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# Venturing into a world of darkness and silence

By OH CHIN ENG

TO be visually handicapped is already a challenge but to be hearing impaired as well must be very difficult.

Some people got to feel what this was like yesterday when they joined their disabled counterparts in a 2.2km walk in Penang.

While most of them walked blindfolded, some also wore earplugs as well to better understand the challenges faced by the disabled.

More than 2,000 people took part in the walk, with part of the group guiding participants who are visually disabled or blindfolded.



A helping hand: Blindfolded participants being led during the 'Sight and Sound' charity event in George Town

It was the fourth consecutive year the event was held, with the title in the first two years being Walk For Sight after which it was expanded to Walk For Sight & Sound.

Yang Di-Pertua Negri Tun Abdul Rahman Abbas flagged off the event at 7.30am at Beach Street. The walk was like a fiesta as the group was led by the St George's Girls School's marching band.

The participants passed several heritage sites along the route that covered Light Street, Jalan Masjid Kapitan Keling, Farquhar Street and the Esplanade before completing the walk back at Beach Street.

Spotted among the sea of people was housewife Liang Phooi Kim, 43, who came with her three children and six other family members.

“This is a very meaningful event as it’s for charity and gives us a better understanding of how the blind go about in their daily lives.

“My kids walked blindfolded and I guided them along the journey,” said the first time participant.



For a purpose: Participants starting their walk during the 'Sight and Sound' charity event in George Town

A group of nursing students from KDU College also took part to show their support for the disabled.

“I felt scared when I was blindfolded because it was totally dark. I banged into people a few times. However, I knew I was safe because my friends were guiding me.

“With this event, I know how it feels like when we can’t see. We have to respect those with visual problems. We must not isolate them because of their disability,” said 21-year-old Rohana Abdul Aziz who was among the group of students.

She said those who are sighted must be grateful for their ability to see.

Visually impaired Yusoff Abd Rahman, 60, was happy to be among the participants this year as he gave foot massage service in the first three walks.

“This kind of event should be held more frequently because its gives the normal people a chance to experience what the blind and deaf experience in their daily lives,” he said.

Yusoff, who lost his eyesight to glaucoma when a child, urged people with eye problems to seek medical help immediately.

“If you have any problem with your eyes, quickly go for a check up,” he said.

Participants were given certificates of appreciation after the walk and treated to refreshments. There were also game stalls as well as massage service provided by the St Nicholas Home’s Wellness Centre.

The event had aimed to raise RM100, 000 for St Nicholas Home, Malaysia Glaucoma Society and Penang Deaf Association.

Organising chairperson Beatrice Lam said the event was successful in raising awareness on visual and hearing disabilities among the people.

“We want to create awareness, to let people know how it feels to be blind and deaf. This event is more on awareness than charity,” she said while thanking all donors and sponsors for their contribution.

The event was jointly organised by the Lions Club of Georgetown Perdana, Penang Municipal Council and Penang State Sports Council.