

# POVERELLO TEEN CENTRE

YOUTHS on the move .....



WILLING HANDS & CARING HEARTS  
in Sabah

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# WILLING HANDS & CARING HEARTS

A youth service project to the Indigenous Community



Team 1— Painters



Team 2— Mural Artists



Team 3— Carpenters



Team 4— Playground

The past months of intense preparation culminated on the morning of 11 Dec 2007 where the Team of 20 youths, 4 volunteers and 2 staff gathered at PTC with much anticipation of the trip ahead. Bags were checked and rechecked to make sure we had not missed out anything during the hectic preparation which had only ended late in the evening, the night before. Without further ado, the Team set out, each lugging our own bag and 2 other bags weighing 10kg each, filled with donated items for the Bazaar to be held the following Sunday.



Upon reaching Sabah, we were immediately picked up by 2 vans and a lorry towards the 2<sup>nd</sup> level base of the mountain where our accommodation awaits. After travelling a whole stretch of never ending dark road we were met with warm welcome and ushered to our home for the next 9 days. The sight of the very simple and somewhat dilapidated house, with some leaking spots in the ceiling wasn't very encouraging, but sleep was on the top of the list for everyone, even if it was on the floor.

The next day as well as for the next 4 days, the Team took on a routine of walking on the gravel path to the unfurnished Kindergarten at 8am and only returning after 5pm. The work was divided into 4 'departments'. 1<sup>st</sup> Team was in charge of cleaning and painting of the walls, doors

etc, 2<sup>nd</sup> Team was the artists at work, painting murals on the wall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Team was the carpenters creating tables, partitions, shelf, shoe rack etc, and the 4<sup>th</sup> Team was tasked to create a playground comprising a swing, seesaw, sandpit and fencing. It was perhaps the most difficult task since not much material and resources were at hand, hence it was up to the group led by one of the volunteers who was an engineer to create out of nothing, literally! The days usually ended with some of the Team members heading to the nearby river, led by the locals who had been assisting in whatever ways they could, for a bathing session which was often more splashing around than actual bathing. This was a relief for the rest of the members who preferred to queue for their turn at the house's two improvised toilets.



Nightly evaluations were done by the different 'department teams' and then a whole group, assessing what was done during the day, what didn't seem to be happening and what could be better. Emotional issues and conflicts were also resolved, even if it had been resolved during the day, so as to help the youths learn better skills in conflict resolution. Hence the progress of the work improved with daily adjustments and better working methods and teamwork.



Every evening, after dinner, the Team would trudge our way with our torchlights to the little hall for a session of Basic English class for the village children. The session accompanied by a game led by a different group of youths was a delight to the locals, that even the not-so-young would gather outside the premise to join in the laughter and lessons.

On Sunday the 6<sup>th</sup> day, the atmosphere was charged with a different kind of anticipation,



for it was Bazaar day. News had spread about the event so as the youths were stringing the balloons we had brought along to give a festive atmosphere, the locals were already milling around and looking excitedly at what we were

laying out for sale, even though it was still an hour or so away from the stated time for opening. The youths had a good experience doing their 'garang guni' sales pitch and even a modelling of the clothes we were selling. Some were stationed near the exits to do 'security' job, to ensure smooth flow of traffic and others were cashiers. The locals were good partners in these roles as language remained largely a barrier especially with the older folks who only speak the Kadazan dialect.

In the afternoon, the local boys asked our youths for a friendly soccer match. Not having played much of soccer, our youths were sure they were going to be 'slaughtered' nicely but they were still game enough to agree. Even with the rest of us doing



our improvised cheers, hollering our encouragement and comical groans of despair, our team was thoroughly beaten. However what was most inspiring to see : our youths grinning from ear to ear with adrenaline and pumping the hands of their opponents with remarks of awe and praise. That was a nice show of good sportsmanship from Singapore youths!

In the evening, there was a Cultural Exchange where

the Sabahans cooked their Traditional dishes for our tasting and it was most interesting especially their



homemade wine made of fermented rice. The evening was filled with music played with their traditional music instruments and dance performed by the Sabahans and we reciprocated with our own dance, guitar and singing and Japanese Drum. It all came to an end with much interactions, and friendship bonding.

For the next day the locals proposed a trek up the mountain. The children called the mountain their 'playground' but we Singaporeans could not help disagreeing with that term for it was grueling and scary to be victims of Leeches which tend to launch their attack on unsuspecting legs till it was too late to prevent blood loss. The horrifying incidents gave us all a healthy respect for the humble household vinegar which was our weapon against them.



The following day was the last day for refining all our paintings and works of creation. Since much of that had to be done before we could hand over to the locals the next day, it was a day where the team spirit of the group was most effectively activated. All the 'departments' were dispatched to do whatever parts of the

Kindergarten that was still unfinished or needed a finishing touch. By evening time, at 6pm which was the deadline we gave ourselves, typical Singaporean style, we finished off and cleared the place ready for handover the next day. That evening's evaluation was a good look at the significant moments we experienced throughout the project and what we have managed to accomplish as well as the values that we have personally found most inspiring.

