

Values In Action programme: Helping the needy

PUBLISHED JUL 31, 2017, 5:00 AM SGT

In the final section of this three-part series, The Straits Times looks at the Values In Action programme in schools. For the final week, we look at two projects by Catholic Junior College and Anglo-Chinese Junior College students and how they planned and learnt from their own activities.

Lim Min Zhang

In the final section of this three-part series, The Straits Times looks at the Values In Action programme in schools. For the final week, we look at two projects by Catholic Junior College and Anglo-Chinese Junior College students and how they planned and learnt from their own activities.

CATHOLIC JUNIOR COLLEGE: LEARNING A LESSON IN EMPATHY



CJC students Alyssa Lim and Ryan Wong, both 17, giving instructions to some young camp participants before a Captain's Ball game. PHOTO: CJC

The camp was supposed to improve the participants' emotional well-being. But the Catholic Junior College (CJC) student organisers were caught off guard when some

of the children broke down in tears on the first day of the camp.

The participants were between 10 and 11, and came from difficult family backgrounds such as low-income households. Some were upset when they received fewer sweets than peers in other groups, as a result of being slower in playing an introductory game.

Vice-chairman of the service learning project Alicia Tan, 17, said: "To us, it was a very small thing, but we didn't realise the children were observing closely. It was something we had to explain to them."

The episode was one of the key learning moments for the JC1 students, who became more empathetic through the two-day camp they organised for some 50 children from Lakeside Student Care (Jurong West) last month.

The camp was part of CJC's Values In Action (VIA) programme.

While not everything went according to plan for Alicia's class, their efforts did not go unappreciated.

Participant Kieran Kwa, 11, said: "The programme was fun and interactive. I liked the outdoor games the most as I learnt about teamwork, and I hope they can come again."

With the good feedback, the class has resolved to organise another camp for the same group of children at the end of the year.

Mr Alvin Leong, 29, teacher facilitator for the three-month project, gave each student the task of getting to know at least one child well.

He said: "Because this was compulsory, a lot of the students had the idea to just get this over and done with. But we saw them transform from just wanting to finish this project, to being genuinely interested in the kids' lives, and developing that sense of empathy and desire to want to continue helping them."

Student Shen Yiyang, 17, said: "We realised we should not label children with a certain background in one way and stereotype them. Rather, we should make the effort to know them, as they are all unique individuals."

ANGLO-CHINESE JC: DEVELOPING COMMUNITY AWARENESS



ACJC student Jean Low, 18, helping at a charity event last month. At the event, beneficiaries from Awwa Family Services and seniors from O'Joy Care Centre interacted through joint activities such as making terrariums. The charity event was part of ACJC's Project Cheer, which was started in 2014 and had 12 student-led projects this year. PHOTO: ACJC

Three weeks after helping to organise a bonding session between the young and old in Singapore, Rishabh Garg was inspired to do more for his community in India.

Together with his family, the Anglo-Chinese Junior College (ACJC) student, 18, served food to the poor at a temple near his home town Bulandshahr in northern India last month.

The permanent resident said: "It was through my school's project that I became more aware of the needs of my community. So when I went back, I shared my experience with my family, and we decided to do something for the needy."

Community awareness and empathy were things Rishabh and his classmates had learnt after organising a charity event earlier last month. At the event, seven children from Awwa Family Services and 42 seniors from O'Joy Care Centre interacted through joint activities such as making terrariums.

Mr Mervyn Sek, 38, head of department for project work and values in action at ACJC, said: "At the JC level, we want the students to have a sense of ownership and responsibility, that initiative to start things and the tenacity to see it through."

The charity event was part of ACJC's Project Cheer, which was started in 2014 and had 12 student-led projects this year.

To learn about the needs of the children and elderly, Rishabh's team visited both Awwa and the care centre to talk to the beneficiaries and staff. It took the JC2 class numerous Skype calls and proposals to get the day's events in order.

The class's teacher-mentor for the project, Ms Lye Kit Wan, 31, said: "The event itself might only be one day, but I think the students have picked up... certain values and skills that are lifelong."

Director of Awwa Family Services Edwin Yim said: "Some of the children had a hard time bidding farewell to the elderly and exchanged high fives."

Project leader Joel Tan, 18, said he realised he has not really spent time talking to his grandmother.

"I came to realise that I should really cherish the relationship with my grandma, and take the first step to help her more and give her the interaction she wants with me."

HELPING STUDENTS BECOME SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE

The Values In Action (VIA) programme is aimed at developing students into socially responsible citizens who contribute to the building of stronger communities.

It replaced the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) in 2012 and is compulsory for students in primary schools, secondary schools, junior colleges and centralised institutes.

The change signalled a shift in emphasis - from providing community service to developing desired values in students.

Through the VIA programme, students learn about community issues and the needs of others, and come up with proposals on how they can contribute to improvements in school, at home or in the community.

At the primary school level, the programme focuses on the home and the school community.

At the secondary and junior college levels, the focus is on the school and the wider community.

Unlike in the CIP, there are no minimum hours to fulfil, but students would have had some opportunity to go through the VIA programme in the past five years. They are not graded on their contributions in the programme.

Schools can customise their VIA schemes, setting aside curriculum time for reflection by students.