

SINGAPORE

MICA (P) 129/04/2012



RED CROSS

NEWS

ISSUE ONE 2013



BRINGING

LOVE

IN EVERY GRAIN

EDITORIAL

A group of students from RCY - SMU Chapter worked tirelessly on

Happy New Year! We ushered in 2013 with three big bangs!

Four-hundred and fifty veterans, alumni and current members of Red Cross Youth (RCY) gathered at the RCY 60th Anniversary Dinner to reunite, reconnect and reminisce about the nostalgic times they shared as RCY Cadets and Links! Read more about how RCY transformed lives on Page 12 and 13!

The very next day, some 8,000 volunteers thronged the streets to raise funds at the Red Cross Flag Day 2013. We share a photo spread 'behind the scenes' across Pages 4 and 5!

Project R.I.C.E 2013 to share some love with the needy this Chinese New Year. A total of 900 volunteers from different chapters were mobilised for this project and worked with Sheng Siong Supermarket to collect rice. Their months of hard work paid off when they surpassed previous collections to collect 111,813kg of rice for beneficiaries. Read more on Page 14!

In this issue, we share stories of how our Day Activity Centre transformed a reticent individual to a cheerful, smiley person (Page 16) and how the commitment of some nursing students to the First Aider on Wheels programme

left a deep impression on the teacher-in-charge (Page 18).

In addition, SRC is also committed to building the capacity of our volunteers and training them for deployment in medical, water and sanitation and psychosocial support. Last December, we trained the first batch of volunteers in psychosocial support (Page 19).

Thank you for reading this newsletter and do pass it along. If you have story ideas, please get in touch with Sondra.foo@redcross.org.sg. We look forward to hearing from you.

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Spreading the Festive Cheer

By KEVIN CHAI, *Community Involvement Programme Officer, Red Cross Youth – NTU Chapter*
Photos by WONG LEONG JEAM, *Volunteer, Singapore Red Cross*

The Year of the Snake presents new hopes and beginnings for all of us.

As we celebrated Chinese New Year (CNY) with much festive cheer with our friends and family, a group of students from the Red Cross Youth (RCY) – Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Chapter took this a step further by celebrating CNY with the residents of our Red Cross Home for the Disabled (RCHD). They hoped to share the abundance of good health and happiness with the residents of our Home.

This is not the first year that the Chapter celebrated CNY with the residents. Kevin Chai of RCY – NTU Chapter shares his journal below with us.

This year, the RCY – NTU Chapter roped in volunteers from National University of Singapore (NUS) and Jurong West Secondary School. A total of 50 volunteers gathered at RCHD early in the morning of 23 February to prepare for the celebrations. After a briefing, the volunteers set up the stage, prepared the logistics and rehearsed the performances.

Chairman of Singapore Red Cross (SRC), Mr Tee Tua Ba, gave a welcome speech to open the celebration.

An animated and zealous lion dance performance then ensued and brought much joy to all the guests present! In this performance, the feisty lions interacted with the Guest-of-Honour, Mr Tee, and our residents.

This was followed by a joyous Lo Hei session, when wishes of fortune and prosperity resounded throughout the hall as people enthusiastically tossed the ingredients of the salad dish, emulating the spirit of vitality and energy of the snake in its year.

While everyone basked in the festive mood, one of the organising committee members dressed up as the God of Fortune. Our Guest-of-Honour and the God of Fortune then mingled and distributed oranges and Hong Baos to all the residents.

A series of exciting performances by various clubs from NTU followed suit, enhancing the festive spirit amongst the audience. Highlights included a traditional and graceful dance performance by the NTU Chinese Dance Club, as well as a captivating Diabolo performance by NTU Diabolo Club. Also stealing the limelight was an energetic martial arts showcase by the NTU Wushu Club.

In the afternoon, all the guests, performers and volunteers were invited to enjoy a lunch buffet together. It also doubled to thank all volunteers and performers for their invaluable contributions to the celebration.

After lunch, a group of RCHD residents went up on stage and performed a CNY song for everyone. Their courage and efforts were truly inspiring and commendable.

Finally, the celebration ended off with a dance performance put together by the organising committee of the event and a singing performance by all the volunteer helpers. Through these performances, we hoped to convey our gratitude to everyone for their support and contribution.

This celebration proved to be an invaluable platform to forge stronger bonds amongst volunteers while honing our soft skills and communication abilities. Most importantly, we were glad that our humble efforts brought great pleasure to all the RCHD residents, staff, and guests present.

Red Cross Flag Day 2013

Photos by WONG LEONG JEAM, ALFIAN ALUYI and HADY LIANG,
Volunteers, Singapore Red Cross

This year's Red Cross Flag Day was held on 26 January, the day after the Red Cross Youth 60th Anniversary Dinner. Notwithstanding the tight schedule, students from different schools, volunteers and staff worked tirelessly together to raise approximately S\$258,000 from the street collections for the local humanitarian services of the Singapore Red Cross (SRC).

More than S\$422,000 was raised from street collections, pledge cards and donations from schools, companies and organisations for SRC's local humanitarian services.

It exemplified the teamwork and commitment of one and all to make the Flag Day a success.

Behind the scenes of a successful Flag Day





- 1** Red Cross Youth Volunteer Instructors and staff arrived at the collection centres as early as 6.30am to set up the table and arrange the donation tins according to the serial numbers.
- 2** There was a briefing on the dos and don'ts that the students had to adhere to when asking for donations.
- 3** Students had to sign out when they collected the donation tins and flags.
- 4** Enthusiastic flagbearers were raring to fundraise.
- 5 - 9** Generosity transcends ethnicity and backgrounds.
- 10, 11** Discipline, patience, friendliness are the values that the students learn from participating in Flag Day.
- 12** Our drivers and transporters ferried the donation tins to Red Cross House.
- 13** The boxes, filled with donation tins were carried up the Red Cross House via a human chain.
- 14- 19** After the donation tins were opened, the coins and notes were sorted to facilitate counting.
- 20** It was a systematic process of recording the amounts donated by the different groups.
- 21** Singapore Red Cross would like to thank all volunteers, donors, supporters and staff for their invaluable contribution in making the Red Cross Flag Day 2013 a success!



Finding Joy in Giving

By JESSICA ONG, *Corporate Communications and Marketing, Singapore Red Cross*

“We have stopped for a moment to encounter each other, to meet, to love, to share. This is a precious moment, but it is transient. If we share with caring, lightheartedness, and love, we will create abundance and joy for each other. And then this moment will have been worthwhile,” said American Physician, Deepak Chopra.

For the staff of Portcullis TrustNet Group, this notion of taking time off work to meet, love, share and bring joy to the residents of the Red Cross Home for the Disabled (RCHD) is not new. They have been visiting the home since 2008, when Mr Tee Tua Ba, Chairman of Portcullis came on board as the Chairman of the Singapore Red Cross.

On 14 December 2012, the staff of Portcullis brought along gifts, food items and prepared a series of programmes to spend some joyful moments with the residents. More importantly, in the season of giving, the staff of Portcullis gave smiles, love, warmth and a personal touch to the residents.

“It was very thoughtful of them. Not only did the staff and members in Portcullis

care about the residents, they were also aware of the feelings of the caregivers. It was heartwarming to know that the needs of nursing aides and caregivers were not forgotten in times of celebration. Even before Christmas, the staff and members of Portcullis came to establish bonds, interact and connect with the residents,” said Mr Tee.

