

IT'S NEVER TOO LATE



Youth Worker Mrs Shirley Teen with Celine (image obscured to protect student's privacy)

“

Finally, I felt that my existence was not pointless.

”

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Just two years ago, life was so miserable for the 15-year-old that she wanted to end it.

Celine*, a long-haired Secondary 3 student, recounted the issues she faced then. "There were complicated matters at home, I was failing in school, I felt hated by my teachers and my only friend in school betrayed me," said the quiet, soft-spoken girl.

"I didn't want to go to school anymore but I pretended I was still going to school. I sprouted vulgarities and splurged money. I was rebellious and hot-tempered. Many times I considered suicide and I would cut my arm with staples."

Connection

During this difficult period, a friend invited her to visit the New Life Youth Hub at Fajar Road. Celine rejected the invitation initially. She explained, "I didn't have friends there so I didn't want to go."

When she visited the Youth Hub subsequently, she was not impressed. "I didn't know what it offered so I did not think much of it," said Celine. Little did she know that her life would change after her first visit.

"The people there were very friendly. Two Youth Hub staff, Eric and Shirley, came to me and chatted with me," she said.

* A pseudonym is used to protect the student's privacy.

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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).

"I told them the problems I was facing. They listened and gave me advice. Finally, I felt that my existence was not pointless. I've never felt such care before."

Touched by the sincere friendships and genuine concern, Youth Hub soon became her second home. The Youth Hub team was her big brothers and sisters, always ready to offer a listening ear and a shoulder for her to lean on.

As the family atmosphere rubbed off on her, Celine began to see her life differently and started making changes. With the guidance and support of the Youth Hub team and volunteers, Celine found her footing, returned to school, and began restoring her relationships with her own family.

Change

However, Celine struggled in her schoolwork due to her prolonged absence from school. Help came in the form of Linda Soon, a first-time New Life volunteer tutor.

A teacher at the Singapore Girls' Home, Linda found that it came naturally when she began to coach Celine in Science and Maths. "I have been teaching for more than 10 years and this is what I do best. I wanted to contribute with what I could offer," said the mother of two.



Linda, Celine's coach



Celine, a keen learner

Not only was she coaching Celine in her studies, her maternal insights also gave Celine fresh perspectives on her relationship with her own mother.

Celine beamed with pride as she shared her mother's comments on the changes in her. "My mother said I have become more mature and obedient, very different from my rebellious days," she said.

Celine's hard work paid off too when she passed her year-end exams with flying colours. Her tutor Linda was also encouraged by the outcome of her first volunteer assignment. "The sense of being able to give back is very fulfilling," she said.

Contribution

Celine felt that the New Life Youth Hub was instrumental in turning her life around and wanted to give back to New Life. She has been actively involved in service-learning projects since, like bringing children from a family service centre to the Marina Barrage and interacting with the

elderly. Another opportunity came when New Life Youth organised a cupcake sale fund-raiser in 2009. Celine was a committed member who baked cupcakes alongside other Youth Hub members.

"Celine likes to help out," said Mrs Shirley Teen, New Life Youth Programme Coordinator. "She is very faithful and will make sure everything's done. She has a very keen learning attitude and she is very teachable. She takes advice seriously and will diligently apply what she learns."

These days, Celine would occasionally bring her sister in Secondary 1 to join her at the Youth Hub. She is eagerly waiting for her youngest sister, currently in Primary 5, to move up to the secondary level so that she too could participate in the new life experience.

"It's never too late to know that I am wrong and start anew. I finally know what I want and how I'm going to achieve my goals. I will work hard and strive my best for it," said the teenager with a smile.

Keen to know more about the Youth Hub?

Call **6892 4419** or email [**youth@newlife.org.sg**](mailto:youth@newlife.org.sg)



Youth hubbers in a fundraising project

VOLUNTEERS'

Lee Min Rong

I Grew to Love Children



When I first worked with children, I was not able to talk at their level. It did not seem that I was loving them as much as my friends were.

As time passed, I think God groomed me. My love for children, especially the disadvantaged, grew. I just wanted to be able to help them in any way I could.

Volunteering has been rewarding. I learned so much from fellow volunteers' unique ways of interacting with children. I am stirred by their passion, and inspired by their talents.

Each child comes with a different set of temperament, character traits, burdens and interests. There is no fixed way of

Jeremy Koh

Volunteering Builds My Family



Volunteering has always been a part of my life. I started volunteering in New Life by giving parenting talks, something I had already been doing.

Delivering parenting talks helped me to be a better parent.

When I am scheduled to give a talk, I would discuss specific aspects of parenting with my own family. So, even my children have become indirect contributors for the principles and tips that I give.

interaction. My reward is seeing a child finally being able to read or finally having someone to talk to.



As clichéd as it sounds, it really is more blessed to give than to receive. Even if it takes time out of our busy schedules, knowing you have made a difference in a child's life is more than enough to make up for everything.

Ms Lee Min Rong is a secondary school science teacher and volunteers in both the Steady Readers and Kids Champ Club programmes.

Min Rong coaching children.

VOICES

Jeremy with his wife Suan Ai, and children Samantha, Josiah and Elliot.



When my family helps out, we get exposed to various people and problems. After serving the less fortunate, my children see their own blessings and realise that they do not have much to complain about. Their perspectives and value system become more balanced. So, volunteering helps me teach my kids in a less obvious but effective way.

Volunteering as a family makes family time more meaningful and creates bonding. This is better than shopping!

