. It was only then that Henry realized confidence wasn't about being the most striking person in the room — it was about showing up with sincerity and growth.

By September, Henry decided to give himself a birthday gift — to take on one more project before summer ended. That opportunity came when he was cast in the new music video of Nell, a South Korean alternative rock band that has been active for twenty-five years and drawn more than 150,000 monthly listeners on Spotify.

“The entire crew was Korean,” Henry said, still amazed by the experience. “It felt surreal to be part of an international production. I had to adapt quickly, not just to the language but also to the pace and precision of the team.”

Between rehearsals, fittings, and shoots, nearly one-third of Henry's summer was devoted to performance work. Balancing his industrial-design coursework with an increasing number of acting opportunities wasn't easy, yet he found meaning in the struggle. “It makes me realize how precious it is to live the dream instead of just talking about it,” he reflected.

“Since I was little, I spent every summer at my grandmother's house in the countryside, riding my bike through narrow lanes and chasing the last bits of summer sunlight,” Henry reminisced, his eyes lighting up.

But this year was different. The stillness he once found in the countryside had given way to a new kind of rhythm — one illuminated by camera flashes. Every project, every conversation, and every failure became a mirror reflecting a new side of himself.





