

David Kuo

I (author Schiller Wang) have known David for almost twenty years. Back then he was a happy carefree student who loved sports and volunteering. Now he is the Head of Branch Network in Ontario at HSBC Bank Canada, responsible for 650 employees and 49 branches. But, no matter how successful he is, David always gives an everlasting impression of a friendly 'sunshine' youth, full of vigor and enthusiasm, on the lookout for new ways to develop and grow the young people around him. His successful career comes from this infinite source of energy.

A person's character is formed by the environment one grows up in. David's optimism and his community spirit are shaped by his background - he did not grow up sheltered in the warm embrace of his family. David left for North America at an impressionable young age, experiencing the strange and difficult environment of foreign lands in his early teens. These travels made him more adaptable to new and difficult surroundings and he found he enjoyed interacting with other young people.

David left his place of birth, Taiwan, in 1985 for California and Texas, staying with family friends. Every two weeks, he would write his father and brother. He learned self-discipline and independence very quickly, and that 'strangers' could become friends. Only in 1988 after David's father completed his immigration application to Canada was he able to reunite with his family and study in Vancouver. Those days did not last long. Very soon, David's father returned to Taiwan to practice medicine, and David chose to study economics at the University of Toronto, and settle down in Toronto.

David's one passion when growing up was basketball. Not only would he be less homesick when he played basketball but he also learned from it the valuable lesson that without perseverance and hard work, one could not succeed. With a lot of training and natural talent, David got on the Vancouver City High School Basketball All Star Team in 1990. While being an All Star player was an enjoyable experience, he also learned how to be a team player and to stay young at heart.

The independent spirit cultivated when he was a teen has given David an understanding and compassionate outlook on life. At the University of Toronto, he was able to utilize his organizational skills, his communications ability and leadership talent while actively participating in extracurricular and student organization activities. As President of the University of Toronto Chinese Students' Association, David tried to apply for funding for Chinese student groups from the university but encountered challenges. As a result of that, David decided to be involved and was the first Chinese Canadian student selected to be the Cultural Commissioner of the Student Council at the University of Toronto (Scarborough), responsible for liaising with over 30 student organizations, distributing the operating funds provided by the university, and organizing various multicultural activities on campus. This is the first important experience that David had in learning management skills and an opportunity to demonstrate his leadership capabilities in a mainstream environment.

Full of vigorous energy, David has been whole-heartedly promoting youth team sports. In 1995 he founded the Chinese Canadian Youth Athletic Association (CCYAA), the first sports association organized by new immigrant students. CCYAA expanded team sports among Chinese students by organizing North American Chinese Basketball tournaments in Toronto, Saturday youth basketball camps, sports

tournaments and youth scholarships. Not only did it increase networking among students, it also provided networking opportunities between the Chinese Canadian community and professional sports teams in Toronto. Its impact is still being felt today. He also led youth groups to get involved in charity events. One time he organized a three-men basketball tournament for Yee Hong Foundation, with over 100 teams participating. What makes David even prouder is that several recent CCYAA presidents and executive members, after years of CCYAA training, are making their marks in their respective careers and industries, including TV sports anchor (Edcon Yau), Raptors/Canada Basketball (Ronald Yeung), United Nations (Albert Tseng), banking (WingTai Lam), telecommunications (Clement Chu) etc. to name a few.

In the 1990s, for three consecutive years, David led several Chinese Canadian university students associations to organize a 'university information exhibition' to provide information for parents and high school students about to graduate. He was also able to get these associations to join hands in holding fund raising events, such as the fashion charity ball in 1996 for the Heart and Stroke Foundation. One of the student models from the University of Toronto, Lin Chi-ling, is now a well-known actress and model. These few examples go to show how David was able to develop young people, especially their self-confidence, through different venues and growth opportunities. As a result of his volunteer work and outstanding service to community, David was awarded 'the most outstanding youth overseas' by the Taiwanese government in 1998.

