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Society for the Physically Disabled

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WE BID GOODBYE TO OUR PATRON – A TRIBUTE TO DR WEE KIM WEE

On 3 May, SPD bade a sad farewell to our Patron and friend of disabled people, Dr Wee Kim Wee. 89-year-old Dr Wee Kim Wee died on 2 May after having lived a full and fruitful life.

Dr Wee became SPD's Honorary Adviser in October 1994 before becoming Patron in June 1998. In his time here, he showed special interest in the welfare of people with physical disabilities and made effort to launch several SPD initiatives in fundraising and provision of services.

Though Dr Wee scaled down his involvement in the later years, he continued to show concern for the well-being of the Society. Key Board Members paid regular visits to him to seek his counsel as well as update him on SPD's progress. Always one with keen foresight, Dr Wee had highlighted the need to cater to the elderly who could one day become disabled due to aging at one of the update meetings. Both the SPD Assistive Technology Centre and Rehabilitation Centre have been

set up catering to the needs of the elderly too.

"He never failed to help us when we asked for direction and advice. We feel deeply for the loss. We have lost a gentleman, a very caring person," said Mr Koh Nai Teck, Immediate Past President of SPD.

Dr Wee had left an indelible mark on the people of Singapore. Fondly hailed as a People's President, he was a champion for the underdogs

and showed great empathy and compassion for people with physical disabilities. SPD was privileged and fortunate to benefit from his contribution when he was its Honorary Advisor and Patron from 1994 to 2005. We will miss him and will always remember Dr Wee with fondness and affection in our hearts. ☺



Ever supportive of SPD's events, Dr Wee Kim Wee launches the 'Wells of Joy' event in 1998



As guest-of-honour, Dr Wee presents the grant to Education Programme participant Julian Wee in November 1997



Dr Wee greets the clients warmly when he visited SPD (then SAP) in October 1994



Bernard Teo of DAC demonstrating the use of the Intellikeys to Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports, at the launch of the Specialised ATC on 22 April 2005

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SPD OFFICIALLY LAUNCHES SPECIALISED ATC

SPD commemorated the official launch of the Specialised ATC with the first assistive technology seminar and announcement of the winners of the first Assistive Technology Invention Competition. A MOU was inked with an Australian counterpart at the official launch.



The winning entry for the Open Category of the AT Invention Competition came from a team from NUS. The team worked on a technique which allows for a prosthetic leg to be made in two and a half hours instead of the usual one month



Designed by students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, the Head-Controlled Motorized Wheelchair came in first prize in the Student Category for the AT Invention Competition



The 'Brainy Communicator', a research collaboration between A*STAR and the Specialised ATC, allows users to control the computer using only brain activity

With the support of the National Council of Social Service and the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, SPD's Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) has assumed the role of the Specialized ATC for all physically disabled people in Singapore. In conjunction with the official opening of the Specialised ATC, a three-day seminar on assistive technology was organized from 22 to 24 April.

The Specialised ATC's first seminar on assistive technology (AT) saw local VWO staff learning and exchanging views and experiences with foreign AT practitioners specially brought in by SPD for the workshop.

Besides the series of professional workshops that were tailored for specific needs of staff, there was also a public forum that provided a broad view of AT and showed the application of AT at work, in school and at home for leisure and living purposes. The professional workshops covered topics including AT in computer access, AT in education (both special and mainstream schools), AT in music technology, mobility access and environmental control using AT.

Providing AT training to VWOs is a key role of the Specialised ATC. To further enhance its role in this area, the Centre signed a Memorandum of Understanding with NovitaTech, a renowned AT centre in Australia, at the official

opening. Under the MOU, NovitaTech will provide consultancy services, training and hosting of exchange programmes for local AT practitioners.

Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports, who officiated at the official opening of the Specialised ATC, also presented prizes to the winners of the first AT Invention Competition organized by SPD in collaboration with A*STAR's Institute for Infocomm Research (I²R).

The Competition launched in September last year drew 26 entries in the Student and Open categories. Entries were judged on originality, impact, practicality, cost efficiency and inclusion of universal design features. The winning design was

"...we hope to develop a culture whereby the design and production of everyday products will factor in the needs of people with physical disabilities."

the 'Direct Pressure Cast Prosthetic Socket for Transtibial Amputees' that allows a prosthesis to be made in just two and a half hours instead of the usual one month. This new technique also saves the amputee many trips to the hospital for measurement and fittings.

"Technology can level the playing field for the physically challenged. A disabled person can perform as well as a non-disabled person given the right assistive device. Through the Competition, we hope to develop a culture whereby the design and production of everyday products will factor in the needs of people with physical disabilities. This will move us towards being a more inclusive society," said Ms Chia Woon Yee, Director of Technology at SPD. The Specialised ATC hopes to organize and conduct the AT Invention Competition biennially.

Besides providing consultation and training to VWOs, the Specialised ATC will also through The Community Research Network collaborate with tertiary institutions and agencies in research projects. This is to encourage interest locally to develop and produce AT systems and devices that are affordable and more suited to local needs.

The Community Research Network has lined up various start-up research projects and will also partner the Economic Development Board to organize a "Best Practices in Assistive Technology Research" forum in September. 6

NTU, SPD Sign MOU on at Research Collaboration

The Nanyang Technological University and SPD signed a Memorandum of Understanding on 13 June to jointly pursue and promote research and development in assistive technology (AT). A joint research group, the Assistive Technology Research Group (ATRG) will be established between the two organizations as part of this collaboration.