The atmosphere this last day was filled with a heavy sense of poignancy as we bade farewell to

the friends we have made during these 9 days. The bonding of friendship was apparent, especially with the children who have tagged along wherever we went and whatever we did, they were there with us helping us in their little ways. The Team left Kampung Kibunut village with a deep sense of regret having to part from the familiar faces, and our 'home' for these 9 days and especially with a sense of appreciation and gratitude for having this opportunity to work together, live together and experience together the richness of another culture and the richness of friendships beyond borders.

by Sr Maria 

# fruits of our labour



swing , see saw, sandpit , fencing in the playground



kindergarten with mural walls, shelves, shoe racks, tables and partitions

clean and painted walls



the Sabahan community

PTC Team (in PTC Tshirts) with the locals  
 Berwin, Mei Bao, Si Hui, Jacky, Junyong, Cassandra, Zhong Xin, Jie Han, Kelvin, Beng Huat, Felicia, , Jenny, Sr Maria, Stein, Diana, Jasmine, Leona, Charlenne, Yi Hui, Sandy, Siong, Melvin, Cheng Chye, Mervin, Jermyn, Michael

# PARENTS' AWARENESS DAY

*by Sebastian Goh, volunteer*

"Hmmm... why is my daughter/son always coming home so late after school? Where is she/he hanging out and with whom? What is this Pover....or, whatever, all about? ".....

Questions, questions, questions!! All remained unanswered in the minds of concerned parents.

PTC held its Parents' Awareness Day on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2007, with the purpose not only of setting the parents' minds at rest but also to encourage them to support their children and the programme they are being exposed to.

Days before 18<sup>th</sup> October, many youths were seen going about tidying the premises of PTC. No surface was left undusted, floors and even doors were given a good scrubbing until the place shone like in the advertisement for household cleaners.

Blessed with a bright sunny day, staff and volunteers arrived well before the appointed time, toggled in their distinctive PTC T-shirts. As the parents streamed in, they were welcomed by the staff and volunteers who engaged them in conversation to answer their queries, as well as to learn more about their children and family background.

Sr Maria warmly welcomed one and all in the conference room and gave an outline of the function and goals of PTC. This was followed by a slide presentation of the activities of the PTC youths during the year. Parents were introduced to the many activities which the youths had been exposed to and how the staff and volunteers engage them at the Centre to keep them occupied during their time spent at the Centre as well as how they learn to improve themselves in various aspects of their lives.

Seven youths took centre-stage next to share their personal experiences in their time spent at PTC. They came from among those now in Secondary 2, who only joined this year, seniors from Secondary Three and Four who had been with the Centre for up to three years, as well as alumni come back often to help out with day-to-day activities at PTC. All these youths happily and confidently shared with the audience, how they had benefitted from the programmes they had taken part in. The most significant positive point all these youths acknowledged was their happiness in interacting with youths of all ages which in turn gave them more confidence in relating to their peers. The result of this led to better rapport with family members at home.

It was tea break next, more interaction was possible among all present, who shared their views. They were also treated to a performance by the pride of PTC – the Japanese Drum Group. The performers were drawn mainly from the youngest members of PTC youths. They played their hearts out, much to the delight of all present, the amazement of some parents who swelled with pride, and unfortunately, the baneful chagrin of residents living in Block 166.

The assembly settled in again, in the cool comfort of the conference room to listen to a recital by the guitarists. Here again, the youths showed that they had not wasted their time spent at PTC. In groups of twos, threes and more, the guitarists demonstrated their ability and mastery of the guitar even though some of the musicians had only started lessons a few months earlier. The vocalists sang their



best and someone remarked that we had 'Singapore Idol' potential here. It was also noticed that the parents were so proud of their children that some were seen tapping along in rhythm with the music.

After the sterling display by the youths, the parents and volunteers were treated to a slide presentation on *Parenting Teens*. It touched on many subjects relating to interaction between parents and their teenaged children. This was followed by a Parents'



Forum in which the adults shared their problems and how they learned to cope with them. Sr Maria was ably assisted by Bro Collin Wee in fielding questions and concerns of the adults present. Bro Collin had the audience in stitches with his often humorous anecdotes on his experiences in counselling youths and their parents.

The day came to a close after the parents willingly filled in the Feedback Forms in which they indicated what they thought of the event and how they now felt about their children at PTC. A fitting comment by one attendee was that PTC should seek to expand their premises as the conference room was too cramped for that day's programme.



## Talk on *STRESS* Management



Though working with youths could help our volunteers feel "young-at-heart", there is always a certain level of stress encountered — be it tutoring them, facilitating them life skill modules, etc. So, to enable our volunteers handle stress better, we invited Br. Collin to give a talk on this interesting subject. And the result? Learn about the 3G's like Cecilia did. Let's hear it from our volunteers.....

