

Heart 2 Heart

Bartley Community Care Services - Touching Hearts, Building Lives



BCCS' latest community satellite centre opened February 17 without any fanfare but much to the excitement of many curious young ones.

The satellite centre at MacPherson Primary School came about after many months on the drawing board. Getting the right person to run the centre was crucial. This centre had the full support of the school's management. The principal and vice principal were very keen to provide an interesting and meaningful support for latch key kid families after school.

Mr Emi Supati became our full time staff and volunteers like Matthew Teo and others provide a host of activities from energy-packed captain's ball, to ever popular racket game, badminton, to traditional chatek to ever-green board games as well as the less strenuous program like the reading club. These are scheduled daily (Mon- Fri) for students and they can't seem to get enough of them.

Besides after school activities for kids, BCCS has also partnered 'Dads for Life', an organization that promotes active fatherhood. Parenting skills training as well as family bonding activities in a familiar and close contact are regularly organized. Since the inauguration of the centre, a story approach program to promote better communication and understanding between father and child was implemented. In celebration of Father's Day, the theme 'My Father, My Hero' was adopted to promote family bonding. A good number of families came together to enjoy the inspirational Superman movie, 'Man of Steel' and to prepare or to receive cards in appreciation of dads.



HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED WHAT CHILDREN DO AFTER SCHOOL WHEN PARENTS ARE AT WORK, ESPECIALLY IF THEY COME FROM LOWER INCOME FAMILIES? HEAR FROM THE KIDS THEMSELVES.

This is what 5 regulars at Kids Zone - MacPherson Primary School have to say about the centre and its impact on their lives thus far.

Q: Why do you come to Kids Zone?

Izzul: To have fun (Izzul used to go home, watch TV, study)

Gagandeep: To relax and play (Gagandeep used to go to Geylang Library but his father felt that's too far away)

Nazrul: Got board games & for news because I am a news reporter. I have never been before and I find it's fun (Nazrul used to look for friends to play catching with)*

Mahak: To play badminton, floorball, board games (Mahak used to hang around school doing nothing, just walking about as she had to wait for her sister who has remedial classes)

Sharidah: It's much fun (Sharidah used to play catching with friends)

* Some of the kids here have enrolled as news reporters, with assignments from 'Uncle Matt' (referring to Matthew Teo, a volunteer at the centre) who also edits their reports. It is obvious they love their 'job' and take it rather seriously.



From the left: Izzul, Gagandeep and Nazrul

Q: What do like about this centre?

Besides the games competitions organized which they agreed unanimously is to say about why they are fond of the newly opened Kids Zone:

Izzul: Introduce games never played before. Education - understand games better because trainers are brought in.

Gagandeep: Everyday has a different activity.

Nazrul: Interesting, not boring, it provides care, settles quarrels.

Mahak: Sports tournaments - there are prizes. Even though we are taking part in the school, we want more tournament to get better

Sharidah: There are tournaments -sometimes friends cheer for us, support us. Fun, cheerful place.



From the left: Mahak and Sharidah

**Q: How has this place affected you?
What lessons have you learnt which have helped you become a better person?**

Izzul: Yes, don't fight

Gagandeep: Cooperate with team members. I argued why I was to be goalkeeper instead of attack but I learnt how to solve this problem

Nazrul: Yes, don't shout

Mahak: I am becoming better because of my reporting. I need to have perfect English

Sharidah: Coming soon maybe (meaning she expects to become a better person in time to come)

When asked if they were going to miss the centre during the one month school break, the answer was a resounding 'Yes' and 'Obviously!' Need we have asked?

So it's a definite 'thumbs up' from the children who hang out at Kids Zone. Now, what does Emi have to say about his first six months at the centre? In his own words, 'I'm lovin' it!'. He along with the volunteers say they are gratified by the positive impact the centre is having on the children in terms of character building, on their family and their general well-being.



SO, YOU HAVE HEARD WHAT THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE KIDS ZONE AND STAFF HAVE TO SAY BUT WHAT DOES THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION HAVE TO SAY ABOUT THIS INITIATIVE?

On July 14, 2014, a high level team led by Ms Sim Ann, Minister of State, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Communications and Information and Mr Hawazi Daipi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Manpower, chairman of COMPASS (COMMunity and PARENTS in Support of Schools) with an entourage comprising members of MOE's Communications and engagement division, principals of other schools, community leaders, parent representatives and the media paid a visit to MacPherson Primary School and were full of praise for the Kids Zone initiative. Madam Rostinah, principal of the School clearly encouraged by the feedback, added that Mr. Daipi commented that he has not seen any set up similar to Kids Zone in other schools, a point she said the minister took note of. Mr John Chong, vice-principal all too familiar with the background of many of the students in his school is full of gratitude for what he sees as a much needed service.

WHAT DID YOU SAY BCCS IS AGAIN?

BCCS is an institution of a public character (since Dec 2012) dedicated to improving the plight of lower income families in the South East district by offering help in the areas of literacy skills, tuition programs, after school care and parenting skills. It was first registered in 2000 as Wei Ni, meaning 'For You' in Chinese. It underwent a name change to its present in 2010. BCCS' mission however remains unchanged as 'Touching Hearts, Building Lives'

BCCS' program focus is offering help to children from low-income families to jump start their academic life, to gain self-confidence as they progress after having lagged behind academically, thus reducing risks of early drop-out from school.

