



CHILDREN WORK BEGINS

The pair of 12 year-olds casually recounted their recent “colourful” past – at age 10, *Michael** was involved in gang activities and committed theft; *Nigel** revealed that he smoked cigarettes, sniffed glue and used pornography.

Primary 6 children hanging out at the New Life Youth Hub have shared at varying degrees, their liaison with vices since young. “Those who come to the Youth Hub are only a very tiny fraction of what’s really happening out there. It’s very disturbing,” said Ms Dawn Ang, Children Services Programme Coordinator.

In her meeting with Mr Liang Eng Hwa, Member of Parliament for Holland-Bukit Timah GRC (Zhenghua), Ms Ang learnt that several primary schools need assistance with increased delinquent activities on-campus outside classroom hours. Schools have also identified more than 100 primary 1 to 4 students with literacy problems.

A quick check with other voluntary welfare organisations in the neighbourhood found that these offered tuition and student care services predominantly to mainstream children. School

counsellors addressed problems students faced in schools but they largely did not manage cases or mediate between the school and distressed parents. There is a void of services to address issues children are facing.

The Work Begins

In January 2009, New Life Community Services Centre established Children Services to provide specialised programmes and services for children in the community. More importantly, it aims to build a next generation that is resilient and empowered for growth.

“We need to mentor our young. Not only must we provide a nurturing environment, more importantly we need to balance their physical, emotional, social, intellectual and moral growth for holistic development. We believe that every child can grow to his or her potential and make character-driven choices,” said Ms Ang, who is spearheading the new service.

New Life Children will reach the children in the community via a three-pronged approach: School-based, Centre-based and Community-based.

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New Life Community Services Centre is affiliated to Covenant Evangelical Free Church and a member of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

In School-based, we will work closely with primary schools through student mentoring, talks and workshops, and even establish Befriending Clubs in schools. As we build our capacity, we aim to eventually provide case management support to bridge the gap between schools and distressed parents.

In Centre-based, Children Services aims to establish a Children Centre that will offer Drop-In as well as Student Care Services. This Centre will be safe haven for unsupervised children to play, study and make friends. We are in the process of applying for a space to build the Centre.



In Community-based, for a start, we will provide educational support for needy at-risk children, who are lagging in school. For instance, the Steady Readers Programme will assist children with literacy issues and Creative Learning programmes will aid their academic development.

New Life Children will work closely with schools, grassroot organisations, fellow service providers and families to deliver value-added children services to the community.

For more details on how you can partner New Life, contact us at volunteer@newlife.org.sg or donate@newlife.org.sg.

** Not their real names.*

Details have been changed to protect the identity of individuals.



儿童工作 展开了

这一对十二岁的男生不以为然地谈起他们多彩的‘过去’——在十岁时,麦克*已经加入了私会党并犯下了偷窃行为。奈格尔*也透露,他在同龄时已经开始吸烟、吸胶毒和使用色情刊物。

一些常去新生青年聚会中心的小六学生,也不时透露他们自小就染上的恶习。对此,新生儿童服务中心的洪珮滢小姐表示:“这些常到聚会中心去的学生只是一小部分而已,其实目前社会上类似这样的学生还有很多。这种情况实在令人担忧。”

洪小姐与连荣华先生,荷兰-武吉知马集选区议会会面时了解到附近邻里学校所面临的‘危机’。许多学生在课余时间,因无人看管,在校园内进行违法的活动,如吸烟、偷窃等。校方已向连议员求助。学校也透露,在小学一至四年级的学生中,有大约100名学生在阅读和学习方面有困难。

新生调查发现,在武吉班让一带的福利组织,主要为主流儿童而设,专提供补习之类的课外服务。而在校园内,辅导员除了协助学生们应付在课堂上所面对的问题,一般上都不处理学生个案或与调解根本问题。区内显然欠缺儿童所需的服务。

工作展开

今年一月,新生成立了专为儿童而设的儿童服务中心。这项新服务旨在帮助儿童茁壮地成长,从而塑造坚强的下一代。

开发这项新服务的洪小姐表示:“我们必须指导我们的孩童。我们不只是要提供给他们一个良好的学习环境,更重要的是让他们

在身心、情感、社交、智力与道德各方面都能均衡发展。我们深信每个孩子都能够按照他们的潜能去发展,根据他们的性格去作出人生的选择。”

新生儿童服务中心将会通过三大管道来提供服务——学校、中心和社区。

学校方面:我们将会与校方紧密合作提供学生辅导、讲座和讲习班,甚至设立学生俱乐部。随着新生儿童服务的扩充,我们计划为校方和问题学生的家长之间提供调解与协助。

中心方面:我们希望成立一所儿童中心提供学生托管服务。此中心也会是一个安全的儿童聚会场所。我们已经向有关当局提供申请设立此中心。

社区方面:在这初期,我们将提供教育支援给学业欠佳的问题儿童。例如:阅读课程(Steady Readers Programme)——专为阅读能力较弱的儿童而设;还有创意学习项目以加强他们的学习能力。

新生儿童服务中心将与学校、基层组织、家长及其他非盈利组织携手共创这些多样化的服务。

预知更多详情,请电邮至volunteer@newlife.org.sg或donate@newlife.org.sg。

*为保护当事人的身份,姓名以译名取代。



DAWN OF CHILDREN SERVICES

From conducting youth and children programmes to pioneering a new service — Ms Dawn Ang, who joined New Life a little more than a year ago, has been tasked with spearheading the new Children Services. She talked about her passion and excitement for children's work.

