



Changing A Child's Life



Hazel as a primary school student in New Life Student Care (Bukit Panjang).

“My parents didn’t have much, but they always went out of their way to help others.”

— Hazel, 21

When she was young, she remembered her mother cooking meals for the church that her family belonged to, and her father going all the way to Mustafa to buy toiletries for visiting foreigners. When her father got kidney failure, it didn't stop him from visiting others in hospital. “He was a good role model for me,” Hazel recalls.

Enrolled in New Life Childcare and subsequently New Life Student Care (NLSCC), Hazel was grateful that her family received subsidies for school fees when her father passed on, leaving her mother as the sole breadwinner. Marianne, then a Student Care teacher-mentor, remembers the student Hazel as “loud, tenacious, full of life and energy. She was bouncing around the centre all the time!” Conversely, Hazel says of Marianne, “She’s very nice but also quite strict. She didn’t make me feel out of place, her care for me was very comforting.”

“Not only did I have to help them with homework, but I had to look out for their mental and emotional well-being. I would try to talk to them to understand their behaviour and use a gentler approach.”

— Hazel, 21

Back in 2012, when Hazel was P4 and Marianne a new staff, NLSCC had no structured programmes or character-building focus. “It was a homely environment, the teacher-mentors were all “aunties” and “jiejies” (sisters),” says Marianne with a smile. “It was very much child-minding, but the teacher-mentors loved the children fiercely. They really knew each individual student.” Despite the bare-bones centre schedule, Marianne recalls that the teacher-mentors still used their time with the children to correct their behaviour and impart good values. “Over the years we realised we could do a lot more.”

After ‘O’ Levels, Hazel’s mother suggested that she get a part-time job while waiting to enter polytechnic. One rainy afternoon, she brought Hazel down to the Bukit Panjang Student Care centre to ask about a job. To Hazel’s surprise, the first person they met was none other than Marianne, by then a senior staff who did not usually work at that centre. She gave Hazel the opportunity to be an intern – and later an ad hoc teacher-mentor – which the latter gladly took up. Hazel shares, “If I didn’t get that opportunity, I wouldn’t be where I am now.”

Although she found teaching children physically and mentally exhausting, Hazel persevered in caring for them. “I have been in their shoes. I wanted to make the kids feel like they are not alone.” She learnt to be patient and sensitive in how she spoke and behaved towards the students.



Hazel as an ad hoc teacher-mentor at NLSCC.

“Not only did I have to help them with homework, but I had to look out for their mental and emotional well-being. I would try to talk to them to understand their behaviour and use a gentler approach.” Marianne, seeing Hazel teach, appreciated how she was stern at the right times, knowing when not to give way to the kids, and took initiative to ask questions when she was unsure. “It was a bit of a ‘proud mama’ moment, like, ‘She’s all grown up, she’s not that little kid anymore!’”

“We place a lot of importance on individual growth and setting their foundations right...”

— Hazel, 21

Having grown up in the centre, Hazel could now appreciate how different it was as a teacher-mentor. The programmes – and staff – were more intentional and focused on children’s character development. “We place a lot of importance on individual growth and setting their foundations right,” she shares.

“For the teacher-mentors who have stayed on, the love and dedication they have towards the kids is different from anywhere else. They really see it as a passion and not just a job.” Just as it was when Hazel was a student, the centre remained “a place where kids are genuinely loved and make new friends and memories”.

After graduating from polytechnic, Hazel joined New Life HQ as a comms intern who eventually became full-time. Instead of serving beneficiaries on the ground, she is now one of the staff working behind the scenes to support the client-facing services. “I’m with New Life not because of my past, but because of my future. I want to use my experiences in Student Care to help our audience see our work with a different lens, of how we go the extra mile to change a child’s life.”



Help us change children's lives!

Children have so much potential to become future changemakers who impact lives, just like Hazel. But like her, they need the benefit of loving and values-driven care that services like New Life Childcare, Student Care and Children Programmes provide.

Your support allows us to nurture the next generation of servant-leaders who will strengthen their communities. Donate to us now to impart confidence and compassion to children in need. Your contribution will surely bear fruit in a child's life in future.

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