

Mentoring by Magic

A lone girl arrived with her school bag slung over her shoulder. Her eyes darted around the room, looking for familiar faces. Soon enough, they trickled in. Their initial nervousness gave way to eager anticipation of another magical afternoon. These youths make magic, literally.

Started in 2010, the Mentoring Through Magic Programme seeks to mentor 12 to 16 year-old youths by putting them through a hands-on apprenticeship in the art of magic performance.

New Life Youth Programme Coordinator and magic enthusiast Joel Seah piloted the programme in New Life. Why magic?



Young Magic Makers

"We chose magic as a mentoring medium because not only are illusions highly sought after, they also captivate youths' natural curiosity," said the 29 year-old.

"In Singapore, there's little exposure to performing magic as it is not yet mainstream entertainment unlike in other countries." Joel picked up the art of performing magic in his high school days in Australia and continues to hone his skills.

While magic might appeal to the young, it was the older folks that Joel had to persuade. "When we first started this project, there was misconception among some parents that magic is about cheating. They thought their children would be subjected to negative influences," he said.

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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).

Through patient dialogues, however, many parents realised the objective was to mentor their children. They finally agreed to let their children have a go at the programme.

After just 24 lessons in the first year, the youths have already performed publicly three times. In their latest performance, they amazed an audience of 300, including a Member of Parliament at New Life's 10th anniversary gala dinner.

Looking at the youths practice and peer-teach their latest moves in quiet confidence, it was easy to assume that success came easy. "It wasn't always like this," mused Joel. "When the group was first formed, the youths hardly interacted. Teamwork changed everything."

Through planning and performing live as a group, the youths learnt to support one another. Together they experienced successes and disappointments, and learnt to care for each other. They have also become more expressive, gaining self-confidence and building camaraderie in the process.

Now in its second year running, the Mentoring Through Magic Programme is training older youths to be mentors vis-à-vis a 10-week basic course. This gives



Public Performances

them the opportunity to 'give back' to the group and learn leadership skills. Many youths who were formerly deemed to be at-risk were transformed by leadership responsibility into youth leaders.

The 16-year-old Amelia* was one such youth. She came into the programme one year ago with much adolescent angst. She was loud, angry, easily provoked and had a strained relationship with her overprotective parents. Through mentoring, Amelia opened up and learnt to manage her anger. She gradually overcame her emotional difficulties and is now a mentor to the younger apprentices.

Not one to rest on his laurels, Joel aimed to take the programme further by leading his charges to bring magic to the community. This year, he hoped to see the youths perform at hospitals and other charitable institutions, a dream that would take community support for it to come true.



Fun Learning with Friends

“ When the group was first formed, the youths hardly interacted. Teamwork changed everything. ”

Joel Seah
New Life Youth
Programme Coordinator

“Currently, we have three adults anchoring the programme. Moving forward, we certainly need more adult volunteers to adequately give one-to-one attention to each youth in the mentoring journey,” Joel said. “You don’t need to be good at performing magic tricks. All you need is a heart to connect with youths over a soda to share your life experiences.”

To volunteer with New Life Youth, please call **6892 4366** or email **volunteer@newlife.org.sg**

* Names changed to protect the privacy of the individual.

Instilling an INNER COMPASS



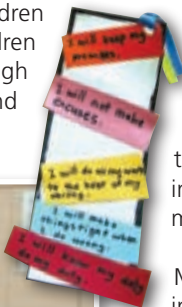
"I like KCC because I can learn good things like respect and self-control," said ten-year-old Mark*. Such artless sentiments are music to the ears.

"The most important aspect of character training is role modelling," said Ms Wong. "In KCC, volunteer befrienders bring this about."

"The Kids Champ Club (KCC) is a fun place for children aged 7-12," said Ms Faith Wong, New Life Children Programme Coordinator. "Children are taught character through stories, experiential activities and interactions with volunteers."

One such befriender, Ms Cheong Yian Ling, started helping out this year.

"I used to doubt how much a weekly programme can do in cultivating character," said the petite volunteer. "Seeing small improvements, like how the children learn to work together instead of blaming others, encourages me."



Mark, who joined KCC when it started in December 2009, continued: "My befriender, Daryl, will guide me when I do wrong." Ten-year-old Zetty* agrees. "My befriender is very funny and showed me how to care for others," said the new KCC member.

Run on Saturday afternoons, KCC was re-launched on 29 Jan 2011 as a weekly programme instead of fortnightly.

"At KCC, I see each volunteer make use of any opportunity to mould the child's character," added Ms Cheong. "Working alongside such like-minded and dedicated volunteers is one of my biggest joys."

"Character is behaviour expressed when values are internalized," said Ms Wong. "It guides right decisions in future. That's why KCC begins instilling this moral compass while children are young."

*To volunteer at the Kids Champ Club, please call **6892 4366** or email **volunteer@newlife.org.sg***

* Pseudonym used to protect the child's privacy.

Giving Youths a Giving Spirit

30 youths raced down Orchard Road on 21 Dec 2010 in a bid to out-give each other.

The *Amazing Race*-styled event by New Life Youth saw teens singing carols at Cathay's basement, canvassing for Salvation Army's Christmas Kettles, and posing for pictures to bring smiles to passer-bys.

Ms Esther Mok, the New Life Youth Programme Coordinator who organized the activity, shared, "We wanted to encourage the spirit of giving amongst youths by showing them that they can give in many different ways."

