

epworth moments

An Epworth Community Services Quarterly Newsletter

February 2019

Back To School Fun!

We welcomed our students back for a new school year with exciting activities

more on **page 6**

Where Do We Go From Here?

Executive Director Tan Khye Suan shares his thoughts on the need to help children and youth develop better mental wellness

page 3

Looking Back: 2018 Year-End Recap

We look back at some activities during everyone's favourite time of the year

page 4



Content

Where Do We Go
From Here?

03

Looking Back: 2018
Year-End Recap

04

Back To School Fun!

06

Join Us!

08



Community Services

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Epworth Community Services is a voluntary welfare organisation which helps at-risk children and youths in their educational, social, emotional and moral development.

The Society is a registered charity, a full member of the National Council of Social Service and an Institution of a Public Character.

Mission

To reach out in Christian love, by providing quality programmes and services to all children, youth, parents and their families, of all language, race and religion, and nurturing each family member in body, mind and spirit.

Objectives

To help children, youths and parents of all language, race and religion, especially from dysfunctional, disadvantaged and needy families, to:

- Develop to their fullest potential;
- Enjoy a balanced family life;
- Become responsible and caring family members; and
- Become useful members of society.

Where Do We Go From Here?

By Mr Tan Khye Suan, Executive Director

Recently, in my interactions with some children and youths, and their parents, the issue of mental health of young persons came to my attention. Let me share a few stories:

1. A few months ago, a teenager who was preparing for his A Level examinations asked to see me. He just found out that his friend had committed suicide a day before. His friend did not seem unhappy or depressed in the days leading up to the suicide and was behaving normally. The teenager wanted to know what could have triggered his friend to commit **suicide**. He was very distraught and it affected his preparations for the impending examinations.
2. A set of parents spoke to me a few months back. Their son was in Primary 4 in a mainstream school. He is diagnosed with mild **autism**, but is high-functioning. As they spoke, tears flowed. Their son was returning from school feeling very sad and lonely. He told his parents, "I have no friends. My classmates always laugh at me. I don't know why." They asked me, "Why are the children so cruel to my son?" Their son is now on medication for **depression** and hated going to school.
3. Another set of parents asked me how to deal with their daughter. She was "stuck" to her mobile phone, day and night. She spent her waking hours using the mobile phone to chat with her friends, surf the internet and watch videos. This **screen dependency behaviour** affected her studies and she stopped going for her school CCA.

All these stories have one thing in common. They involve mental health well-being. What is more alarming is that we are hearing these sad stories in increasing frequency.

Today, our children and youths face many pressures and challenges that are quite different from those a decade ago - from parents, their peers as well as technological advances. We need to help them cope with the fast-moving pace of changes in society.

Perhaps, helping them is not enough. We must help parents in order that children and youths get the necessary attention, support and love they need at home! I will elaborate on these points in subsequent articles of this newsletter, Epworth Moments.



In September 2018, we informed readers of the rebranding of our organisation. As Epworth Community Services, we reclaim our Methodist heritage. Epworth is the birthplace of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. John Wesley was known for his passion to address the challenges that society faced in his time; that included poverty, alcoholism and slavery.

For Epworth Community Services, there is a compelling call to help children and youths, and their parents, who are challenged by issues of mental health well-being. We are already helping children with learning difficulties, developmental challenges and with various degrees of trauma. We will look towards helping parents build strong families that will be able to support children and teenagers as they face the many pressures and challenges in their lives.

These words of a Christian hymn constantly ring in my mind:

*I, the Lord of sea and sky
I have heard my people cry
All who dwell in dark and sin
My hand will save
I, who made the stars of night
I will make their darkness bright
Who will bear my light to them?
Whom shall I send?*

Perhaps, Epworth Community Services need to answer to the urgent cry of the children and youths, and their parents. We must take concrete steps to render the support they need. I remember the vision of Isaiah as God spoke to him:

***Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
"Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?"
And I (Isaiah) said, "Here am I. Send me!"
(Isaiah 6:8)***

Looking Back: 2018 Year-End Recap

By Elaine Hoong, Literacy Intervention Teacher
at Epworth Literacy

The last quarter of 2018 was definitely an activity-filled period for our children, with Children's Day in early October, the school term ending in November, and Christmas in December! Here's a look back at some activities conducted with the children from Epworth Literacy at the end of last year.

A Ride Into The Wild

Thanks to generous donors, our children were blessed with a day out at the River Safari! Many were excited as they finally got to meet Jia Jia and Kai Kai, the famous pandas that were the talk of the town. The iconic boat ride, *The Amazon River*, brought us up close and personal with the flamingos, capybaras and many other amazing animals. Graceful manatees and stingrays were quite a sight to behold as well!

Outings are always great fun! More importantly, it gives our children the opportunity to socialise and have an experience they can fondly remember. It warms our hearts when we see some of them looking out for one another.



An exciting day out for the children meeting many animals up close and going on the iconic boat ride, *The Amazon River*.

This event would not have been possible without our donors: River Safari and Roots @ One North, Judy & David Seah, Ann Gan, and Gwen & Chris from G Patisserie. Thank you for your generous donations as we celebrate the gift of children and remember the less fortunate.

