



RADIANCE

Inspiring volunteerism, one issue at a time



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Mark your Calendar!

1 March 2014/ Saturday/ 10am to 1pm

Rainbow Centre Training Part 2

29 March 2014/ Saturday

Family Day '14 – Connections 180

30 March 2014/ Sunday

Annual General Meeting

WE WANT YOU...

- 1. Secretariat** for MYG Central Committee
- 2. Volunteer Coordinator** for MYG Central Committee

Get in touch with your respective project chair for more information. Join us today and be the catalyst of change.

Chairperson's Message

Hello hello! Another year is coming to an end this March and here's another issue of Radiance thanks to all of you! As we round up the year this last quarter (we count our work year from April to March), you can look forward to our annual Family Day on 29 March and AGM on 30 March!

For the last quarter, volunteers and trainees were involved in the first Meals-on-Wheels initiative as part of the ongoing Connections 180; a fruitful volunteer training session by Rainbow Centre; a stint at the annual Children Charities Association Christmas fair; as well as a movie outing to Frozen. MINDS also had the inaugural MINDS Appreciation Day where some of our volunteers received awards. With several projects having their annual project camps as well as Christmas and New Year celebration, I'm pretty sure it's been a happening quarter.

As we work towards another work year, I want to raise a pressing issue faced by many projects – the inevitable challenge of managing aging trainees.

MYG celebrated its 40 anniversary last year, and many of our trainees are in their 40s while we also have younger ones in their 20s. We are gradually experiencing a wider age gap among our trainees. How should we set the bar when planning for activities; where the younger ones are challenged and the older ones are also effectively engaged.

There are also different concerns faced by caregivers and volunteers – the former are undoubtedly concerned about the trainees' future and the latter, about planning activities for trainees, or even volunteer recruitment activities.

Should MYG undertake the responsibility of informing caregivers about the Mental Capacity Act and Special Needs Savings Scheme? How informed are we as volunteers in these areas? What is MINDS doing for their clients thus far and how can MYG leverage on the foundation laid upon by MINDS?

How should we plan mass activities like ACID and Sports Day to cater to everyone? The term 'everyone' gets broader with each passing year. More of our trainees are having mobility issues; some are no longer attending sessions as their aging caregivers are unable to bring them to sessions. Should we consider a formal exit for aging clients who aren't benefiting from our usual sessions? If so, where to? Are there community partners that are better positioned than us and willing to consider 'taking over' our trainees?

The list goes on, there is no one answer to any of these questions since MYG will always serve whoever's in our list of beneficiaries. It's a matter of careful deliberation and evolution of our own methods, volunteer recruitment included.

Chairperson's Message

More volunteers are definitely needed to look into various aspects in order to lay out a clearer picture. Moving into the next year I do hope we can find some answers to a couple of these questions.

Thanks for listening to my ranting! Happy volunteering and keep up the good work!

Quek Xiang Hui

"For the first time in forever...I'm getting what I'm dreaming of"



As a prelude to the Christmas festivities, our trainees were treated to a screening of the well-acclaimed Disney movie "Frozen" at AMK Hub's Cathay Cineplex.

It was one of the few occasions that trainees from all the projects in MYG came together for a combined activity held in the public.

Despite our general meeting time being so early in the morning at 9a.m., the open space outside Cathay was rapidly occupied by excited trainees, caregivers and volunteers, all prepared for the movie screening.

With the help of volunteers, each project ushered their respective trainees into one of the three theatres that we booked, where everyone gradually settled down in anticipation of the movie. As the lights dimmed, and the movie kicked off with the usual commercials, our trainees clapped and squealed in excitement.

It was definitely an eye-opener for our trainees, as they were mesmerized throughout the movie, be it by the beautiful animation accompanying the unique storyline, or the sing-along songs with catchy tunes.

By Therese Ho (AMK)

1st Homecoming for EP – BKTG

In addition to our regular volunteers, we welcomed 26 other volunteers on 26 October 2013, when Basic Knowledge Training Group (BKTG) and East Point (EP) celebrated our joint home-coming event as part of the Connections 180 campaign.

