

Celebrating 10 years



Rejoicing
10 years
of
Youth Outreach
& Development

POVERELLO TEEN CENTRE

PTC
NEWS

31 May 2009 - a Sunday that we celebrated our 10 years of Youth Outreach and Development. Our currently active youths were invited to this celebration and then, by word of mouth, ex-students of PTC also came along, affirming that *sense of affiliation* to the Centre. So imagine - our multi-purpose hall was filled to the brim with VIP guests, volunteers, staff and youths, a total of about 100 people !



The afternoon programme began with a pre-taped video performance of Japanese drums by the students. Sr Maria then thanked all volunteers for their dedicated effort and support to the Centre, presenting them with Certificates of Appreciation and the latest edition of PTC T-shirt specially designed by Melvin Poh, an alumni member. *Down Memory Lane* - the entire audience was brought through a video show reminiscing the events of the past 10 years.... the many faces of the students participating in the various activities, both local and overseas; the volunteers at Life Skill sessions in school and providing tuition at the Centre; our mascots such as Povee the tom-cat, Bobo the guinea pig, and Snowy the kitten we nursed; the fun time during Youth Day and Volunteers

Appreciation celebrations.

It was also an auspicious moment when Sr Maria officially handed over the Centre's door keys to Br Emmanuel from the Gabrielite Brothers who will now operate the Centre, with the continued financial sponsorship from Catholic Welfare Services.

Then came the surprise programme!! All watched in amazement when the cobra graciously rose from its basket at the music of the snake charmer's flute. There was also a comical magic show by the snake charmer assisted by one of our students who was 'selected' by the former. The tameness of the prized albino python was demonstrated to all when Br Emmanuel allowed the snake charmer to place it round Br E's neck.



Soon after, almost everyone wanted to have a feel of this snake and photos were taken.

At 5pm Mgr Eugene Vaz celebrated mass.... a time to give thanks to God for His amazing graces that led us through these 10 years. Dinner followed and many students stayed on till 9pm taking each other on for a knock-out competition of Chinese Chess.

(by LW)

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Mt Ophir expedition 20-21 April 2009



Why would 27 youths, mostly not very fit and almost all big fans of PSP games, which has become more than a simple pastime, want to spend a gruelling day scaling the mountain? While I was glad that response was so good, I was nonetheless bemused by their enthusiasm. Thinking that I had better erase whatever fantasies they have about mountain trekking, I set out to put them through a preliminary training regimen comprising of conquering the simple HDB stairs, jogging, better suited diet for some and 'mini gym' which is basically one of those found in exercise parks in housing estates. I thought that it was probably sufficient physiological preparation even for these 'PSP yuppies'. Our usual sessions of First Aid, Environmental issues and precautions, Personal and Logistic packing with the youths as part of the preparations were carried out. The objectives and purpose of the Expedition were also emphasized, reinforcing the values which we always have with them.

On 20 April itself, the palpable adrenaline of the youths streaming into the Centre at the early hours of seven in the morning was certainly an energy booster for the rest of us who are not so young. After a briefing, we boarded the chartered bus, all looking forward to finally taking on the Challenge that we have built up over the weeks of preparation. After the excitement of the

Customs check and nagging instruction from the adults "check your passport", the youths settled down to a restful journey with a few either snoozing and the rest watching a gongfu movie flick of the 80s.....better than nothing apparently!

Reaching Tangkak, we could see the towering height of Mt.Ophir looming above us. The mood in the bus immediately changed from respite to an anticipative one as all heads craned to catch sight of the majestic mountain...especially for Singapore who only has only a hill to call its own....to see, to be near and more so to be climbing a Mountain would be an awesome experience. After checking in with the Ranger office, we were shown the designated



camping site which was not only rather cramped for eight tents but on uneven ground as well! Nevertheless, filled with a 'rough it out' spirit, we methodically set up the eight tents in groups of 4 taking care to avoid ants infested areas. After that we had a briefing by the Head Ranger on the precautions to take before we head for the nearest waterfall some 30 minutes' walk away. The half-hour walk was more like a trudge up some 100 over 'Nature stairways' with gnarled aged roots at our feet and forested trees around us. Midway, rain started falling and then we remembered to our dismay, most of the tent flaps were not zipped