Bro. Collin's presentation was straight forward and simple to understand. I like the way he elaborates certain points. He shares his personal experiences of the youths whom he works with. This makes it more comprehensive of what he wants to bring across to us. I enjoyed his talk. ~ Cecilia Chin

Topics interesting especially his personal experiences, such as "shifting the table bit by bit". Objective achieved and no one got hurt. He delivered his talk with humour and liveliness. To de-stress, his tip : just get away to a quiet place and be with God. ~ Daniel Chong

Apart from the God element and Getting the work done, I must remember to have a Good time in all my future undertakings, be it big or small. ~ Cecilia Fung

## News flash

Berwin Tan and Wang Junyong (PTC Alumni Y2007) left for Hong Kong on Sunday 24 February for a 7-day International Youth Exchange Programme 2007- 08. Berwin and Junyong, NYAA Gold Award Holders Alumni (GAHA) members, are two of six ITE students selected to participate in this delegation of 22 participants. Well done guys!! You do us proud !



## Volunteers & Youths having FUN

Celebration of Volunteers' Day 2007 was incorporated with the youths' year end bash. And we had 2 days and 2 nights at the Changi Aloha chalet on 19 November which was dedicated for the volunteers and 20 November for the youths.

The volunteers arrived enthusiastically in the afternoon at the chalet on Day 1 and immediately made themselves at home enjoying the grandeur of the chalet and the ambience. The programme started with a workshop by Yvonne who deliberated on healing by Quantum Touch (QT). Volunteers learned about the wonders and affects of QT and after a 40-minute presentation, all were paired off to try (their hands) on this healing which emphasizes on energy. Each and every one was very serious and took turns to "heal" their partners of his/her bodily pain. Some were amazed when warmth was experienced on their ailing limbs, necks, etc.

Later in the evening the volunteers were treated to a sumptuous home-cooked dinner specially catered for them. And to "thon" the night, they played mahjong with 3 youths who missed the volunteers too much to leave them alone!

Next morning — the youths all streamed in happily by 10am taking over the entire chalet with their robust presence; and after "checking in" in the allocated rooms (ground floor for boys and upper for girls), they headed to having fun on the beach, the walk-board, and the surrounding Aloha grounds. In the afternoon, our special guest-speaker Mr Jeffrey Goh delivered a humorous and enlightening motivational talk to the youths who listened heartily and were very impressed by the real life childhood experiences that Mr Goh had. And we hope that they have also learned something on living harmoniously with their peers and society and appreciating their parents' hardship and love.

After the talk and before dinner, it was free-and-easy for the youths; and so off they went in different batches to the beach for a walk, to nearby Changi Village for some shopping, and some just simply "hang-out" with our volunteers who came back early for the BBQ dinner with the youths. It was a time to show appreciation to the volunteers when the eager young "chefs" (all of them) gathered round the fire to cook the various types of meat and served the volunteers and Management Committee members — Mr James Chew, Sr Molly Lim and Mr Stanley Goh. What a wonderful sight indeed!

Immediately after dinner, certificates for the various activities were presented to the youths and souvenirs of appreciation to the volunteers. The evening programme ended with a sudden downpour of rain and the volunteers left in different car-pools, leaving the youths and staff to continue with DVD movies, games and "thon-ing" the night.



*We say farewell to Sr Maria who left s on 31 January 2008 for Maris Stella Convent awaiting a new posting. During her seven years at Poverello Teen Centre, she has nurtured and mentored youths helping them grow and develop in character via the various activities she initiated. For the staff and volunteers, she has been a friend, a confidante, ..... an inspirational and uplifting gift.*



*And we welcome Sr Victorine who is no stranger to PTC as she was involved in its "inception". We will definitely continue benefitting from her many years of working experience. (she already "gels" well with the youths during the CNY celebration —see the smiles on their faces!!)*

## Kayaking Expedition for NYAA Gold & Silver Awards

Acceding to the NYAA Gold/Silver Award requirement, our youths set out for a 4D/3N kayaking expedition from 10 to 13 January 2008. They braved the elements and camped overnight in tents in the remote surroundings of Pulau Ubin, cooking in and eating from mess tins. To share their experiences, we have Sandy, Melvin and Jiehan — our NYAA Gold participants.

Doing the NYAA Gold is so stressful but challenging as we had to do a lot of planning like logistics and food. I couldn't train regularly due to school work but I was willing to challenge myself, and within some time I managed to upgrade my kayaking skills. This expedition enabled me to learn, experience and observe many things. I learned how to become a leader as I lead my team from one place to another. I experienced and observed nature and the weather.

~ **SANDY**



For this kayaking camp I have learned a lot—mentally and physically. I had to plan the logistics, food, campsites and routes. Throughout the entire expedition, I have learned to lead a team and become a better leader. I also learned to listen to and follow instructions and plan fast when faced with bad weather. As we kayaked from one location to another, I learned determination. I gained further knowledge observing nature and exploration.

~ **MELVIN**

(left)



Among the many things to plan, the most difficult is planning the route as we had to work on the table of tide times and the weather. Being a leader is not an easy task for me as I had to look after everyone and make fast and correct decisions. But this allowed me to think fast and arrive at effective decisions. Everyone in the team persevered with determination and didn't give up easily. I can learn from this quality and apply it in my life as I move on.

~ **JIEHAN**

(right)