



ST NICK'S NEWS



ST. NICHOLAS' HOME PENANG (7TH EDITION MAY/JUNE 2013)

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The first quarter has been an exciting one for our Home. A lot of fun activities were carried out and it looks like our aim to make our trainees more active and involved in sporting activities are starting to work!

In April, we had our annual Sports Day and Ride for Sight. Read on to find out more about what happened in our wet but exciting sports day. Also in this edition, learn a bit more about one of our St. Nicholas' Home's VIP staff member and one of our DBMH child.

Enjoy Reading!



HE WALKS BY FAITH, NOT BY SIGHT

“Being sighted often engages us in being pitiful towards the visually impaired. One usually feels sorry for those who are not aware of how beautiful the world is since they never had the opportunity to experience vision. The sighted world has decided for them that being blind is what they are; hence, compassion is their birth right. However, SNH for the blind deals with this attitude strongly by giving back to the world, citizens who walk not by sight but by faith! Stephen Inthiran, the face of SNH at the front desk, is a story that is of success and life.

Stephen is the 1st born to his parents and was born blind. As if this was not trauma enough for the parents, the second time they had a baby girl, she too was met with the same fate. However, the parents did not ever think of them to be a burden and as Stephen says, “My parents were the ones who told me that I was not handicapped and was as normal as any other child”. As a child, he remembers himself being restless as he stumbled upon everything, every time. Being born blind, he had no clue about what he was missing in life. Since blindness was his only disability, he somehow involuntarily got trained into being a sharp listener and using sound as his light.

With the mindset of being independent and as able as any other, Stephen became a part of St. Nicholas' Home at the age of 7. He joined the home which was then a primary school, in 1986 in standard 1. Being exposed and trained in braille, he went on to join a public school and finished as a high school graduate. Soon, he took up training to become a telephone operator and joined St. Nicholas Home where he has been a key member ever since.

In Stephen's own words, “Life is unpredictable, but the challenges being met with a smile is what I believe. Though I am not a Penangnite and stay in Sungai Petani, yet I come to work on the island

changing transport three times, since telemarketing and telephone operator jobs are not that common in my area”. In SNH, the moment one enters, one is greeted by Stephen, as he is very responsive to sounds. All telephone calls, paging and front desk management is done by him. A day without Stephen in the front office makes the others feel practically lost as he is totally in grip of everything. Blessed in love, he finds himself happy with his wife who is a sighted person. Stephen says, “She is my eye and I love her”. Immaculately dressed with a matching tie and a nice shave, he is a man of wit and makes a sighted person feel crippled as he oozes with confidence.

When asked whether he knows what is darkness, his answer is, “No, but everyone says its black and I know black is the colour of hair while rose is Red”. A music buff and a humourist, you never see him low. He has his sad moments where he says he knows he must be missing something called sight and would try to get over it. He says SNH is his light and he is happy to be here and show others how easy it is to learn to live without vision when faith is there.

Seeing Stephen walk in pride, head held high, one is always stunned with one thought ... maybe a blind mind is the biggest handicap, which cares if one is not sighted.



ST. NICHOLAS' HOME PENANG

No 4, Jalan Bagan Jermal,
10250 Penang,
Malaysia

Tel: 604 - 2290800

Fax: 604-2278590

E-mail: ed@snh.org.my

Website: www.snh.org.my

Facebook: St Nicholas
Home Penang



SNH budding

athletes!



Thurga being trained
to wash her hands
and mouth after eating
her meals.

WET & WILD SPORTS DAY

The dark clouds, the heavy rain and the flooded roads did not deter the staff and blind & visually impaired trainees of SNH from attending the annual Sports Day that was held on the 6th of April 2013. Thoughts of postponing or cancelling the Sports Day were floating around as many were worried about the gloomy weather and the rain that did not seem to stop. But spirits were high and as soon as the rain slowed down, the chairperson decided to move ahead with the Sports Day. The event started off with the singing of the national and state anthem, followed by the athletes' oath for a fair and safe sports day.



The staff and BVIs were divided into 3 teams and each team had to choose a car brand as their team name. As such, the names of the team were Volkswagen, Ferrari and Jaguar.

One of the most competitive and coveted prize at every sports day is the Best Decorated Tent. Each team had to decorate their tent to reflect one of the 3 major Malaysian festival celebrations, Hari Raya, Deepavali or Chinese New Year. The teams really went all out to outdo each other, with all 3 teams starting their decorations from the day before itself!

Among the sporting activities held during the sports day were Javelin, Short Put, Discus Throw, Running, Futsal and the crowd favourite, Tug-of-War. For all these activities to be equally fair among the BVI trainees, all the participants had to wear a blindfold. For the running competition, each blind-folded participant had to have an escort runner as well.

Despite the rain pouring heavily, all the staff, BVIs and volunteers were in high spirits and continued playing. The SNH Sports day is not just an event to showcase and unearth the talents of the BVI trainees but it is also a day to show people that they too can do the exact same activities that a sighted person can do.

Sports day was a day where sight, position, age and size did not matter. On that day, we were all equals and we look forward to the day where the BVI community will have the same rights and responsibilities and share equal opportunities and the quality of life that is available to their sighted peers!

LITTLE DANCING STAR

Thurga first came to SNH in 2012. Coming from a family of four and as far as Johor Bahru, the most southern part of Malaysia, it has been a long journey of success for her here in St Nicholas' Home Penang.

Thurga was born with congenital blindness, mental retardation and autism. Before stepping foot to SNH, Thurga was pampered a lot at home. She was still wearing diapers as she did not have the proper toilet training. She was having difficulties doing daily activities on her own such as eating, dressing herself and wearing shoes. However, she was able to walk around without any help. When placed in an uncomfortable situation, she would make noises and throw tantrums.

All that changed when her parents decided to send her to St Nicholas' Home, Penang. Within a year, she changed tremendously. More attention was given towards enhancing her skills in tactual sense, cognitive living skills and motor skills and Thurga became better each day.

Now, with the training received from the Deaf, Blind & Multi-Handicapped programme, Thurga is able to wear clothes and shoes on her own when she receives

a verbal command. She is now able to move around from her dorm to her classroom and dining hall. Thurga also recognises her housemothers, teachers and friends' voice when they talk to her. She has also become more energetic and lively as she demonstrates through her new found love of music and dance.

In class, she is able to do tactual puzzles and explore the different shapes and sizes of the tactual board. She is also able to recognise her both hands, other body parts and name them. She is also beginning to repeat words that she has learned from her teachers which indicate her learning progress. Thurga is definitely one of St Nicholas' Home shining stars and we look forward to seeing her star continue to shine!

