



## YOUTH GOT A FRIEND

At his events management job several years ago, Clifford Lam struck up friendships with the tertiary-aged youths working part-time at the events he helped organise. He enjoyed interacting with these youths so much that he made the switch to become an MOE counsellor.

“That desire to reach out to young people drove me to be a counsellor. And that passion drives everything that I do today,” he shared.

When he found out about the opportunity to be a Youth Befriender at the Woodlands Youth Hub, Clifford jumped at the chance. Clifford now spends his Friday afternoons engaging the hub members in fun activities and hearing them talk about their interests. “Being able to lend a listening ear or even just spend time with the youths energises me. It’s my way of thanking God for how He has blessed me.” He has also sponsored snacks for the hub’s March holiday programmes as well as contributed cajons to the hub with his church mates.

As a school counsellor, Clifford observed that most youths do not have enough time at home with their parents. Lacking that guiding, caring presence, youths often turn to other, less reliable sources for role models and comfort. Clifford believes that the youth hubs, with their positive activities and seasoned staff mentors, provide a safe space for youths away from pernicious influences, where they can

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explore their interests and learn beneficial life skills. “We facilitate discussions, we help them problem-solve, and we teach them how to interact with others better so that when they go back to school, they can form better friendships.”

For Clifford, spending time with the youths at the hub builds the necessary trust and rapport needed for mentoring to truly be effective. “Mentoring starts when the youths trust you not to judge them when they share their struggles. So I try not to

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In the five months since he’s begun volunteering, Clifford has learnt to see the strengths of the beneficiaries he serves. “Youths have this courage that adults don’t have, which leads them to do good things if channelled in the right direction,” he said. Clifford has also been inspired by the efforts of the youth hub staff mentors. “Week in, week out, they plan programmes like cooking or music jamming, and I’m very encouraged by their dedication. They’re really amazing, they know the kids inside out.”

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