The hall was filled with laughter as performances were lined up one after another. At the mingling sessions, the spirit of love was resonating close to our hearts as cheery chatter and chirpy voices reverberated in the multi-purpose hall.

Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer, was ambling around the room, bringing joy and entertainment to the residents. The person impersonating Rudolph, the reindeer, was Mr Robin Tan of Portcullis. He was all dressed up in his brown coat of fur, big hooves and a bright red nose.

“I used to perform in the wards for the residents. This year, I was determined to take it on stage – volunteering to doll up as a reindeer and bring happiness to the residents. We practised for close to two

weeks to ensure it was a success. I enjoyed myself a lot and will definitely come back next year. Hopefully, the residents enjoyed our performances too! It is my innermost wish that the residents are blessed with joy; that they will smile and enjoy every moment and every day of their lives,” said Mr Tan.

The youngest amongst all others, Joey Lim, 11, gleefully shared, “This is the second time I have come here and I look forward to coming again! I came with my mum and her company last year and we had a carolling session in the wards with the residents so I decided to do more this year. Together with other staff of Portcullis, my sister and I danced the Gangnam style on stage for the residents. I felt very thankful to be given the opportunity to perform and entertain them.”

Indeed, the string of performances by the staff of Portcullis was a really generous Christmas gift to the residents. The bonds fostered between the volunteers of Portcullis and the residents speak volumes about the time and effort they contributed to bring joy to the disadvantaged.

Master Hui & Celebrities Band Together for a Good Cause

On 12 December 2012, prominent geomancer Master Hui and local artistes raised S\$10,000 through a fundraising effort (a Puja ceremony) for survivors affected by Typhoon Bopha in the Philippines.

A cheque presentation ceremony held at the Singapore Red Cross was witnessed by local celebrities like Yan Bing Liang (严丙量), Brandon Wong (黄炯耀), Henry Thia (程旭辉) and Ben Yeo (杨志龙).

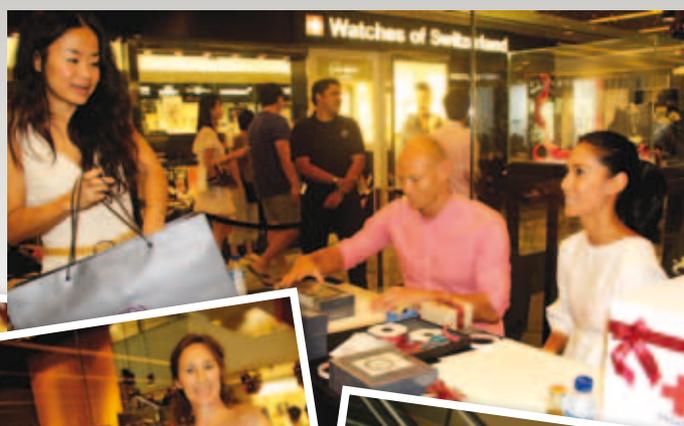


Partnership for Humanity

Georg Jensen, a Danish luxury lifestyle brand selling jewellery, watches and home collections encouraged customers to 'round up' their purchases with a donation to the Singapore Red Cross in December last year. The boutique at the ground level of Paragon then matched the donations as part of its Joy of Giving campaign.

The proceeds were channelled to support the local humanitarian services of Singapore Red Cross (SRC), including the Red Cross Home for the Disabled, TransportAid, FoodAid, first aid training and community First Aid programmes. Georg Jensen roped in celebrities to wrap the gifts of those who donate.

"The work that the Singapore Red Cross does is vital to the community and we are proud to support them through this fundraising campaign," said Mr Jonas Wulff Moller, Managing Director of Georg Jensen Singapore.





Blood donors give blood to save lives. It is a selfless sacrifice that entails overcoming their initial fear of needles and developing the discipline and perseverance to carry on donating blood regularly every few months. Some people have been donating blood for decades. Some organise blood drives. Others spread word about blood donation to their family, friends and colleagues, inspiring others to give the gift of life. They all deserve our respect, recognition and appreciation.

To recognise blood donors who have unreservedly given blood to save countless lives, Singapore Red Cross (SRC) unveiled two physical counters to enable the public to 'salute' blood donors for their special contribution with the pressing of a blood drop button. These interactive counters are placed along high pedestrian-traffic areas to raise awareness of the everyday heroes and heroines who live in Singapore and

enable the public to pledge their support for the contribution of the blood donors. Once the button has been pressed, the counter will display the number of "salutes" garnered. SRC aims to collect one million salutes by June 2013.

In addition to saluting the blood donors through the physical counters, you can also show your support via a virtual counter on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/sgridcross>. Make sure to 'like' the page!

"The world needs heroes who selflessly come forward to donate blood and to save lives. As they continue to do so, we want to remind them that they are not alone. They have a nation supporting and cheering them on for their personal life-saving contributions," said Mr Benjamin William, SRC Secretary General.

"Every single salute to our blood donors counts in our journey towards hitting the one-million mark. We want as many people

as possible to step forward and help achieve this goal – everyone matters. We believe that this will be a source of inspiration and encouragement for all our donors," affirmed Mr William.

Leukaemia survivor, Mr Sulaiman Bin Suradi, 21, shares his experience to encourage people to come forward to 'salute' the blood donors. "I was diagnosed with leukaemia when I was 10. The frequent top-up of blood or platelets helped to stabilise my condition, thereby enabling me to continue with treatment. Blood donors turn lives around, not just for patients, but for their families and the community at large as well."

You can do your part by giving your 'salute' to the blood donors! This will give the blood donors the affirmation that their efforts and contributions are recognised and appreciated. Encourage your friends and family to 'salute' the blood donors for their gift of life today!

The counters are available for public pledges at the following dates and locations:

Date	Venue	Date	Venue
3 January – 19 February	Khoo Teck Puat Hospital	28 February – 1 April	National University of Singapore
28 January – 21 February	Republic Polytechnic	8 March – 10 April	Tan Tock Seng Hospital
19 February – 28 February	The Star Vista	16 April – 10 May	Nanyang Polytechnic
26 February – 8 March	City Square Mall	22 April – 22 May	Temasek Polytechnic



Discovering the purpose of Serving

By GINNA DEEPTHI, *Volunteer,*
Red Cross Youth – NUS Chapter

Philosopher Albert Schweitzer once said, “I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

To inspire youths to come forward to serve the less fortunate in our community, the National University of Singapore (NUS) held a Volunteer Symposium in December 2012. Volunteers and academics were invited to participate in the dialogue with 200 students from ITE, junior colleges and tertiary institutions.

Themed ‘i.Volunteer – Be the Gears of Change’, this inaugural NUS Volunteer Symposium was jointly organised by NUS Office of Student Affairs (OSA), NUS Students’ Community Service Club (CSC) and Red Cross Youth - NUS Chapter. The objectives of the event were to provide a platform for youths to experience volunteerism, to motivate current volunteers to continue their volunteering efforts and to inspire others to serve the community and be change agents of the future.