To complement the MOU, NTU's annual 'Engineering Innovation and Design' competition included an AT category for the first time, with eight projects submitted under that category. Project teams worked with SPD in the design of their project, to create solutions that would improve the daily lives of physically disabled people. 6



Professor Michael Khor, Director, Office of Research, NTU, and Dr Ow Chee Chung at the MOU signing ceremony

WANTED! WHEELCHAIRS AND OTHER MOBILITY AIDS FOR THE NEEDY DISABLED



Volunteers learn to repair donated wheelchairs from volunteer trainers at the SPD Ability Centre



The large-scale public appeal for wheelchairs aims to collect 500 pieces of mobility aids to be given to those who need them in Singapore and Aceh

SPD in partnership with Central Singapore Community Development Council's (CDC) Pass-It-On conducted Singapore's first large-scale public appeal for wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Termed the Move for Mobility (MFM), this project launched in May aimed to collect mobility aids, refurbish them and then distribute the restored aids to help the needy disabled in Singapore and Aceh.

Supported by Mobility Aid Recycling Services Centre (MARSC), Keppel FMO and the Singapore International Foundation (SIF), MFM saw volunteers labouring every Saturday at the repair workshop to put the donated aids to good use again.

"There are many physically disabled people who need our care locally. At the same time, following the tsunami disaster, there are the disabled in our neighboring countries who are in need as well. MFM is a platform for organisations

and individuals in Singapore to join hands in a community service to benefit both communities in Singapore and Aceh," said Mr Soh Chee Keong, Vice President of SPD who mooted the project.

"MFM is a platform for organisations and individuals in Singapore to join hands in a community service to benefit both communities in Singapore and Aceh."

A portion of the mobility aids collected will be sent to Aceh

as part of relief efforts following the Boxing Day tsunami disaster. Initial assessment by the Singapore International Foundation showed that hospitals and some VVOs in Aceh have indicated need for more than 2,000 pieces of mobility aids for victims of the tsunami who have sustained severe injuries and are disabled. To ensure a direct source of assistance for future repair and maintenance, some 15 volunteers from Singapore will conduct Train-the-Trainer workshops for their Indonesian counterparts. Basic training will also be given to some recipients of the mobility aids to enable them to do simple repairs for the mobility aids they received. A small delegation representing MFM visited Aceh in end May to meet up with Aceh local partners to tie up the delivery, training and logistics details.

Those interested to volunteer for Move for Mobility or donate wheelchairs can contact Volunteer Coordinator, Alice Hue at 6236 6391. ☎

VISITING BANDA ACEH

In late May, SPD Rehabilitation Service Director Abhimanyau Pal and a team from the Move for Mobility project traveled to Banda Aceh to understand the needs of the community there, and to plan

the logistics and training of volunteers. Under Move for Mobility, it is hoped that at least 500 pieces of mobility aids would be collected by August and distributed in Singapore and in Banda Aceh. ☎



The tsunami on Boxing Day last year left a trail of destruction to the landscape, leaving many in need of help.



It has been estimated that in Banda Aceh, more than 2,000 pieces of mobility aids are needed for the victims of the tsunami who have sustained injury.



During the visit to Banda Aceh, the Move for Mobility committee met up with their Indonesian counterparts to plan for the Project and the training of the locals, as well as to establish a platform for individuals and organisations in Singapore to work together to benefit the community.



The team surveys the donated mobility aids that need refurbishing at a collection centre in Aceh. Volunteers from Singapore will be heading to Aceh to train the locals on how to refurbish the mobility aids.

A DAY IN ORCHARD ROAD AS A SPEECH-IMPAIRED PERSON

The Specialised ATC conducted an exercise on 7 June to test out the level of acceptance of Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) devices in the community. Armed with the LightWriter and posing as a person with speech-impairment, The New Paper reporter Genevieve went on an exercise to test the reaction of the people on the streets. Accompanying her was Chia Woon Yee, SPD's Director of Technology, who reports on her observations.

Genevieve was assigned several tasks and briefed that she should not "talk" or gesture while accomplishing the tasks. Her only form of communication was to use the lightwriter, a device that converts text input to voice output.

Tasks

1. Go to Tiong Bahru MRT station and ask the station officer which line to take to Orchard.
2. Take the MRT to Orchard station.
3. In the train, find a young man or lady and ask for directions to Orchard station.
4. Get off at Orchard station and look for a Giordano store at Takashimaya. Ask for directions.
5. Buy a pair of socks at Giordano. It must be blue or white, and must not cost more than \$5.
6. Go to library@orchard. Ask passers-by for directions.
7. At the library, ask the librarian for the book 'Gentlemen: Goh Chok Tong, An Appreciation'.
8. Go for a meal at MacDonald's. Order your favorite meal and upsize it.
9. Take the bus back to SPD.

The experiment was carried out fairly smoothly except for a hilarious situation of a MRT commuter who did not understand what Gen wanted, and thought that she was a ticket inspector. Flipping out her EZ-Link Card, she tried to swipe it through the LightWriter instead. Generally, most people are polite, patient and willing to help, and Gen was able to complete most of the tasks.

