

AKTIVITI ACS

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June 2005

Right to Education

Last year, the Star Newspaper highlighted the incident of a blind graduate who was refused admission to be trained as a teacher just because the Ministry of Education could not prepare the test questions in Braille.

In mid-April, the New Straits Times highlighted the plight of a 14-year-old girl born without legs who had to stop school because she did not want to burden her classmates and teachers in carrying her around in the school.

After several dramatic days, the story ends with good news when the Minister of Education directed the school to move her classroom down to the ground floor. And Modenas, a local motorbike company, sponsored a scooter for the father to ferry her to school. The student was of course ecstatic to return to school.

Does the dignity of this young student not put us to shame? Why do the poor, the underprivileged and the disabled always have to be subjected to more humiliation? Do problems such as these need to be highlighted in the press media for action to be taken?

It is sad that discrimination such as the above still exists in this glorious land of Malaysia. Last week, the Minister of Education Dato Seri Hishammuddin gave rise to hope when he made a declaration to take direct charge of the special education portfolio following many such complaints that the needs of students with disabilities have not been fully addressed.

This is indeed a positive step as we move towards an inclusive, barrier free and rights-based society for people with disabilities.

TSUNAMI UPDATES

The tsunami tidal waves that hit the Pulau Betong kampung on December 26th 2004 was just 2 km away from the new ACS Stepping Stone Work Centre which is situated at the corner of Jalan Baru, Pulau Betong. For the first 2 weeks following the catastrophe, the members with intellectual disabilities at the Work Centre baked cakes and cookies to supply to the victims and volunteers in that area.

Later, ACS started a small collection amongst its children, parents, staff and volunteers in an attempt to do our part for the local community. The Lions Club of George Town, one of the regular and faithful supporters of Asia Community Service responded without hesitation to ACS' proposal to do a joint project for the benefit of the people in Pulau Betong.

Through this collaborative effort, and with the support from many, we were able to raise RM13,500.00, which was equally distributed to the 27 families affected by the disaster in that area.

The amount might not be a large sum but we had hoped that in a small way, it had helped ease some of the losses and hardships faced by the families.



ACS Chairman

*ACS Chairman and Lions Club
President distributing the donations.*



FIRST STEP CENTRE

Parental Involvement - One of the key factors of success in an early intervention programme is active parental participation. We are glad that this year, 5 families have signed up to be committed to the Hanen "It Takes Two To Talk" parents intensive training programme. This specialised programme from Canada is being conducted by our speech language therapist Ms Terri Faust.

We are also happy to report that some of our children who graduated last year are doing fairly well in their present schools. This we must attribute to the dedicated parents who have not failed to stand by them and support them in their efforts.

The staff team is waiting eagerly to meet up with the 10 children and their families in June to hear about their developments and progress during the up-coming reunion party organised by the mothers.

As Ann Landers said, *"it is not what you do for your children but what you have taught them to do for themselves that will make them successful human beings"*.

Inclusion - Over the years, many parents have lamented on the difficulties in finding suitable pre-schools or nurseries which would be willing to enrol children with special needs. In order to find out some of the reasons for a non-inclusive practice, we are attempting to do a simple study of kindergartens and preschools in Penang.

Please contact us if you know of any kindergarten near you who may wish to participate in this survey.

The **Early Childhood Intervention Symposium** will be held
at the **Grand Bluewave Hotel** in **Shah Alam**
on **August 12th - 14th 2005**.

'JOM!' MOBILE TOY LIBRARY

World Play Day celebration was held on May 27th at the grounds of ACS Stepping Stone Centre. Participated by over a hundred children and young adults with disabilities plus their siblings and other children from the Balik Pulau community, the 2- hour event offered various games stations both indoor and outdoors.

The staff and volunteers had put in a lot of effort in the preparation. The sheer delight on the faces of the children as they participated in the games was well worth the hard work.



Grant – ACS is glad to be awarded a small grant from The Sumitomo Foundation to conduct a comparative study on play styles of children with special needs.