On the first day, participants learned how they could give back to society in a panel discussion with various experienced volunteers. The panel included Chairman of the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC), Mr Stanley Tan, President of Club Rainbow, Mr Gregory Vijayendran, NUS Department of Social Work Assistant, Professor Esther Goh, and NUS alumnus, Mr Tan Ching. Questions raised encompassed ways to continue volunteering once a person has embarked on his career, the mandatory Community Involvement Programme (CIP), and approaches to deal with unexpected situations while volunteering.

From time to time, youth volunteers are criticised for being uncommitted and insincere, attending volunteerism projects for the sole purpose of making up numbers. That said, the mandatory CIP programme is just one of the many avenues for students to serve

the community, and is more importantly an avenue to enlighten the students on the ways to volunteer in the future.

“The plan for such mandatory CIP is not the problem. Community service projects provide the opportunity for students to be exposed to community service. However, the implementation should ensure that students understand the rationale behind such a plan. Students should be encouraged to discover their own interests, values and find meaning behind pursuing community projects,” expressed Mr Tan, the NVPC Chairman.

“Those who are interested in community service need to have sound psychological and emotional intelligence. They also need to clarify their motivations for helping others. People should not volunteer for the sake of meeting one’s needs or for the pursuit of a good feeling or image,” accentuated Professor Esther Goh.

At the symposium, students also learned about volunteering and serving different groups of beneficiaries such as children, youth-at-risk, the elderly, as well as the intellectually and physically disabled during break-out sessions, which were led by experienced facilitators. These sessions gave them an insight to the challenges faced by each group of beneficiaries and how and where participants can offer their services.

On the second day, the participants undertook a learning journey that exposed them to the activities carried out by various volunteer service organisations. This enabled them to gain first-hand experiences that transformed their outlook on volunteering.

In summing up, it is hoped that this Volunteer Symposium inspired youths to look deep within themselves and to come forward to serve as volunteers; thereby deriving happiness by giving of themselves to others.

Red Cross Youth (since 1952) Historical Milestones from 1994 to January 2012

This is the last of a three-part series showcasing milestones in RCY's 60 years of service to humanity.

In 1994, the Red Cross Humanitarian Network (RCHN) – Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Chapter was set up. RCHN was for post secondary school students.

In 1996, the RCHN – National University of Singapore (NUS) Chapter was set up.

In 1996, Mrs Shirley Yeo was appointed as the Director of RCY.

The Singapore Red Cross (SRC) hosted the Asia-Pacific Youth Gathering themed 'Youth in Community Service' at the NUS Temasek Hall from 31 May to 8 June 1997. A total of 59 foreign delegates from 13 countries and 110 local cadets participated.

In 1997, Project Red Cross Love was initiated to serve the destitute elderly living in one-room Housing Development Board flats in Kampong Glam.

In 1998, the RCHN – Singapore Polytechnic Chapter was set up.

In March 1998, youth members and leaders packed and distributed food parcels and medical supplies to more than 50,000 families in Indonesia at different phases in the wake of the economic crisis in Indonesia.

The Unit Support Corps was set up in 1998 to look into the needs and growth of the school membership, through the deployment of Volunteer Instructors (VIs) and Volunteer Adult Leaders (VALs).

In 1998, the RCY Community Service Award was presented to 20 Red Cross school



units for their exemplary service to the community.

In 1998, RCHN members from NUS, NTU and Singapore Polytechnic Chapters embarked on their first International Special Project, Well of Hope 'Operation Saonum' in New Hatpang, north of Laos.

In 1999, RCY cadets participated in the first National Heritage Trail organised by the Ministry of Education for youths of all the eight uniformed groups.

In 1999, RCY volunteers and cadets put up a full-scale musical, 'The Choice'. In addition, a dance drama, 'Rejuvenation', written and sung by RCY volunteers, was performed at SRC's 50th Anniversary.

In August 2000, 18 youth members from the Iwate Chapter of the Japanese Red Cross visited Singapore, initiating a new bilateral relationship.

In 2000, the RCY Excellent Units Award (EUA) was introduced. The EUA, in line with the Ministry of Education's introduction of



the Sustained Achievement Awards for Uniformed Groups, aimed to recognise schools with Red Cross units that were performing well.

In **2001**, Mr Lau Hock Soon was appointed the Director of RCY.

The revised Incentive Badge Scheme was officially launched.

In **2001**, the RCHN – Singapore Management University (SMU) Chapter was set up.

From 29 June **2002** to 13 July 2002, an exhibition 'Down Memory Lane – 50 Years of RCY' was held. A souvenir magazine, a set of 12 posters and a commemorative CD-Rom were produced to record the historical milestones of RCY. The RCY logo used for RCY's 50th Anniversary celebrations was adopted for continual use.

In **2003**, RCY was restructured to meet the growing needs of school units. Focus Committees were formed to enable more youth leaders to take on leadership roles.

In **2004**, Volunteers' Instructor Programme and Unit Leaders' Programme were introduced as part of the training and development curriculum. The Unit Officers' Programme was initiated to equip teachers with the essential management skills to nurture and guide the RCY members.

In **2004**, RCHN – NTU Chapter launched its signature event, Vibrant Blood, a public blood drive to collect blood, raise awareness of blood donation amongst youths and recruit and retain blood donors.

The RCHN – NTU Chapter raised S\$106,000 as part of its first Operation Moving Hearts (OMH) to support the victims of the **2004** tsunami.



Following the Asian tsunami in December **2004**, RCY members provided relief to survivors in Meulaboh, helped in the collections of funds and manned the hotlines. RCY veterans provided leadership to pack the relief supplies and to run the Operations Centre at the Paya Lebar Airbase.

From 24 to 26 August **2005**, RCY hosted the Third South-East Asia Youth Directors' Meeting in Singapore.

In **2005**, the RCHN – Ngee Ann Polytechnic Chapter was set up.

In **2006**, RCY, RCHN and Adult Volunteers Division (AVD) rendered their services to the Red Cross Movement's Seventh Asia-Pacific Regional Conference delegates from all over the world from 19 to 23 November 2006.

The first mobile blood drive by RCHN – SMU Chapter was held at Dhoby Ghaut MRT Station (with major corporate sponsors including the train operators).

In **2007**, to commemorate RCY's 55th Anniversary, a strategic review planning exercise was held with discussions with various stakeholders such as the cadets, teacher officers and Volunteer Instructors. It culminated in a retreat in Bintan, Indonesia, themed 'Shaping RCY's future: we Dream, we Dare, we Do!'

In **2008**, Mr Ling Khoon Chow was appointed the Director of RCY.

RCHN – NTU Chapter organised a fund-raising concert 'Illuminate' in **2008**, which raised over \$10,000 for the residents of Red Cross Home for the Disabled (RCHD).

In **2009**, Youth Officers held a learning journey to Hanoi, Vietnam and a Youth Ambassador (Blood) Programme 'Train the Trainers' workshop.

In **2009**, three Officers from RCY, including Mr Ling Khoon Chow, Director of RCY, represented SRC in the Red Cross Movement's 150th anniversary celebrations in Solferino, Italy.

In **2011**, RCHN – NTU Chapter raised over S\$36,000 for the victims of the Japan Earthquake via Operation Moving Hearts.

In **2011**, RCHN – NTU Chapter organised 'Enamour' which raised over S\$9,000 for RCHD.

The Youth Ambassador (Blood) Programme was launched. The RCY uniform was also reviewed.

