

Another Week Beyond - 1305

Dear Team

One morning 3 months ago, we had a pleasant surprise when we brought our children to our little herb garden for their learning activity. The night before, someone had climbed over the low-fence and planted the sapling of a fruit tree. Next to it was a hand-written note that read "This tree is Rambutan. Please take good care. Block 128 donation." We laminated the note in plastic and have left it next to the sapling till today, in honour of the anonymous donor.

Despite the noise and other inconveniences that the operations of our child development centre had caused, our neighbours continue to offer their goodwill. The rambutan tree reminds us that blessings should not be taken granted and that goodwill must be reciprocated. Relationships like a fruit tree must be nurtured and handled with care.

This week the children, parents and teachers from our child development centre began a series of visits to neighbours, shop-keepers, places of worship and basically, the people in the neighbourhood who had contributed to our work in one way or other. With oranges, some home-made lanterns, tambourines, drums and a small lion head, our children performed a gusty lion dance to wish the stall-holders in the nearby market a very prosperous new year. The market has been an important learning environment where our children became familiar with vegetables, fruits and other food, the handling of money and the skill of making a purchase. So in the spirit of the Lunar New Year, our children were honouring the stall holders as their teachers.

The oranges were donated by China Aviation Oil (Singapore) Corporation Ltd and before setting off, our teachers showed our children the respectful way of presenting them. They also explained to our children the importance of remembering those who care for us during the festive periods. As many of our children are not Chinese, our teachers highlighted the importance of visiting relatives and friends during Hari Raya and Deepavali too.

Our children learnt these lessons well and delighted everyone with their energetic greetings of "Gong Xi Fa Cai!" A stall-holder ran after a child to give him a biscuit in appreciation and this Malay child responded with "Kam Sia" which was Hokkien for "Thank you," bringing a smile to the faces of those who were nearby. It was indeed heartening to see people reaching out to each other with small gestures that overcame the perceived gaps in generation, language and culture. We were not the only one to feel this way as many in the market took out their camera-phones to capture the moment.

Next week, our children will be knocking on the doors of our neighbours and it will be done after office hours as many parents would like to join their children in this gesture of gratitude.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

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I believe that we are here for each other, not against each other. Everything comes from an understanding that you are a gift in my life - whoever you are, whatever our differences. - John Denver

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