

AKTIVITI ACS

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October 2013

Workability

In preparation for a talk at the Workability Asia Conference which was held in Kuala Lumpur in early July, we managed to take stock of the activities at our Stepping Stone Work Centre since its inception thirteen years ago.

Through the centre, we provided work opportunities and supports for individuals with intellectual disabilities in the rural countryside, many of whom were just staying at home. Their vocational work involved conservation activities, and creating eco-friendly and traditional artisan crafts.

As we look back, we can truthfully say with pride that our investment of time and effort have not been futile. We have discovered so much of their abilities. Contrary to common beliefs, many of them have commendable work attitudes and work attributes. Several who joined as apprentices have been promoted to become skilled workers and in-house trainers. Many have developed self-esteem and gain self-confidence when they are entrusted with responsibilities.

They are churning waste to wealth; they care and protect the environment. They work with dignity. Many are self-reliant and some are even contributing to the family's income. We value them as they are loyal workers. They are no longer a liability but an asset in the society. They have discovered self-worth and have gain respect from the community.

The worth of this quality of life is simply immeasurable.

HOWEVER, because we show proof that PWID can work, we are now expected to comply with the minimum wage requirement recently imposed by the government, which has put us in a quandary.

It has forced some NGOs in the same predicament as us to appeal on the basis that the productivity level of PWIDs is low; and that the running cost of such a work centre is high because we need to employ supervising staff. Unfortunately this appeal and plea have taken us back to a charitable approach just because of the lack of understanding and consideration of this population.

While one arm of the government (the Welfare Department) is providing some work incentive allowance to PWDs, the other arm of the government (Ministry of Human Resource) is expecting the NGO employers to fulfil the minimum wage order.

Could it be that all matters pertaining to disabilities have been placed under the Welfare Department for far too long?

Or that the Ministry of Human Resource has failed to acknowledge the role of NGOs, which are mainly non-profit organisations in providing work opportunities for people with disabilities. PWDs have been marginalised for such a long time that it seems unfair to expect them to “compete” with open market.

As a compromise, some NGOs have stopped the contribution of EPF (Employees’ Provident Fund) for its workers with disabilities just so that their names are not reflected in the payroll which is being monitored by the Labour Department.

Can there not be a better compromise? As the EPF is probably the only form of savings that some of these workers have, this is certainly a bad move.

We will have to keep pushing that the onus back to the government to either increase the work incentive allowance or to exempt the non-profit NGOs from this requirement. The role of the NGO is to fill the gap in society where there were once no services, and in the meanwhile also strive to increase more opportunities for people with disabilities to work.

First Step Centre

Last year, we suffered the loss of several staff members – one for further studies, one re-located and two to private practice. At one point we were wondering if we should scale down our services as we were not successful in finding replacements.

This year however, we are glad to announce that we have been able to recruit three full time and two part time staff onto the team.

This has been a great booster to the programme and we warmly welcome these new recruits who would be guided under our faithful volunteer speech pathologist Terri Faust and special educationalist Ms Loh.



L to R (back)

Peh Sim, Cindy, Ch'ng, Shirley, Terri, Loh

L to R (front)

Laila, Sharneeya, E-Maine, Komathy, Shafiqah

Bereavement



Angeline S. B. Cheah
1947-2013

On 1st of June 2013 with deep sadness we bid farewell to Associate Professor Dr Angeline Cheah who passed away peacefully after battling with cancer. Angeline was one of the founding directors of Asia Community Service.

As one of the pioneers in the field of social work in Malaysia, Angeline will also be fondly remembered and missed by all her students, friends and associates nationwide.

Toy Library

Cindy and I had the opportunity to attend the 4th Asian Toy Library Conference which was held in Tokyo in June. Besides presenting a keynote address, we were able to learn from other Asian countries through their presentations as well.

We also had a fantastic World Play Day celebration. We came back encouraged with lots of creative ideas learnt from the Japanese.

Additionally, visiting toy libraries and several other facilities prior to the conference made the trip worthwhile.

Visited a community toy library which is located in a public shopping mall!



Clowning in Penang

We were also able to coordinate and host the visit by two professional clowns from Kuala Lumpur. We arranged for them to accompany our toy library team to visit various community centres and children's homes in Penang.



As part of their community service, they put up a record number of performances at nine locations in one week!!

Thanks to Mr John and Kaka the Clown for entertaining and blessing these children with joy and laughter.

Outings & Assistance

The older children at the First Step Centres had a couple of outings to the Penang Bird Park in May and to the Aquarium in August. It was a feat as most of the 4-5 year olds came without their parents! We are grateful to the parents for entrusting us with that responsibility!



Likewise the members at the Stepping Stone Work Centre also took a day off and went wild at the Water Theme Park in Perak. The whole day outing was fun and exhausting but provided a break in their work routine.



Of course, all these outings would not have been possible without the support and assistance of the many volunteers and students who interned with us during those times. We are grateful for the extra manpower provided to enable us for these little adventures.

Art Exhibition

Three of the art pieces drawn by Ruslan and Asniza that we submitted were selected from the thousands of applicants for the Asia ParaArt Exhibition. The art exhibition was held in Tokyo in mid-October.

It was sheer delight to know that Asniza's painting was selected from amongst the 222 participating art exhibits to receive a special prize.

Title: Flower Baby
Artist: Asniza Mohd Ismail
Media: Oil on Canvas
Size: 60cm x 60cm



This area has so much potential. But in order for us to develop and expand this project, we are looking for willing art enthusiasts or art students who are able to spend time with us and guide us. Please contact us if you can assist.

Job Coach Project

Job coach supports people with disabilities in the open employment. We have recruited a couple of volunteers to help us embark on this pilot project. We are currently looking for

- a) potential candidates
 - *young adults who are slow learners or those who have intellectually disabilities who are seeking employment*
- b) interested employers
 - *companies in Penang who are looking for workers*



Terima Kasih

Student interns from USM, UTAR, Uplands School, University of Bournemouth, Yonago Medical Welfare School spent 5 days to 3 months with us while groups from University of South Florida, Nihon Fukushi University, Bunkyo University, Ryukyus University made one day visits.

Volunteers and visitors continue to stream in and out, blessing us as well as being blessed.

Thanks to the Intel Involved Matching Grant Project, we were able to benefit not only from the voluntary help from the employees but also from the matching grant raised.

Starbucks sponsored refreshments and the employees participated in our World Play Day event held at Balik Pulau for the community.

We are grateful to receive new and used toys from Datin Teo and Uplands Year 7 students respectively. We also received a vanload of exercise books and stationery items from Mr Ang which we in turn shared with other welfare bodies.

Thanks also to the many individual donors for keeping our work going.

Warm Regards,

Khor Ai-Na
CEO

**Pain is pain. Broken is broken.
But FEAR is the biggest disability of all.
And will paralyze you more
than you being in a wheel chair.**

- Nick Vujicic -

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)



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“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

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