In February **2012**, the Flag Day 2012 set a new record by raising a total of more than S\$400,000 through the strong support of RCY schools, non-RCY schools, individuals and organisations.

In **2012**, the RCHN was integrated with the uniformed arm of RCY to achieve synergy in resources and to provide a seamless transition in the volunteering experience of youth volunteers from primary, secondary and post-secondary education. Henceforth, the RCHN became known as the RCY – Chapter.

In **2012**, with a volunteer count of 281, the RCY - NTU Chapter was the largest Chapter in RCY.

In **2012**, RCY celebrated its 60th Anniversary with the theme, 'Celebrating the Red Cross Spirit'.

The Exploring Humanitarian Law (EHL) programme was launched in **2012** to introduce RCY cadets to International Humanitarian Law.

On 25 January **2013**, the RCY's 60th Anniversary Dinner was held at Ban Heng Pavilion Restaurant. Four hundred and fifty guests – past and present Directors, volunteers, teacher-officers, staff and friends – attended the alumni dinner. To round up the Diamond Jubilee celebrations, a book on RCY's 60-year journey in Singapore is being compiled and published.





Finding Themselves in

Red Cross Youth celebrates 60 years of service to humanity.

The German author Johann Wolfgang von Goethe wrote: "Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and help them become what they are capable of being."

The Singapore Red Cross (SRC), whose mission places a significant emphasis on service to humanity and protection of the dignity of human life, is such a perfect epitome of this that one could be forgiven for wondering if the nugget of wisdom has been adopted as an unspoken motto.



The Red Cross Youth (RCY), the youth wing of the SRC, was established back in 1952. True to its motto, 'Serve One Another', the RCY focuses on community service and aspires to inculcate the values of compassion, passion, discipline, perseverance and resilience in its members. Today, the RCY boasts a total of 44 Links Units (primary schools), 47 Cadet Units (secondary schools) and 10



Chapters (post secondary institutions e.g. ITE, polytechnics and universities). With a membership that numbers over 5,000, the RCY is directly engaged in advocating blood donation and the provision of first aid coverage. With an eye on the future, the RCY seeks to take the initiative to educate society on International Humanitarian Law through its activities.

The RCY recently celebrated its 60th anniversary on 25 January 2013 at Ban Heng Pavilion Restaurant at HarbourFront Centre, commemorating 60 years of service to humanity. A total of 450 past and present members attended the celebratory event. Ms Sim Ann, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Communications & Information and Ministry of Education graced the occasion as the Guest-of-Honour.

Mr Ling Khoon Chow, Director, Red Cross Youth, addressed the need for the

organisation to stay relevant in a time where youths are exposed to seemingly infinite choices – some good and others less so.

"This is why we have embarked on a more consultative and engaging approach in reviewing and evolving our curriculum, focusing more on character and leadership development as well as management skills through experiential learning", explained Mr Ling.

Ms Sim Ann also acknowledged in her speech that RCY's activities "provide powerful learning experiences for our students. Through engaging in such activities and providing opportunities for reflection, students learn to see themselves as a part of the larger community and how they can make a meaningful difference regardless of their age."

The RCY's impact on the lives of its members should not be underestimated. In an era where many students join and attend co-curricular activities (CCAs) simply to accumulate CCA points or because they are instructed to do so, the commitment and passion displayed by RCY members is refreshingly inspiring.

Mahatma Gandhi once said: "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service



Service to Humanity

By VINAY KUMAR, *Volunteer, Singapore Red Cross*

Photos by YUSOF NOOR, MICHAEL MAH, MOHAMAD AZRI and LIONEL LIAU, *Volunteers, Singapore Red Cross*

of others.” For many youths challenged by the social and psychological hurdles that come with adolescence, the RCY offers a guiding hand, an outlet for their physical, mental and emotional energies and serves as a beacon of stability. As Gandhi puts it so eloquently, the RCY helps its members find themselves at the time they need it most.

Ms Keung Xi Zhen, a RCY alumna, by her own admission, was a “brazen, sometimes even rude and self-assured, 13 year-old” when she joined the RCY. “I left with a greater appreciation for respect for others, self-discipline, and working in a team,” she underscored.

“I would definitely recommend others to join Red Cross Youth. Not only do you learn useful first aid and evacuation skills, you also build your character, pick up soft skills useful at your workplace and form strong friendships with people who accompany you for life,” suggested Ms Keung, whose closest friends today are from her days as a RCY member.

SRC’s influence has not been confined to the realm of social betterment. Mr Lau Hock Soon, 51, who served as the RCY director from 2001 to 2008, has been a volunteer in the Red Cross since 1977. In 1980, Mr Lau met a fellow volunteer working at the Red

Cross headquarters. That volunteer is now his wife, with whom he now has two children, Ms Sharon Lau, 20, and Mr Stanley Lau, 19. The couple has imbued the Red Cross spirit into their children as well.

The Lau family treats Red Cross events as family outings. Ms Lau has actually been attending these events even before she learned to walk. Currently an undergraduate at James Cook University and also working part-time as a relief teacher, Ms Lau finds joy in sharing her experiences in the Red Cross family with her students. She has already managed to inspire six students to join the RCY in their primary schools.

Mr Lau and his wife firmly believe that their children’s participation in Red Cross activities have helped to instill certain values that no amount of nagging or scolding can teach. Mr Lau said: “By their sheer observation and involvement, they have learnt the universal values of empathy and compassion.”

It is not hard to imagine why so many RCY members stay on after they complete their secondary education.

Mr Tang Chun Tuck joined Red Cross at the age of 13 in Gan Eng Seng School back when RCY was still known as the Junior Red Cross and was in its nascent years. Now

60 years old, he is still passionate about volunteering and is an Advisor to RCY. Mr Tang reminisced: “I literally grew up with the Red Cross.” Over the years, he has been a witness to the evolution and progress of the SRC and continues to play an integral role in its development.

The RCY has come a long way since 1952. The organisation has grown from strength to strength. At a time when intergenerational chauvinists have carelessly thrown around the notion that the youth of today are unruly, immoral and purposeless timewasters, the members of the RCY pose as strong evidence to the contrary.

Mr Ling summed up the anniversary beautifully, “Many things have changed in 60 years, but the one thing that has remained constant throughout all this time is that we are still serving humanity.”

Calm in its stature, but steadfast and unwavering in its mission, the RCY shines as a beacon of hope. The RCY offers the reassurance that even as consumer culture is becoming ubiquitous in an increasingly globalised world, the soul of humanity remains intact.



Bringing Love in Every Grain

By PATRICIA LAU, *Volunteer, Singapore Red Cross*
Photos by MICHAEL OZAKI, ALFIAN ALUYI and YEW YAN TENG,
Volunteers, Singapore Red Cross

After a two-year hiatus, PROJECT R.I.C.E 2013 came back surpassing expectations. Themed 'Love In Every Grain', Project R.I.C.E 2013 collected 111,813kg of rice for beneficiaries, bringing them some festive joy during the Lunar New Year. Spearheaded by Red Cross Youth – SMU Chapter, Project R.I.C.E 2013 was made possible with the help and support of some 900 youth volunteers and Sheng Siong Supermarket.