Observations

1. It seemed that many people assumed that those with speech impairment would have hearing problems. They would automatically gesture to communicate with AAC users. At the City Hall Interchange, Gen started chatting with a guy named William, after he gave her some help with directions. At

first, he wasn't sure how he could communicate with her and was gesturing. He told us that he had the urge to talk to her by typing back on her device instead of replying verbally. However, many of SPD's clients have trouble speaking due to neurological problems but have no problems hearing.

2. People were generally polite and helpful to the AAC user, after understanding that the person is speech-impaired. Many patiently waited for the user to type the message out, even when it took awhile to correct mistakes. However, this may not be the case in more crowded situations or during peak hours on the public transport, when everyone is in a hurry.
3. The AAC user was using short sentences and typing to make the speech output as fast as possible because people were waiting. Using the LightWriter can be stressful and frustrating, especially when mistakes are made while typing.
4. People that the AAC user approached usually instinctively read the text on the LightWriter instead of listening to the speech output. It is probably easier to read than to wait for the voice output.
5. The AAC user was using gestures to say thank you, to get directions and basically, to help in communication. There are universal gestures that can be understood by all, and for easy words, it is easier to use gestures than typing out on the LightWriter.

Gen looked visibly relieved when we told her she could speak after the exercise ended. She felt liberated, but said it was an interesting experience posing as a speech-impaired person. 6



"The device makes communicating easier for people who cannot speak, it's great!" - William, a passenger on the MRT who helped Genevieve with directions



The McDonald's staff pay close attention to Genevieve's orders and were patient with her



Another helpful passer-by giving directions, this time to the library@orchard

MAY DAY CELEBRATIONS AT SENTOSA

Helen Tay, Manager of the Fundraising Department, gives a brief account in this article of the fun the beneficiaries had at Sentosa with members of SISEU.

On 14 May, SPD was privileged to be invited by the Singapore Industrial & Services Employees' Union (SISEU) to NTUC's May Day celebrations at Sentosa.

Guests included beneficiaries from various children, elderly and disabled charities, and after all were seated, the event kicked off with food and interesting performances on stage by artistes and volunteers. There was a magic show, harmonica performance and sing along sessions. At a special birthday segment, the organisers gave a box of assorted pastries to five of SPD's participants whose birthdays fell in May. They were delighted with the gift.

At the event, SISEU generously gave a total of \$1,500 worth of NTUC FairPrice vouchers to SPD's clients. They also arranged for volunteers to help our participants to ensure that all their needs were taken care of. From the smiles and laughter on all their faces, it was clear that the volunteers and clients enjoyed each other's company.

The volunteers joined the guest-of-honour Dr Ng Eng Hen, Minister for Manpower, in distributing hongbaos and goodie bags to all beneficiaries present, courtesy of NTUC.

With all the fun and generous gifts, it was indeed an event to be remembered! ☺



The celebrations at Sentosa was a day to remember for both clients and volunteers



Caring volunteers enjoyed the celebrations with clients, having fun while getting to know them better

WISHES GRANTED ON VESAK DAY

Twenty-eight beneficiaries attended the Vesak Great Joy Party organised by Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services at the Meritus Mandarin Hotel on 22 May. The President, Mr S R Nathan and Mrs Goh Chok Tong were among the guests at the occasion.

"I'm grateful to Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services for this new wheelchair, which is like a new lease of life for me."

A total of 1,000 participants from various voluntary welfare organisations attended the lunch. Through the event, the organizers wanted to reach out to the needy and disabled people and provide an occasion where all could gather together and interact.

An array of vegetarian food was served, and there were numerous entertaining performances including one by ventriloquist Mr Victor Khoo and his puppet Charlie. VIPs attending the event also distributed hongbaos to the happy participants too.

The highlight of the lunch was the granting of wishes to the participants in the wish-a-list ceremony. The Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services

presented items to some lucky clients who were asked to list their wishes earlier.

SPD craftsman, Gan Boon Leong who has been with the Production Workshop for more than 30 years had his wish of a new wheelchair granted.

Said Boon Leong, "I'm grateful to Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services for this new wheelchair, which is like a new lease of life for me. My wheelchair was getting old and broken in many places. Now I'm much more comfortable, and feel like I can go to more places and in a shorter time. Thank you so much!" ☺



Boon Leong being presented with a new wheelchair with adjustable leg and back rests



A wish come true! Boon Leong excitedly tries out his new wheelchair for the first time

THERAPY HUB ORGANISES TRAINING PROGRAMMES FOR STAFF OF VWOs

SPD Therapy Hub together with the Social Service Training Institute recently put together an Individualised Care Planning Programme aimed at equipping rehabilitation support staff of VWOs to develop individualised care, rehabilitation and training plans for their clients and patients. This is part of a spectrum of courses to be organized by the Therapy Hub over the next two years.

Having to care for a disabled or elderly person is a great challenge for all caregivers. Family members usually provide this care until the needs of the person become too great to be handled at home by the caregiver. Then, the responsibility for care is transferred to professional caregivers in a nursing home, day care centre or similar facility. These professional caregivers, termed as "Rehabilitation Support Staff", must have appropriate training to safely and effectively manage the needs of the disabled and elderly.

