

Heart 2 Heart

A publication of Bartley Community Care Services MCI (P) 127/08/2014

Christmas - 'tis a season to be jolly?

Yes, for most average income families in Singapore. Christmas is a season for special meals, gifting and vacations to reward oneself and family after a year of hard work. Alas, this is not so for those who can get by with only 3 meagre meals a day. Last Christmas though, some of these families from the Lorong Lew Lian precinct were asked what their festive wishes were.

"All I want for Christmas is . . ."

BCCS, in wanting to bring some extra special joy to the otherwise mundane lives of these families, decided to enquire about the wishes of needy families in December 2014. Six families expressed their wishes and BCCS set out to fulfil them. This meant sourcing the 'items' wished for, raising the funds for it and getting it coordinated.

Granny Lau who had not had a Chinese New Year reunion dinner with traditional goodies for many years longed for one with her family and boy was she in for a surprise!

Not only did the meal comprise a sumptuous spread of CNY delicacies from the famed Mouth Restaurant, it was delivered personally by BCCS representative to her house on the first Day of Chinese New year for the long dreamed-of traditional CNY family meal of abundance. Granny Lau is wheel-chair bound and suffers from Dementia.

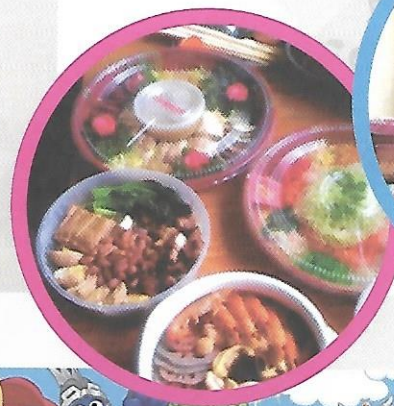
Granny Lau was truly appreciative of this very thoughtful act and was visibly touched.

Mrs Emerlita Goh had heard much about Universal Studios and yearned for the experience but an outing of this nature for the whole family would mean a substantial outlay which they can ill afford and so remained a dream until.....

After Mrs Goh's wish was expressed, theme park and mono rail tickets were organized and off went Mrs Goh and family, a party of 9 for a fun day-out at Universal Studios. The family was more than thrilled and promptly sent a shot of themselves (see photo on the right) with their message of heart-felt appreciation to BCCS representative. What a blessing to have been able to bless this family!

These are two of the six wishes expressed and fulfilled. No effort will be spared to fulfil the others at the appropriate time.

Photos (from top anti-clockwise):
 1. Granny Lau & family's CNY reunion meal
 2. CNY delicacies from Mouth Restaurant
 3. Mrs Emerlita Goh & family at Universal Studios, Resorts World, Sentosa



A peek into the sacrifices, motivations, gratifications & hopes of volunteers at BCCS' various programs
We asked some volunteers 5 soul searching questions and following are the candid responses of 8:

Qn 1: How would you be spending your time if you were not volunteering?

Ashley: Probably spent sleeping in on my Saturday mornings.

Alison: Pursuing my hobby/personal interest

Katherine: Probably watching Korean Drama

Anon: Housework, coaching my boys in their schoolwork, running errands

Vico: Outing with my friends or resting

Fiona: Studying

Jaselyn: Doing other leisure activities and spending time with loved ones.

Daniel: I would be having family-time; reading for self-edification; or reaching out to acquaintances

Qn 2: What do you think you gave up (if any) as a result of volunteering?

Ashley: Leisure time and time to study

Alison: Time with family/friends

Katherine: Extra time with friends...but the reality...Korean dramas

Anon: Housework, coaching my boys in their schoolwork, running errands

Vico: My freelance work

Fiona: Time, a portion of my heart

Jaselyn: Nil

Daniel: Volunteering at BCCS is in fact an enriching experience for me.

Qn 3: What is your prime motivation for volunteering with BCCS?