Early Stages

PROJECT R.I.C.E first began on a smaller scale in 2008. At that time, student volunteers from Children At-Risk Empowerment (CARE) organisation and Singapore Management University (SMU) helped. See Hoy Chan (1988) Pte Ltd then matched the rice collection. A total of 1,460 kg of rice was collected in 2008, more than double the 600kg target. Following the overwhelming response from the public and media publicity in Channel 8 news and Lianhe Wanbao, Project R.I.C.E developed into larger scale projects in 2009. In 2009, 40,715 kg of rice

was collected, far exceeding the targeted amount of 30,000kg.

Mechanics of Project R.I.C.E 2013

This year, there were two channels through which the public was encouraged to donate rice; by buying rice vouchers at Sheng Siong Supermarket, and when volunteers came knocking on their door on 2 Feb.

On 12 January, Edmund Chen, Goodwill Ambassador of Singapore Red Cross, showed his support by making a special appearance at the Sheng Siong Supermarket's Bedok outlet. He was warmly welcomed by the volunteers, shoppers and staff of Sheng Siong.

Through January, rice vouchers were sold at all 33 Sheng Siong Supermarket outlets, at a special price of S\$6.90 for 5kg of Fragrant Jasmine rice. Hundreds of Red Cross Youth Chapter volunteers mobilised themselves over two weekends at the supermarkets. They promoted the project and encouraged shoppers to support the cause.

"We are honoured to be part of this meaningful project. Project R.I.C.E 2013 has been very successful in its nationwide





meetings for the planning, execution and closure of the project in between her lectures and extra-curricular activities. She explained, "We actually started planning for Project R.I.C.E 2013 since April last year. We did the proposal and the recruitment of the organising committee. While all this work could be tiring at times, I am grateful for the opportunity to lead the project. I am also truly thankful for having met so many generous donors who expressed their enthusiasm towards this worthy cause and contributed so passionately".

Her attitude mirrors what Project R.I.C.E 2013 hopes to achieve which is interestingly formed by the acronym 'RICE'.

**Reach out and give a helping hand,
Inculcate compassion and empathy
among the volunteers,
Care and concern for the needy, and
Encourage Volunteerism**

Besides volunteers, Sheng Siong Supermarket also played a significant role in contributing to the success of Project R.I.C.E 2013 with the sale of rice vouchers. This is not the first time that Sheng Siong has partnered Singapore Red Cross for Project R.I.C.E. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Sheng Siong Supermarket for partnering us in this meaningful project over the years.

Another key factor that contributed to the success of Project R.I.C.E 2013 was the good media coverage in AsiaOne, Capital 958, Lianhe Zaobao, My Paper, The Straits Times, TODAY, and Warna Radio.

Many people and organisations came together to make Project R.I.C.E 2013 a success. They brought 'Love in Every Grain' to the beneficiaries by giving of themselves as reflected by the acronym 'RICE'; reaching out to help those in need, inculcating compassion and empathy, caring and being concerned for the needy and encouraging volunteerism.

free food to the needy regardless of religions on Sundays. I want to say a big thank you to all the donors for their generosity."

Factors contributing to the success of Project R.I.C.E 2013

With 111,813kg of rice collected for beneficiaries, this has been the most successful Project R.I.C.E thus far. The generosity and support of the public has once again helped Project R.I.C.E 2013 to not only surpass the targeted collection, but also benefit more beneficiaries this time round.

The nationwide publicity, collection and distribution drive of Project R.I.C.E 2013 were collective efforts of many volunteers. Red Cross Youth - Chapter volunteers from Anderson Junior College, ITE College East, Nanyang Technological University, National University of Singapore, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Singapore Management University, Singapore Polytechnic and Raffles Junior College all stepped up to the challenge. They set aside time amidst their hectic school schedules to help generate public awareness, solicit donors via door-to-door collection and to distribute the rice.

Ms Giscille Chen, a student leader from Red Cross Youth - SMU Chapter, was one of the many who worked for months on Project R.I.C.E 2013. Ms Chen participated in countless

rice donation drive. This shows our people's warmth and eagerness to contribute for a good cause. Their kindness and compassion are commendable," said Mr Lim Hock Chee, Chief Executive Officer of Sheng Siong Group Ltd.

In addition, the youth volunteers worked tirelessly to knock on the doors of hundreds of households on 19 January, explaining the objectives of the project and encouraging residents to get involved by donating sealed bags of rice weighing from 500g to 10kg. Two weeks later on 2 February, the volunteers came back to these households to collect rice. They were then distributed to beneficiaries from 92 welfare organisations.

Cheng Beng Buddhist Association was one of the beneficiary organisations. The staff of Cheng Beng Buddhist Association, Ms Tan Lay Eng shared about her thoughts on the initiative, "Project R.I.C.E 2013 is a really good initiative because it has a wide outreach and can help many people. The project has helped our organisation reduce expenses because we cater



Transforming Reticence to Exuberance

By PAUL CHNG, *Volunteer*, and SITI MARIAM BINTE SAIFUL HAIREEN, *Red Cross Home for the Disabled*

Always wanted to donate to the Red Cross, but not sure how to? Wondering how your contribution positively impacts the lives of the beneficiaries? Most importantly, what does 'humanitarian' really mean to you?

I also ask myself the same questions when I am approached to donate for a good cause. I must say, this does not stem from a reluctance to donate, but rather from a sincere and good-hearted curiosity.

These questions were thankfully answered when I learnt about the Day Activity Centre (DAC), run by the Singapore Red Cross (SRC). This centre was opened in June 2011 and is situated at the Red Cross Home for the Disabled (RCHD) at Family Link @ Lengkok Bahru. The DAC provides social, physiotherapy and occupational therapy activities to develop the cognitive, social and motor skills of the clients. The service also offers the caregivers a peace of mind, thus enabling them to continue working during office hours.

"In the past, she used to be reticent... Since enrolling into the DAC, she is now a noticeably cheerful, smiley, bright-eyed individual who welcomes interaction and has a heightened sense of awareness."

Mdm Siti Mariam of her sister

Mdm Siti Mariam's younger sister, Ms Siti Alloyah, 41 has benefitted immensely from the DAC programme.

Ms Alloyah suffers from physical and intellectual disabilities and occasional fits of epilepsy. Being wheelchair-bound, she is completely dependent on her elderly mother to care for her basic needs such as

feeding and toileting. Though her mother is her sole caregiver, Mdm Mariam helps support the family financially and tends to her sister whenever possible.

When Ms Alloyah first joined the DAC, the staff noticed that she was rather reserved and did not like being around people. Simple gestures like touching her hand would trigger her anger and she would outwardly display her displeasure by 'tutting' loudly. Often, Ms Alloyah would be unresponsive; gazing around with a blank expression and showing no interest in visual or audio stimulation.

After being in the DAC for a few weeks, Mdm Mariam and her family noticed a marked improvement in her sister's personality. "In the past, she used to be reticent when we brought her out, such as to the market. Since enrolling into the DAC, she is now a noticeably cheerful, smiley, bright-eyed individual who welcomes

interaction and has a heightened sense of awareness. She is increasingly socially adept; she smiles upon hearing her name. She is also responsive to stimuli. She 'converses' with anyone who

interacts with her by making noises. She gains attention by going 'maaaaakk' until someone responds to her," shared Mdm Mariam.

Indeed, the older sister and her family are pleased with the positive outcome of enrolling her sister at the DAC.



