

## Star Wars princess a beacon for needy kids as Carrie Fisher visits Hong Kong

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Published: 4:30am, 22 Nov, 2014 ▾



Charity fundraisers (from left) producer Charles Wessler, actress Carrie Fisher and Ivanhoe Pictures president John Penotti at the Grand Hyatt hotel. Photo: Edward Wong

She will soon return to cinemas to use the force to battle the dark side - but Hollywood superstar Carrie Fisher took time out to visit Hong Kong and use her star power to bring some light to the lives of Asia's poorest children.

The actress, best known as Princess Leia in the Star Wars films, was guest of honour at last night's The Hub charity ball, raising money for children across Asia. Beneficiaries included The Hub Hong Kong, which supports education in Sham Shui Po, one of the city's poorest districts.

"I like children, I even have one of my own," Fisher joked, to explain why she agreed to headline the ball. The invitation came via friend and producer Charles Wessler, who learned about The Hub from fellow producer John Penotti, a friend of the Hong Kong charity's co-founder, businessman David Boehm.

Fisher and Wessler combined their Hong Kong visit with a trip to two orphanages in Myanmar.

"When Charlie told me about what was going on and how I could help, I happily came aboard," Fisher said. "Also I haven't been to Myanmar."

A video of the visit prepared for last night's ball at the Grand Hyatt hotel in Wan Chai showed Fisher singing, sharing make-up with the children and allowing a girl to apply homemade sunscreen to her face.

"She did a much better job," the actress joked. "They're gorgeous kids - it looks like you staged it. It looks like a gorgeous painting of just colour and life and innocence, and they deserve everything that we give them."

Wessler, who worked on two of the original three Star Wars films, said he wanted to help as soon as he found out about the organisation.

As well as organising Fisher's visit, he donated signed posters to auction off from some of the hit comedies he has filmed over the years, including Dumb and Dumber and sequel Dumb and Dumber To, which opened in Hong Kong this week.

"I looked at the websites and the video they sent and it seemed like a really great organisation," Wessler said. "You're working with kids, you're helping kids, you're making their lives better."

Fisher, who will return to her iconic role in Star Wars: The Force Awakens, due for release in December next year, is a frequent visitor to Hong Kong.

"I was just here about a year and a half ago; we went to Harbin for the ice [festival]. It was awesome," she said. "I come through here, stay here."

So what's her favourite spot in the city? "Hollywood Road is the place to go, just for the name," she said. "We were just there and got some incredible art."