

People with Passion



Rosette necklaces are made from donated fabrics – remnants from tailors and upholstery shops. They've quickly become a best-seller.

A Yarn of Kindness and a Thread of Hope

Meet Anna Tsang, the creative mind and kind heart behind local social enterprise, Mother and Child Project. Originally founded to equip single mums with sewing skills to enable them to work from home, it now embraces women from low-income households, the mentally ill and the elderly.

Mother and Child was born

Anna, a slim lady with a sassy blunt-cut bob who openly reveals that she's just the other side of the half-century mark, has none of the airs you'd expect from a trained fashion designer. First impressions are of somebody comfortable in their own skin, happy doing what they do, with an innate sense of effortless style. She arrived at the

interview in a purple silk tunic fashioned from a hand-woven scarf from Laos, and black silk wide-legged pants by Mother and Child Project. When we asked Anna how Mother and Child was born, she traced it back to a chain of second-hand shops called 'Something Old, Something New', which she opened in

1998 at the East Coast Care Centre to help the mentally ill in recovery. When she opened a third shop at St. George's Place – a crisis centre for anyone who needs temporary shelter – she identified a need among the lonely souls who volunteered in the shops or came in search of a friendly face and a kind word.

"I noticed there were a lot of single mums who'd been abused by their husbands, who couldn't work because they were foreigners and didn't have the necessary paperwork. It occurred to me that if I taught them how to sew they would be empowered to work from home and gain some financial independence," recalled Anna.

Piecing together a plan

Anna already had several old sewing machines that had been donated, most of them broken down but not beyond repair. She set to work and pieced together her plan. Her application for the ComCare Enterprise Fund, a startup fund for social enterprises from the Ministry of Community, Youth and Sports, was successful. She was in business! A turning point for Mother and Child Project came when it received press coverage in English and Chinese newspapers in 2009. Donations of second-hand fabrics, referrals and self-referrals came pouring in. And so did the orders – from the public, from corporations and from stockists. The family of Mother and Child Project grew and grew.

Seamstresses reap what they sew in cash

One practice that sets Mother and Child Project apart from many social enterprises is the fact that suppliers are paid in cash for their projects upon completion. Funds from sales are constantly re-invested in the workers.



Samsui Ladies

Anna explained that many of her worker mums don't even have bank accounts, since they are unable to raise the minimum deposit required to open one. In many cases, their earnings from sewing are their first taste of financial independence.

A lady in luck

When asked to cite an example of a supplier whose life has changed because of her involvement in Mother and Child Project, Anna told us about a single mum with two sons, one of them autistic. After several unsuccessful attempts to engage maids, all of whom were unable to handle the demands of her autistic son, she was referred to Mother and Child Project in 2007.

On visiting the lady's home, Anna spotted a commercial sewing machine and knew she'd happened upon a serious seamstress. Subsequently, this lady was able to earn close to \$1,000 a month during a busy period, not rely on a maid, and send her son to a special school. When she calculated her savings from working from home – no transport costs, no outside

lunches, no work wardrobe – she found she was infinitely better off than when she was working. Plus, she enjoyed the invaluable gift of peace of mind as a hands-on carer for her son.

Anna's Story

When we asked Anna what drove her to commit to a life of community service, she shared her amazing story. Here, we share it with you.

"I was born and raised in Hong Kong, and migrated with my mother to the United States. As a child, I was sexually abused and had attempted suicide many times. After every attempt, I had no recollection of my actions. By the time I was 21, I was diagnosed with schizophrenia and prescribed medications that made me shaky. As a fashion designer, this was very debilitating and frustrating.

"When I had graduated from fashion design school in Los Angeles, I returned to Hong Kong to work. There, I met my Singaporean husband in a disco. At the time, I was under medication. When I came to Singapore, I made friends with a woman who had the gift of healing. She prayed and I saw a vision

of my father's mistress. This woman had done irreparable harm and caused immeasurable suffering in my family. I told her it wasn't humanly possible to forgive her, but if God wanted me to, I needed His help.

"Shortly after, I felt something leaving my body. It was as if a weight had been lifted from my shoulders... From that day on, I never went into remission and have been totally free of medication. I consider it a miracle of sorts. That said, I am still retraining my thinking to prevent relapsing into that downward spiral of negativity.

"When I was still struggling with mental illness, I made a pact with myself that if I ever got through this, I would do something to make a difference to a lot of women's lives."

That difference was – Mother and Child Project.

Mother and Child Project designs are characterised by funky, quirky designs, meticulous workmanship, and often, a nod to local and other Asian cultures.

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Reversible Jacket

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