Having adequately-trained manpower to support therapy service provision has always been an issue in Singapore's Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs). Attracting, recruiting and retaining qualified therapists in non-profit organisations are often a top priority. Developing a second line of trained Rehabilitation Support Staff like therapy assistants, therapy aides, nursing assistants, healthcare aides and training officers should not be far behind.

In most developed countries, Rehabilitation Support Staff are required to complete an associate degree or certificate training programme on top of structured on the job training.

While working with Rehabilitation Support Staff of other VWOs recently, therapists of the SPD Therapy Hub identified that they require a structured training programme to enable them to provide the best care and training to those they serve. To help prepare those involved in direct patient care and rehabilitation, the SPD Therapy Hub set about organizing training courses for the Rehabilitation Support Staff of other VWOs.

The objective of the training modules is to introduce participants to therapy theories, practices, philosophies and principles so they will have a better understanding of the therapy services needed for their patients.

A wide range of training modules is being planned and developed for specific groups of support staff, to be offered over the next two years. The proposal will involve at least 300 hours each year in training, which will include classroom-based training as well as hands-on practice under the supervision of SPD Therapy Hub therapists.

The objective of the training modules is to introduce participants to therapy theories, practice, philosophies and principles so that they will have a better understanding of the therapy services needed for their patients. The programmes will provide sufficient practical knowledge and skills to the participants to prepare them to assist therapists in the delivery of effective quality service to clients.

The courses will be held at the SPD Ability Centre and will be conducted by Mr Pal Abhimanyau, Director of SPD Rehabilitation Services and SPD Therapy Hub. Training methods include classroom lectures, small group discussions and hands-on practice. ☺

Those interested in obtaining information on upcoming courses can contact Ms Serene Chai at 6236 6369, or email Serene_CHAI@spd.org.sg.



A deeper understanding of therapy services including theories, practices, philosophies and principles will improve the quality of service that support staff provide to their clients



Staff from nine VWOs attend the Individualised Care Planning course in May where they learnt how to develop individualised care, rehabilitation and training plans for their clients

TipTop

Tune in to 93.8 Live every day from 4.25pm onwards for Tip Top, where you can get tips to keep you feeling at the top. In the minute-long programme, healthcare professionals touch on various topics on health and fitness that will help you as you work towards a healthier, fitter you.

Listen in to our very own Debbie Chow, Physiotherapist and Assistant Manager of SPD's Therapy Hub, as she gives out bite-sized information on Foot Care, Back Care, Carpel Tunnel Syndrome and Sports Injuries. So make a date with us everyday at 93.8 Live!

ENDURANCE TRAINING AT BEDOK RESERVOIR PARK

Caroline Chua, a volunteer with the Freedom Adventure Club, gives an account of the Club's adventure at Bedok Reservoir Park on the morning of 28 May 2005.



FAC volunteers conduct warm-up exercises to prepare everyone for the 4.3km walk

Blue skies and bright sunshine greeted beneficiaries and volunteers as they stepped out of the SPD van and onto the grounds of Bedok Reservoir Park. It is another outdoor training session with the Freedom Adventure Club (FAC), part of a series of endurance and strength training sessions, with the aim of leading two groups of beneficiaries up Bukit Timah Hill at the end of the year.

"Today we will be walking around the reservoir, which is about 4.3km," I announced. "This will be a training session and it will be different from the other activities that you had before, unlike the leisure walk at MacRitchie Reservoir and treasure hunts."

"We are going to test your stamina, mental and physical endurance," Suhaimi, a fellow FAC volunteer said as we proceeded with the warm-ups. "For the first kilometer, we will be taking checks on everyone's time. In the next two kilometers, we will require everyone to keep to the stipulated time, and the last kilometer will be at your own pace."

Despite starting out on a serious note, the mood of the beneficiaries remained chirpy and everyone was raring to start on the walk.

"Let's start!" shouted Jimmy, another volunteer.

Though the terrain was flat, the path was strewn with gravel

stones. Beneficiaries and volunteers mingled and chatted as they made their way around the reservoir. At every 1km mark, we took a short break as we announced the timings. The spirit of the group rose as the timings became shorter and shorter. It was a surprise!

Towards the last leg, some of the beneficiaries were slowing down and feeling a little tired. However, with encouragement from fellow beneficiaries and volunteers, they too managed to keep to the timings and kept pace with the group.

The final time recorded for the last kilometer was 13 minutes compared with the first timing of 20mins. What an achievement! ☺



The group of FAC volunteers and beneficiaries at Bedok Reservoir Park

SMALL STEPS TO SUCCESS – A TESTIMONY FROM A STROKE SURVIVOR

Rodney Rodrigues, a beneficiary at the Work Activity Centre, shares his testimony as a stroke survivor.

Prior to my stroke on 11 September 2003, I worked as a material control specialist for about five years and also did some telemarketing on a part-time basis. On weekends, I enjoyed shopping and watching movies, and would also visit my parents regularly. Life was good though I was a divorcee. I have two lovely children from my first marriage and caring parents.

It has been about one and a half years since my stroke, and I've recovered about 70% usage of my limbs now. I've stopped using the quadstick (a walking aid), and am able to walk with more balance, and can go practically everywhere alone by taxi, though not by public transport yet. The stroke has affected the left side of my body, leaving my left hand to be quite stiff. My therapy sessions twice a week at SPD's Rehabilitation Centre, is helping me gradually regain my mobility.

