



On Monday, 20 children stepped into their neighbourhood's Seniors Activity Centre for the first time. It was not just to have a look around but to eat, talk and play with their elderly neighbours. They were guided and encouraged by students from Anglo Chinese Junior College who had spent the morning preparing them for the visit. **Project Cheer by the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation impresses on young people that despite being a part of a social service programme they too can brighten someone else's day.** It also aims to encourage interaction between the young and old and we thought that it would be a good way to break the ice among neighbours who would otherwise not be talking to each other. As it turned out, all our children needed was an opportunity and some guidance as they helped call out the bingo numbers and excitedly helped their elderly neighbours with their bingo cards.

Social services are usually organised to meet the needs of specific groups but when "needy" people are grouped together, they tend to become isolated from the rest of us. Putting a service facility within a neighbourhood does not mean that its participants are naturally integrated into our community. It is only with people start having friendships that community is created. We applaud Project Cheer and the Thye Hua Kwan Moral Charities Seniors Activity Centre for creating the opportunity for children, youths, adults and the elderly to come together in friendship.

The holy month of Ramandan is approaching and once again it is an opportunity for several of our mothers to embark on income generating festive baking projects. Over the past 3 days, our mothers have been hard at work preparing tubs of pineapple jam in partial fulfilment of an order for 27 000 cookies. As we supported these mothers, it was obvious to us that hard work alone will not enable success. We will succeed only because our friends and the community at large have offered their support and are invested in our success.

Our mothers are only able to handle the large order because Caritas Singapore, the social and charitable arm of the Catholic Church has generously offered us the use of their baking facility at Agape Village gratis. Yesterday, this baking studio welcomed representatives from the the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore to perform Sertu, a cleansing ritual which assures Muslims that the cookies prepared at this studio will be appropriate for their consumption. Also, orders have increased because Project Khadijah, a volunteer group has been helping us to secure orders from various corporations.

We have also had suppliers granting us substantial discounts and volunteers working alongside the mothers. Hence, it is with much gratitude that together with the mothers, we humbly acknowledge that our friends have put aside religious differences and vested interests to cooperate for our success. Hard work is necessary for success but it is not enough. The vulnerable among us would require our collective friendship.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard


*"All major religious traditions carry basically the same message; that is love, compassion and forgiveness. The important thing is they should be part of our daily lives."*

*The Dalai Lama*

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