

Another Week Beyond - 1310

Dear Team

I found a plastic bag containing 4 packets of instant noodles on my desk today. In it was a note, "I have enough for now, please help me to share." It was a note from a lady who lived in the next block. A few moments later, a colleague asked me to sign a receipt for a \$10 donation. Again it was a neighbour that I recognised. He was an elderly man that was on welfare who visited us sometimes when he needed his letters to be read to him. "It is the second time this year, uncle is giving to us," our colleague told me.

I am still feeling touched and humbled as these 2 people have triggered in me a different way of looking at asset appreciation. The value of our home is relative to the amount of goodwill among my neighbours. This statement is certainly true for those residing in rental housing areas.

We believe that volunteering is a wonderful opportunity for those we serve to work alongside and cooperate with those from the mainstream. Hence, we are constantly identifying and nurturing leaders within the rental housing areas. This week, we organised a floor party to identify a "floor leader" who would help us identify the needs of his neighbours but more importantly, to mobilise their talents and strengths for the benefit of their neighbourhood.

Only 8 households out of 24 responded to our invitation but while they did not join the party at the lift landing, almost all of the others kept their doors open. We were most heartened when those who came brought the food to their neighbours without us asking. Over food and drinks, we learnt from those that came that they were very grateful to be living among neighbours who cared for each other. One elderly lady shared that she always keeps her door open because neighbours are always dropping by to see if she is well. She reassured us that it was a safe neighbourhood and no one would harm her.

Eventually, 2 residents volunteered to be floor leaders as they shared the view that it is really important for neighbours to look out for each other. To emphasise the point, they shared how neighbours had knocked on each other's door at 1 am in the morning a few months ago when a fire broke out at their lift landing. Everyone cooperated to ensure that young and old were safely escorted to a waiting area while the firemen did their job. Sounds like in their view, the fire appreciated the value of their neighbourhood.

Finally, I would like to share a few paragraphs from a note of encouragement that was inserted into 100 food hampers prepared and distributed by Porcelain The Face Spa who closed their operations on Wednesday to visit our families.

"No one can summarize their lives in a short note, but let me try and share what I can about my life. After my expulsion, I was still the self-centred rebellious girl who let my family down time and again. Friends were my only world."

"There were times when I felt vulnerable, useless and helpless. My life was mayhem, night became day and day became night. I had to steal food and sleep in the playground because I had run away from home. In fact, I was sent to Beyond Social Services for help by the authorities."

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I count myself lucky to have met Pauline, who was my mentor when I joined the Porcelain Team at 17 years old. Pauline helped me through a difficult period and never stopped caring for me and teaching me.

Now I am who I am because of her and I am someone I feel proud to be. What I want to share is that life may be full of battles but never give up. There are always people who believe in you.”

I just saw the note today and the best thing about it is that we could not identify who among the Porcelain team wrote it. Thanks to a caring community, this young lady's life has been transformed.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

“When strangers start acting like neighbours... communities are reinvigorated.” - Ralph Nader

Gerard Ee
Executive Director
BEYOND SOCIAL SERVICES
26 Jalan Klinik #01-42/52
Singapore 160026
DID: (65) 6664-8571
Fax: (65) 6274-0633
HP : (65) 9788-5700
www.beyond.org.sg
ged@beyond.org.sg