We would also like to thank our dedicated staff of Epworth Literacy for organising this event, and volunteers from Heartware Network for spending time with our children.



An experience the children can fondly remember - thanks to our generous donors, dedicated staff and volunteers from Heartware Network.

Joy To The World! : Christmas with Epworth Literacy 2018

In a little town of Bethlehem, over two thousand years ago, a baby was born in a stable. Angels, shepherds and magi rejoiced at the birth of Jesus – but why? Why was His birth such a celebratory occasion and a concern for us today?

Our teachers from Epworth Literacy explained the true meaning of Christmas through videos, crafts and games during our annual Christmas Celebration. Our children learned that Jesus was God's gift to everyone, and that He died on the cross for our sins and rose again (on Easter Sunday). Because of Jesus' sacrifice, we are saved from eternal spiritual death. Christmas is not about the presents but about God's love and forgiveness for us all.



Celebrating the true meaning of Christmas during Epworth Literacy's annual Christmas Celebration.



The team of volunteers from ACJC and friends organised games to celebrate Christmas with the children. The children also brought home Christmas goodie bags thanks to our generous sponsors.

This year, we were privileged to have volunteers from Anglo-Chinese Junior College (ACJC) and friends join us in organising a carnivalesque Christmas celebration. It was such a joy to see the centre and pavilion bustling with excited children as they actively participated in activities, such as toss-a-can, bowling, and balloon sculpting. Each child also made crafts and received a bookmark to remind him or her of the true meaning of Christmas.

Thanks to our generous sponsors, each child brought home a bag of gifts and vouchers as well.

In addition, parents were fortunate to attend a parenting talk called *Rejoice in Hope: Journeying through the Odds*, where Mary Heng shared her joys and struggles of raising a child with special needs. In difficult times, she found peace and hope in God to help her press on.

This celebration would not have been possible without the help of our volunteers and charitable donors. Likewise, we count on your generous donations and support to continue to make such events possible for at-risk children and youth.

Back To School Fun!

By Julie Chu, Manager at Epworth Student Care

January 2019 marked the start of another school year! One could see the innocent and “blur” looks of the P1 students and the anxious parents who were concerned about how their child will fare in a new environment.

We had a week of orientation for the new students to get familiar with the class, environment and the staff-in-charge. For the “old” students, it was a time of rekindling friendships and adjusting to another class with new staff-in-charge.

Many exciting activities were organised to get the students settle down in the new class. There were 119 students including 28 new students who joined on 2 Jan 2019.

In the blink of an eye, February arrived and it was a month full of festive celebrations and activities. We celebrated Chinese New Year with the students with a children’s version of Loh Hei, conducted arts and crafts for the students for Valentine’s Day and held a talk on fire safety and a fire drill in line with Total Defence Day.

In addition, ACS Barker Choir Group conducted Music Enrichment for the students for their Values in Action (VIA) Project. They presented 2 song items and some of the students sang along with them. ACS Barker Choir Group also organised 2 team building games – Whacko and Musical Chairs. The students had so much laughter and enjoyment throughout the songs and games.

JANUARY

Back to School!

Bonding time through playtime, meals and reading.



FEBRUARY

Chinese New Year Celebrations

Chinese New Year arts and crafts by the different levels.



Loh Hei (children's version - with all their favourite snacks). Of course, the students were overjoyed with the snacks.



Music Enrichment by ACS Barker Choir Group

Students enjoying the songs and games conducted by ACS Barker Choir Group for their VIA project.



Fire Safety Talk

Conducted by Stanley Quek, Assistant Supervisor at Epworth Student Care.



Valentine's Day Crafts

The boys also made 'superman lollipops' for their Valentine's - which can be their parents or friends.



VOLUNTEER WITH US!

Volunteers play an important role in our programmes and services, many of these programmes and services could not have been conducted without their involvement. Volunteers can choose to be engaged in ad-hoc, short- or long-term programmes and are matched to programmes according to their time, interest and inclination.

Examples of ways you can help are:

- kidsREAD (reading programme for young kids)
- Epworth Student Care
- Community Programmes and Events



Please visit www.epworth.sg/volunteer or contact Jessica Soo, Assistant Manager - Volunteer Management and Facilities Management, at 6715 3711 for details on how you can volunteer.

THE HELP YOU GIVE CAN CHANGE LIVES

Epworth Community Services helps at-risk children and youths from needy and disadvantaged families in their educational, social, emotional and moral development. We are a registered charity, a full member of the National Council of Social Service and an Institution of a Public Character.

In the last financial year, our programmes and services reached over 2,600 children, youths and their parents. Through our intervention, we hope that they with their families will be able to better cope with the demands of our fast-paced society.

Our ability to continue helping children, youths and parents from dysfunctional, disadvantaged and needy families is largely dependent on our generous supporters who strongly believe in our cause. As a voluntary welfare organisation dependent on goodwill donations, we seek your ongoing support through our Epworth 500 programme to realise our mission and objectives of developing those most in need to become useful members of society.

Please donate generously at www.giving.sg/web/epworth-community-services. You may also contact us at admin@epworth.sg or 6562 2211 for enquires on donations.



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