



Sitting together on a sofa in their elegant Pok Fu Lam apartment with its beautiful sea view and elegant Asian furniture, Chris and Liza Green reflect on all the blessings the region has brought them. The couple met in Hong Kong and have built a comfortable expat existence; their three children, Leia, 4, Oscar, 3, and Emma, 17 months (who totters around during the interview), complete the happy picture. This sense of wellbeing was one of the spurs that led to the couple setting up a "donor circle", which they called New Day Foundation. "Like most Hongkongers we worked and played hard," says Liza, who is originally from Cape Town. "Hong Kong's neighbouring countries were our playground, as we took every opportunity to visit new cities and islands. But our travel revealed to us the sad and desperate underside to these countries and we had a longing to give something back."

At university in South Africa, Liza had been active in community projects and this provided the inspiration for New Day. The idea was shelved while Liza had her first two children in quick succession but, while pregnant with Emma, she began to make plans. Having given up her part-time teaching work, Liza wanted to fill a space in her

CHRIS AND LIZA'S TOP TIPS FOR RAISING COMPASSIONATE CHILDREN:

- When you're on a family holiday, spend a half day visiting a local family or school so your children can see the different challenges faced by people around the world.
- Ask for charitable donations rather than presents for your child's birthday. Choose a charity with your child and suggest they add some of their own pocket money to the donation.
- Encourage older children to volunteer for activities organised through www.handsonhongkong.org, such as visiting the elderly or helping disadvantaged young people. (They will need to be accompanied to most events.)





Parents of Invention: Chris and Liza Green

life. "I needed to regain a sense of purpose and identity and I think that daughters especially benefit from seeing that their mother is fulfilled." "Plus, I didn't want my children to think of their dad as just a banker," laughs Chris, adding that he wants his offspring to grow up with an awareness of some of the issues in the world, something that he didn't get from his childhood spent in a small town in Massachusetts. "When the kids get to a reasonable age I'd like them to want to give some time back to their community."

The couple hosted a dinner party and persuaded eight of their friends to join New Day. Members donate a minimum of HK\$500 a month, which is then put into a fund that helps female-centric projects across Asia, many of which are highlighted by the Asia Foundation (a partner organisation to New Day). Recent beneficiaries include a motorbike shop run by women in Kathmandu, a home in Tibet that provides sanctuary for girls sold as slaves by their families and a shelter for victims of human trafficking and domestic abuse in Laos. "We needed a focus for our donations," says Lisa "so we decided on women's issues. If you help a woman, her whole family can benefit." The Greens point out that women are often undervalued in some of Asia's backwaters. "In Tibet an orphan boy will be taken in by Buddhist monasteries but a girl will be left to fend for herself." New Day doesn't provide funds for salaries or training, preferring instead to donate money for buildings or make one-off purchases of tools and equipment. This enables the charity to get involved in a wide variety of causes.

New Day is unusual in its approach in other ways too; the Greens encourage the members to do more than donate. "Anyone can write a cheque," says Chris, "but the members, including us, find that they gain real insight from getting properly involved. When we visited our first project, the women's shelter in Laos, we took chocolates and

sweets and ended up feeling really stupid. The woman there didn't even have soap or shampoo." New Day members are encouraged to suggest deserving causes and help implement change, although just contributing money is fine too. The charity prides itself on ensuring that 95 per cent of all donations goes directly to the needy (as compared to 50 per cent in some larger organisations) with Chris and Liza covering any incidental costs.

The couple insists that establishing their own charity has been an overwhelmingly positive experience, with "no real problems". Chris confides that they soon learned not to take rejection personally and to understand that not everyone would share their enthusiasm for the project. Liza has found that even though some friends don't want to get involved it doesn't mean she should feel embarrassed talking about her work to them. "At first she thought people would cross the street thinking she'd try and tap them for money," jokes Chris. One unanticipated bonus of working together has been that the couple's relationship has benefited from a joint vision and passion. Certainly, their dedication to the cause is infectious.

That initial dinner party sparked several more and there are now about 45 members in the group, although the couple would like that number to double.

And how does Liza fit in all this hard work whilst parenting three children? "I work during nap-times, very early in the mornings and in the evenings, with Chris helping out at weekends," reveals the supermum. "We were a bit naive about all the work that would be involved!" Liza points out that joining New Day would be ideal for any mothers who are looking for a satisfying and meaningful pursuit. "You don't have to make regular or long-term time commitments and you can use whatever skills you have, whether they are in marketing, leadership or simply organisation."

To get involved in New Day or make a donation, ring Liza on **2546 2711** or email cgreen@netvigador.com. The website for the charity is www.newdayasia.com.

If you believe
women have the
ability to change the
world...