

AKTIVITI ACS

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Social Services – Whose Responsibility?

As partners in our ministry, allow me to share with you our major crisis in the work i.e. the lack of manpower. Apparently this is not just our problem but a problem faced by many NGOs in the country.

We seem to lose our trained and experienced staff to newly set-up private practice services. We can bask in pride that the staff we have trained are highly sought after, but then this egoistic thinking gets us nowhere. We are forced to face the vital question of whether the salary scale of NGOs are far too low. And if so, we will need to act accordingly.

With the mushrooming of private services (i.e. hospitals, therapy centres, educational services), it is evident that they are meeting not just the needs but fulfilling the demands of the market. It also shows that some families today can truly afford to pay for private services.

Should NGOs serve only the poor and leave the private sector to cater to those who are affluent? Will this continue to widen the gap between the rich and the poor? Are services rendered by NGOs of inferior quality because we do not pay staff as well as private enterprises? No, it is simply because we have to rely on public donations to run our services.

Shouldn't the government take more responsibility for the provision of these services rather than relying on NGOs and private initiatives? Quality healthcare, childcare and education, accessible public transport are social services, especially for our citizens with disabilities that must fall under the responsibility of our government.

After all, what do we pay taxes for?

The preliminary report on the National Education Blueprint (2013-2015) which was released by the government recently in September was a disappointment as little substance was given to students with special needs.

Over the months, we have made several press releases through the National Early Childhood Intervention Council (NECIC) concerning the educational needs of children with special needs. But these repeated calls seem to go unheeded.

Together with Bold Penang, ACS initiated a survey project with families on educational options last year. After several months of data gathering, we compiled suggestions and recommendations and it resulted into the **Memorandum on Inclusive Education as National Policy for Children with Special Needs**. This was submitted to the Minister of Education in April and the booklet was published in May 2012 for wider circulation.

With this booklet in hand, we hope that more parents and civil society members will join us to advocate and push more aggressively for our voice to be heard. No child should be left behind in this vital education transformation exercise.

The Memorandum and copies of our press releases are available for viewing and download from our website.

Early Childhood Intervention



4th NECIC 2012 - Our entire First Step staff team were privileged enough to make a trip to Sibu, Sarawak to attend the 4th National Early Childhood Intervention Conference in June. Some of us presented some papers based on our work in Penang. The conference with the theme of “*Family Centred Approach: Early Intervention and Beyond*”, attracted a record of over 700 delegates nationally as well as internationally.

We were also able to visit some centres, inclusive kindergartens as well as longhouses!

1st AP-ECI Conference - Several of us also participated in the 10th Biennial Early Childhood Intervention Australia and 1st Asia-Pacific ECI Conference in Perth in August. Two days were dedicated to study visits which were such a privilege and an eye opener.

In Australia, it is a non-issue for children with special needs to be accepted and included in all childcare services and kindergartens. In stark contrast, we either have to fight or beg for inclusive childcare and education in Malaysia.

Respite Care Support Centre

During the March school holidays, as part of the respite holiday programme, a visit was organised to the USM Museum. We are not sure if any of our kids enjoyed the star gazing in the planetarium but they certainly enjoyed building their own water rockets. It was scary but fun to launch these rockets high into the sky.

They all also enjoyed playing with giant soap bubbles outside the museum.



We are grateful to Dell as well as UST Global and individual volunteers who helped us run the respite care programme ever so faithfully on Saturdays. This full day respite enables parents to have a break from their 24-hour seven days a week care for their child with special needs.

Our plan to start after school care in the afternoons has to be postponed due to staff shortage and our difficulty to recruit volunteers during the weekdays.

Jom! Mobile Toy Library

We were invited to share our toy library activities at the Fairview International School in March. The students brought their toys from home to give to our toy library. We are glad that they are willing to share their toys with other children in the community.

Jom partnered with the Learning Garden this year to celebrate World Play Day on May 28th.

It was a fun-filled afternoon for 120 children. We had 25 fun stations and children were issued “passports” for them to collect their stamps after participating in each station. This is to ensure that they do not miss out on any of the activity stations.



Getting ready for the Caterpillar Race

Stepping Stone Work Centre

Trip – Seven members accompanied by two staff made a trip to Kuching for a holiday and to Bawan, Sibul to visit Pusat Muhibbah (a community-based project for people with disabilities) which was started by Prof Ken Nakazawa, one of ACS’ founder members. They had a wonderful experience staying in the longhouse as well as building friendship across the sea. This trip was made possible with their own hard earned money which has been diligently saved.