They did not simply just show up – one of the returning volunteers, Mei Peng led the Arts and Crafts session by teaching our trainees how to make letter holders out of paper plates, while Koon Pin, Hock Chin, the “3Js” and Siok Hui prepared tea break. Janet and Kenneth also participated actively by leading the dances during the “Diamond Dance” segment. Some of them even recognized trainees whom they took care of all those years ago, and is happy to know that the caregiver still remembers them.

It is very heartening and inspiring to see the returning volunteers still so passionate about the projects even after an absence of more than 20 years. While we held a meeting to discuss the programme for the home-coming, they took out albums after albums of carefully labeled photographs (*no facebook/ digital cameras back then*), a handwritten book of sing-a-long songs and other scrapbooks that preserved their memories of their time at BKTG.



One of the messages that we got from the Connections 180 project led by Kelvin and his committee is that ultimately, the volunteers and trainees of a project will change over time (duh!). In another 20 years, how will the current regular batch of volunteers remember their times today?

For many of us now, we are in session during some of the best years of our life, and we can only hope that during this time, we have done our best for the trainees, and enjoyed the company of our fellow volunteers. To that end, in 20 years time, we could then be like the returning volunteers today and remember the times at EP/ BKTG fondly.

It is also our wish that in 20 years down the road, the future batch of volunteers at EP/ BKTG will be there to serve our trainees better and more effectively than we ever could now.

Contributed by BKTG

Giving back in the season of giving



Handcrafted stamps have always been a delicate way to bring across personalised messages to loved ones. It is a delight for us to have collaborated with MINDS MYG to share the joy of creating Christmas postcards using these handcrafted stamps. To top it off, we even had a booth at Children's Charities Association Annual Christmas Fair at Ngee Ann City on 7 December 2013.

Thirty stamps were crafted befitting the Christmas festive season before our session with the trainees from East Point Project. Our initial fears that the trainees might not enjoy the stamping session dissipated once we started the workshop. The trainees were fascinated with the exuberant choices of colour ink pads and the cute designs on the handcrafted stamps. The first ten minutes of the workshop were a flurry of activities as trainees started to choose their favourite ink pads and stamps. Eventually, everyone settled down and started stamping their favourite design on the postcards. The outcome of the workshop exceeded our expectations!

The trainees enjoyed the process of making the festive cards and had fun throughout the session. Furthermore, the cards were exquisite and unique in every way.

Overall, these cards were very well-received by the public and participants of the fair. We even had a hands-on stamping station for people to put their personal touches to their cards. It was heartening to see one of the trainees from East Point Project visiting our booth, feeling proud that his cards were being appreciated by the public.

We are glad that the sale of these festive cards contributed to a good portion of the proceeds. At the end of this event, we felt enriched by the whole experience and motivated by the passion of all MYG volunteers who consistently and selflessly contribute their time.

By Priscilla and Zach

That pivotal point that led me to volunteering

There are times in life when a person you meet, an incident you witness, or a book you read, changes your life forever. My journey started off with one such book.

In my first year of Junior College, I was randomly browsing through the public library when a book with a mother and her baby laughing on the front cover caught my eye. Its provocative title, 'The Year My Son and I Were Born', was what drew me to it, but I never realized it would become one of the most sincere, heart-wrenching and life changing books I would ever read.

The memoir chronicled Kathryn Lynard Soper's first year of mothering a son she didn't expect to have Down Syndrome. The tears over the loss of the future she thought her son was going to have, the struggle to fight the depression that weighed so heavily on her, and the stares of others when she brought her son out – through it all, I wondered, how is it that I had never before given a second thought to the intellectually disabled? The way people would stare at her son when they thought she wasn't looking struck an especially deep chord in me – hadn't I been guilty of doing that the few times I encountered the disabled?

I was ashamed of my previous actions, and I wanted to get to know this much-forgotten segment of society better. And thus it was that I became a volunteer at MINDS MYG Children's Wing.

I must confess that this hasn't always been an easy journey. Many volunteers will probably nod their heads in agreement when I mention the frustrations when session plans don't work out, when trainees throw their tantrums, and even when our volunteer numbers fall far below the required.