Ashley: By volunteering, I am able to offer something that I know will benefit so many of the less fortunate

Alison: God's calling

Katherine: I wanted to serve outside of Sunday, also I enjoy working with children

Anon: Enjoy reading and interacting with children, there is a need for manpower

Vico: Giving back to the community

Fiona: To show love to the kids

Jaselyn: Gain an insight to what BCCS does and understand how we are doing our part to help the community

Daniel: BCCS is a structured platform to work with.

Qn 4: What personal satisfaction/gratification from volunteering have you received if any?

Ashley: Seeing the children being so excited to learn, the process of them learning and the end product whereby they can actually apply what they learn is immensely heartening. It does sound cliché to say "pleasure from helping others" (from the Chinese idiom 助人为快乐之本) but personally experiencing it truly allowed me to feel such a tangible joy from using my gifts to bless others around me and more importantly, to see them gain from it

Alison: To see joy in the faces of the students and to be able to help them in their learning process. Grateful to be able to participate in God's work through the church.

Katherine: Good rapport with the children and seeing them grow in confidence in themselves.



Vico



Katherine



Ashley



Fiona



Jaselyn



Allison



Daniel



Anon: Children enjoyed the time with us, be exposed in little ways like organising, thinking and planning outside my family matters, get to know more how things are administered in the area I am involved in

Vico: Progress made by the children

Fiona: Appreciating the children's innocence, seeing their learning/progress, receiving love from them, and witnessing God's helping hand

Jaselyn: Inexpressible gratitude and thankfulness. Blessed and fortunate to be able to experience and understand first-hand the true meaning of the saying "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

Daniel: I can help others with my professional experience for free

Qn 5: What is your hope for the ones whose lives you are touching?

Ashley: I do hope they know that people out there care and love for them; that love for someone is not just within family, but it can really be for anyone. And after they have received this love, I certainly hope this will show them to help and care for others around them too.

Alison: They will be guided in the right direction & they too will feel the love of God through the volunteers and come to know Him one day.

Katherine: I hope God will use the practical love and my life to open the way /journey of knowing Him personally

Anon: They will have better self-esteem, enjoy books/reading.

Vico: Better quality of life, happier family!

Fiona: That they will have an encounter(s) with the one true God

Jaselyn: For their hearts to be stirred and experience for themselves God's mighty love, and one day come to accept Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour

Daniel: It would be good to help them acquire life-skills for a more productive life

BCCS's volunteers come from different age groups, are at different life stages and in different occupations but whether it's the Korean dramas, the extra hour of sleep or family time they have given up, they agree it has been all worthwhile. Confident children, happier families, hope for the future – these are outcomes the volunteers help bring about by giving a little of themselves. In turn, volunteers derive satisfaction which far outweighs the sacrifices they make and exceeds any expectations they might have had.

If you have felt a twitch in your heart, it's time to take the next step, contact BCCS to see how you can be instrumental in touching hearts, building lives. You too can make a difference today! Be a part of a caring and giving community!

More than just 'Hello' & 'Good Bye!'

BCCS opted out of the monthly grocery distribution program to concentrate on the lunch pack distribution program more meaningfully instead. Whilst this scheme has been on-going for some time now with volunteers from Braddell Heights Zone B, Resident committee and Nanyang Junior College, it has never been more than just a routine weekly delivery of free package lunch to needy households. Not content with just providing manpower for a delivery service, the BCCS team decided to invest time to befriend these beneficiaries (from 11 households as at May 2015) who tended to be lonely souls, rarely having anyone to share their woes with, much less stepping out of their homes to socialise.

BCCS teams involving volunteers from various age group now go out two Saturdays a month, not just to distribute lunch but also to engage beneficiaries in casual conversations to get to know them better. This investment has paid off. Once strangers, BCCS volunteers are now 'pals' whom these elderly folks welcome regularly into their homes. The genuine care the volunteers have shown them has won them over.

These beneficiaries are opening up and some have even stepped out to attend community events organized, something previously unthinkable.

With better understanding of their needs, support currently lacking is being looked at. One such need is dental treatment. BCCS is actively looking into the resources required and is targeting to bring this service to the elderlies living in this neighbourhood in the most efficient manner.

Much remains to be done but with many caring hearts and willing hands, much can be done!