Eat - Staff team from Hard Rock Hotel fed us well these few months. They came to the centre to serve us a meal in June, collected and gave us approximately 100kg of can food from their “Can-lah” campaign and invited us to a scrumptious buka puasa meal in their hotel in August.



We are honoured to be identified as a beneficiary for their Rock to Rock Run 2012 which will be held at the end of October.

Celebration of Art

In June, we held “**The Outsider Art: Showcasing An Exhibition Of Hidden Talents**” at the quaint and rustic Cha Diam Ma café held in conjunction with the Georgetown Festival 2012. This is in celebration of arts, culture, heritage and the hidden talents of this special group of people in Penang.

A total of 36 art pieces by 17 special artists, majority of whom are members from the ACS Stepping Stone Centre, were displayed. Several large pieces of artwork were displayed outside on the street corridors with the kind consent from neighbouring homes.

At the end of 2 weeks, we were surprised to learn that we have sold 15 art pieces! You may be able to see some hanging in several cafés in Georgetown. We are grateful to consulting artist Ms HooiKeng Kang and the owner of Cha Diam Ma cafe for initiating this idea and for the exposure.

Spurred on by this encouraging experience, we have ventured into starting up a small art studio where these special artists can gather and paint on a regular basis. These sessions are held at the Pemancar House Respite Centre in Gelugor.

Do contact us if you know of any such special artists or if you wish to view their art work. We are also hoping to start a small permanent gallery to display these art pieces, so please contact us if you know of any kind and interested sponsors.

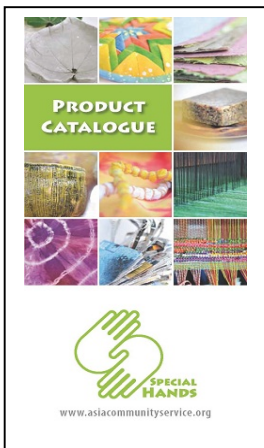
Some of the special artists with their artwork posing for the press outside the exhibition venue.



Product Catalogue

One of our achievements this year must have been the compilation of our product catalogue!! It has been a daunting task due to the variety of items that are constantly being churned out from the ACS Stepping Stone Work Centre.

Putting the catalogue together has been a challenge. Thanks to Enoch Tee for the design of the Special Hands logo, Adrian Cheah for photography and graphic design, and the Dell team for spurring us on. It is amazing to see the number of items that our centre produces.



We have easily 60 items made from paper, batik, tie-dye materials, hand-woven cloths, ceramic pottery, T-shirts, candles, soap etc etc etc.. These items do not even include produce from our bakery section.

Thanks to CIMB Foundation, we have now got a printed catalogue which we will be happy to mail it to any interested individuals or companies. Please call us or drop us an email if you wish to have a printed copy. Soft copy can be viewed on our website.

Another exciting area that we are working on now is the online shopping. We can't wait to announce it once it is ready.

Gangnam Fever

Gangnam fever also hit us lately. And so, we took a break from the usual work routine and hit the dance floor. With the help of some friends, our spontaneous performance was recorded and uploaded on YouTube video!

We invite you to check it out by googling YouTube – *Gangnam Penang Disabled Style*. We received almost 1,000 hits in just that first week.



As a viewer from US said – *'I'm happy to see disability being incorporated and promoted in such a mainstream and fun way!!!'*

Terima Kasih

With joint organisers Musica Sinfonietta and JCI Pearl, the Splash Musical Charity Concert held in April at the Performing Arts Centre, Straits Quay raised RM25,222.00 for ACS. It was a lovely evening of classical orchestral music, jazz and choir.

We also received RM66,219.00 from Dow SEA Charity Golf Challenge 2012. This donation will allow us to work on the extension of our pottery studio at the Stepping Stone Centre in Balik Pulau.

We are grateful to faithful donors such as Kuok Foundation, Tun Sardon Foundation, PMP, Dari Penang Group of Ladies, ACE Japan and of course many individuals.

Thanks to our many volunteers as well, without whom our activities would not be able to run so smoothly. Short term student interns, volunteers and visitors from near and far, come and go but they also enrich our lives in various ways.

Thank you all for your partnership!

Warm Regards,

Khor Ai-Na
CEO

Remember, if you ever need a helping hand,
you'll find one at the end of your arm....

As you grow older you will discover that you
have two hands.

One for helping yourself, the other for helping
others.

- Audrev Hepburn -

RESPONSE SLIP

- I would like to be a volunteer.
- I would like to make a general donation of RM _____ towards the activities and running expenses of ACS.
- 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)



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

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