Although I'm doing well, some nights I'm still unable to sleep,

as I lie in bed, worrying about my future and recovery. However, I'm able to get by with support from people around me. I'm grateful to my best friend William, who houses me in his home and takes excellent care of me, and also to my family, relatives and loved ones who have encouraged me to get better.

“Being here is like receiving a constant reminder to count my blessings, as I feel fortunate to be given a second chance at life”

At the present moment, I'm working at the SPD Sheltered Workshop as a telemarketer, where there

is a transport van to fetch me to and from work. It's a five-day-week job with an allowance. I enjoy working at the Centre because I get to meet many people including other disabled people and interact with them. There are stroke survivors like me as well as others who are in a worse-off physical condition than myself. Being here is like receiving a constant reminder to count my blessings, as I feel fortunate to be given a second chance at life. I have many friends at the workplace, some of whom I share quite a close friendship with.

Actually, I feel that this stroke has taught me a thing or two in life. Firstly, not to take people, my health and physical abilities for granted. I have also learnt to be more considerate and understanding towards the needs of the underprivileged, and to recognize that my sufferings are nothing compared to the suffering of others.

My hope for the future is to regain 95% usage of my limbs. I also hope to be able to get a decent job

with a salary that can sustain me independently. I would very much like to be able to continue working at SPD. Should I recover almost fully, I would like to give back of my time, and volunteer at SPD as well.

My main mission and goal in life now is to be a role model for other stroke survivors and disabled people, and help them in any way possible when I get better. I want them to know that they are not alone in their hardship, and that life is still worth living for. My advice to them is to never give up on their disabilities and to know that miracles do happen. I believe that when we are given a second chance at life, we can choose to make the most of it and to change for the better. ☺

The SPD-Singapore Power Rehabilitation Centre operates from 8.30am to 6.00pm from Mondays to Fridays.

For more information, please call 6236 6398.



With therapy, Rodney has progressed to walking without the aid of a quadstick



As a trainee at the WAC, Rodney helps by doing telemarketing for the products made at the WAC

THE SAMSUNG WALK-A-JOG CHARITY

Philip Loh from the SPD Education Programme who participated in the Samsung Charity Walk-a-Jog gives an account of the event that helped to raise over \$30,000 for the SPD Transport Subsidy Fund.

It was a real pleasure to be part of the Walk-a-Jog organized by Samsung Asia Pte Ltd and a greater joy to be sharing with you my experiences.

The participants, including me, arrived at East Coast Park by the SPD transport. The organizers welcomed us warmly.

For the first few minutes, the volunteers were grouped with the participants and we were each given a bottle of mineral water. The President and Chief Executive Officer Mr Park Sang Jin arrived with his wife soon after. Mr Park gave his opening address, then two physical fitness instructors started the warm-up workout, to prepare us for the walk. The workout was also very funny and it sure put us in an upbeat mood!

The walk was 3km long, and it was an enjoyable one for both the volunteers and the clients. When the walk ended, we were treated to more entertainment with the various teams shouting their "cheer"

in the cheerleading competition. After a tough fight between the groups, RHQ/EMS Division emerged the winners. They had the highest marks of all the groups. I thought the men looked really cool in their grass skirts and they were most generous to donate their prizes to SPD too!

The highlight was when Mr Park presented a cheque of \$30,102 to support the SPD Transport Subsidy Fund. Ernest from SPD thanked Samsung staff by playing two songs on the harmonica.

After that, we had a lucky draw. I was not as lucky as those who won the prizes. The prizes consisted of five MP3 players and some NTUC vouchers. We then wrapped up with a delicious lunch from McDonald's.

Soon, it was time to go home. I was sad as I was having so much fun with the volunteers. In my opinion, it was a memorable treat for me and I wish it would be held again. ☺



Ready, Get Set, Go! The 20 competitors placed at the front get ready to start the race



SPD staff and beneficiaries gather together in anticipation of the walk-a-jog to come



Many thanks to Samsung, who so generously helped us raise funds for our Transport Subsidy Fund



Ernest, our talented DAC client plays the harmonica for the crowd

CREATIVE THINKING SKILLS AND PROBLEM SOLVING STRATEGIES WORKSHOP

Social Worker Angela Chung reports on the Creative Learning Workshop held during the school holiday for primary school children.

Nine children from Primary 4 to 6 under the Education Programme attended the Creative Thinking Skills and Problem Solving Strategies Workshop conducted on 10 June 2005. The workshop was one of a series of holiday enrichment programmes organised this June holidays for SPD Education Programme students.

During the three-hour workshop, the children were dazzled by many mathematical formulas, mind puzzles, IQ questions and magic tricks. The instructor was Mr Teng Chong Heng, a senior lecturer from Singapore Polytechnic's School of Mechanical & Manufacturing Engineering, who is an avid volunteer with SPD.

"I thought the sessions were going to be boring, but now I've learnt so much about mathematical formulas which I did not learn in school!"

With more than 24 years of teaching experience, Mr Teng challenged the kids' minds and captured their imagination with his colourful PowerPoint slides of mathematical formulas, IQ questions and mind games. It was evident that the children enjoyed learning about mathematics through fun and games in an interactive group setting through the creative use of polka cards and dices.