Mr Jeremy Koh runs his own business and conducts Family Life Education programmes for New Life as a volunteer.

Alan Yong

Start Small



When I started volunteering, I did not know what to expect, but I wanted to gain experience.

I initially thought I would be a great help to youths in their studies. However, it turns out that most of them do not really study at the Youth Hub. I spent most of my time there playing pool or games with them.

I learned that you cannot expect to see the results immediately. It takes a long time to build relationships and trust.

Volunteering has really helped me improve my listening skills. The youths know that you are there because of them and not because you want to earn money.

Start from something that you know you can handle to get a taste of volunteering. Starting small is better than not starting at all.

Mr Alan Yong is a university student and befriender with New Life Youth. He has co-led an outdoor learning expedition to Mt Ophir, helped in camps and workshops, and made friends with youths at the Youth Hub.

Volunteers are a critical resource in New Life's mission.

Email volunteer@newlife.org.sg or call **6892 4366** to find out more.

PARENTS CHEER NEW LIFE CHILDCARE

Camera flashes filled the classroom as Chinese teacher Ms Evangeline Low led the three and four-year-olds in an animated little dance. The Nursery Classes were having their weekly morning assembly, and there were special guests present — their parents.

Parents were visiting New Life Childcare after the cyclical maintenance was completed in March 2010.

"Parents were invited to experience their children's school life and to see how our improved environment has enhanced the children's learning," said Ms Yvonne Lee, New Life Childcare Supervisor.

Parents were all smiles as they joined their children for breakfast and the morning assembly. They also took a tour of the refurbished facilities including the kitchen, bathrooms and playground.

What's New

Ms Lee said, "The children enjoy the new, clean toilets. Our kitchen is now better equipped. With an oven, we can offer greater variety and healthier options."



Parents join in breakfast

The new playground is a huge draw. "With more challenging equipment, children are able to exercise balance and coordination," said Ms Lee. "We also have weekly water play now with our water trough."

Safety is not overlooked. The new roller-shutters offers added security. Physically, the play area has been enlarged and teachers have more space to plan structured activities.

Appreciations

"There is good ventilation and the premises are very clean," said Ms Jeslin Neo, who waited 9 months to enroll her son Jayden in New Life Childcare. "I'm glad to see that my child is enjoying himself in school and at the same time learning new things."



Ms Alice Ooi added in agreement, "New Life Childcare is very reputable around here. The space is very large, and you have roomy classrooms. You also have well-qualified local teachers."

Another parent, Dr Ong, appreciated the values taught by New Life Childcare. "Children will naturally learn many things on their own," he said, "but there are some things that cannot be left to chance like the teaching of values." Another parent, Ms Luah, commented that her son's discipline at home improved after he began attending New Life Childcare.

The children liked their school too. Dr Ong's wife added that their daughter wanted to come to school even when she was sick.

Mr and Mrs Lim were both amazed that their daughter Xin Hui in Nursery 2 made so much improvement within a short time, especially in her social development. They also reported that she is very happy to come to school.

More Visits

More than 75% of the children's parents attended the visit, and all who came found the visit useful. Mrs Nijendra commented, "It provides an idea of what my child does in school, and also helps me as a parent to be creative and consistent with the nurturing process of my child. The teachers are doing a great job!"

All the parents felt that they would like to have more such visits and parent-teacher meetings. "It's a rare occasion for parents to participate in what their children do," said Ms Luah.

This is in line with New Life Childcare's direction to increase parents' involvement and partner parents in nurturing wholesome children.

The parents' visits took place on 25, 26, 30 and 31 March 2010.



Capturing young memories



Parents experience class



Enjoying healthy exercises

For.Your.Interest.



Time-Out-Programme Camp

Five youths participated in a 3-day-2-night camp on 22-24 Mar. This programme engages students who have played truant and are likely to drop out of school, to help them find reasons to stay in school.

Impacting Character at Home

Ten parents learned on 27 Feb the importance of affirming and encouraging children from Paul Samuel, a veteran parenting coach and father of 2 teenagers. This was the first Parents' Day organised by the Kids Champ Club.

Chinese New Year Celebrations

Bright red replaced the usual blue of New Life's childcare uniform as children turned up to celebrate the Year of the Tiger.



Sportsmanship in Basketball

Eleven basketball teams pitted their skills in New Life's annual 3-on-3 Basketball Challenge on 3 Apr. This community platform connects youths and encourages good sportsmanship.



Steady Readers Parents Night

Ten parents were empowered to help their children read. This first Steady Readers Parents' Night held on 13 Apr aimed to partner parents in a whole-family approach to increase children's literacy.

UPCOMING EVENTS

16 & 23 May

New Life Friends' Day

New Life pays tribute to supporters who gave their time and resources for New Life's work. Call 6892 8127 for details.

8 & 9 Jun

Story @live Workshop

Kids Champ Club holiday enrichment programme to stir children's interest in stories. Call 6892 4353 to sign up.

19 Jun

Street Soccer Competition at BPJ

Register at Youth Hub or call 6892 4419.

3 Jul

Sports for Youth 2010

Sports carnival and Tchoukball exhibition at Woodlands. Call 6892 4419 for details.

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*

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 that will *build the next generation*. Your support makes a difference!

Donations received in 2010 are eligible for 2.5 times tax deduction. For every dollar received via the online Charity Donation Portal, New Life pays a service and administrative fee of 3 cents.

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

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Payable to **New Life Community Services Centre**.

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

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Please go to

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