Q: Why do you enjoy working with children?

Ms Ang: Children give me joy, whether they are naughty or nice. When I look at them, I see a short past but a vast and limitless future. I want to be a part of their future by investing in their lives. That gives me joy.

Q: Why were you chosen to pioneer this new service?

Ms Ang: Calling, passion, gifting and God's grace. When I came onboard in August 2007, I was already certain of my calling to work with children. Although there was no Children Services, I've been conducting children-related programmes while working with youths. When plans for Children Services surfaced, I was offered the opportunity by New Life's Centre Manager to pioneer the work.

Q: What's Children Services about?

Ms Ang: Affirmation, character & opportunity. We seek to affirm each child's



Ms Dawn Ang, pioneering Children Services.

worth, building character and giving each child the opportunity to learn and grow to his or her potential.

Q: How do you envision Children Services to impact the children in the community?

Ms Ang: We aim to engage children to positively impact them, empowering them to become eager learners, well-adjusted and purposeful. We will work closely with schools and grassroots leaders to establish our presence in the community and actively engage parents and caregivers in order to impact these young lives.

Q: How do you feel about pioneering Children Services?

Ms Ang: I'm very thankful for my superiors' belief in me, offering me this rare opportunity to grow with the organisation. I'm especially grateful to my supervisor Mr Nelson Ong, Centre Manager Ms Dianna Ooi, as well as MP Mr Liang Eng Hwa and his personal Assistant Ms Soh Teng Hua, for their advice and unwavering support.

Q: What are some of the challenges ahead?

Ms Ang: Getting the right people on board, staff and volunteers, who share the vision and passion to build young lives.



A LESSON ON BOUNDARY

*Youths hitting the books,
a common scene now at
the Youth Hub during peak
examination periods.*

A teenage couple fondling each other in a corner; a group of boys exchanging vulgarities over a game of pool; yet another group of teens discussing their gangster-related activities brazenly.

This was the mayhem at the New Life Youth Hub in its early days.

House rules have since been implemented to send a strong signal to the youths that ill-behaviours were not welcomed at the Hub. But beyond the list of “dos” and “don’ts” lie a more crucial lesson on boundaries.

“Youths being youths, they like to have fun and push the limits,” said Mr Nelson Ong, New Life Youth Manager. “We want to help them understand the importance of keeping within boundaries. The house rules were intended to help them grow.”

Youth Centre Programme Coordinator Mr Joshua Cheng recalled that when the rules were strongly enforced at the beginning of 2006, some youths reacted with unhappiness and challenged the rules. However, the majority of the youths were cooperative.

“For a start, we created awareness. Most of the youths didn’t even know the meaning of the dialect expletives they had been using,” said Mr Cheng. “They simply followed their friends. Once we explained the meaning, they realised that it was wrong and stopped using them.”



However, those who persisted in their ill-behaviour would be “banned” from the Hub for the day.

In addition to the enforcement of rules, Mr Cheng added that consistent quality time with youths would make deeper changes in them. “The quality of the relationship marks how far you can go,” said the programme coordinator.

Youth Hub members Toh Yaorong, 15 and Alvin Ee, 14, could not be more thankful for the improved atmosphere at the Youth Hub, thanks to the house rules. For them, coming to the Hub is a daily must, not only to meet their friends but also to study.

“I can study with friends at the Youth Hub. But if there are gangsters and bad people, I wouldn’t come here anymore,” said Yaorong.

Alvin agreed. “I feel safe at the Youth Hub.”



EARLY FOUNDATION IN CHINESE



The 200-strong audience watched in amazement as 6-year-old Lim Jing En delivered her word-perfect Kindergarten graduation speech in Chinese at the New Life Childcare Graduation Ceremony in November 2008.

According to her father, Mr Lim Ming Fang, Jing Eng would “shock” him occasionally with her use of profound Chinese words. He added that her level of Chinese was so strong she was able to read books for Primary 2 students.

In her letter to New Life Childcare, Mrs Louisa Ng thanked the Chinese teachers for laying an “excellent foundation in Chinese language” in her daughter Gabriela, who achieved “extremely good results in Beacon Primary School”.

The Centre also received a 2009 Chinese New Year greeting card from a parent, thanking Chinese teacher Mdm Shi Rui Ju for building a strong Chinese

foundation in her child, who graduated from Childcare in 2006 and is currently in Primary 3.

Of such multiple positive feedbacks, Senior Chinese Teacher Mdm Xiao Rui Hua was delighted. As the head of the Chinese team, she was largely instrumental in building and improving the quality of the curriculum at New Life Childcare. But the soft-spoken Chinese national from Shanghai quickly added that “there’s more work to be done”.