But it has also been a journey full of joy – the joy of hearing our trainees thank us without prompting, the joy of seeing them leave sessions with a smile, the joy of knowing that today, we made a difference in someone's life – these are joys that make us return week after week.

It has nearly been four years since, and while I probably am more experienced and comfortable in interacting with the intellectually disabled than when I first started out, I cannot honestly say that I know them well, because I'm learning so much more each week.

Take a session a while back, a trainee looked me in the eye and asked why he was different from everyone else. I didn't know what to say, but his innocent yet searching question made me realise just how much I have been blessed, and how much of life I have taken for granted.

Contributed by Children's Wing

Year-End Revelry for RSPID, WE and AMK

On the 28th of December, trainees, caretakers and volunteers from RSPID, WE, and AMK gathered at Woodlands Garden School for an afternoon of fun and excitement - the long anticipated Christmas party!

The party kicked off with a sing-a-long session. Trainees and volunteers alike assembled into a circle and did some action-oriented activities to break the ice and hype up the atmosphere. This was followed by a surprise appearance by Santa Claus and his fellow elves who wowed everyone with their generous goodie bags of sweets.

Thereafter, trainees were invited to help decorate the hall (stage, walkway, front, and back) to set the stage for the party. It was heartening to see the hall area brighten up with decorations and ornaments created by our very own trainees - giving them a sense of belonging and contribution to the festive atmosphere.



Trainees were then invited to visit the myriad of game stations to play different games, and have their photo taken in a Christmas themed photo booth. Our special guests from VGC also put up a spectacular performance featuring favourite, familiar songs and everyone sang and swayed along to the tunes.

What would a party be without food? Special thanks go out to our trainees' parents who participated enthusiastically in the potluck dinner, volunteers who also contributed generously to the delectable spread and trainees who tried their hand at food preparation!

By Therese Ho (AMK)

Terra Hope's Movie Outing to Frozen

The morning of 14 December saw our residents and volunteers gathered at AMKHub for a highly anticipated movie screening! While catching a movie with friends and family isn't considered anything special for most of us, this was a first for our residents. Naturally, they were really excited and couldn't wait for the movie — Frozen.

And it turned out to be a special experience for all; volunteers and residents alike. Sitting together and enjoying the luxury of having the entire theatre to ourselves, everyone enjoyed the movie very much, ooh-ing and aah-ing along with the twists and turns in the plot, and at the beautiful characters on the screen.

After the movie, they were all very excited, and someone told me repeatedly, in a very excited manner, "I am the princess!", and then flashing a big smile every time she repeated this to someone else in the vicinity.

Before boarding the bus back, we led the residents to a trip to the toilet and what a chaotic experience it was getting them to form lines before the cubicle and to make room for the public who are entering/ exiting the toilet. Adding to the chaos was a chorus of high-pitched and excited "YES!" when I asked the girls whether the movie was nice, never mind the fact that the question was posed to them in the toilet.

One last thing to do before boarding the bus – picture taking with the pretty Christmas decorations in front of AMKHub!

After spending some time and effort getting volunteers and residents to fit into the camera frame, a few pictures were taken to commemorate the outing and as a pre- Christmas celebration.



Aboard the bus back to MINDsville, residents were still smiling happily and waving to the volunteers who had yet to board the bus, apparently still excited from the movie and simply by being outdoors in a new environment, with new things to see.

When we got back to the hostel, the residents returned to their rooms and the volunteers proceeded to pack the logistics required for the MINDsville Family Camp the following weekend!!

Contributed by Terra Hope

Connections180 – 1st Homecoming for RO Ex-Volunteers

On 21 Sep 2013, Project Connections 180 was launched by chairperson Kelvin Lim (BKTG current volunteer) and former MYG chairperson Liau Tian Der (88-90) with the objective of connecting volunteers from different eras, to tap on their vast and varying experiences.

Reach Out (RO) witnessed its first homecoming on 26 Oct 2013 as ex-volunteers from the 80s to early 90s era visited RO for the 1st time after 20 years.



Alice Ho (pictured;

chairperson 91-92) conducted a handicraft class to make photo frames. It was very heart-warming to see ex-volunteers guiding the members once more 20 years later!