Keith Chew Hock Chuan (top photo, 2nd from right) is BCCS' core representative at Family Zone (Satellite Centre at Braddell Heights Zone B) with BCCS volunteers for the weekly distribution program

BCCS tagline - As I see it.....

By Matthew Teo, a long time volunteer and program coordinator with BCCS

Touching Hearts, Building Lives...

This simple tagline is our community life line!

It is not just a simple string of words but also an algorithm* for volunteers in our engagement with the community.

It is a simple set of instructions for living together in a community transcending outward differences. It sets us on a gentle descent towards service and love seeking to send others on the ascent towards a better future. It provides us the opportunity to channel some of our resources to rediscover our neighbors, to cross over cultural differences, to grasp the meaning of a love that recognizes each other as fellow citizens of earth and potential members of the Kingdom above.

Certainly not everyone may embrace this tagline as a reigning algorithm in their heart-ware... but can we afford to remove this tagline from the foundation of our community life?

Faith underpins this tagline. It is an expression of our strong belief in the worth of every human life. 'Touching Hearts' expresses a desire to show love, care and respect due to fellow human being through acts from the heart that can redeem the humanity of each person – the wonderful image and imprint of the One we love. If we care so much for historical artifacts that remind us of a bygone era of human civilization, how much more must we care for the living remnant and wrecks of today! Indeed, faith must feature in our works to accomplish the mission before us!

Hope is encapsulated in the execution of a series of caring acts. It is not a single drop of water but the constant flow from the tap that provides for the life of human communities. It is not the tithe of money but the tithe of our time and life that communicates hope of the Second coming of our Beloved.

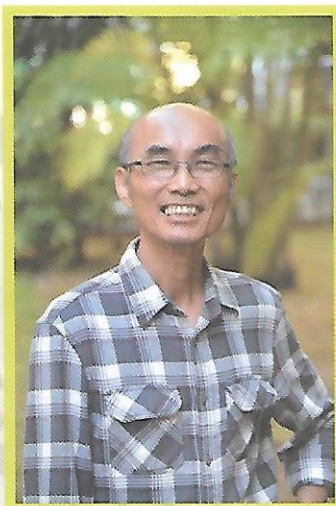
I see hope when well-heeled executives and professionals change out of their smart suits into familiar jeans and tees to spend time with others who may otherwise be 'strangers' in this city. I see teachers, students, managers, retirees, mothers sharing a common platform - teaching children week after week. Freely given and warmly received! I see huddled on the floor, eating, talking and exchanging common grace and life on a common corridor. I see like-minded men and women, willing hands, receiving each other and strangers with smiles and open doors. I see little feet running and I hear carefree laughs from little voices. I see playful chasing of one another. These going-ons make up the ingredients of hope in our BCCS community life every Saturday – an expectation of greater things to come.

Love is rebirthed. Every child is birthed by love – a gift of life from above. Every child unloved is crushed and disabled from birth. 'Touching Hearts, Building Lives' is a tagline that directs our effort to save children and their families from the crushing effects of our fallen world. We may live in a world-class city, but we have not eradicated poverty. An excess of wealth does not equate an excess of love. In fact, the correlation is often perversely inverted! Pursuit of wealth can also lead to depression and oppression. Just as ironically, rapid development can also result in rapid deprivation. But through community engagement, love that has been lost is rebirthed. The very purpose of community work is that love be visible in the communion of all people regardless of race, language or religion.

The simple voluntary gatherings on Saturdays, serving the poor restores faith, hope and love – a desire implicitly expressed in BCCS' tagline 'Touching Hearts, Building Lives'. It is empowering. It is the power of the One who first loved us, who restored us with hope for a life to come.

**An algorithm is a finite sequence of well-defined instructions for calculating a function (or executing a procedure) that terminates in a well-defined ending state.*

Apr 17, 2011



Kids' Zone @MPS

The Kids Zone at MacPherson Primary School one year on

Now at bigger premises, now with the full support of the school management and now ever more popular with the students.