On the personal level, it brings me tremendous joy to share this positive experience. It also redefines the term 'humanitarian' in a more personal and tangible way for me. I sincerely hope that this story would reach out to you and show how your donation could significantly help our fellow Singaporeans who just need that extra bit of help.

Keen to donate to help Ms Alloyah and other individuals in need to make a difference in their lives? You can donate via the following payment methods: AXS Machine, iNets Kiosk, Paypal, regular GIRO donation, Credit Card or Cheque by post and SGGives.



Scan the QR code for further details.



Great Buys @ Bargain Price

By EMMA GATEHOUSE, *Volunteer, Singapore Red Cross*
 Photos by HADY LIANG, *Volunteer, Singapore Red Cross*

Thrift shops run by charities are gaining much traction and popularity in Singapore. With inflation at all-time highs and consumers tightening their budgets, the concept and fun of shopping at thrift shops to treasure-hunt for great bargain buys is very appealing to both young and old.

Starting last September, the Red Cross House Monthly Bazaar has been held at Red Cross House, 15 Penang Lane, close to the Dhoby Ghaut MRT station. This is a natural transition from the well-known and well-loved Shop@RedCross at Jalan Khairuddin. Red Cross House is situated at a more convenient location and it saves the shoppers a commute to Singapore's east.

In 2013, the Red Cross House Monthly Bazaar has been transformed to the Weekend Sales, to be held across the last weekend of every second month. The Weekend Sales offers patrons a truly worthwhile opportunity to shop for items, whether brand new or pre-loved at amazing bargain prices!

Substantial markdowns and an extensive range of items are assembled, transforming Red Cross House into a true market bazaar. "Our rooms are stocked with new and pre-loved goods donated by well wishers and the continued support of corporate contributors such as Macy's, Singapore Post, Changi Airport Group, SMRT, and Comfort Delgro," said Ms Lim Peishan of the Singapore Red Cross' fundraising team, who manages volunteers at the Weekend Sales.

"Cameras, smart phones, and MP3 players donated are carefully reserved for the Weekend Sales. Shoppers can expect a wide variety of great bargain items such as new and used clothing, household items and kitchenware, mobile phones, electronic goods, clothing, jewellery, accessories, stationery, books and baby and children's toys," shared Ms Lim.

"We have brand new clothes priced at S\$5 or less. There are pants sold at S\$1, and brand new baby items, donated by Singpost, are discounted by up to 30 percent. It is a really good opportunity to

shop for presents, or buy something for yourself," explained Ms Lim.

More than twenty Red Cross staff and wonderfully supportive volunteers work together; planning, pricing and arranging the items for sale. This is a generous and heartfelt effort that can take up to a month to organise and prepare, with another whole week to pack and clean up after the event.

Funds raised at the Weekend Sales go towards the local Red Cross humanitarian services to help the disabled and aged in the local community, provide food and provisions to disadvantaged people and support community-based events.

Look out for the next Red Cross House Bazaar's Weekend Sales on 27-28, April at Red Cross House, 15 Penang Lane, Singapore 238486! Opening hours are from 11am to 5pm, Saturday and Sunday. Only cash payment is accepted. Help us stay green by bringing your own carry bags!

If you have items you'd like to donate to our thrift shop, we'd love to hear from you!

Deliveries can be made to:

Location
Red Cross House

Address
15 Penang Lane,
Singapore 238486

Opening Times
Weekdays from
9am to 6pm

Procedure
Kindly contact our Fund Raising
Department for arrangements or
for further enquires at 6664 0500.

Red Cross
Training
Campsite

62 Jalan Khairuddin
(Opera Estate)
Singapore 457524

Every Friday to
from 10.30am to
3.30pm

Kindly hand over items to any one
of our volunteers helping to run the
thrift shop.



Scan here for more information!



Cycling to the Rescue

Imagine a scenario where your child takes a fall while learning to cycle. Blood flows from the wound at her knee cap. You panic as you do not have anything to wrap the wound to stop the bleeding.

With first aiders patrolling East Coast Park on weekends under the First Aider on Wheels (FAOW) programme, you no longer need to worry. FAOW was first mooted in 2009. In this programme, trained and certified first aiders provide voluntary first aid treatment to park-goers during weekends.

The FAOW programme was re-launched in February 2012. This time around, it received the support of the National Parks Board. Within a year, FAOW was served by 350 volunteers, of whom 40 are active. Since its re-introduction, a total of 1,100 first aid treatments have been provided to the community.

That said, the challenge of sustaining the weekend programme remains. Thankfully, Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Health Sciences has committed its nursing students to the FAOW programme since February 2012. In 2012 alone, the nursing students and one of the lecturers in the school, Ms Vignasweri Ratnam, have contributed more than 1,500 hours of their time for first aid duty under the FAOW programme.

"This is a good platform for the students to put first aid knowledge into practice and enhance their confidence, knowledge of front line care, communication skills and ability to think on their feet. It also gives them a sense of achievement that they can contribute to society even though they are just year one students," explained Ms Ratnam.



What really impressed Ms Ratnam was the students' enthusiasm to help. "They were willing to sacrifice their time. Also, their passion for the cause spurred them to practise their skills even prior to the commencement of each session, even on the wet sandy beach," she shared.

Ms Ratnam recounted a near drowning incident that occurred on 13 January at 6.50pm. "The students immediately rushed to

"This is a good platform for the students to put first aid knowledge into practice and enhance their confidence, knowledge of front line care, communication skills and ability to think on their feet."

*Ms Vignasweri Ratnam,
lecturer of Ngee Ann Polytechnic's
School of Health Sciences*

the scene. Luckily, the victim's breathing was restored when she was brought to the shore.

The first aiders responded professionally and stayed till 7.45pm even though their shift ended at 7pm. They hardly asked for time back. This was truly volunteerism from the youth," explained Ms Ratnam.

Terrance Tan, one of the nursing students who participated in the FAOW programme, said, "It is good because we can put our first aid skills to use and it is a service to humanity."

Singapore Red Cross appreciates and recognises the contributions of Ms Ratnam and the nursing students as well as all other FAOW volunteers in making this FAOW programme a success.

It is hoped that more civic organisations and companies will come forward to join the FAOW programme to ensure its sustainability. After all, it is a worthy programme that ensures the well-being of the people in our community. If your organisation or company is keen to join the FAOW programme, please contact Tan Jian Qi at 6664 0570 or email him at jianqi.tan@redcross.org.sg.

Building Capabilities to Counsel Others

Asia Pacific has gained notoriety for being the world's most disaster-prone region. Disasters hit very fast and very hard. Yet, the emotional scars left behind are there for the long term, especially for those who have lost their loved ones.

Family members who have lost their loved ones undergo periods of emotional trauma, pain, denial, anger, bargaining and depression before they finally accept that the loved one is gone. Sometimes, professional counseling has to be provided to help the family members better cope with the loss.

To prepare volunteers for overseas deployment to counsel aggrieved survivors of natural disasters, Singapore Red Cross (SRC) organised the Basic Psycho-social Support Skills Level 1 training course for its volunteers and staff. Held on 17 and 18 December 2012 at the newly-opened Singapore Red Cross Academy @ Atrium, the course was conducted by Promises Pte Ltd, a mental health and addictions consulting and training company. Incorporating lectures and role plays, the course is part of a broader strategic direction to facilitate a systematic training programme for volunteers to prepare themselves for humanitarian relief aid overseas.