After university graduation, David entered the banking business, joining HSBC Bank Canada. At that time there was a large wave of Chinese immigrants from China to Toronto, and HSBC was exploring the Chinese Canadian market and expanding Mandarin service. In December 2001 he was appointed Branch Manager of Markham Mandarin Centre Branch. Two years later, David received the President's Award, and was selected one of four staff in Canada to attend the global convention as a winner of "2003 HSBC President's Award".

One of the special contributions that David has made to the banking industry is to build springboards for the development of young people, the so called Gen Y. In 2010, as a member of HSBC's Diversity & Inclusion Council committee, he helped to launch an innovative employee group in HSBC Bank Canada, the 'Y-Knot, Young Professional Association' for young employees to develop their leadership skills while networking with others. Currently 600 younger employees have joined the Y-Knot group, which provides mentoring and networking opportunities with more senior staff. Y-Knot along with HSBC's strong effort to recruit on campus, was credited for HSBC Bank Canada winning the Best Employer for Young People Award in 2011.

With his branches showing impressive year-end results, David was promoted to a District VP role in 2007. In 2012, David became Head of Branch Network in Ontario responsible for 49 branches, an outstanding role model representing Chinese Canadians in the Canadian banking industry.

Breaking into the executive level in the Canadian banking industry within the time David did is a remarkable achievement for any young person's career. David's meteoric rise is closely tied to his community involvement and his giving back to society. One can even say the two are complementary - the strong foundation David has built in the community allows him to develop a wide customer base, and at the same time leverage the bank's resources to service community needs.

David was President of the Taiwan Entrepreneurs Society Toronto (TEST) from 2006 to 2007, building broad connections between local Taiwanese businesses and mainstream society. He helped raise the image and profile of Taiwanese business people, and most importantly, he helped Taiwan Entrepreneurs Society Toronto establish a Young Professional & Entrepreneurs Group, which provides a springboard for the next generation to integrate into society. As President, he initiated several activities, including the series 'Building Roots in Canada', providing opportunities for entrepreneurs to intermix with new immigrants. He also developed a series on 'Self-Marketing' for the younger generation, encouraging young people to get out of their comfort zone and learn how to market themselves in front of a panel of ten judges. At present David is still on the Board of Directors of TEST Charity Foundation.

As his star rises in the financial services sector, David is taking part more frequently in community events. In the last ten years, you can often see him in media photos representing HSBC Bank Canada. Not only in the Chinese Canadian community, but also in main stream society, David has been contributing to the economic development of the local community. As an example, he is also on the Board of Directors for the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation, which is a crown agency of Ontario Government to promote tourism in Ontario.

For many years, David has not only been the Advisor of Chinese Professional Association of Canada (CPAC) and the Association of Chinese Canadian Entrepreneurs (ACCE), he also actively promotes within HSBC Bank Canada to support community activities. As an example, HSBC Bank Canada collaborated with CPAC in organizing the CPAC Education Day, providing information and support for new graduates in immigrant families. Recently, David also became an Advisor for SickKids Foundation and Royal Ontario Museum. He attends many charity events throughout the year to support the community.

David contributes generously his time and energy, but he specifically thanks his father for always caring selflessly, his wife Patricia and his superiors at the bank for their support, his colleagues and the community elders for their care. While he has given himself selflessly, the community has encouraged and recognized him in return, including the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Award given to him in 2012.

Throughout his life, David moves everyone around him with his fiery spirit and youthful enthusiasm. Whether it is working on the student council, sports camp, banking or business associations, he is always thinking of paving the way for the next generation of young people. David always says, "Young people in time would realize that, by GIVING, they are GAINING directly or indirectly. As an example, I was elected to serve on the Student Council and had to stay an extra year at the University of Toronto, but because of that I met my future wife, and the extra volunteer work that year landed me my first job in a bank."

Times change, but David Kuo will always be the 'sunshine youth'. His youthful vigor comes from his spirit to give.