With the new 2015 rules stipulated by the new school management, students are no longer allowed to loiter or play anywhere in the school after school hours. They are allowed to stay back only if they supplementary classes, CCA activities or ... if they wish to hang out at the KidsZone. This means that whether it's to kill time before their scheduled activities or where going home is not relished or not even an option, the natural place to head to is the KidsZone, a place they can call their own.



Be it the new school ruling, the sheer attraction of KidsZone's varied activities or simply the appeal of air-conditioning (provided for rooms with close proximity to the construction site), the KidsZone @MPS is set for continued high attendance this year.

Year to date attendance now average 56 students a day compared to 31 in 2014. In 2014, it peaked at an average of 47 students per day in September but has already reached 73 in April 2015 and above 60 for three consecutive months since then.

To cope with the increase in numbers, full-time BCCS centre coordinator, Emi, was thankful for the support from Polytechnic/Junior College and students of other tertiary institutions but only up to April this year (they start or return to school for a new term). A personnel from Love Aid Project Limited (a partner of KZ since its inception) has since devoted much of her time helping out at KZ on a daily basis. Additional help also comes from KZ Peer Support Group (PSG) comprising Primary 5 & 6 students, Youth Volunteers (an alumni of MPS 'graduates') and occasional walk-in volunteers from Bartley Christian Church.



Photo on the left: Newly formed chess club is needing a new coach as current coach, Samuel Lee (Volunteer from Bartley Christian Church) is being enlisted for national service.



Photo on the right: PSG (Peer Support group) members

To facilitate the smooth running of KidsZone, MPS appointed Mr. Jeffrey Tan, a Chinese language teacher cum discipline coordinator, to handle liaison between teaching staff and KidsZone's staff. His appointment has led to greater awareness of KidsZone's programs amongst the teaching staff. Beyond liaison work, he provides consultation on risks issues and school's requirements to ensure compliance for various sports activities organized by KidsZone. To take some load off KidsZone's staff, he takes on the more extreme cases of problematic kids and supports where help is needed. BCCS is indeed grateful to MPS's management for their close collaboration as seen in very tangible ways.

Besides nurturing lives, satellite centre at MPS is also about supporting families. This where the 'Dads For Life' program comes in.

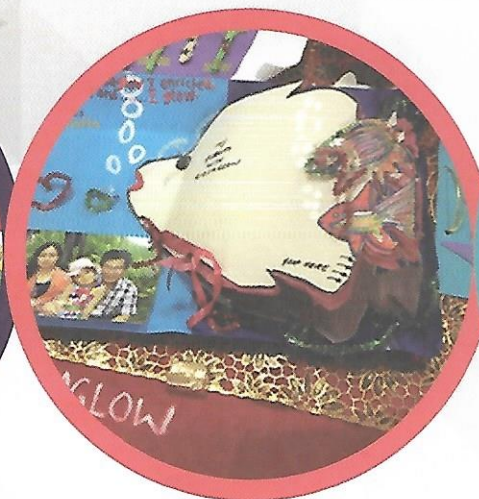
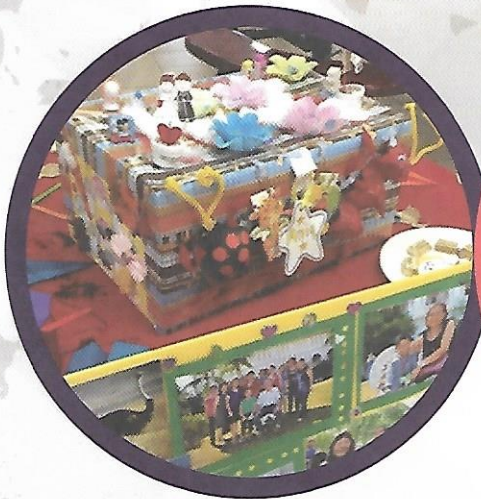
DADs forLife

Its activities for 2015 kicked off with a Telematch on Feb 28 followed by a movie screening of Lego –the movie on Mar 28. Activities will resume in July after administrative details as required by the school have been sorted out. Dads For Life welcomes dads who understand the responsibilities of being a dad to be a volunteer in this program to enrich lives in this community.