and track shoes for the next days' trek were out in the open. So a few volunteered to trudge down again to cover up both tents and shoes. Eventually the sounds of the waterfall lured the rest of us who were waiting to head on towards it. The sight of the waterfall was enthralling as it splashes and winds its way down smoothen rocks and into the pool before making its way down more winding rocks and crevices. The youths, armed with assorted bottles of shampoo and bathing



soaps, gleefully left their backpacks and waded in. Before long, squealing sounds of excitement and frolicsome bodies could be seen at different parts of the waterfall. Fully refreshed from the waterfall, we trudged down again to our campsite to prepare our dinner.

Dinner was rice cooked over a small gas stove with Chinese sausages, luncheon meat and packet soup and a dash of dark sauce, creating our own version of 'sar po rice' to whet our appetite. In many ways, cooking it themselves and then eating as a group in the rustic surroundings makes the food taste better than it really is. What was more unconventional for them was the use of the water fallen into the pond for cooking. Some followed it without

second thoughts, while others cringed in distaste; nevertheless it was necessary as there was no other source of water but that from the pond.

After washing up, armed with a torchlight each, we made our way nearer to the common toilet where there was more light for our night briefing and sharing, sitting on groundsheets we brought along. It was an early night for everyone as the next day's schedule began at 5.30am.

The next day began very promising with fine weather and everyone brimming with eagerness to

hit the mountain trek. Just then, we had our first casualty - Stein, an Alumni member was having a fever, and we had to eventually leave him at the Resort by the foothill. Led by three Rangers, we then set off to the 1st checkpoint - a daunting set of 100 over stairs which resulted in our 2nd casualty, Felicia. Fortunately one of the Rangers agreed to bring her down to the foothill. At that point we were wondering who would be the 3rd casualty!

As the trail deepened into more forested terrain, the going got harder and tougher and soon there were more shouts of 'Slow downnnn...' and 'Stop, stoppppp....!' from the back to the chagrin of the Rangers who felt we were doing a crawl-pace trek. Along the way, the youths were delighted to see unusual sights of the forest, where ants were of gigantic size, mushrooms of varied colours, patterns and size, iguana, and enormous, poisonous red-headed centipedes and spiders. After much sliding on down slopes, clambering over mounds and intricate intertwined roots, we finally reached Check point 5, to the relief of all. By then all of us were ravenous and in no time, we were digging into the plain fried rice provided. The nearby stream where we were resting became a source of entertainment as we tried to tuck our apples between rocks in the chilly water but ending up having to catch our 'runaway' apples in the gushing stream. Such simple fun and joy is a rare opportunity for us urban Singaporeans to relish!

The return trek was easier as the way was more familiar and somewhat expected,



hence to the relief of the Rangers we were faster....just a little bit though! Along the way, each team had a gunny sack to contribute to nature conservation as we attempted



By midway, water supply ran low, track shoes were also disintegrating beyond recognition, regardless of whether they were branded or not....obviously not made to withstand such harsh terrain activities.....

Catching sight of the Ranger Station meant an end to the gruelling trek, so what one was likely to hear from the foothills was

like a stampede thundering down the formidable staircases. Upon returning to Gate A again, we discovered to our relief that our casualties were well-rested and fine albeit terribly bored. On the way back to Singapore on our chartered bus, we had an evaluation of our challenging trek. All appreciated the opportunity to touch base with nature and the challenge of a mountain trek, but most of all the chance to do bonding with one another. After the evaluation, the noisemaking in the bus gradually dwindled off, due to some dropping off into snooze land and others still wide eye enough to watch an exciting video that ended just in time when we reached Malaysian check point.

Two things that were topmost in our minds when we reached PTC, and that was to have a very good bath and then hit the sack.....certainly a great way to end the day.

(by Sr Maria)



Mangrove Conservation

The mangroves are unique tropical inter-tidal habitats that have been rapidly destroyed due to the development of coastal zones throughout the tropical world. This rapid destruction has also occurred in Singapore, which has been vigorously reclaiming her coasts to increase her total land area for development. The mangroves have long been undervalued in Singapore for their utilitarian and intrinsic values.

