

AKTIVITI ACS

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January 2011

This Earthly World

Almost daily, we read about abandoned babies, promiscuity, child sexual abuse and more recently, the case of a teenager who was sodomised by the caregiver of a residential home. The poor boy who had cerebral palsy and autism eventually died. What on earth is this world coming to?

(Even as I write this, I need to inhibit the disgust and revulsion I harbour for the people responsible for such despicable acts. I am reminded however, that I am human and so are they; and both parties need forgiveness).

Melaka state government has set up a school for pregnant teens. Penang has launched a state-wide campaign to stop sexual crimes against children. The Ministry of Education is planning to introduce sex education to children as young as 6 years old.

Promotion of the UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the UN-Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPWD) does not seem to curb the above inhumane activities.

It is obvious that we are living in a sick world today. We can no longer rely much just on goodwill. We need more drastic measures to combat this inhumanity. The Malaysian Persons with Disability Act 2008 (Act 685) which is rights-based legislation will have to be revised to include punitive measures to protect this population who is more vulnerable.

More importantly, there is a need to admit our weakness in implementation and enforcement in almost all areas of our governing system. There must be a strong political will to address this seriously.

As for individuals like you and I, we must continue to seek justice and do our part, however small and in whatever way, in making a better world. As the saying goes, if we are not part of the solution, then we are part of the problem.

FIRST STEP INTERVENTION CENTRE

Past – In November, a family gathering was held in the Copthorne Orchid Hotel to celebrate the graduation of 7 of our children who will start their formal schooling in 2011. The parents and siblings did a good job in organising this event which was great fun. This made the parting slightly easier as we had grown slightly attached to the children!

We wish to thank Ms Natalie Emmerich, an inclusive education intern from Germany who helped out at the centre for 5 months from August till December.



Present – In mid-2009, we went into partnership with BOLD Penang to expand our early intervention services onto the mainland. In over a year, the enrolment increased 600% with over 30 preschoolers now and we were forced to re-locate. Well, we found a nice corner house for rent in Taman Sutera Prima and have been busy with renovation works in December.

The renovation and move is costing us over RM30,000 and we therefore hope that you can help us defray some of this expense. Do fill up the response slip if you can assist in any way.

The new centre is located at No 1, Lorong Sutera Prima 4, Taman Sutera Prima, Seberang Jaya, 13700 Penang. Tel: 04 - 3984358

Prospect – Honestly speaking, starting more services is not something that we can afford to do as a small NGO. We hope that whatever we have started can provide models of good practice that can be replicated on a wider scale throughout the country.



We are glad that the government has taken many initiatives to start pre-school services. As such, we are currently reviewing our early intervention services to look at focussing in supports for inclusion of children in mainstream kindergartens and pre-schools.

RESPIRE CARE

In August, we were able to host the Bulpitt family from the UK for three weeks. Luke, a prosecuting lawyer by profession, his wife Rachael and their two teenage daughters open up their home in Reading to be respite carers for children with special needs.

The Bulpitts spent their summer holidays conducting several talks and training sessions for parents, staff and volunteers in Penang and Sibul. Because this is such a new area of service, they helped us publicise through the mass media in order to create awareness on the needs of families having children with disabilities.



You can read more about the respite care services on-line at:

<http://www.goodtimes.my/index.php/Community/relief-for-caregivers.html>

<http://www.goodtimes.my/index.php/Community/timely-gift-of-time.html>

To date, we have 16 families who have signed up for this respite service. However, we feel that many more families should take advantage of this temporary relief support. In the Asian culture, families probably feel guilty to indulge in taking a break in caring for their children. Some have the luxury of extended families' support; while some more affluent families have engaged domestic maids for this purpose.

Well the truth is, everyone of us, in whatever things we do, need to have a break otherwise we will also get burned out; and will not do our job well.



Elaine & George with their giant pumpkin

In December, some children with special needs were able to participate in an inclusive holiday camp held at the Respite Care Centre.

In the meantime, our faithful volunteers have tended lovingly and the garden has produced a harvest of sorts – pumpkins, chillies, lady's fingers, rosella and various herbs!!

STEPPING STONE WORK CENTRE

One afternoon in November, we had a surprise visitor when celebrity Chef Wan popped in at the centre! Many of our members were able to recognise him and shared their work with him. He had a TV crew with him and so we got featured in one of the episodes of Asian Food Channel!!



This centre in Balik Pulau continues to be a hive of activities with a constant stream of visitors. Our record shows that we have received almost 700 visitors in the past year, both locally and globally.

Our guests have included heads of social welfare institutions from Japan, social workers from Australia, medical college students from Kepala Batas; school students from Ipoh, Trengganu and Melaka etc etc. We have also had 10 occupational therapy students from Japan on placement with us for a week, two social work students from the UK and three USM social work students for a month.