Mike Yoong, 1st RO chairperson in 1986, an

evergreen volunteer, took centre-stage again to lead all volunteers and members in

Irene Seah (85)



Yoon Hsie (87)

Nostalgic memories as ex-volunteers looked at past photos!



Hsiao Mey (85)



Rosalind Png (87)



Peter Tan (80)

Connections180 – RO's 2nd Home-coming

As part of annual RO camp from 22-23 Dec 2013, a night Christmas party was organised jointly by ex-volunteers and current volunteers held at MINDS HQ at Margaret Drive. The members and volunteers enjoyed a night filled with festive food and Christmas games, as well as Christmas carols performed by 2 groups and ex-volunteer John Chan turning the clock back with Chinese songs.



Experience sharing – pioneer volunteer Carol Cheong with active volunteers Tze Beng and Wei Leng

Carol Cheong, who was roped in together with Mike Yoong (1st chairperson 86-87), to start RO project 28 years ago, attended the 2nd Homecoming Christmas party and said: "Deep inside me, it was an emotional walk down memory lane. Never had I ever dare to envisage that we can last so long. But we did! It is truly amazing!"

Credit to the many volunteers who carried the baton in this RO relay through the years. Among them, Tze Beng, Wei Leng and Jackie, who joined RO in 1997 and are still active volunteers today



人会老，心不老

20+ years ago, we've all shared the same passion to make a difference for RO members. Although we have aged (*I lost some hair, and some others have white hair*), but its heartwarming to see everyone still come together to connect with each other and volunteer once more in adhoc events to contribute in a small way when we have time, together with the current volunteers, for the members!

**By Chan Wei Siong
(1990 RO Chairperson)**

Journey with East Point

Trepidation engulfed me as I took my first step into Towner's garden school on a Saturday in back July 2013. It was the first time I'm helping out at a centre for the intellectually disabled and I wasn't sure what exactly to expect. I made my way to the canteen where I met Verna, the volunteer-management person for East Point (EP).

She gave me a quick introduction to EP and assured me that most of the kids here aren't violent before leading me into the classroom where they held their lessons.

Upon entering the classroom, Verna interrupted the sing-along session so that she could introduce me to the class. Despite the scanty number of trainees and volunteers, I was greeted effusively which made me feel slightly more at ease. However, being the socially awkward person I am, I chose two seats away from the nearest living, breathing thing, hoping to 'observe the situation' before I approach anyone.

To my surprise, that human, who happened to be a trainee, approached me and pulled me closer to him. He then introduced himself, with the help of a volunteer, Jim. Jim may not understand nor would he remember what he did that day, but to me, that action meant a great deal to me. He interacted with me that day and later on, through him, I learnt a great deal about the other trainees.

The subsequent EP sessions mostly had the same order of activities where trainees did sing-along, arts-and-craft or PE before going for tea break. Despite it being seemingly mundane, it sure was an eye-opener for me as I had the honour of seeing the trainees take on tasks which I never thought would be possible for them, mainly due to the quintessential view I held of them then. For example, I was amazed to see this girl cut paper so well – I, for one, fail to cut in accordance with the guiding lines sometimes.

The following weeks and months flitted by rather quickly and before I knew it, I was invited to join EP for their annual chalet/camp. It was two days of absolute hilarity, fun and drama. I also got to see a different side of many of the trainees as well as volunteers, whom I'll never see during EP sessions.



My journey with EP had indeed been enriching (I have even developed an emotional attachment to this place!) and I could not ask for more.

By James Sim (EP)

My first MINDS Meritorious Award

I received my MINDS Meritorious Award on 18 January 2014. How time flies, I have joined Reach Out (RO) for 4 years!

Back in 2009, I was browsing through the NPVC website for volunteering opportunities and came across RO. On my first day, I still remember Wendy, the then bubbly and friendly Volunteer Administrator, who introduced me to other volunteers and gave me an overview of RO. The lessons were conducted in a simple and engaging ways which left me a deep impression and from then on, my Saturdays were spent with this group of lovely people.