"The time was too short!" said Marcus, 14, one of the teens at the end of the race, echoing a sentiment shared by many. Feedback from the youths showed they had indeed learned about giving, and thoroughly enjoyed the process.

The day ended with dinner and a walk down Orchard Road. Many had never been to Orchard



What Christmas is About

Road, much less seen the Christmas light-up or what Christmas was about.

"I enjoyed seeing the youths so enthusiastic about the race, and having the opportunity to experience the Christmas atmosphere," added Ms Mok.

Bringing a Smile



Some may have been new to Christmas, but all soaked in the spirit, and learned that giving can happen in so many ways.

To find out more about New Life Youth, call **6892 4419** or email **youth@newlife.org.sg**

A Concert-ed Achievement

Childcare Concert cum Graduation 2010



A palpable buzz of excitement filled the air as more than 300 parents, relatives and friends streamed into the auditorium at 10 Jelapang Road, cameras in hand, ready for the Kodak moments.

The children at New Life Childcare were even more excited. They had practiced for months for the Annual Concert cum Graduation Ceremony, held on 11 December 2010.

The concert began with the K2 children trooping down the aisle in regal graduation

gowns to the eager applause of the audience. They performed two songs before K2 graduates Jovial Soh and Lim Shu En addressed the audience in English, followed by their classmates Jerald Chua and Gabriel Yeow in Mandarin. The quartet wowed the audience with their perfectly memorised and clearly enunciated speeches.

The much-anticipated concert did not disappoint. The children, as young as three, melted the audience's hearts with their endearing and well-executed skits, dance and poetry recitals, and colourful costumes. Poised and confident, they truly deserved the thunderous ovation.

"The performance is primary-school standard, not something you would expect from preschool children," remarked Ms Evonne Ang, a New Life volunteer who also manages a tuition centre.



Children beaming on and off-stage





Judging by the camera flashes and appreciative laughter, it was clear that the audience agreed wholeheartedly. Said parent Mrs Esther Yeow, "As a mother, it's great to see both my boys giving and performing their best. I am very proud of them!"

The children and teachers worked hard for months. Practices began as early as August, and the children's excitement spilled over at home.

"They came home and talked to us excitedly about their up-coming concert. They have been practising at home and sharing with us their roles," said parents Mark and Sarah of their two daughters who performed.

The dedication of teachers played a key role in the concert's success. "It is not easy to teach and direct children as young as 18 months to perform. The teachers have done a wonderful job," said Ms Ang.

The teachers devoted long hours searching for inspiration on top of their full teaching loads. Most had no prior dance training or experience but were undaunted as they came together to peer-teach and exchange ideas on choreography.

New Life Childcare Teacher Ms Evangeline Low was very thankful for the incredible teamwork among the teachers. "I felt

a great sense satisfaction, seeing both the teachers and children grow through this. I look forward to the next concert!" exclaimed Ms Low, who was the concert organiser and also a dance enthusiast.



Appreciative audience

Teacher Ms Rachel Teo concurred. "At the end of the day, it's about getting the kids to brave the stage and build up their self-confidence build up. That's the ultimate goal," she said.

*For inquiries on New Life Childcare, please call **6892 0177** or email **childcare@newlife.org.sg***

For.Your.Interest.

Ending the Year Together

26 youths ended 2010 with a day of fun at the beach, followed by a barbeque. The activities built a relational foundation between staff and youths in preparation for 2011. Three Youth Hubbers, sisters GM, GL and GN, spent 3 weeks planning for the day's activity, and they're looking forward to doing it again in March and June 2011.



New Life Children & Student Care Opens

New Life's latest service offering opened its doors on 4 Jan 2011 at Blk 507 Jelapang Road. This student care service looks after children 7 to 14 years old before and after school hours so that parents can work without leaving children home alone. 29 children have enrolled, with more on the waiting list.

Stories Worth Telling

A boy with a tree on his head, an Unidentified Green Baby, a mysterious Shadow, and a magic word: these stories have enthralled the children at New Life Childcare since a 19 Jan storytelling session. They taught about accepting differences, hearing a child, acting in children's interests and meeting their basic needs, thus bringing alive the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in a meaningful, understandable way.



UPCOMING EVENTS

13 Apr 2011

Monster Under My Bed

New Life Childcare's K1 and K2 children will watch a drama by Paper Monkey Theatre to learn about overcoming fears.

22 May 2011

New Life Friends Day / AGM

An appreciation for New Life's volunteers and other supporters, as well as a day to take stock and envision the future at New Life's Annual General Meeting.

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 Children & Student Care (Bukit Panjang)

*Mentor Children to become Disciplined
and Confident Individuals*

New Life Youth

(Bukit Panjang & Woodlands)

*Building Character &
Developing Resilience*

SUPPORT NEW LIFE!

Your support makes a difference to young lives! New Life Community Services Centre is committed to *Building the Next Generation* through a range of programmes and services.

Donations received are 2.5 times tax deductible. From 1 Jan 2011, IRAS no longer accepts tax deduction claims based on donation receipts. Thus, all donors would need to provide a tax reference number (NRIC, FIN or CRN) to qualify for tax deduction through IRAS' Auto-Inclusion Scheme.

For more information, call **6892 4366** or email to donate@newlife.org.sg

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By Interbank Transfer: Please transfer funds to

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Please state your NRIC/FIN no. as payer name.

By Interbank GIRO: Please download a GIRO

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