The thoughts of mangrove conservation first started in 2006 during our weekly kayaking activity. Mangrove seedlings of different species were seen floating on the surface of the sea. After an appeal from the Straits Time for mangrove conservation, PTC started collecting seedlings and brought them back to PTC. The youths meticulously nursed and nurtured the plants before transplanting them.

As it is part of his NYAA Gold award assignment, our gold award participant Kelvin had been collecting mangrove seedlings during kayak outings and nursed them in PTC. Eventually on 27 March 2009, after nursing 5 mangrove plants for about a year, he organised a kayaking expedition to Jeluntong River in Pulau Ubin for the transplantation of the mangroves. With the help of fellow alumni, he successfully transplanted the 5 mangroves along the bank of the river.

In all, it was a rarest opportunity for the alumni to come together as a team for kayaking and at the same time fulfilling a meaningful service of mangrove conservation.

(by KCC)





Moving on... ITE... RP

On 18 April the Alumni held a talk at PTC to give the youths there, an overall idea of what ITE life is and the different courses offered. We also gave a presentation of our individual courses to allow them to have an insight of what our courses have to offer. In addition we gave them more information about the CCAs that are offered in the different colleges. One of our Alumni members from *Applied Food Science* brought different flavorings like butter, curry, vanilla, pandan to let our students understand the important use of our sensory faculties in the the course.

In addition, we also touched on the career prospects that are made available to them if they were to graduate from the



individual courses. It was also the first time that we had both the Sec 3s and Sec 4s participate in this talk. For the Sec 3s, it would allow them a longer time of preparation to achieve their aim. The target audience was the Sec 4s as they would be graduating this year end.

We invited teachers from College East to elaborate on the ITE special college admission scheme (SCAS) whereby ITE consider students with special talents and

achievement, for direct admission to ITE full-time Nitec courses. Students may apply under the different areas like Sports, Performing & Visual Arts, Leadership; Entrepreneurship & Innovation and Course-related skills.

Overall, the feedback given by the students was positive like, "I was given information about the different types of courses and the course that I wanted".

After the ITE talk, Mr Stanley Goh, a lecturer from Republic Polytechnic (RP) introduced us to the diploma courses that are available. We also clarified our queries him. What is interesting about RP is that there are no major exams but there are lots of tests. RP is a wireless and paperless Polytechnic, and



everything is done by computer. It is an advantage because nowadays there are students carrying laptops around to assist them in their school work. Some of our alumni are now studying in Temasek Polytechnic and Singapore Polytechnic after having achieved good results at ITEs.

(by Kelvin & Alumni)



Kayaking Expedition

After 1 month of discussions, planning and preparation, the 3D/2N kayaking expedition for the 8 NYAA Silver participants (Sec 3s) finally arrived. This Adventurous Journey is a requirement for NYAA. Three NYAA Gold participants (Sec 4s) were roped in to guide and mentor the Sec 3s during the expedition. The Saturday morning saw everyone packing and loading onto the lorry all logistics, food, personal bags and kayaks, and off to Changi we went. The mood of the youths was energetic and excited as Changi beach came into sight. Unloading of logistics and kayaks unto the beach was done swiftly. After briefing the day's programme including accessing the weather and deciding on leaders at different checkpoints, the youths eagerly got together with their allocated partners and into the kayaks they went.

All 7 kayakers began their journey across the Changi shipping channel, keeping left of Frog Island (Pulau Seduku) and following the coast line of Pulau Ubin. With a few pit stops of rests in between, we soon found ourselves approaching Pulau Ketam, a landmark as the leaders pointed out as an indication that the mouth of Jelutong River was nearby. As we entered Jelutong River, the next pair of leaders led us in, pointing out all the landmarks visible on our maps as we made our way to the Jelutong Bridge, the venue of our lunch. The bridge came into view, and so did other kayakers, indicating that other kayakers were in the vicinity. We beached up, secured our kayaks and took the necessary logistics and food required for lunch. Lunch went smoothly, seeing pairs cooking together and sharing a hot piping meal of instant noodles and other ingredients. With

