

A CLUB FOR CHARACTER

Excited chattering filled the New Life Youth Hub. It was packed with 23 children attending the inaugural Kids Champ Club activity, Children's Bazaar, held on 21 November 2009.

The young participants were treated to an afternoon of fun, from hand and face paintings, balloons sculpting to bead jewellery-making and creative drinks blending.

Parents were equally excited, not at the games but the establishment of Kids Champ Club, right at their doorstep. They learnt that the Club's purpose is to model character and impart values to their children.

According to Ms Dawn Ang, Acting Head of New Life's Children Services, Kids Champ Club is a platform for children to connect meaningfully, feel a sense of belonging and love, and learn character values in a safe environment. This is a new initiative of the Children Services.



Said one parent, Mdm Kelly Loo, "This is a very good programme. They teach good values, and I approve of it very much."

Why Character?

Senior Minister of State for National Development Ms Grace Fu said at the 2nd International Conference on Character Development Through Service and Experiential Learning, held on 17 March 2009, "Character development and the fostering of values are important in preparing young people to contribute to society."

Ms Ang agreed. She added, "Character gives children an inner moral compass. It is only with character that children could grow up resilient

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and able to make sound decisions in life."

At Kids Champ Club, volunteers teach character qualities like Punctuality and Obedience through the many activities. For instance, the children learnt that "Punctuality is showing esteem for others by doing the right thing at the right time."



Volunteers show the way.

Volunteers Make the Difference

In her address at the conference, the Senior Minister stressed the importance of role models. She said, "Positive role models are also vital in character and values education."

Indeed, mentoring is the key to character formation at the Kids Champ Club where volunteers model key character qualities for children to follow.

"Without volunteers, there will not be any intentional relationships built," said Ms Ang. "Children look up to mentors and look forward to the relationship."

It was not just the children who enjoy the relationship. "I love talking to the kids," said Ms Lee Min Rong, 29, a teacher and pioneer volunteer. "It is really fun to know what they are thinking, what interests them and get a glimpse of what their world is like."

Each volunteer is assigned to mentor a group of 5 children to help them understand and apply the character qualities. Other volunteers specialise in creatively crafting and conducting activities that build character.

"I hope to see the children have fun while learning good character," said Ms Lee. "It would really bless my heart to see a child who used to arrive late for the programme to come on time or early, or a child who used to be rude, say his 'thank you' and 'please'".

"I'm thankful for the volunteers," said Ms Ang. "They are a passionate, energetic and wonderful group with a big heart for children."

As the Club Grows

Kids Champ Cub now has 25 children attending regularly. "We are at full capacity already," said Ms Ang.



Storytime at Kids Champ Club!

As the Club grows, Ms Ang intends to have separate, age-appropriate activities for both the older children and the younger children so that they are better engaged. For this to be possible, the Club would need at least 10 more volunteers.

“Ultimately, the Kids Champ Club seeks to mentor children to become character champions.”

Ms Dawn Ang,
Acting Head,
New Life Children

The Kids Champ Club

The Kids Champ Club is a programme of New Life's Children Services.

Who? For children 7-12 years old.

What? Character-building through fun and mentoring.

When? Saturday afternoons fortnightly.

Where? Blk 419 Fajar Road, #01-449, New Life Youth Hub.

Want to find out more? Email us at volunteer@newlife.org.sg or call us at 6892 4366.

Character First!

The Kids Champ Club uses the Character First! materials that teaches 49 character qualities, such as attentiveness, gratefulness, and sincerity.

It uses a 3-step process:

- **Emphasising character**
- **Requiring character**
- **Recognising character.**

When Character First! was first developed in the United States of America it successfully reversed low morale, illegal drug use and high absenteeism in a manufacturing plant. It is now used in schools, prisons, corporations and government departments in over 25 countries worldwide, including many schools in Singapore.





A PROJECT OF LOVE

Ten-year-old Alice* and her 5-year-old brother live with their grandfather, who has stomach cancer. Their father is imprisoned. Their mother started serving her 1-year prison sentence in February 2010.

Sounds like television drama? Their ordeal is real. Since her ailing grandfather could not work, Alice was assisted with NTUC vouchers from Project Love every month.