Visual supports - One of our staff Ms Kang Hooi Keng who is a graphic artist, has been instrumental in systematically organising the craft section at the work centre. With the visual supports that she has developed, the members at the centre have been empowered to work as independently as possible.

However, after being with us for 9 years, Hooi Keng will be moving on to developed her own career as an artist after her first successful public visual art exhibition recently.

Pottery - Hooi Keng has also established the pottery section. Members have been exposed to hand building techniques. We wish to appeal for experienced or interested potters to continue her good work so that more members can also learn and master pottery skills.



Please let us know if you know of anyone who is able and willing to assist us in this area.

TRAINING

Besides the Bulpitts, we had had several fruitful sharing and training sessions organised over the past six months. In June, Mr Alex Chew helped us look in depth on how to support and work with parents and caregivers.

In July, speech therapist Ms Francesca Bierens conducted a practical training workshop for over 100 people.

In September, occupational therapist Ms Teo Lee Fun shared with us on how to develop handwriting skills.



Deep in reflection

In October, Ms Erica Lovel shared with us her experiences as a mother of a child with Autism Spectrum Disorder and the types of educational services in Australia. Knowing the variety of options and supports available to families in Australia made us envious but hopefully will also enable us to press on for similar amenities.

In December, occupational therapist Ms Kinuyo Siva conducted an in-house service training for our early intervention staff and volunteers. Our staff was also able to attend Story Telling Workshops in September and a Brain Gym workshop in KL in November.

We were also invited to participate as speakers at the Sunway Medical Conference on Early Intervention; the Bakti-Minds' Conference on Alternative and Augmentative Communication and the 3rd National Early Childhood Intervention Conference in Melaka in December.



We are glad to report that the National Early Childhood Intervention Council (NECIC) has been established and trust that the Council can look into issues of concerns to be taken up to the relevant authorities.

Among the objectives of the NECIC is to act as an advocate and a monitoring and coordinating body for early childhood intervention issues.

MUTIARA VOICE CLUB

In July, Diana and Shahell gave an excellent presentation at the Training Course on Economic Empowerment of PWDs held at the USM. They spoke with great confidence and were able to take questions from the floor. Their answers were so honest and pure; it is no wonder that they were given such an ovation from the audience.



20 members of the Mutiara Self Advocacy Club journeyed to Selangor in November to attend a grand Dinner & Dance together with their peers from the Klang Valley. Four members stayed back an extra 5 days to observe, visit and interact with other self-advocacy groups. What I was impressed with is the fact that the members made the schedule and arrangements all by themselves.

We are thankful to United Voice who graciously hosted their stay in KL.



Visiting Dragon Club members at work in PKI Kajang.

FUNDRAISING WORKSHOP

We helped organised a Workshop on Fundraising and Communication in June. The 3 day workshop, facilitated by Ms Ann Woo and Brother Dominic was well attended by over 80 representatives from various NGOs in the Penang and the northern region.

Sometimes, we wish we have a full-time person to look into implementing some of the fantastic and innovative ideas shared at the workshop to bring in the funds so that we can just concentrate on providing our services.

With a necessity to raise RM30,000 each month to cover operating costs, we rely heavily on the faithfulness of our regular supporters to sustain our services. It is hard work to organise public fundraising events therefore we are thankful for those of you who have done so for our benefit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Soroptimist International of Penang for helping us to equip the respite care centre; and Dell for nominating us to be one of their beneficiaries for their Family Charity Run.

We also managed to secure a grant from CIMB Foundation to help fund the marketing and promotions of our products to improve the socio-economic status of our members with intellectual disabilities

Despite the many individual donors, our funds are slowly depleting. This is due to the expansion of our work and unfortunately, we ended the year in red. One of the reasons is the proposed charity carnival which had to be postponed due to unforeseen circumstances.

If you are able, we hope you can assist by contributing to our funds to help tie us over this low season.

Thank you for your kind consideration.

Warm Regards,

Khor Ai-Na
CEO

How far you go in **life** depends on you
being tender with the young,
compassionate with the aged,
sympathetic with the striving and
tolerant of the weak and the strong.

Because someday in life, you will
have been all of these.

George Washington Carver (1864-1943)

RESPONSE SLIP

- o I would like to be a volunteer.
- o I would like to make a general donation of RM _____ towards the activities and running expenses of ACS.
- o I would like to donate towards the renovation costs of First Step Centre.
- o I would like to donate via credit card auto billing transaction. Please send me details.

Postal Order/Cheque No: _____ Date: _____
(Please make all cheques payable to Asia Community Service or direct bank transfer to Maybank Account No 507040213362; CIMB Account No 07390000784053 or log into www.cimbclicks.com.my. All cash donations are tax-exempted).

Signature: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel No: _____ (H) _____ (O)



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“Jom!” Mobile Toy Library: Mobile Phone 016 – 4487006

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