One of the participants, Mr Marc Heng, an investor by profession has been volunteering with the Regional Disaster Response Team of

SRC for about a year. Another participant, Ms Jenny Koh is a retiree who has been volunteering with SRC since last year.

They were motivated to attend the course to build their inner capabilities; to be better equipped to handle situations in the field.

One of the key learning points was that the mental

health of the volunteers is as crucial as the survivors. "It is important to maintain a high degree of self awareness to ensure that as volunteers, our mental health is also well taken care of," shared Mr Heng.

Participants also learned useful skills which are applicable in life, such as stress management and how to approach survivors. "It is important to look out for the reactions of the aggrieved family members, listen to them and make them comfortable enough to open up to talk. We need to empathise with their pain," said Ms Koh.

That said, there were different parts of the course that the participants enjoyed most. For Mr Heng, he enjoyed hearing about the personal experiences of the trainers and experienced volunteers in disasters

situations. Ms Koh who enjoyed the role play the most, shared, "While the lectures provided theoretical knowledge, I really gleaned much insight of what the lecturers were trying to put across to us when the different scenarios were acted out in the role plays."

Though Ms Koh felt that she is not yet very well equipped to handle the most difficult cases, she felt it was a good start for all the participants.

Sharing the same sentiment, Mr Heng said, "It was truly enlightening. We learnt a lot from the issues discussed and the experiences of the trainers. We emerged from the class with a strong conviction that the course was worthwhile. We are better equipped to go to the field."



Presenting the first cohort of the psychosocial support course

DISPELLING BLOOD DONATION MYTHS

By DOMINIC LEONG, Corporate Communications and Marketing



FACT

Singapore needs blood. On a daily basis, our health services require 400 units of blood – that translates to more than 500 donors needed every single day!

That is why Singapore Red Cross works hard in encouraging people to donate their blood. Your donation could save the lives of three other people.

There are many myths and misconceptions about blood donation that put people off from giving others the gift of life. Let us dispel some of them:

Myth Donating blood will harm me!

Truth Blood donation does not harm the body. It will also not weaken your immune system. Only 450ml of blood is drawn from the donor – the average adult has five to six litres of blood. In just three days, the donated blood volume will be replaced.

Myth The needle will hurt!

Truth You will only feel a pinch. In Singapore, local anaesthesia is applied to the area before the needle is inserted so chances

are you will not even realise it's been inserted if you look away.

Myth One donation will not make a difference!

Truth Each donation can potentially save three lives. Some people think their blood donation will not make a difference. Every person matters. Give the gift of life today by donating blood.

Myth I'm a vegetarian; there isn't enough iron in my blood!

Truth Vegetarians can also donate blood – green leafy vegetables are high in iron, so you can eat more of those if you are concerned.

Myth I could get HIV or other infectious diseases!

Truth New and sterile disposable needles and blood packs are used for each donor. This is a standard health procedure handled by qualified, experienced medical staff.

QUIZ ON BLOOD DONATION

Take a quiz to find out how much you know about blood donation!

- 1 You can donate blood if you are 43kg.
- 2 You cannot donate blood if you have a haemoglobin level of 11.7 g/dl.
- 3 You can donate blood if you are 13 years old.
- 4 You cannot donate blood if you have previous and current history of cancer.
- 5 You can donate blood if you took traditional herbs the day before.
- 6 You need to increase your intake of iron-rich food such as red meat, beans, dark green vegetables, iron-fortified cereals, raisins and prunes two weeks before blood donation.
- 7 You are advised to avoid fatty food such as lipids (fatty materials) before you donate blood.
- 8 Red cells are used to treat patients with anaemia and patients undergoing major surgeries.
- 9 Platelets are not used to stop bleeding in patients who suffer from cancer, leukaemia or bleeding disorders.
- 10 You can make up to four whole blood donations in a year.

TRUE FALSE

<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

ANSWERS
ON PAGE 24!

Red Cross Beacon of Hope to Survivors

Photos by MUHAMMAD SHAFIQ RAJAB,
Volunteer, Singapore Red Cross

Just as Filipinos were struggling to rebuild their lives after the lashings of Typhoon Washi, they were hit by yet another typhoon. Typhoon Bopha pummeled through the communities in the southern island of Mindanao in the Philippines on 4 December 2012. It left a trail of destruction to homes, livelihoods and infrastructure. More than six million people were affected and 1,000 lives were claimed.

The Philippine Red Cross began preparations for responding to the humanitarian impact of the typhoon well in advance and was monitoring the typhoon since the day it was sighted. Volunteers and rescue teams were put on standby. Support vehicles and equipment such as rubber boats and ambulances were deployed.

After Typhoon Bopha hit, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) made an urgent appeal for funds to support relief and recovery efforts for thousands of families affected by the disaster.

The 4.5 million Swiss francs (S\$6.0 million) raised enabled the Philippine Red Cross to assist 50,000 survivors (or 10,000 families) who were directly affected by the storm. The survivors were provided with immediate food and non-food relief items, together with longer-term help to support their recovery, including support to water and sanitation systems, cash grants to help restore livelihoods and materials to rebuild homes.

Singapore Red Cross (SRC) deployed a team of volunteers to distribute S\$150,000

worth of relief supplies including collapsible water containers, blankets and rice to assist survivors of Typhoon Bopha. "Since the typhoon first made landfall, we have been

"We receive a lot of donations from the Red Cross, such as rice and canned goods. They really help a lot and I am very thankful to Red Cross for that. Without their support, we would not survive."

Ms Mary Chris Limbwasan

in close touch with our sister national society, the Philippine Red Cross. Singapore Red Cross' humanitarian aid will directly benefit the survivors living in shelters. We will continue to work closely with the Philippine Red Cross, on the on-going critical relief efforts," said Mr Benjamin William, Secretary General of the Singapore Red Cross.

The Singapore Government donated S\$50,000 to SRC for relief operations in the Philippines. While SRC did not launch a public appeal, walk-in donations were accepted for ongoing relief efforts in the areas affected by Typhoon Bopha.

Many families benefited from the relief assistance provided by the Red Cross Movement. Ms Mary Chris Limbwasan's family was one of them. Ms Limbwasan has been living at the evacuation centre managed by the Philippine Red Cross with her husband and her 18-month-old daughter Nicole since the storm hit.

"We receive a lot of donations from the Red Cross, such as rice and canned goods. They really help a lot and I am

very thankful to Red Cross for that. Without their support, we would not survive. They provided free check-ups, medicines and vitamins," she acknowledged.

One month on, the Philippine Red Cross continues to actively respond to needs in communities across the affected region.

The provision of shelter assistance remains a key priority – particularly for families that are currently residing in evacuation centres.

Like Ms Limbwasan, many lives have been saved because of the humanitarian work done by the Red Cross in providing relief aid in the aftermath of disasters. By providing basic necessities and shelter to the survivors who have lost almost everything, the Red Cross Movement has once again, been true to its mission of alleviating human suffering.





“The feeling was mutual”

By ANKITA JACOB & DHANASHREE SHELGAONKAR,
Red Cross Youth (RCY) – NTU Chapter
Photos by CHIA SWEE KIM, *International Services*

Two students of RCY – NTU Chapter recount their Overseas Humanitarian Project (OHP) experiences in Myanmar and how they gained new perspectives, returning with hearts full of gratitude for the many blessings they have in life.

