



DSA's Ms Sulyanna (right) and Bryan, an adult with Down syndrome (centre), joined My First Skool children in creating handmade resin art

# KAMPUNG SPIRIT

Community engagement provides children valuable first-hand lessons on kindness, respect and embracing differences.

Children learn when they volunteer in the community and contribute to society. More than just an opportunity to do good, it opens their eyes and minds to the world beyond what they know. In the process, they learn important values such as kindness, care and empathy.

Through ECDA's 'Start Small Dream Big' (SSDB) movement, preschools collaborate with community partners on projects that encourage children to give back to society. Two such organisations are Singapore Art Museum (SAM) and Down Syndrome Association (DSA), long-time supporters of SSDB who also participated in the 2023 edition, themed 'Many Helping Hands, Caring for Everyone'.

Ms Pauline Cheong, Assistant Director of Learning at SAM, notes, "Children need to understand that no action is too little. Something that starts as a small act of kindness can have a profound effect on communities." To support children's learning, SAM developed a resource kit that uses contemporary art to help preschoolers understand the differing life experiences of individuals with visual impairment.

In the same vein, DSA works closely with preschools to create greater awareness of the Down syndrome community and the challenges they face. "We want to inculcate compassion and inclusivity, starting with young children. Preschools are a great place to start as we can engage the children as well as their teachers and parents," says Ms Nur Sulyanna Sumali, an Executive (Volunteer Management & Community Partnership) at DSA.

## RAISING AWARENESS AND FUNDS

One preschool that DSA partnered for SSDB 2023 was M.Y World @ Woodlands. Ms Sulyanna kicked things off with a virtual talk about people who have Down syndrome and ways of supporting them. The preschool then planned activities to continue building children's awareness.

Kindergarten classes used letter templates provided by the Singapore Kindness Movement to write letters of encouragement to DSA beneficiaries. Wanting to be included in this effort, the younger children spent art and craft sessions making items to raise funds for DSA. Toddlers created colourful bookmarks, while nursery children hand-painted tote bags and decorated plant pots. These were sold to their parents, raising a total of \$617.

On his tote bag, Chew Kai Xing, 4, wrote the word 'kindness' and painted three heart shapes to represent his parents and himself supporting children with Down



M.Y World toddlers making fingerprint art bookmarks



M.Y World children's artworks, including Kai Xing's tote bag (left), supported a good cause



syndrome. His father, Mr Chew Han Seong, says, "The SSDB project made Kai Xing more aware, thoughtful and welcoming of children with disabilities. While walking around the neighbourhood one day, he said we needed to make a slope so they could walk up more easily."

## ART FOR GOOD

My First Skool at Blk 209 Ang Mo Kio also partnered DSA for its SSDB project. DSA brought a group of volunteers and a beneficiary — Bryan, an adult with Down syndrome — to the preschool for a series of resin art sessions. Besides making resin keychains together, the children and visitors played and danced with one another.

English teacher Ms Miza Afiqah Binte Mahdi observed the children happily interacting with their new friends, taking turns to place objects such as dried flowers and beads in the resin mould. "In their eyes, Bryan was no different from any other person learning and playing alongside them. In fact, the children's questions were focused on the fun activities they were doing together," she says.

Funds from the resin art pieces, sold at a preschool fundraising event, will be channelled to various DSA initiatives, such as its Children and Adult Education Services and its Enrichment Programmes.

## FROM ANOTHER PERSPECTIVE

As an extension of its art-for-charity project, the My First Skool centre tapped on SAM's SSDB resource kit. This kit was based on the SAM Touch Collection — a series of

## SAMily Funday

2 DEC (SAT) 2023, 1PM TO 5PM  
LEVEL 1, SAM AT TANJONG PAGAR DISTRIK PARK

This bi-monthly event offers a family-friendly line-up for all ages, from craft activities to exhibitions. Try your hand at puzzles, get creative with drawing, or join a storytelling session for ages 4 and above. Register at [bit.ly/SAM-Events](https://bit.ly/SAM-Events).



“ We should not ignore people with disabilities. We should make them feel welcome and be patient with them.”