everyone's strength replenished and taking the lunch break as adequate rest, together we carried all 7 kayaks over the bridge, which was no easy task as not only were the weight of the kayaks a challenge, but the additional weight of all the logistics atop the kayaks too. With a lot of teamwork, coordination and cooperation, all 7 kayaks made it across safely and off we went again into the river, being led by the next pair of leaders. The leaders leading the team were



tested on their memory of their last visit to the river, making sure that every turn and bend they chose to take was correct. The exit of the Jelutong River soon greeted us and cheers erupted from the team. Making a right turn at the exit, we followed down the coastline, and Maman beach came into view. We

beached up, unloading all our logistics and equipments, forming a human chain to transfer the load up to the campsite and securing the kayaks so they would not drift off in the night. Once the tents were set up, 1 group went to look for firewood, the other to head down to a small hut to buy mineral water and soft drinks. Bath time soon ensued, as the youths experienced how it was like not being able to use any proper shower facilities, just using 1.5-litre bottles to fill up with water to wash their bodies, washing of hair by squatting down in front of washing points to wash the shampoo off and helping one another take turns filling up the bottles with water from the water point. It was truly a whole new experience for most of the youths who were used to readily available facilities like a heater, proper shower head, lighting, etc. Dinner time was also a new experience for most of the youths, cooking rice in a mess tin, making sure the right amount of water for the rice, cutting and adding

ingredients, and making sure the rice is soft and most importantly, edible! It was an enjoyable time for everyone, cooking and cracking jokes together. Darkness grew closer and as it began to rain we moved to a shelter and together in a circle shared what each had felt, learnt and experienced in the day. As the evaluation came to a close, so did the rain and we made our way back to our tents. The youths got into their allocated tents and began their journaling of the day for their NYAA. Chattering of voices could be heard from the tents, but soon died down when most of the youths were overcome by weariness from the day's events and drifted off to sleep.



After a hurried breakfast we set off with our new allocated partners for the day and headed towards Coney Island, our lunch time venue. Our trip there was riddled with inconsistently erratic pelting rain, dark clouds and thunder, but we pressed on, as we all knew the dangers of being in open waters under such conditions, and partly because we soon felt the pangs of hunger and cold. Coney Island finally came into sight and upon beaching up on the banks chosen by the leaders; the usual logistics and food for lunch were brought out and set up. Lighters became an issue as most had become damp and unusable. Fortunately there was ONE dry enough to enable the lighting up of our gas stoves and the other lighters. With tide and weather against us, lunch was prepared and gobbled up quickly as we did not want to encounter the waves spilling into our lunch, washing away our logistics, nor eating in the rain. With that, we were off again, only to encounter yet again heavy rain on our journey. Our next stop for the night was New Campsite, and with good leadership by the Silver participants and consistent encouragement and guiding from the Gold participants, we soon found ourselves beaching up onto New Campsite. Everything needed to be brought up to shore and closer to our tenting area, so it took awhile to get everything up. Ensuring that everything was in place, the pitching up of tents soon

came into sight, along with the discovery of ants all over the place. It was a difficult task choosing an appropriate tent site and 1 youth creatively thought of making a moat around 1 of the tents he would be sleeping in. Dinner was instant mash potatoes together with pasta. Evaluation was next and each gave an account of their experiences, sights and feelings they had encountered for the day. Time to hit the sack and the snores came much quicker than the previous night. Morning came before we knew it, and the same old routine of freshening up, preparing for breakfast and setting off followed. What was different was we were looking forward to this last day of the camp, heading back to Changi where we last left the lorry, looking forward to Changi Village food and heading back to PTC. Setting off to Changi Beach once final checks and loading was completed at New Campsite saw the journey seeing and feeling the youths full of anticipation and longing, for ready cooked food, sugared drinks, of proper bathing facilities and proper bedding. But what they also took away with them as they paddled hard towards their final destination was an experience no one could take away from them and lessons learnt that can never be taught in a classroom or within 4 walls.



The changes could be seen and felt as each of them showed mass potential in their leading, directing, organizing, teamwork and love for nature and the outdoors since the start of this expedition. As the kayaks beached up and the youths emerged from them, they left behind only footprints of their wonderful and adventurous journey, but imbedded in their hearts and minds were the lessons, experiences and memories that will one day be shared with their juniors.

(by SQ)