



ST NICK'S NEWS



ST. NICHOLAS' HOME PENANG (6TH EDITION MARCH 2013)

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The first quarter of 2013 is almost over and everyone at St. Nicholas' Home is gearing up for our annual charity bike-a-thon, Ride for Sight 2013.

Everyone at the Home is excited about it and have been preparing since January itself! This year, we have introduced a monthly practice ride called, Fun Ride for Sight as a lead up to the big Ride for Sight 2013!

Read all about it in this issue of our newsletter!



RIDING FOR THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE!

St Nicholas' Home (SNH), Penang Global Tourism and various cycling groups have come together in a bid to recognise and raise the awareness of the rights the blind and visually impaired (BVI) community deserves to choose an active lifestyle for themselves.

Despite the many years of rehabilitation and education, many of the blind are still faced with barriers and these barriers are usually a result of people who have a poor understanding of the abilities of the blind. Very often than not, they are deemed incapable of being independent and leading a normal life. As such, they are frequently placed into a pigeonhole.

Therefore, as of February 3rd 2013, various cycling groups have committed themselves towards setting aside one Sunday every month to bring about 20 BVIs cycling using tandem bicycles from SNH to the Car Free Zone on Beach Street, Penang as a bid to raise awareness that the BVIs can make their own decisions about leading a lifestyle of their own choice. The BVI pillion riders are from the various training programmes here at SNH such as the IT programme, Skills Development Centre and from the Massage Training Centre.

As the rides become more known and frequent, we hope to have at least 30 tandem bicycles which will allow us to bring more BVIs on these rides.

All these rides will lead up to the big Ride for Sight (RFS) Charity Bike-a-thon 2013 scheduled to be held on April 14th 2013. With RFS coming into its third year, we are expecting more than 1000 cyclist to take part and registration for the ride has been very positive.

These rides with the blind and visually impaired community are definitely a step closer towards raising the awareness of the rights of the BVIs and their ability to make their own decisions about their life. By having more of these activities, we hope to show all the people in Malaysia that the BVI have the equal right to enjoy and do the same things as a sighted person.



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Creative Musical

Inventors:

SNH Recycle Band



One of the trainees enrolled in the IT course learning to use the computer.

THE RECYCLE BAND

The SNH Recycle Band is one of a kind. All of the band members are blind or visually impaired and consists of 5 musicians, twins Azhar and Izwan playing on wok pans, Bedrul playing the water dispenser, Phon playing the plastic drum and Anq playing the cow bell. Besides music, they also perform the lion dance, especially during the Chinese New Year. The band was established in 2007 in Penang, Malaysia under the guidance of Wan Ibrahim.

It is amazing how they use waste products as music instruments but the fact that they sing while making music makes this band even more authentic. With a rich repertoire of English, Mandarin, Indian, Malay, and Tamil songs they can satisfy their multi-cultural audience all over Malaysia. "Every object has a different sound. I look in the dust bins for objects with a suitable sound. I take the object home and check the sound by ticking on it. My favorite discovery so far is the white pail and the water dispenser." Wan mentions. Wan really enjoys working at SNH and considers the Music as a part of therapy. "Most of them are slow learners but when they are here they can remember everything and memorize all songs."

In the future, Wan wants to mix real instruments with recycled instruments. The recycle band performs mostly in Penang but they have also been to KL and Cameron Highlands. "Normally we don't advertise, people listen to our music and recommend us to their friends."

SAMSUNG EYES

Nowadays you cannot avoid the computer anymore. For a lot of work you need to be able to handle working with a computer. The IT world is one that quickly develops, especially since the introduction of the worldwide web. "It is always useful for the blind to get to know how to work with computers because they can use this knowledge in their further studies or work. Despite the ever changing technology, our IT department keeps up well with the use of windows 7. In 2005, we built a new lab named Samsung eyes with the support of sponsorship by Samsung," our IT instructor mentions.

Since 2009, the IT training centre uses the International Computer Driving License (ICDL). This is an internationally recognized qualification in IT skills. "To achieve an ICDL qualification, the trainees must successfully complete a test concerning Information Technology (IT), managing files, word processing, making spread sheets, databases, presentation, information and communication."

There is still room for improvements. "More courses on for example, security, internet, software, and developing websites will be helpful for the trainees. Furthermore, it would be nice if SNH can supply education on a diploma level. Four out of the sixteen IT trainees are totally blind but some of them are really good and it would be nice if they can grow further in this," our IT instructors explains. The instructors are very passionate about what they do even though it is not always easy teaching the BVIs, but they always strive to do the best they can for the trainees.

THE BLIND AND YOU

Whenever a sighted person meets a blind or visually impaired person for the first time, they usually do not know what to do or how to react. Advising someone to "behave normally" may be odd and difficult for some people to follow or adjust. Here are a few tips or advice that can help us on our journey of friendship with our blind and visually impaired friends.

Firstly, we have to accept and understand that blind people are just the same as us. They come from all walks of life and from all sorts of backgrounds, just like you and I. There are blind sportsmen like Olympic South Korean Archer, Im Dong-Hyun, blind singers like Stevie Wonder, blind farmers, housewives, lawyers, masseurs, social workers and others.

When we talk to them, we should just talk naturally and we should not talk down or address our remarks as though our blind friends are not there. When we walk up to a blind person to say hello, be sure to say who you are as they might not recognise our voice and if

you do not know them by name, a light touch will indicate who you are speaking to.

Many blind people appreciate our assistance or help to cross a road or find a shop, however, if an offer to help is rejected, we should not feel snubbed as well as there are many who work hard to be independent. When we come across a blind or visually impaired person, ask them if they need help. Then, when we assist them, always walk slightly in front with the blind person holding your arm. We should also always warn a blind person when we are approaching a flight of steps or a slope so that we can prevent any untoward incidents or injuries.

Being friends with a blind or visually impaired person is not difficult and for us to live in a civil and just world, we should break down the barriers and walls that divide us, for us to be able to accept and live harmoniously together.

Source credit:

<http://www.mab.org.my/reference/younblind.html>