"I'm very grateful for this help," said Alice's mother in January, as she collected the vouchers in person one last time. "It is for the essential needs of the kids. Without this help, it would be very tough."

What is Project Love?

Project Love was conceived to reach the lower income strata of communities served by New Life with direct financial aid. It aims to provide help to families who may have

fallen through the cracks of existing social safety networks, focusing specifically on education and subsistence.

Since it was launched in July 2009, Project Love has assessed 57 families and approved more than \$12,000 for disbursement to 49 children in 27 families. Cases were referred from schools, grassroots organisations, other social service agencies, childcare centres as well as identified from among New Life's own service users.

According to New Life's Social Worker Ms Tess Hng, a typical distressed family helped by Project Love commonly has one or more members coping with issues such as major illness, mental health problems or imprisonment. "The family's relationships are often strained and they are unable to work together to overcome the problems. As a result, it is the children who suffer," said Ms Hng.

More than Money

Project Love adopts a holistic approach where financial needs are not the sole focus. Other issues that may either perpetuate or worsen the situation are also addressed.

Ms Hng related the example of a Primary 2 boy* whose parents were also incarcerated. He lived with his grandmother and often missed school due to oversleeping, even though his classes were in the afternoon. After careful assessment, Ms Hng narrowed the critical areas of need to school transportation and relationship with his grandmother.

Using Project Love funds, a school bus service was arranged for the boy as well as counselling support on the side. With

such simple interventions, the boy's grandmother reported that he has since learned routine and become regular in school. Teachers have even remarked on his improved attitude and performance in the new academic year.

The right assessment is the key. The decision on whether help is given, how much, the duration and nature of help given is a matter of professional judgment. "Sometimes, financial help by itself may bring more harm than help," said Ms Hng.

"We have to assess whether the family will be responsible in using the resources we offer. We also have to be careful to not eliminate all healthy stress that motivates families to own and overcome their problems, thereby becoming stronger."

In Project Love, the financial aid is used to relieve the pressures that threaten to overwhelm a family in distress. This relief enables them to regain their ability to cope and allows them to grow stronger in the long term.

"We have a lot of work with groups of children and youth in our (Youth) Hub and in schools," said Ms Hng. "But with Project Love, I see myself as a bridge that can bring blessings directly into people's lives and homes."

Project Love
aims to give children
from needy families
access to basic
education so that the
next generation need
not remain trapped by
poverty.



Social Worker Tess Hng engages a family.

For enquiries, please call Ms Tess Hng at **6892 8105** or email **projectlove@newlife.org.sg**

**Names and other details have been changed to protect the family's privacy.*



TCHOUKBALL!

"Tchouk!" The ball ricocheted off the angled trampoline-like frame and zipped past two catchers. They lunged for it, and missed. The ball hit the court floor – one point scored!

Tchoukball (pronounced "chuke-ball") is a relatively young sport in Singapore. It is also the New Life Youth team's latest sport for building character and resilience in youths.

"It's fun to play and attractive for youths to learn," said Mr Eric Sng, New Life Youth Programme Coordinator. "With a new sport, there is a level playing field for youths to try out. Youths with less physical abilities are less intimidated and more willing to try."

Fellow Youth Programme Coordinator Ms Mie Takatsuji, agreed. "I've only tried it 3 or 4 times, and I can play!" she said. "Everyone on the team has a chance to play. It is a very friendly game that even beginners can play."

Mr David Kok, a physical education teacher at Christ Church Secondary, said that the sport has gained such a momentum that the students were asking him for the equipment to play during recess.

Youth worker
Benny Lim
shooting a
point.

Competition, not Aggression

"Although the sport is very competitive, it is non-aggressive," said Mr Sng. "It is a battle of wits, skills, team chemistry and strategy, not just physical prowess. Mixed gender teams are common for recreational play. People at varying levels of skill and abilities can play together and still enjoy the game."

Mr Kok agreed. He said, "Although there is no contact and totally no interception, you get a good workout, comparable to most other competitive sports like soccer and basketball."

It is this unique quality that makes tchoukball an ideal mentoring platform. One of New Life Youth's primary strategy is mentoring youths on character through sports. Among other things, New Life's staff and volunteers impart values such

as responsibility for oneself, relationship with teammates and respect for the opponent.

