

Children performing at the finale with community workers



MAKING SINGAPORE A BETTER PLACE

THIS YEAR'S PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE PROJECT 'START SMALL DREAM BIG' CONCLUDED IN HIGH SPIRITS.

The heavy downpour on 7 October did nothing to dampen the spirits of the 10,000 children and educators at the Finale of the 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) Project. Held at the OCBC Square at the Singapore Sports Hub in conjunction with Children's Day, the SSDB Project was part of the President's Challenge that inculcate the spirit of giving back to society in pre-schoolers. The event also featured an exciting carnival, comprising more than 20 activity stations set up by various government agencies, commercial partners, and pre-school centres.

The SSDB Project saw a five-fold increase in hours spent on community projects by children (see sidebar for more). The young ones also raised more than \$150,000 for the President's Challenge beneficiaries and other community organisations.

Guest-of-Honour President Tony Tan Keng Yam as well as Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin were impressed by the children's community projects

showcased at the Sports Hub. "The project has given our children small but invaluable opportunities to make positive changes to the world around them, and taught them to dream big," said President Tan.

One of the projects on display was titled "Kampung Spirit", an initiative by children of Kidz Meadow Childcare @ Buangkok Crescent. They worked as a team and packed groceries for distribution to the less fortunate during the Islamic fasting month of Ramadan.

"We hope to inculcate in the children the spirit of giving to those in need," said Ms Jurianna Bte Jumhari, the centre's Principal. "If we all work together like in the 'old kampung' days, we can achieve a lot. No act is too small." ♥



President Tony Tan at the SSDB Finale



Having fun at the carnival

Photos by Eric Chuan

LEARNING AND GROWING TOGETHER

CULTIVATING A CULTURE OF LIFELONG LEARNING FOR PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATORS.



SkillsFuture study awards recipients

Learning and growing is the life motto of Ms Uva Jothi, 24, who was nominated in December 2015 by her centre principal for the ECDA Professional Development Programme (PDP) for Teachers. Despite the hectic lifestyle, the pre-school teacher at PCF Sparkletots Preschool @ Keat Hong Blk 489B welcomed this latest opportunity to deepen her skills and knowledge in child development and pedagogy.

What is her secret? "Time management," says Ms Jothi. "It is an important skill to have." She even teaches this to her pre-schoolers so that they, too, can start reaping the benefits of having an organised schedule or a plan.

Learning and growing together helps us to provide a better environment for the little ones.

Ms Uva Jothi

Ms Jothi's passion for continuous learning stems from a desire to keep her practices current and relevant to the needs of children at her centre. Together with other educators and parents, she is confident of making a difference to the children's learning. "Learning and growing together helps us to provide a better environment for the little ones," she explains. She is already looking forward to the PDP Modular Course which starts in October.

But Ms Jothi's journey will not end there. She also plans to pursue a degree in early childhood education and become a curriculum writer so she can use her skills and knowledge to contribute to the sector and make a greater impact on the community. ♥

GROOMING THE NEXT GENERATION OF LEADERS

THESE TWO ECDA SCHEMES SUPPORT EC EDUCATORS WHO WISH TO DEEPEN THEIR SKILLS.



PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR TEACHERS

Pre-school teachers who have the competencies and aptitude to take on higher roles in the future can apply for the programme. Potential candidates should be highly committed to improving the centre's quality and the quality of their teaching and learning practices. To apply or find out more, visit www.ecda.gov.sg/pages/ECDA-PDP.aspx.



SKILLSFUTURE STUDY AWARD (SFSA)

SFSA awardees receive \$5,000, which can be used to defray out-of-pocket expenses associated with the ADECL (Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Leadership).

Ms Sylvia Neo, the Principal of Apricot Academy (Laguna) Pte Ltd, encourages educators at her child care centre to take up the study award as "it will enable them to gain a deeper understanding of the early childhood sector and in turn, improve their pedagogical skills".

The centre supports award recipients by granting them more flexible working hours to attend the course. "It is important to provide additional support to staff to upgrade their skills so that they can continue to put in work of high and consistent quality that will benefit the children," Ms Neo explains.

Visit www.bitly/ECDA_SFSA to find out more.



Minister Ong Ye Kung with a SFSA recipient

▶ This year
349
SINGAPOREANS

in various sectors were awarded the SFSA in recognition of their efforts and commitment towards skills mastery.

Photos courtesy of SkillsFuture Singapore

LET'S GO OUTSIDE!



EXTENDING LEARNING BEYOND THE PRE-SCHOOL CLASSROOM DOES WONDERS TO CHILDREN'S SENSE OF COMMUNITY.

When pre-school centres work hand-in-hand with community partners to take early childhood education beyond classroom walls, it's good news for everyone, especially the children.

"Community partners bring with them different knowledge and expertise. Collaborations between pre-schools and community partners help connect the classroom learning with the community we live in. They create valuable opportunities for more in-depth experiential learning for educators, children and even parents," says Presbyterian Community Services (PCS) Principal **Seow Hwei**.

This year, PCS Jurong West Centre, a Partner Operator (POP) centre, participated in the National Parks Board (NParks) Community in Bloom (CIB) programme to promote a deeper appreciation for nature among their kindergarten children. Under this programme, the children and their parents tend to the community garden run by the Jurong Spring Zone C Residents' Committee. They carry out gardening activities such as watering the plants and weeding. **Mdm Sivagami**, mother of **Roopan** from K2, enjoys participating in the community involvement project.

"Roopan and I enjoy being outdoors with nature," says **Mdm Sivagami**, who has also noticed



A parent tending to a community garden

Collaborations... help connect the classroom learning with the community we live in.

Ms **Seow Hwei**

better physical health and reduced stress levels in her child.

By collaborating with partners like NParks, the centre is able to instill a love for horticulture in children through engaging gardening activities. "Besides contributing to the lush greenery of the centre, this partnership programme value adds to the centre's curriculum. It encourages self-directed learning among children, helping them develop science process skills, project management skills and teamwork," says **Mr Ng Cheow Kheng**, Group Director, Horticulture and Community Gardening, NParks.

POPular Advantage

"The POP Scheme has helped us harness additional resources for the centre," says **Ms Seow**. "Under the scheme, PCS has been able to send

more staff for training and this has, in turn, strengthened the curriculum."

The POP scheme supports pre-schools in their efforts to improve centre and teacher quality, and the affordability of their child care services. Learn more about the POP scheme at www.ecda.gov.sg/Parents/Pages/POP.aspx ❤️

PARENTS CAN DO MORE!

TIPS FROM **MS IVY TAGUDANDO MAESTRE**, PCS JURONG WEST CENTRE:



Start by joining small projects in the community, such as a gardening project in your child's pre-school.



Volunteer for causes that are close to your heart.



Pick a project and turn it into a family tradition. This helps instill the value of sharing in your children.



Photos courtesy of PCS Jurong West Centre