CHEANG YUN JIA, K2, My First Skool at Blk 209 Ang Mo Kio

artwork adaptations designed to make contemporary art more accessible to persons with disabilities such as visual impairment. The museum had also previously organised an exhibition titled *Hello Future: Let's Go Hand in Hand*, which featured the works of preschoolers inspired by the same collection.

Children were introduced to *Utama's Kitty* — a smaller version of local artist David Chan's wood-and-steel lion sculpture, *Utama's Cat*, and one of the pieces in the collection — through the resource kit. An image of the lion was embossed on a card, and children had to guess what the picture was by rubbing their fingers over the raised surface with their eyes closed. A QR code then directed them to SAM's website, where they learned how the artist was inspired by the legend of Sang Nila Utama to create *Utama's Cat*, and how he adapted his life-sized installation to cater to persons with disabilities.

Ms Cheong says, "Although our activity was simple, it helped children better understand the challenges faced by persons with disabilities. It provided an interactive way to learn more about inclusivity and put themselves in another's shoes."

*Utama's Kitty* is revealed by rubbing the embossed lion image with a pencil



## LOVE ALL, SERVE ALL

Parents, make serving the community a family affair! Here are three ideas to bond with your child while contributing meaningfully to society.

- Lend neighbours a hand.** Children observe and model your actions. Make it a habit to perform kind acts, such as pressing the lift button or holding the door open for someone, and encourage them to do the same.
- Make care packs for essential workers.** Encourage children to show appreciation to delivery riders, construction workers and cleaners in your estate. They can put a few favourite snacks in little bags and hand these out.
- Get involved in preschool events.** Help out with preschool fundraisers or volunteer for class activities. It shows children the value of reaching out and belonging to a community.



win



→ Three lucky readers will each receive a 'Mad for SAM' tote bag.

Simply answer this question:

Name one artwork adaptation that can be found in the SAM Touch Collection for visually-impaired audiences.

Submit your answer online at [go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest](http://go.gov.sg/beanstalk-thrive-contest) or scan this QR code.

Closing date: **22 December 2023**



## Play Mates

How fun and games help children learn core life skills and values.



### > Why Play Works: Big Changes Start Small

By Jill Vialet  
OverDrive link: [nlb.overdrive.com/media/6582934](http://nlb.overdrive.com/media/6582934)

A social entrepreneur, Jill Vialet explores how educators and parents can harness the power of play and build learning environments that enable children to thrive. This book puts together ways in which play can be a tool for bringing out the best in children, and shows how to incorporate play into spaces and day-to-day activities.

Contributed by Gladys Tan, Librarian, National Library Board



### > Let's Be Friends

By Nicole Ong, Natalie Wong, Nadiah B. Afrina Masrani, Ragnild Ong, Regina Wong and Alicia Chan

This heartwarming picture book is written and illustrated by students from Singapore Polytechnic's Media, Arts & Design School. It follows Tapir, who goes around looking for an animal friend to play with. However, he faces trouble finding the perfect buddy because everyone is not like him. On this quest into the forest, young readers not only meet a variety of animals, but also learn to embrace differences in friends.

Contributed by Neo Wan Ting, Librarian, National Library Board



### PERK UP YOUR EARS

Children often have lots of questions when they play. This is because they want to practise their new language skills and are curious about the world around them. Listening well is important as it makes your child feel that what he or she is thinking and saying matters to you, which in turn strengthens the parent-child bond.

To show your child that you are listening:

- Get down to your child's level, make eye contact, and give your full attention.
- Nod, smile, and show affection such as hugging and holding hands.
- Play close attention to your child's body language and behaviour, not just his or her words. It can reveal a lot about your child's emotions.

For more expert parenting tips, visit [www.familiesforlife.sg/parenting](http://www.familiesforlife.sg/parenting).



## FOR YOUR DAILY DOSE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD INSPIRATION...

Grow@Beanstalk is your one-stop early childhood (EC) resource portal for inspiring stories, useful tips and activity ideas, as well as the latest happenings from the EC sector.



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