

Hong Kong street refrigerator keeps giving

By Alice Fung
The Associated Press

HONG KONG — Most people who head to Woosung Street in Hong Kong’s old-school neighborhood of Jordan are visiting its popular restaurants serving everything from curries to seafood. Others may be headed for a lone refrigerator, painted blue, with a sign that reads: “Give what you can give, take what you need to take.”

The door of the fridge sitting outside a hockey academy opens to reveal it is stuffed with packets of instant noodles, biscuits, tins of food, and even socks and towels for anyone who may need them.

Ahmen Khan, founder of a sports foundation on the same street, said he was inspired to create a community refrigerator after seeing a film about others doing the same thing. He found the refrigerator at a nearby refuse collection point and painted it blue.

“It’s like a dignity, that when you go home, you open your fridge to get food,” Khan said. “So I want the people to just feel like that. Even if it’s a street, it’s their community, it’s their home, so they can simply just open it and then just put food there, and collect the food.”

Khan’s blue refrigerator project



COMMUNITY GIVING. Two women chat with Ahmed Khan, center (behind refrigerator), after placing food inside a refrigerator at Woosung Street in Hong Kong’s old-school neighborhood of Jordan. Khan, founder of a sports foundation on the same street, said he was inspired to create a community refrigerator after seeing a film about others doing the same thing. (AP Photo/Vincent Yu) went viral on social media and people have been dropping by to leave food inside.

Janet Yeung stopped by recently with a plastic bag filled with biscuits, instant noodles, and snacks. She stacked them carefully inside.

“I think doing good deeds does not need to be on a large scale,” Yeung said. “A small act can already show our kindness, and contribute to this world.”

A resident who would only identify himself as Yeung (no relation to Janet

Yeung) is one of the people benefitting from the blue refrigerator, from time to time helping himself to some food or even masks left by donors.

“Those who are really in need can take things from the fridge whenever they want without any worries, as the fridge is here 24 hours a day,” he said.

Associated Press writer Zen Soo contributed to this report. “One Good Thing” is a series that highlights glimmers of joy in hard times — stories of people who find a way to make a difference, no matter how small.

Indian shepherd combats water scarcity by building ponds

By Aijaz Rahi
The Associated Press

DASANADODDI, India — Kalmane Kamegowda, a 72-year-old shepherd who lives in a nondescript village in southern India, has become something of a celebrity, winning national recognition from no less than Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Kamegowda, who never attended school, says he’s spent at least \$14,000 from his and his son’s earnings, mainly through selling sheep he tended over the years, to dig a chain of 16 ponds on a picturesque hill near his village, 75 miles west of Bengaluru, India’s Silicon Valley.

The ponds, constructed over the course of four decades, are meant to address the problem of water scarcity. Kamegowda — known as “Pond Man” — says they’re “scientific” in nature, with the water flowing on a slope, enabling the ponds to avoid drying up even in the scorching summer months. Birds and wild animals such as bears, leopards, deer, and foxes use the ponds to quench their thirst.

Kamegowda, who sports tidy black hair and a gray beard, was once dismissed as mad by other villagers. They mocked him for claiming that he had learned from his father, also a shepherd, the art of identifying ground moisture and using it to create bodies of water.

He relied mostly on shovels, spades, and pickaxes to create the water bodies, and rented excavating machines when he could afford them to structure the ponds.

The Karnataka state government praised his work more than two years ago with a prestigious award. But the national recognition came early in 2020 when Modi lauded his work on his popular radio broadcast, calling Kamegowda an “ordinary farmer” with “an extraordinary personality.”

“He has achieved a personal feat that will leave anyone awestruck,” the prime minister said, adding that



ECOLOGICAL EFFORTS. Kalmane Kamegowda, a 72-year-old shepherd, swings a stick to splash water in one of the 16 ponds he created near Dasanadoddi village in Bengaluru, India. Kamegowda, who never attended school, says he’s spent at least \$14,000 from his and his son’s earnings, mainly through selling sheep he tended over the years, to dig a chain of 16 ponds on a picturesque hill near his village. (AP Photo/Aijaz Rahi)

Kamegowda “has dug 16 ponds, through his hard work and the sweat of his brow.”

“It is possible that the ponds he has constructed may not be very big, but then his efforts are huge,” Modi said. “Today, the entire area has got a new lease of life on account of these ponds.”

Social groups are now urging Modi to honor Kamegowda with a national award.

Kamegowda is happy to show journalists around, hobbling on a bandaged leg due to an ulcer wound that hasn’t healed for months. That restricts his regular visits to his ponds these days.

Four years ago, he saved some money for his daughter-in-law, who was expecting to give birth with a caesarean section, but she delivered a baby boy vaginally, leaving him with some cash on his hands.

“I spent the same money to dig another pond and named it Krishna — after my grandson,” he said.

Kamegowda, who has dozens of sheep, lives in a two-room unfinished shed next to his son’s house, and enjoys spending time with his family. He keeps all of the documents and newspaper clippings reflecting his

achievements.

He has a second nickname — “Vanapalaka,” or guardian of forests, earned through his planting of trees in an area near the ponds designated by officials as a park.

“Most of the villagers are proud of me, but those who are jealous try hard to malign my image,” he said. “I ask people not to pollute the ponds by washing clothes and restrict the use of water only for their livestock.”

“It’s nice to see villagers bring their livestock to these ponds to drink water, but it hurts when some try to defame me,” he said.

He was referring to some villagers who, apparently jealous of the recognition he had received, submitted a petition to the local administrator, complaining that Kamegowda was treating the pond area as his personal estate even though it was government land.

However, the local administrator, deputy commissioner M.V. Venkatesh, said he visited the village and found that “there is a wrong perception” about Kamegowda’s work. “His work is genuine,” he said.

This year, the Karnataka state government allotted 5 million rupees

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