Rain or shine, my members (whom we affectionately call) will turn up at RO at 2.30pm every Saturday. We will start off with the Personal Development program to allow our members to try their hands at a range of recreational activities and hobbies. The next hour will be allocated for the Integrated Program which focus on academic and social skills, designed to help our members interact with the public before ending with Team Activity which aim to expose our members to different kinds of sports or games. It is through such activities that my bond and memories with the members were created.

Members now remember and will call out my name once I reach RO, one particular member like to hold my hand if I am standing near her, another like to sneak behind me and ask if she can smell my hair.

There was another one who likes to take picture with volunteers and we always joke that every volunteer will start of from being her photographer to taking picture with her. I also used to have a member who liked to disturb me by stepping on my feet. Recounting all these little actions always bring a smile to my face.

Happy times always pass very fast and every Saturday after bidding farewell to my members, we volunteers will continue our own bonding sessions over our weekly dinner. In RO, we function like a big family, coming together and spending time to interact and catch up. I felt even more strongly for this big family when I was down with illness last year. Even though I was out of action for a while due to my weak physique, I was not forgotten by them. Every week I would receive a get-well card handmade by them and a fellow volunteer friend would send me a joke every day to uplift my spirit. Their little act of kindness warmed my heart and provided me with a great source of support and comfort throughout my recovery period. I counted my blessing for knowing them and becoming part of this family.

My passion for volunteerism is still burning and I hope more will join us in this life enriching and meaningful experience. The happiness and friendship one gains from volunteering is worth much more than the effort and time, one has put in. So why hesitate? Join us now to experience yourself!

By Yang Shi Jing (RO)

An Outing Closer to Mother Nature

A nice and warm weather on 12th October 2013 herald an exciting and fun-filled day ahead. The excited faces of the Gully trainees gathered at the Eunos MRT told us they were really looking forward to the farm visit.

A long bus ride brought us first to Hay Dairies Goat Farm. We kicked off our visit with an excellent introduction about the farm and the goats by John from Hay Dairies. We then proceed to milk the goats, tour around looking at the baby, mommy and daddy goats.



Look at how fascinated Gary is!

Many trainees sped through the trail somehow knowing that delicious chocolate milk was awaiting them at the end of the tour.



Group picture and off to the next farm!

We visited the Bollywood Veggies next. During a 30-minute tour, our trainees were given assorted leaves and fruits to taste and they went round trying a variety of organic plants ranging from marigold flowers to buah kedondong.



We even had a mini art and craft session where trainees made cards using pressed leaves and flowers which got their creative juices flowing, especially when they saw all the materials they could use to assemble fishes and birds.



We ended our day feeling a little tired but very satisfied with lunch of Fish & Chips. It was a truly enjoyable and educational trip and our trainees had lots of fun. I enjoyed the interaction with our trainees, and am definitely looking forward to many more such sessions!

By Quan Yie (Gully)

Get involved and be inspired



On 24th of January, Reach Out (RO) celebrated Chinese New Year (CNY) at the function room in Normonton Park Condo. That day was definitely one of which I've had so much fun, and created so many awesome memories with the precious members and dearest volunteers.

There is a saying that goes; "A minute's performance onstage is at least a year's preparation off stage."

How true. The preparations were tough, especially for steamboat. For example, we had to consider allergies and Halal food for Muslim members. However all our hard work paid off at the end of the day when we saw just how much fun our members had and the smiles on their faces wiped away all our sweats.

Other than a sumptuous steamboat and lou-hei – food representative of the Chinese's culture and tradition – a series of activities such as games and sing-along sessions were also prepared.

Our team of programmers lined up games such as couplet (对联) which allowed members to better understand the Chinese New Year culture, and the prizes were so generous! We even had a big plush minion soft-toy which members love and were vying for.

Heading this whole event was a great experience for me personally. As one of the freshest and youngest volunteer in RO, my volunteering journey, though short, has grown and shaped me into a much holistic person.

My attachment towards RO is also greatly strengthened with all these events and I hope that events as such on project level will allow volunteers to become more committed just like how it has inspired me to.

HAPPY VOLUNTEERING, GUYS! ☺

By Whitney Tan (RO)