



贊助人：曾鮑笑薇女士 Patron: Mrs. Selina Tsang

June 2011

My dear friend,

Jimmy is 12 years old. When our workers in the Hangout first saw him they thought he was about 8 or 9. He was short and thin and very pale. But he seemed to be full of life and he loved playing computer games.

He often came to the Hangout quite late at night and because he was good at computer games would play for long periods. As we got to know him better we noticed that he would play games with other boys on the basis that whoever lost the game should pay for the next game. Or sometimes he would say that whoever lost the game should buy something to eat for the other – naturally he was always the winner!

Sometimes the staff of the Hangout would fix some snacks for themselves or buy something from 7-Eleven to eat. Jimmy would often be hanging around when the food arrived. The staff would offer to share with him too and it was noticeable that he would eat a lot. One evening, he actually finished off seven bowls of rice!

As we got to know him better, we soon found out that he was indeed 12 years old and didn't like to stay at home (he didn't explain why) and that was why he spent so much time in the Hangout until late at night. He eventually also let it slip that he often spent his lunch money from school on computer games and that he didn't like to go home for meals in the evening. That explained why he was so thin and pale.

It turned out that his father in fact had two wives and some years before had left Jimmy and his mother to move in with wife number 2 so that Jimmy had grown up with his mother only. Recently, the father had fallen out with the other wife and had moved back to live with Jimmy and his mother bringing his daughter from the other woman. This arrangement caused a lot of friction and there were constant quarrels between the adults in the family. Jimmy was often the scapegoat for many of the problems that arose but was in no position to protest or object when he felt he was unfairly treated. It was hardly surprising that he didn't like going home. His relationship with his mother had seemed to be alright but the return of his father after such a long absence upset everything and left him feeling unwanted and unloved.

His parents had already contacted a social worker to complain that they felt that they were unable to control their son. Some time before, he had stayed at the Youth Outreach crisis center for a while but now, the social worker from the Family Service Center of the Social Welfare Dept. and his parents were making plans for Jimmy to go into a long term residential center. He was very alarmed by this and promised to stop going out late at night. He did this for a while but soon resumed his old life style and was once again a frequent visitor to the Hangout during the night hours.

While most young people like to play computer games, it is tempting to think that in Jimmy's case, his constant playing of computer games acted as a kind of drug that blotted out the pain he was feeling about the change in his relationship with his mother and the constant scolding he got from his father. His habit of skipping meals was also affecting his health.

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Since he always seemed to be around, one of our social workers in the Hangout decided to take him under his wing. Whenever Jimmy showed up, the social worker would make sure that he had something to eat and would then try to get him involved in other activities besides computer games. He was quite good at badminton and basketball but a bit too short to reach up to the snooker table! The worker would also phone his mother to let him know that he was at the center and that he was safe and sound. His mother appreciated this because she knew that someone was taking care of him.

He became so much of a fixture at the Hangout that he even helped the staff throw out the garbage and clean the toilets. This seemed to give him a greater sense of belonging and of doing something worthwhile besides just playing games.

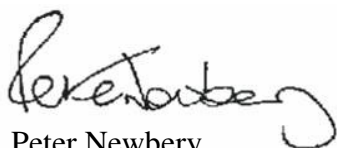
Eventually the social worker was able to get him to think about himself and what he was doing, to set goals for himself and try to meet them. In the beginning it was simple things like when to stop playing and what time to go home but it gradually developed into bigger things. The worker began to teach him some basic skills about how to talk to people politely and how to be generous and kind to others. His mother particularly was happy when she saw that her son was willing to talk to her again.

Jimmy was not a bad boy. He had plenty of good will and was very smart. The fact that he didn't go home was a very reasonable decision on his part given the unsettled and often tumultuous family environment. As in so many cases, the problems created by adults are felt most by the weakest members of the family. Jimmy is still with us! He should be finishing Form 1 this summer and if everything goes well he will advance to Form 2 in September. A little bit of concern, a little bit of support and a little bit of encouragement have made a big difference in his life. Let us wish him all the best for the future.

We could not help Jimmy or any other of our young people without your support. For us the summer holidays are our busiest months as young people are no longer in school and are free to roam far and wide with little supervision.

I appeal to you to make a generous gift so that we can reach out to them and support them in their efforts to grow and develop.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Newbery', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Peter Newbery
Executive Director