Our kids found the workshop enlightening, and even the parents who sat in the session felt the same way. One of the parents, Mdm Peggy Ho, mother of two of the participants, commented, "I thought the sessions were going to be boring, but now, I've learnt so much about mathematical formulas which I did not learn in school." At the end of the session, the kids went home with enriched minds and new friendships forged.

The Creative Thinking Skills and Problem Solving Strategies Workshop was also conducted for the secondary school students of the Education Programme on 24 June 2005. ☺



Mr Teng Chong Heng evoke curiosity and interest in the children through his fun learning methods



Polka card games were used to pique the interest of the children



A game of dice anyone?

MY THOUGHTS

SPD-Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Scholar Liew Chong Choon has Spinal Muscular Dystrophy. He is a 2nd year Business Management student at the Singapore Management University. He shares his thoughts on his disability in this article.

I have been a wheelchair-user since birth, and probably have not experienced many things that my non-disabled counterparts may take for granted. Although that is so, I surprise even myself when I realize that I don't ever remember being saddened by my disabilities.

Once, while watching my friends play football, a teacher asked me whether I envied them. My answer was a 'No!' – quite the opposite reaction from what people would expect. After all, I was not having fun or enjoying myself like my friends were doing.

Because I have never experienced the 'joy' of playing soccer, I don't think I can ever understand how people enjoy playing football. Playing under a hot sun, getting dirty, sweaty and injured is not my definition of enjoyment. A person can only make an accurate comparison when he has experienced the event himself.

In my view, being disabled from the start is better than being disabled later in life because it frees a person from comparison. That does not mean that I enjoy being disabled. If I had a choice I would not want to be so, but it is not up to me to decide. My point is, I do not feel I lack anything or am very different from others. After all I have everything in life that I need – family, friends, a good education and more.

Since young, my mum has always stressed to me the importance of a proper education, but that did not register in me till I was in Primary 6. I started paying close attention

to my studies and for some unknown reason, I managed to get into the top five of my cohort. I really liked the feeling! The strong sense of accomplishment drove me to work even harder.

“I could be a role model for less privileged children and impart to them the importance of perseverance and determination, to inspire in others the hope that nothing is impossible.”

But as I became more mature, I started to search for an answer to what really drives me. Then I realized that I studied because I wanted to find a job in the future, and to give myself a better future. There are endless opportunities to financial independence, like being able to purchase a car and travel independently without relying on others.

I also wanted to be in a position to be able to help others. I could be a role model for the less privileged children and impart to them the importance of perseverance and determination, to inspire in others the hope that nothing is impossible.

That is why I signed up as a mentor to help fellow students.

Being disabled has allowed me to appreciate life more than others. I cannot understand why some people can commit suicide over small setbacks when life is so precious. I think that if one faces his obstacles bravely and overcome it, surely he will become a better person.

In a lifetime, there will always be ups and downs. My advice to others is to enjoy what you have while things are smooth, but do not take it for granted. When challenges come, face them. Living life this way will make life exciting and fulfilling for all. ☺



As a role model, Liew Chong Choon inspires many with his perseverance and determination

CARPEL TUNNEL SYNDROME

Daniel Loh, Occupational Therapist from the Rehabilitation Centre, sheds some light on Carpel Tunnel Syndrome, a condition common to office workers.

Carpel Tunnel Syndrome, also known as CTS, is a condition which occurs when there is compression of a nerve around the wrist that supplies sensation to the thumb, index, middle and ring fingers.

This disease occurs most commonly in middle-aged ladies. This is mainly due to overuse of hands such as resting the wrist on hard surfaces or bending the wrists forward for long periods of time.

Proper diagnosis and management is important in order to lessen the disabling symptoms which occur as the condition worsens.

Common causes of CTS and associated conditions are:

- Repetitive and forceful grasping with the hands

- Prolonged computer usage especially with poor wrist position
- Arthritis, especially the rheumatoid type

It can also occur during pregnancy due to generalized swelling. However people who perform jobs that use vibration tools and machinery, and/or work in extreme temperatures are often subjected to this condition.

Even household activities as simple as repetitive wringing of clothes by hand can cause this syndrome. By far the most significant reason for the increase of people suffering with CTS is the continuous rise in the use of computers. This is becoming a major concern in the developed world where people of all ages are spending much of their time typing on a keyboard and clicking on a mouse.

Signs & Symptoms

One of the most common symptoms of CTS is a tingling and numbness which usually happens in the dominant hand. There may be a pain or burning sensation, which may move up to the forearm and arm. It usually affects one hand more severely than the other although both may be



Ultrasound treatment can help to relieve pain for patients suffering from Carpel Tunnel Syndrome

affected at the same time. Prolonged gripping may bring on or aggravate the symptom.

“Night symptoms” usually occurs when the patient gets up early in the morning with severe tingling and numbness of the affected hand.

In the early or mild stage, the symptoms are usually intermittent. When the disease is in the moderate stage, the symptoms vary in intensity from day to day. Small objects may slip from the hand. In the severe stages, the hand is clumsy and performing fine tasks such as needlework becomes a lot more difficult.

One simple test that can be done to help diagnose CTS is the Phalen’s test. The patient will be asked to flex his wrist at an acute angle for 1 minute. Those with CTS will experience the numbness and tingling feeling.

Treatment

Proper diagnosis and management is important in order to lessen the disabling symptoms which occur as the condition worsens.

