

AKTIVITI ACS

For Private Circulation Only

January 2009

An Inclusive Society

Everybody wants to be part of the society. People with disabilities are no different. They do not wish to be segregated.

Unfortunately, there are still some who live residential institutions and many who are receiving their services in special centres and sheltered workshops. According to current Malaysian statistics, out of 1 million government civil servants, only 581 are those with disabilities. This is a far cry from the 1% quota allocation.

Why are people with disabilities secluded from mainstream services such as regular kindergartens, schools and the working environment? Is it due to ignorance? Is it due to discrimination and prejudice?

A rich society is one that encompasses all peoples including the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the smart and the slow, the abled and the less abled. A community full of diversities is not only rich but strong, as it teaches all of us patience, tolerance and acceptance of each other. It also teaches us respect and honour.

An accessible environment e.g. ramps, is not just good for wheelchair users, it is also helps the elderly, shoppers with carts and parents with buggies. A kindergarten teacher teaching a child with special needs will develop skilful teaching that will make her a better teacher for all children.

Let us embrace diversity and promote a society that is inclusive for all its citizens.

FIRST STEP CENTRE

First Step Graduation 2008 – This family event held on the 16th of November was organised by the six sets of parents of our graduating class. All in attendance were treated to a scrumptious hi-tea which can be deemed “sinful” basing on the amount of food which was served!

Thanks to Seagate for making this party possible.

Congratulations to the Class of 2008



Future Plans - First Step has been providing centre-based early childhood intervention services for the past 11 years. In keeping up with all good practices, we are currently doing an extensive evaluation of our past services as well as charting the way forward for the future.

Due to the awareness created on the importance of early detection and early intervention over the past years, we are glad that there are now more services for these children. The Ministry of Education has now started to cater for pre-schoolers with learning difficulties and many NGOs have also lowered the age group for intake.

With these positive developments, First Step Centre is considering narrowing down our age group of focus from 0-6 years old to 0-5 years of age. Gradually our ultimate aim is to provide early intervention service for babies till three years old.

This will enable us to move towards community-based services such as itinerant supports to enable the smooth transition and placements for children with special needs in the local kindergartens.

We are excited with the prospect of moving towards new frontiers.

UPDATES & EVENTS

Stepping Stone Work Centre

The regular work routine at the Centre was punctuated with several exciting activities such as the taiko performance by a professional group of drummers with intellectual disabilities from Nagasaki Japan in October; and a wonderful dance repertoire by a team of 21 teenage performers from the Planet Dance Sydney Australia in November.

YB Lydia Ong with performers from Planet Dance Sydney



Taiko Drummers putting on an energetic show

Mutiara Voice Club

From the beginning of 2008, the members have been planning (and saving hard) for a trip to Cameron Highlands. They opened up the invitation to their friends, staff and volunteers for this 3D/2N trip from 19th-21st December. In the end, Stepping Stone Centre had to shutdown for two days as most of its members decided to take their annual leave!

TRAINING & TALKS

We have had a host of international professional visitors over the past 6 months i.e. Danielle Schoen teacher from US, Francesca Bierens (Speech Therapist from NZ), Robert Deller (Consultant Clinical Psychologist from UK), Dr Sue Jennings (Creative Drama therapist from UK) and Lou Ambrosy (Occupational Therapist) from Noah's Ark Australia.

We took advantage of their various expertise and organised talks and workshops which easily benefitted about 300 people in Penang. I must record our gratitude to all the speakers for their willingness in imparting their knowledge and skills to us.

Our staff too had had the opportunity to attend and participate in several workshops such as the Training of Access Audit Inspectors, and the Systematic Instruction on Supported Employment and Community Based Skills.

Additionally, our staff team also participated and gave talks at the 2nd National Early Childhood Intervention Conference in Sabah, the 2nd Malaysian Rehabilitation Conference in Bangi and the 11th International Toy Library Conference in Paris.

In August, we made a day trip up north to Perlis to visit the Toy Libraries which are run by the State Public Library. We are excited to see toys being incorporated in these public libraries as part of their services to the community.



The toy library in Perlis

UPCOMING EVENTS

ACS is a co-organiser and will be involved as secretariats for two major conferences this year.

