

# leading lights



Personal Dev



Edited by Ginny Wong

An 11-year-old student knows that dogs (and cats, and just about every other animal out there) are man's best friends, and we should do everything we can to protect them, writes **Nicola Chan**

# Making you paws for thought

**A**ryaa Tanna is out to prove that it's never too early to start trying to make the world a better place. The 11-year-old animal welfare advocate and West Island School (WIS) student knows that even the smallest of actions is enough to effect big changes, when it comes to stopping animal cruelty in its tracks.

Despite her enthusiasm, though, Aryaa was considered too young to volunteer for the SPCA last year, which is why she made animal cruelty the focus of her Year Six school project.

"I have been passionate about animal welfare since I was little," Aryaa said. When she realised the scope of how far a person could go to hurt an animal, she decided to do something about it, even if it was only in a school project.

The "Festival of Action" project at her primary school, the Peak School, required

students to work on one of the 17 sustainable development goals set by the United Nations. Aryaa picked "Life on Land", and started looking up cases of animal abuse online. She was surprised, she said, to come across statistics that were not well-known, but that she felt were important to highlight. Some of these less well-known facts - such as how more than 70 per cent of cruelty to animals involves dogs, and that one million animals are abused each year as a result of domestic violence - were included in her poster project.

Aryaa interviewed the SPCA's Education Manager, Vivian Chiu, who told her about the

**I have been passionate about animal welfare since I was little**

charity's work, as well as how they rescue animals. She even learned how endangered animals are identified, and how often SPCA staff get bitten at work.

The WIS student also conducted a survey at Peak School, asking 35 pet owners about the types of animals they have, and how they take care of them. She then used the data she gathered to create a presentation about different types of animal cruelty, how to prevent it, and proper pet care.

Aryaa's quest to improve the lives of animals didn't stop with a poster of facts and figures, though. She also set up two lunchtime pet toy-making workshops for her classmates. After researching the varieties of toys that cats and dogs like to play with, she settled on making a tug-of-war toy with a tennis ball and rope for dogs, and a cardboard snake on a string

for cats. Aryaa spent all night preparing the materials for the workshops in advance, but she said it was worth it to see how much the animals at the SPCA enjoyed the finished products.

"It looked like the animals really liked them," she smiled. Her project, which also raised more than HK\$1,600, was praised as being one of the best, and she was invited to present it to six classes from three different year groups at Peak School.

Earlier this year, Aryaa was asked by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Hong Kong (SPCA) to present the results of her school project on the subject to Chiu. The Year Seven student was also given the

chance to present highlights of her campaign to students from the University of Hong Kong.

Aryaa said she doesn't want to limit her animal welfare activism to school - she hopes to let her passion for the cause be known in the city, as well as around the world.

"I want to be a vet when I grow up," she added. "And continue to think of more ways to help animals."



**Aryaa's project was praised as being one of the best in the class, and she was asked to present it to classes from different year groups.**

Photo: SCMP / Nicola Chan