For early or mild stages, activities resulting in overuse of the hands

are restricted. Wearing a splint or support, especially at nights, would help to hold the wrist in a neutral position so as to prevent the wrist from bending.

Surgery gives a quick and dramatic relief for moderate to severe stages. However, the recovery may take up to nine months as there will be pain from the surgery and patients will suffer from loss of strength in the hand.

At the same time, alternative therapy treatment can be obtained to speed the recovery process. Ultrasound helps to reduce inflammation and pain, electro therapy strengthens the weak muscles of the forearm, and soft tissue massage helps to stretch contracted tissues and adjust dysfunctional joints at the wrist.

Treatment should also include specific exercises to stretch and strengthen muscles of the affected forearm and hand. CTS can be painful and disabling. Seek treatment early and find the cause of the problem for a more comfortable life and a fitter, healthier, and happier you. 6

VOLUNTEERING CAN BE MORE ABOUT RECEIVING THAN GIVING

Volunteer Coordinator Alice Hue writes about Caroline, a committed volunteer with SPD's Freedom Adventure Club, an outdoor adventure interest group with the goal of helping others through having fun.



Caroline briefing the participants before games



An enthusiastic Caroline leading warm-up exercises at an FAC outing



It's all fun and games with the FAC!

Caroline Chua began her volunteer service in the University. As an undergraduate with Nanyang Technological University (NTU), she volunteered through the NTU Welfare Society, working with beneficiaries who were intellectually disabled. However, work and study commitments kept her from volunteering after she graduated. After completing her part time studies, she re-ignited her passion and decided to try volunteering again.

An opportunity to volunteer came about sometime in early 2004, while surfing the Internet. She stumbled upon a posting on SPD's website requesting for volunteers, and decided to send an email expressing her interest in being a part of the outdoor adventure group.

Friends often joke that one of her talents is to stumble over anything at any place. This time, her stumbling has brought her to SPD, which has given her much joy and a renewed passion for helping others. She recalled, "It would be a perfect way to combine my interest in the outdoors and sharing it with others."

Having been with the Freedom Adventure Club (FAC) since its inception, Caroline has grown with the group and the beneficiaries, and has developed a deeper commitment and understanding towards her volunteer work. The Club has so far brought the beneficiaries to the Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve, West Coast Park, Qian Hu Fish Farm, Labrador Park, Fort Canning Park and more recently, the tree-top walk at MacRitchie Reservoir.

She said, "Volunteering has made me more sensitive to the needs of the physically disabled. Not only that, it has also motivated me to read more about the physically handicapped and their difficulties." She also enjoys the challenge of sourcing for places to go to and tailoring activities according to their needs.

"This year, FAC is planning to lead a group of beneficiaries up Bukit Timah Hill. We have done a series of training for the beneficiaries so that they are well-equipped. After that, we will be targeting for more difficult terrain or conditions like Pulau Ubin." In the long run, Caroline hopes that the FAC committee will comprise both physically challenged members as well as the non-disabled.

She said, "I believe that everyone is able to live an enriching and fulfilling life. The outdoors is something that everyone can enjoy and it can be motivating when one manages to overcome a certain challenge." Rarely have I seen a young lady like Caroline, who is so passionate in her volunteering work. She feels that everyone should learn to enjoy nature and live a fulfilled life.

In her journey with FAC, Caroline recalls the fun times she has had organizing the activities, and witnessing the fun that the beneficiaries have. She enthuses, "I feel that I have received more than I have given out." She observes that everyone has a handicap, whether emotional or physical, which can be very limiting. But she feels we have a choice to overcome it – we can choose to work with it or to allow it to overcome us. ☺

POWERED MOBILITY TECHNOLOGY

Freedom to move about is something that most of us take for granted. However, for a large part of the physically disabled population, this freedom is out of reach. In this second part of 'Technology for Me', Tan Chuan Hoh, Occupational Therapist from the Specialised ATC, introduces the different mobility access aids available for the physically challenged.

1. Standard Power Wheelchairs

The structure of the standard power wheelchair is similar in design to the conventional manual wheelchair frame. The frame and seating supports are integrated into one system to provide support for the seating system and user. The frame is also stronger to support the weight of the motors and batteries. Standard power wheelchairs do best indoors or on level, smooth outdoor terrain.

An important feature of the standard power wheelchair is the position of the drive wheels. There are three distinct locations for the drive wheels.

Users who are interested in purchasing a powered wheelchair should consider their physical and lifestyle needs carefully, as well as their financial situation, before making the buying decision.

The rear-wheel-drive is a more traditional configuration with the

drive wheels behind the backrest of the chair. This method of drive makes the wheelchair fast, but requires a slightly larger turning circle than the other two types of power wheelchairs.

The drive wheels of the mid-wheel-drive are underneath or towards the middle of the chair. This method of drive gives the best turning capability, but can be a little unsteady when starting and stopping and may not suit uneven surfaces.

Drive wheels of the front-wheel-drive are located towards the front of the chair. This method of drive gives a lower top speed than rear-wheel-drive but offers a good turning capability.

There is also a wide range of seating options available for power wheelchairs. These range from simple slung canvas upholstery to complex seating units, allowing independent positioning of the user's body while seated in the chair.