Mdm Xiao, who has been teaching the subject in Singapore for the last 13 years, said she felt a deep sense of responsibility to lay a strong Chinese foundation in young children to interest them in the language.

“Most children in Singapore grow up speaking predominantly English and are exposed to many other dialects. It’s not easy for them to learn Chinese. As a



Another day in the classroom. Senior Chinese Teacher Mdm Xiao Rui Hua, captivating her young students.



Peer learning and interaction encourages use of the language and boosts the child's confidence.

childcare teacher, I have the opportunity to lay the Chinese foundation early, so I have to teach it right, to make Chinese fun and easy to learn," she said.

Chinese teacher Shi Rui Ju concurred. "The objective is to nurture in them a keen interest in the Chinese language so that they will continue to grow in it," she said.

A 2006 study by the Chinese Language Curriculum and Pedagogy Review Committee (CLCPRC), under the Ministry of Education, noted the growing trend of reduced exposure to the Chinese Language among Primary 1 children. The use of English as a predominant language in the home of Primary 1-going children has risen from 36% in 1994 to 50% in 2004. Parents with higher education were more likely to use the English Language at home with their children. The study also noted that

students found the Chinese Language difficult to learn.

Asked how she and her team of 5 Chinese teachers made the supposedly "difficult" language easy for young children, Mdm Xiao replied, "There's no secret but there are a few keys."

"Create an interesting learning environment; engage all 5 senses through experiential learning; organise creative activities such role-play games, music and drama; and encourage interaction among children. But most importantly, teachers must have a strong grasp of the language in order to teach it right and appropriately," she said.

In her 14 years of teaching, Mdm Shi was experienced with all levels of childcare children. She would customise her lessons to the level of children under her care.

"Nursery children learn through play as they have shorter attention span, compared to Kindergarten children. I'd incorporate music and creative games to keep lessons fresh and fun," said Mdm Shi, who is currently studying for her Diploma in Early Childhood Teaching.

According to Mdm Xiao, each year the team would review the curriculum and delivery methods. "We must continuously improve our teaching standards. It's never ending. The positive remarks will spur us on to bring our curriculum to a higher level."

For Your Interest.

Christmas-cum-Birthday Party!

Youth Hub closed its doors from 3pm to 6.30pm on 23 Dec 2008 for their annual Christmas-cum-Birthday Party. Organised by the Youth Hub Committee for Hub staff and members, participants were treated to an afternoon of games and laughter, including a satirical video presentation tribute to the Youth Workers!



Southern Ridges Walk

It was a remarkable 9km walk in the park. More than 20 youths from the Youth Hub embarked on the Southern Ridges Walk on 1 December 2008, an excursion organised by the

Youth Centre. The youths were pushed to their limits during the long march, walking from breakfast till dinner time!

Childcare Yearend Concert 2008

The 200-strong audience went ga-ga over the performances of the ever-so adorable toddlers and pre-primary schoolers on 15 November 2008. Dressed in colourful outfits, the children did their thing on stage while parents watched on with swelling pride. The annual event also featured the graduation of 14 K2 students. Vice-Chairman of New Life, Reverend Dr Chua Chung Kai was the Guest-Of-Honour for the event.



UPCOMING EVENTS

7 Mar, Volunteer Orientation

Keen to volunteer with New Life? Find out more on how you can make a difference at the volunteer orientation. Time: 2pm. Register via email at volunteer@newlife.org.sg

14 Mar, 3-on-3 Basketball Challenge

The 3-a-side Basketball Challenge is here again! Be part of the slam dunk action! Time: 8am-1pm @ Fajar Basketball Court (next to Blk 419) Register at Youth Hub or call 6892 4419 Closing Date: 27 Feb 2009

20 April, Chill Out @ Youth Hub

The once-a-quarter forum for youths will touch on topics ranging from family relations and studies to BGR.

OUR SERVICES

New Life Childcare (Bukit Panjang)
*Nurturing Wholesome Children
In Partnership With Parents*

New Life Children (Bukit Panjang)
*Shaping Young Lives,
Moulding Our Future*

**New Life Youth
(Bukit Panjang & Woodlands)**
Building Resilience & Developing Character

SUPPORT NEW LIFE!

New Life Community Services Centre is a not-for-profit, voluntary welfare organisation committed to serving the community through a range of programmes and services in order to *build the next generation*.

Donations received in the current year are eligible for tax deduction in the following year. Until further notice, tax deduction will be 2.5 times the value of donations made. For more information, call **6892 4366** or email donate@newlife.org.sg

By Cheque: Payable to

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Please furnish your name, NRIC/FIN no., address and contact no. on the back of the cheque.

By Credit Card: Please go to

www.donation.org.sg/call_newlife_frame.html

By Interbank Transfer: Please transfer funds to OCBC Current Account: **7339-581-473667001**. Please state your NRIC/FIN no. as payer name.

By Interbank GIRO: Please obtain a GIRO form from us or call 6892 4366.

Please furnish your full name and NRIC/FIN number in order to enjoy tax deduction.