- I. **3rd National Self Advocacy Conference.** 16th-19th February 2009, Penang. Theme: “Improving the Lives of PWDs through Advocacy”. We are co-organising this with Mutiara Voice Self Advocacy Club.

- II. **Family Conference.** 5th-7th June 2009, Penang. Theme: “Families connecting with Families”. This is co-organised with several other NGOs such as Family Support Network, Penang Down Syndrome Association, Bureau on Learning Difficulties and Spastic Centre’s Co-Op.

PRIDE OF PENANG

In July 2008, George Town Penang was given the recognition and listed together with Melaka as one of the World’s Heritage Sites by UNESCO.

And just last month, UNDP together with the Economic Planning Unit of Penang launched a two-year pilot project to introduce disabled-friendly amenities in “Making Penang Accessible”. This will involve a full audit of its public transport facilities and the development of a comprehensive master plan to improve the ease of access and mobility for persons with disabilities by 2010.



ACS representatives attending the training to become accessible audit inspectors.

UPDATES & EVENTS

Hari OKU 2008

We celebrated the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 14th for the community in the district of Balik Pulau. We co-organised this event with the PDK Air Putih.

In line with this year's theme of "Justice and Dignity for All of Us", members of the Mutiara Voice Self Advocacy Club gave a public talk during the opening launch which was officiated by YB Mohd Farid.

Influx of Visitors

We continue to welcome many individuals and groups of visitors from kindergartens, schools, universities and health clinics. Overseas visitors included those from the Asia Pacific region, UK and the US. We are also honoured that big corporations such as Intel and Unilever chose to conduct their teambuilding activities at our centre.



We had a great time working and interacting with the 50 member team of young adults and their supporters from AWWA Singapore in December.

AN APPEAL

Since the last newsletter, we have been elated with many unexpected “windfall” of support. Dow Chemical gave RM 25,000 for us to replace our bakery ovens and other accessories. Penang Sogetsu Association raised RM 10,000 for us at their recent anniversary dinner; and Continental Automotive contributed RM 13,500 to our work. Hwa Yue-Yi raised RM 23,600 in the charity episode of the TV programme Deal or No Deal.

ACS is also one of the 4 beneficiaries of “A Night at the Theatre” Charity Concert held in November, which featured world-class performances from Priscilla Ballet Academy and Planet Dance Sydney. We are continuously grateful to the many groups and individuals who have faithfully supported our work.

The world is embracing itself for a global economic depression. They say this is just the start. Some of the multinationals here in Penang have announced many cost-cutting measures including compulsory shutdowns and layoffs.

This is not very comforting for humanitarian and voluntary service organisations like ours who rely heavily on public contribution and support. However, we can choose to be worried or rely on faith in God and in human kindness. We will choose the latter for we know that there are many of you who have put your trust in our work.

Best wishes for the New Year,
Khor Ai-Na
Director

We all remember a time when we were excluded from something. If we can get in touch with that, we can focus on where others are being excluded, even inadvertently.

- Mayor Ted Ellis, Bluffton, Indiana, USA -

RESPONSE SLIP

- I would like more information about ACS and its' activities.
- I would like to be a volunteer.
- I would like to be put on your mailing list.
- I would like to contribute towards the ACS First Step Centre's building fund.
- I would like to pledge _____ on a regular basis.
- I would like to make a general donation of RM _____ towards the activities and running expenses of ACS.

Postal Order/Cheque No: _____ Date: _____
(Please make all cheques payable to Asia Community Service. All cash donations are tax-exempted).

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____ (H) _____ (O)

ASIA COMMUNITY SERVICE

C0-23-UP Kompleks Masyarakat Penyayang, Jalan Utama, 10450 Penang.

Email: acsphenand@gmail.com Website: www.asiacommunityservice.org

First Step: 33 Changkat Minden Jalan 3, Gelugor, 11700 Penang.

Phone: 04 – 6585396 Fax: 04 – 6597852

Stepping Stone: 53 Jalan Baru, Pulau Betong, Balik Pulau, 11000 Penang.

Phone: 04 – 8665349 Fax: 04 – 8665887

"Jom!" Mobile Toy Library: Mobile Phone 016 – 4487006



A Non-Profit Organisation Providing Services to People with Special Needs, in particular reference to those with Disabilities

Incorporated in Malaysia. Reg. No. 403709K