2. Power base wheelchairs

Power base wheelchairs are designed specifically to maximize power. The main difference between the standard power wheelchairs and power base wheelchairs is that instead of the seating system which is integrated into the base of the wheelchair, the seat for the power base wheelchair is actually a separate piece which is attached to the top of the base of the wheelchair.

3. Scooters

Scooters are another popular

powered mobility option for users though they are seldom seen in Singapore. Users who have some ability to walk but are limited in distance or endurance most often can use a scooter. For this reason, it is most commonly used by the users outside the home. Scooters can come in either three-wheel or four-wheel versions. Some of the advantages of scooters are that they are lighter in weight, easier to maneuver and less costly than other powered wheelchairs. The disadvantages are that the user needs a fair amount of trunk and upper limb control to operate the scooter, and in Singapore, the scooter may be restricted in certain public areas and when taking certain modes of transport.

4. Add-On Power

A conventional manual wheelchair can be converted to a powered wheelchair with an add-on power unit. Kelvin Ang, a trainee at the Multimedia Centre has spinal muscular dystrophy with weak upper limbs. With the add-on power assembled to his manual wheelchair, he can now control the wheelchair with a push of a button, and is now able to move around on his own independently.

5. Power Assisted Wheelchair

Power assistance for a manual wheelchair is a newer technology. It can be an alternative for users with limited strength or endurance who are unable to propel a manual wheelchair, but who do not wish to use a power wheelchair. With the power-assisted wheelchair, the traditional rear wheels are replaced with motorized hubs that serve to

magnify the force applied to the rear wheels by the user. Thus, the user needs less strength and energy when pushing.

Pressure mapping

An area deserving of mention is the use of pressure mapping when constructing wheelchairs. Pressure mapping is a procedure recommended for people at risk of a skin breakdown, such as those who lack sensation in the buttocks and lower limbs due to paralysis. The pressure mapping system digitizes the pressure information taken while the client sits on a thin bendable pad of sensors placed on the wheelchair seat. The results taken are used to make decisions about comfort, pressure ulcers or product differences, and can provide information on proper seating and sleeping positions and effective pressure relief techniques. It is also important to understand that pressure is not the only factor in pressure ulcer development. Heat, moisture from perspiration or urine, poor nutrition, sensory loss, age-related connective tissue changes, friction or shearing and poor circulation all contribute to pressure ulcers.

Conclusion

Users who are interested in purchasing a powered wheelchair should consider their physical and lifestyle needs carefully, as well as their financial situation, before making the buying decision. It is also useful to seek professional consultation from an Occupational Therapist or an Assistive Technology Practitioner prior to making a final choice on a powered wheelchair. ☺



A standard power wheelchair with rear wheel drive allows users to travel faster



A scooter can be an option as it is easily maneuvered if users have good upper limb and trunk control



An add-on power unit to his manual wheelchair enables Kelvin to move around independently

TWO NEW SCHOLARS SELECTED

"All I ask is for a chance from them to prove myself," wrote Jan Lee, one of SPD's scholarship recipients this year. He was answering a question regarding gaining employment in his scholarship application essay. In it, he writes about his hopes for gaining employment after graduation, keenly aware of the obstacles he will face then.

24-year-old Jan Lee has transverse myelitis, causing inflammation of the spinal cord and leaving him paralysed in both legs. To have come so far in mainstream education and be awarded the scholarship is no small feat. A first-year Accountancy student at Nanyang Technological University and one of the top in his class at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, he is one of two new recipients of the SPD-Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Scholarship 2005.

The other new scholarship recipient is 20-year-old Liew Chong Heng. A second-year Information System Management student at the Singapore Management University, this is his second attempt at the scholarship. Determined to secure the scholarship this year, he displayed renewed confidence, determination and perseverance during the interview which left a deep impression on the panel, contributing to his success this time.

This is the second year of the Scholarship, which awards the two recipients with \$11,000 a year to cover their tuition fees at a local university, and their living expenses. There is no bond to the Scholarship. Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) Foundation has pledged to commit up to \$220,000 over four years to this programme.



The SPD-Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Scholars (first row) with VIPs and Guest-of-Honour Mr Heng Chee How (second row, third from left), Minister of Trade and Industry and National Development, and Mayor of Central Singapore District

"The APB Foundation recognizes the importance of a good education for all our people – able-bodied or otherwise. Through this Scholarship, we want to encourage the physically disabled to not only pursue higher education but at the same time, strive for excellence as well. Only with a solid foundation will these students be better placed to obtain good jobs and eventually make their mark in the society," says Mr Koh Poh Tiong, Chief Executive Officer, Asia Pacific Breweries Limited and Chairman, Executive Committee, Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation.

Both candidates were selected not just for their good results, but also for their attitude and desire to help others. Chong Heng currently helps to mentor secondary school students in his school's SMU-BP Mentoring Scheme, and Jan has volunteered with SPD,

training others in e-Filing in a recent project.

They received their scholarships on 22 June in an official ceremony from Mr Heng Chee How, Minister of State for Trade and Industry and National Development, and Mayor of the Central Singapore District.

"The scholarship is an extension of SPD's Education Programme to help level the playing field for students with physical disabilities. The scholarship recipients will serve as role models and inspire others to overcome their limitations," says Mr See Cher, Chairman of the SPD Education Programme. ☺

We welcome contributions and feedback. Also, if you would like to make a donation or know more about SPD, do get in touch with us.

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