A colourful finish and off to a new start for KidsAglow

Nov 1, 2014 saw the graduation of KidsAglow participants, a joyous event which included a colourful display of handicrafts by participants and their family members, a showcase of their creativity in interpretation of what they had read, seen and learnt during 2014 program.



Having proudly sent off 17 child-parent pairs from the 2014 batch, BCCS is off to a fresh start with yet another batch.

KidsAglow's enrichment program for 2015 commenced in March and will last for 25 weeks, during which participants will be taken through story time, reading with confidence and creative expressions.

Photos below: Orientation for KidsAglow participants on Feb 28, 2015



PSG and KidsZone@MPS 'graduates' as youth leaders

Being the full time coordinator at Kids Zone is a challenging job! When the final bell rings at MacPherson Primary School, Emi has his hands full welcoming students to Kids Zone for the afternoon and making sure that everyone there has a meaningful and enjoyable time.

With an average of 60 students or more visiting each day, giving personal care and attention to each of them can be quite a handful. Ever wonder how Emi does it all? With a little help of course!

Besides the usual volunteers, he's also been building up Kids Zone's very own Peer Support Group and Youth Leaders over the months to help. These young but capable leaders help out with day-to-day operations and responsibilities of running Kids Zone and more importantly, act as mentors and role models for the other students.

The Peer Support Group (PSG) comprises upper primary students who have demonstrated positive values and attitudes. Good behaviour isn't the only factor—Emi also explained that some kids just need a little nudge to shape up and being entrusted with a responsibility goes a long way in giving them a sense of pride and belonging.

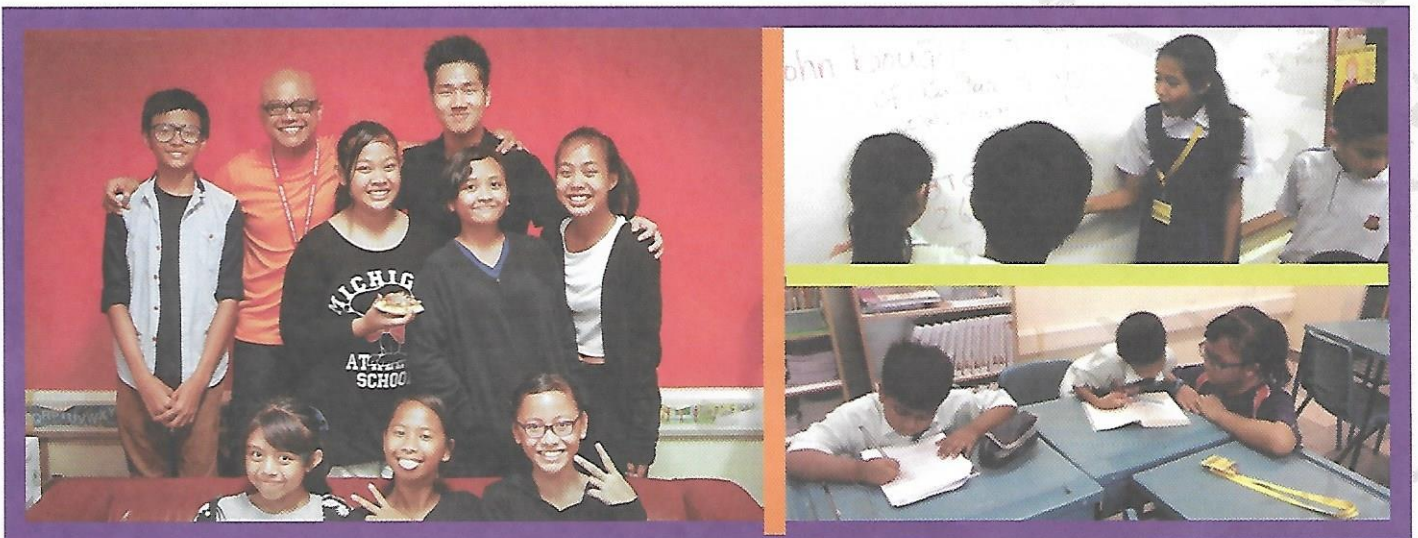
Vishal, a P6 student, was chosen by Emi to be part of this team because he has a proactive habit of looking out for others.