It has been a long-held aspiration for us to do community service and to make a positive difference in the lives of villagers of a foreign country. Our goal was materialised when we went on the OHP ‘Project Twal Lat (Helping Hands) 2012’ to Mae Ya Gone Village,

Kungyangon Township, Myanmar, from 10 to 23 December 2012 with 15 other students from RCY – NTU Chapter.

From the time we boarded the plane to the time we disembarked, we were teeming with anticipation; we held noble and lofty goals of raising cultural awareness, educating and sharing knowledge with the children, improving the lives of the village folk coupled with personal goals of

humanitarian work and imbibing new cultures. Myanmar was chosen as the destination of the OHP. Having recently opened its doors to the world, Myanmar offers several opportunities for community service and developmental work.

We arrived at Yangon at 11am local time. Upon checking into our hotel, we shopped for necessities and items to bring to the villagers. For the remainder of the day, we repacked and organised our logistics. After feasting on the culinary specialties at a local establishment, we called it a night as we had to wake up early the next day.

On the morning of the second day, we took a grueling six-hour journey by bus. We received a grand welcome upon our arrival at Mae Ya Gone village. After the immensely entertaining reception, the guys were led to the monastery to unpack their belongings while the girls settled at the teacher’s quarters which were a five-minute walk away from the monastery.





The infestation of insects, icy cold showers, rock-hard ground to sleep on and the traditional squatting toilets were vastly different from what we are used to in Singapore. However, everyone seemed ready to adapt and adjust to the vagaries of the living conditions. At night, we had a dance rehearsal for the farewell ceremony and held the nightly debrief sessions where we shared our reflections of the day. These activities boosted the morale of the team and strengthened the camaraderie among the team members.

On the third day, we constructed a hard court just outside the primary school by mixing cement, sand and gravel and leveling the mixture. Upon completion, we left a group handprint with the words Project 'Twal Lat' (Helping Hands) inscribed on the cement as a memoir and a mark of the first mission accomplished.

The following three days were spent engaging in various construction projects; installing solar panels for the school and other parts of the village to harness sustainable energy resources, constructing a small Town Hall within the school compound to serve them in the years to come, cleaning the classroom walls and repainting them and installing the hospital beds.

Throughout the week, we were treated with great hospitality and were showered with immense love and care from the villagers. During our construction activities, the children and men helped while the ladies offered us cooling coconut drinks. Every evening, there were people inviting us to their home for coffee, snacks and even dinner. We were overwhelmed and touched by the enthusiasm and hospitality they showed us.



From the beginning of the second week, we gave conversational English lessons to the children with materials we had spent almost a year preparing. We taught them topics on colours, numbers, family and the human body. We also taught them first aid, sanitation and general health.

On the final day, there was an outreach programme where the students gained eye-opening exposure to the different cultures by sharing international songs and dances together with one dish that was unique to that region.

The final day was very emotional as we had to part ways with the kids with whom we developed a strong bond of love and friendship. The tearful farewell testified to the relationships we had built with the people within such a short period of time. Later in the evening, the monastery organised a traditional sticky rice making competition as a hallmark of the intercultural exchange.

Our last day in the village, we distributed soap, dental hygiene kits, footwear, first aid items and mosquito nets that we brought from Singapore. In the evening, the township put up a concert with a total of 28 performances for us. At the closing ceremony, Team 'Twal Lat' put up performances that included catchy songs and foot tapping dance numbers which were thoroughly enjoyed by the audience and the members alike.

The next morning, with hearts full of gratitude, a whole new perspective and memories that we will cherish for life, we made our way back to Yangon.

Upon reaching, we met with The Speaker of Yangon Region Hluttaw (Parliament) Honorary U Sein Tin Win, President of Myanmar Engineering Society U Win Khaing; and former President of Myanmar Club in Singapore, Mr William Shwe who had assisted us in bringing this trip about.

After the meeting we had a sumptuous dinner at a local restaurant and a debrief where all members shared their experiences and personal growth over the two weeks in the village. The following morning, some of us got up early and visited the Shwedagon Pagoda before all of us made our way to the Airport for our flight where we bade farewell to our friends from Myanmar Engineering Society who accompanied us throughout the entire trip.

"This is the first time I have done a project involving a village, school and the Singapore Red Cross. The villagers go all out to help us even though they are busy with harvesting. I can see a lot of benefit in terms of education for the students and facilities for the villagers of Mae Ya Gone. Thanks to Project 'Twal Lat', the villagers gain a lot of knowledge about the outside world. I am truly happy," said U Soe Thein Tun Sonny, our liaison officer from Myanmar Engineering Society.



What's On



<http://www.facebook.com/sgredcross>

April

27-28 WEEKEND SALES

Check out our Weekend Sales for great buys at bargain price! The Weekend Sales, held from 11am to 5pm at Red Cross House (near Dhoby Ghaut MRT), raises funds for the local humanitarian services of the Singapore Red Cross.

May

10 RED CROSS YOUTH LINK CAMP (LINKMANIA)

Write a story or take photos of Linkamania, a youth camp which develops the leadership potential of our youths. To participate, email Ms Kartini Saat at Kartini.Saat@redcross.org.sg or call her at 6664 0521.

22 SINGAPORE RED CROSS AWARDS CEREMONY

We are holding the inaugural SRC Awards Ceremony, which recognises volunteers who have made an outstanding contribution to the Singapore Red Cross. We are looking for writers and photographers to capture the event for posterity. To participate, email Ms Kartini Saat at Kartini.Saat@redcross.org.sg or call her at 6664 0521.

25-26 VIBRANT BLOOD 2013

Give the gift of life by donating blood at the Bloodbank@ Dhoby Ghaut in the Vibrant Blood drive! Organised by the Red Cross Youth - NTU Chapter, the blood drive will be open from 12pm to 6pm.

Answers for the Quiz on page 20

(1) F (2) T (3) F (4) T (5) F (6) T (7) T (8) T (9) F (10) T

June

8 WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY 2013

World Blood Donor Day recognises the contributions of our blood donors for their precious gift of life. To volunteer for event management at World Blood Donor Day 2013, email Ms Idy Lim at Idy.Lim@redcross.org.sg or call her at 6220 0183.

26 RED CROSS CHARITY GOLF 2013

Join us at the Red Cross Charity Golf 2013 at Singapore Island Country Club - New Course to raise funds for the local humanitarian services of Singapore Red Cross! To participate as a golfer or to volunteer at the event, email Ms Lim Pei Shan at Peishan.Lim@redcross.org.sg or call her at 6664 0548.

27 OPENING OF THE INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENT HUB

We are looking for writers, photographers and videographers for the opening of the International Involvement Hub (I2Hub) at the Atrium @ Orchard. The I2Hub provides a platform for homegrown NGOs including SRC to network, share expertise and explore collaborations. To participate, email Ms Kartini Saat at Kartini.Saat@redcross.org.sg or call her at 6664 0521.

29-30 WEEKEND SALES

Check out clothes, accessories, toys and electronic devices at bargain prices at our Weekend Sales for great buys. Held from 11am to 5pm at Red Cross House, the Weekend Sales raises funds for the local humanitarian services of the Singapore Red Cross.



SINGAPORE