“There was a boy who used to be a spectacular player. But after understanding the game better, he has toned down and is now focused on helping the team win instead of just showing off,” said Mr Sng.

What's Next?

Since New Life Youth took up tchoukball in the latter half of 2009, it has taught the sport to more than 400 Secondary 1 and 2 students at Christ Church Secondary School. It has also conducted informal workshops for youths in the Bukit Panjang community and formed teams for club and district-level competitions.

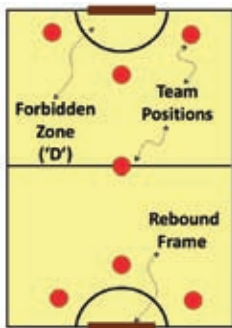
To date, the responses have been positive and Mr Sng aims to bring it further in 2010 by forming new teams and extending the sport to more schools.



*Keen to be part of the team? Email us at volunteer@newlife.org.sg or call **6892 4366**.*

How to Play?

Each team has 7 players. To score, players bounce the ball off either frame on the sides of the court such that it hits the floor outside the “D”. Players may only take 3 steps before passing and the team may only pass thrice before shooting. Teams may not block, tackle or obstruct the other team. The only defense is to catch the ball on rebound before it hits the floor.



Sounds easy? The actual play requires tactics and is full of surprises.

“It is a very intense and fast-paced game that tests teamwork and chemistry,” said Mr Sng. New Life Youth volunteer Mr Alan Yong concurred. “The pace changes very fast and the challenge is to keep up with the game,” said Mr Yong.

Do You Know?

“Tchouk” is the sound made when the ball bounces off the frame.

Swiss biologist Dr Hermann Brandt invented the game in 1970 to create a non-contact sport with minimal injuries. Although relatively young, the sport has already gained a worldwide following.

Tchoukball was introduced to Singapore only in 2006 but the Singapore team has already attained 4th place in world rankings. During the 2009 World Games, the debuting Singapore men's team beat many stronger and experienced teams to clinch the bronze medal.

For.Your.Interest.



Germs Go Away!

Local theatre group Act 3 Theatrics, the theatre group came to presented a 30-min play "Germs Go Away" sponsored by the Health Promotion Board at New Life Childcare on 4 Nov 2009. The children learnt the importance of personal hygiene and what to do when they fall ill.

Children Services Volunteer Training

20 volunteers for the Steady Readers and Kids Champ Club underwent their respective training courses on 30 and 31 Jan.

X'mas in the City

Some 20 youths and youth workers prowled downtown Singapore to celebrate Christmas in an Amazing-Race styled event. It saw 20 participants and youth workers having fun down town.

Caring for Sight

The children in New Life Childcare visited the Vision Care Hub to learn the importance of good vision care habits on 8 and 9 Dec 2009.



Childcare Concert

The months of practice by the children finally came to fruition as a crowd of 200 parents and friends gathered for the annual Childcare Concert on 31 Oct 2009. The concert included the K2 class graduation and lunch.

UPCOMING EVENTS

27 Feb

Kids Champ Club Parents Day

Parents will get to participate in activities planned for them. Call 6892 4353 for details.

1 Mar

New Life Childcare Open House for Parents

Parents' tour of the facilities after cyclical maintenance is completed.

20 Mar

3-on-3 Basketball Challenge

Registration is open for both men's and women's U-19 and U-16 teams.

Register at Youth Hub or call 6892 4419

Closing Date: 8 Mar 2010

Mar-May

UpNorth Tchoukball League

5 youth organisations in Woodlands will compete in league games. New Life Youth is forming a team. For enquiries, call Eric at 6892 4419.

OUR SERVICES

New Life Childcare (Bukit Panjang)

*Nurturing Wholesome Children
In Partnership With Parents*

New Life Children (Bukit Panjang)

*Love Children by Mentoring them
to become Character Champions*

New Life Youth

(Bukit Panjang & Woodlands)

*Building Character &
Developing Resilience*

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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 that will *build the next generation*.

Donations received are eligible for double tax deduction in the following Year of Assessment. For every \$1.00 received via the current online credit card donation portal, New Life pays a service and admin fee of 4.65 cents.

For more information, call **6892 8127** or email to **donate@newlife.org.sg**

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Please go to

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