"When I notice that other people are left out of a game, I usually give up my place and ask them to join in so that everyone gets a turn," explained Vishal. Besides making sure that everyone has their fun, Vishal also coaches the other students during study and homework time, and enjoys helping out with mathematics in particular; his favourite subject. Not many students would admit to loving Maths but to Vishal, it's the logical process in solving problems that he finds fascinating. No surprise that he's in the Chess Club as well!

Remember Nazrul, a Kids Zone regular we interviewed for our last Heart2Heart newsletter? He's since graduated from MacPherson Primary but still comes back often to contribute as a Youth Leader. He loves the games here and now entrusted with a role to help take care of the juniors, he likens the experience to "being a responsible citizen".

We also caught up with Firdiana, another Youth Leader who happens to be in the same class as Nazrul at MacPherson Secondary School and also helps out regularly at Kids Zone.

Being part of the PSG previously, she finds it rewarding to continue as a volunteer and mentoring the kids. When asked if there have been any challenges, she spoke of helping some of the students with mathematics. "I don't really like mathematics but I know how it feels like to struggle with it, and can encourage them to keep trying and not give up because Maths is an important subject," she said. Her favourite subject is English, and writing is her passion which she practises on her own blog.



Besides helping with studies, Firdiana believes in being a role model, helping the kids of KidsZone understand the values of respect and having a positive attitude. Her empathy also helps her relate to issues the juniors are going through, and she likes drawing from her own experiences and giving them advice.

Her goals? She's looking forward to representing her school in volleyball competitions, and also aspires to be an air stewardess!

It's inspiring to see these young leaders with generous hearts spending their free time volunteering at KidsZone! They clearly have a huge role to play here, and it's truly amazing to see the positive impact of their contributions ripple out from KidsZone to the community in such a short time since these leadership programs started—we can't wait to see what's next.

Rebooting for CAPLE 2015

CAPLE (Child And Parent Learning Experience) program 2015 kicks off on June 20. Before this, two training sessions were scheduled to train some 32 volunteers who will serve as coaches for the participants.

Modules in better English pronunciation, focusing on phonetics, consonants, long & short vowels, diphthongs, stress and common mispronunciations were conducted by Mr Norman Lim whilst briefing for the weekly lesson flow was conducted by Ms Chew Wee Pin. Ms Deborah Pay familiarised volunteers with various numeracy concepts and the teaching of these concepts. Ps Kenneth Teo was also present to manage their expectations and to render help in training of volunteers.

BCCS hopes to equip K1/K2 children during its 20-week CAPLE program with basic phonics and numeracy skills deemed necessary to stay afloat in Primary One.

Around 60 children, along with their respective parent, are expected to enrol in the 2015 program based on registrations submitted to-date (June 6).

Photos below: CAPLE Training sessions for volunteers in May/June 2015



Move over EZ-link card...

In May 2014, as part of BCCS' efforts to get mass participation in the cause of BCCS, be it through volunteering and/or contributing towards the cost of running BCCS's programs, BCCS launched an attractive NETS FlashPay card designed exclusively for BCCS. This is to serve as a token of appreciation for anyone willing to part with \$25/- (only during the May awareness month) or more and also as a constant reminder of BCCS's cause.



Designed by Van Tan.

The NETS FlashPay card is a universal transportation card for use locally on taxis, buses, trains and outlets bearing the NETS FlashPay logo. It can also be used in in-vehicle units (newer ones). Just top up with appropriate value and it's ready for use.

The design also serves to tell BCCS's mission and story in ten seconds.

If interested in acquiring one, you can do so by donating \$50 or more to BCCS. As stocks are limited, hurry whilst stocks last! Please contact Anne Yee of BCCS for more information.

Action time:

Make your life and that of others count. Be a part of a team to touch hearts and build lives.

To find out how to:

- make a donation
- volunteer your services
- find out more about the work of BCCS
- offer your suggestions and feedback

Contact Anne at anneyee@bccs.org.sg or call 68850432

Bartley
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