BCCS' 2014 core programs and their objectives

CAPLE (Child And Parent Learning Experience) formerly the LFP (Learning Family Program) – 20-week program to equip K1 and K2 children (and parents) with phonics and numeracy skills to prepare them for primary school life.

1. KidsAGLOW – 25-week program to cultivate in children a love for reading/learning and to promote family bonding
2. Tuition Service – Weekly program to help children in the core subject of English & Mathematics
3. KidsZone (New!) - Daily after school activities for latchkey kids in a safe environment and family support* services.

**Family Support in the form of Counselling & Mediation, Financial Assistance & Planning, Home Visitation and Training for life skills are also being offered at Bartley Christian Church and MacPherson Centres*

HOW IS BCCS FUNDED?

Up to now, much of the funds required to run its programmes have come from donations mainly from well-wishers and Bartley Christian Church and its members with some grants from South East CDC.

BCCS VOLUNTEERS SPEAK

Volunteers are key in BCCS: they are the backbone of the organization without whom BCCS' programs could not have gone on for the past thirteen years. A full-time staff for accounts & administration was first engaged only in 2013 and another in 2014 to man the new centre at MacPherson. Our volunteers come from different walks of life, age ranging from 20+ to 60+, of both genders but all with a heart to help the low income group in our community.



Cecilia Ho Ming Chee, in her forties, a homemaker, has been helping out in the Learning Family Program since 2012, first teaching the children reading through the use of phonics and later also joining the parent group sharing ideas with them on how to engage their children for a healthier parent-children relationship. What started out as just wanting to enrich herself during her free time by doing something meaningful since children are now independent has turned into a passion, an activity she shares with her husband who is also a volunteer. Cecilia says that although it means not having Saturdays to spend with their own children, their children are supportive and she believes it is a great way to teach them by example about caring for the less privileged in our society. To those contemplating volunteering, she says 'Give it a shot! The satisfaction and pride you feel as you watch the children and parents grow is definitely worth it. If you're looking for something new and meaningful to experience this year, the Learning Family Program is a great opportunity for you to do just that!'



Jeremiah Cheong, 27, a network engineer by profession helps out with BCCS' tuition program every Saturday morning. Although it means giving up the chance to sleep in (like what most young people would be doing), he has been faithfully offering his service since Sep 2013. What drives him to do this, you may wonder. Jeremiah reveals that he has been a beneficiary of a similar program when he was young and knows well what it means to receive help academically. His reward? An opportunity to bless someone without having to do too much on his part. For those who are hesitant about committing, Jeremiah offers this advice: 'If the full commitment seems too daunting, just take the first small step of volunteering a mere 2 hours a week, fortnightly.' A very reasonable advice indeed from our young man!



Chew Ing Lim, in her forties, an educator, started serving in the Learning Family program since 2008 although she took a break to pursue her studies a few months later. She returned to help in 2012 when the KidsRead (now known as the KidsAglow) program was launched. Her role here is one of a curriculum planner and program coordinator with the objective of making reading fun so as to instil in the children a love for storybooks. Ing Lim has continued to serve even though it means eating into her time for her

elderly parents, friends, rest after a week of hard work, her interests and hobbies, BSF, all of which are just as important to her. This, because of her strong conviction that students from less resourced families can benefit significantly from additional help given them when young. Ing Lim adds that as these children start to enjoy learning, their self-esteem grows and this will go a long way in helping them cope with studies at secondary level. Indeed, she believes this is her calling as an educator to serve the low income family. Her reward comes from seeing the children and their families warming up to her and other volunteers and the very genuine relationships built with them besides the great satisfaction of seeing the children excited about picking up storybooks of their choice during their weekly pre-reading time and book shopping trips. To those contemplating volunteering their service, she says 'See it as a learning experience and an opportunity to extend love and care for the less privileged amongst us.'

For more details of BCCS's program, go to www.bccs.org.sg



Meet the BCCS Board members

From left: Lye Puat Fong (Head, Publicity), Yip Kim Seng (Treasurer), Lawrence Phang (Head, Audit Committee), Kenneth Teo (Vice chairman & Director of programs), Michael Chay (Chairman), Low Lye See (Head, Volunteer Management), Phua Hong Aik (Secretary), Lee Tai Luang (Assistant treasurer)

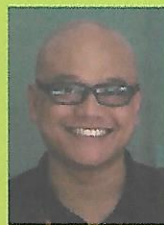
Board members come from different professional background bringing with them different skills and experience but the same passion and common objective of caring for the lower income group in the local community through BCCS.

Meet the full time staff of BCCS

Anne Yee
Admin & Accounts Executive

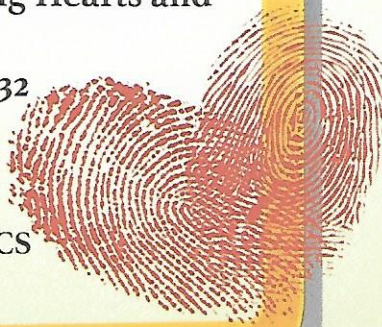


Emi Supati
Program Executive (MacPherson Centre)



If you find the work of BCCS meaningful and would like to play a part in Touching Hearts and Building Lives, contact Anne at anneyee@bccs.org.sg or call 68850432

- To volunteer your services
- To Make a donation
- To Find out more about the work of BCCS
- To Offer suggestions and feedback



Bartley
Community Care Services
TOUCHING HEARTS, BUILDING LIVES
www.bccs.org.sg

Centres:
1. Bartley Christian Church
2. MacPherson Primary School