The 10th International Toy Library Conference will be held in Tshwane, S. Africa from Sept 18th – 23rd 2005.

STEPPING STONE WORK CENTRE

On March 26th 2005, YB Tuan Haji Mohd Farid, State Assemblyman for Pulau Betong launched the Recycling Collection Site at the ACS Stepping Stone Centre. The Recycling Project, initiated as part of the Ford Environmental and Conservation Programme, is the first in Pulau Betong.

This project will help instil a sense of caring for our environment for the people of the rural community. It will also provide an extra vocational activity for the members at the Centre.



STEP TRAINING CENTRE

Since the beginning of this year, centre-based training programme at the ACS Step Centre (Relau) has been put on hold in order for trainees to experience work in outside placements. This temporary break has also enabled us to concentrate on carrying out a survey on the *Current Situation and Needs of Young Adults with Intellectual Disabilities*.

It is vital for us to identify the current situation so that we can focus in on the needs of the families and hence be able to provide better services. A copy of the survey form is available on our website.

**ACS will be participating in the Special Hands Bazaar to be held in Bangsar Shopping Complex, Kuala Lumpur on August 27th & 28th 2005. We will be demonstrating candle making, batik painting and hand weaving.
Do come and support us.**

OTHER NEWS

Visitors – Amidst the many visitors we had the past few months, there was one group from Fukui University which impressed us. The 9 member team comprised of 8 social work students; 2 of them are wheelchair users. Despite their severe disabilities, they could live on their own independently in their hometown in Japan.

However, they found many handicapping conditions during their short stay here in Penang. The pavements were full of obstacles, ramps were too steep; unavailability of suitable public transport system and many other obstructions that you and I are prone to overlook.

My shame could only be compensated by the friendliness and willingness of the surrounding people to offer assistance. My heart lifted up when our visitors expressed eagerness to return.

Let us hope Penang will be able to welcome them next time with an improved barrier free environment which is suitable for all - the young baby in a push buggy or the aged in a wheelchair; both for the locals and the tourists visiting the Pearl of the Orient.



Visiting Snake Temple.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

RDA - Horse back riding activities has resumed back with great excitement from the kids.

Thanks to RDA volunteers, Esther Foong and Lion's Club of Seberang Jaya for enabling Deneson, a 13-year-old teenager with visual impairment and cerebral palsy from mainland Juru to continue his riding sessions on a monthly basis.



Events – In April, we participated in setting up our stalls in conjunction with several events i.e. the Hari OKU (Orang Kurang Upaya) in Komtar; World Earth Day in Intel Kulim and the Hong Leong Charity Run which was held at the Penang Botanical Gardens.

Thanks to the many people involved in the above for the opportunities and not forgetting many who have supported us financially.

With Best Wishes,
Khor Ai-Na, Director

**As long as we regard our disabilities as tragedies,
we will be pitied.**

**As long as we feel ashamed of who we are,
our lives will be regarded as useless.**

**As long as we remain silent,
we will be told by others what to do.**

- Adolf Ratzka, 2003 -

A Non-Profit Organisation Providing Services To People With Special Needs, In Particular Reference To Those With Disabilities.

RESPONSE SLIP

- I would like more information / to be a regular volunteer in:
 - First Step Intervention Centre, Minden Heights
 - Step Training Centre, Relau
 - Stepping Stone Work Centre, Balik Pulau
 - "JOM!" Mobile Toy Library
 - Horse Riding
 - Administration / Fund Raising
- I would like to be put on your mailing list
- I would like to make a general donation of RM _____.
- I would like to donate RM _____ towards the building fund.

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

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Phone: 04 – 6585396 Fax: 04 – 6597852

Step Centre: 1-3-9 Kompleks Sri Relau, Pesiaran Bukit Jambul 1, 11900 Pg.

Phone / Fax: 04 – 6462804

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

Phone / Fax: 04 – 8665349

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

