



## **GVC SINGAPORE** **WORK CAMP 2010 – REPORT**

NAME OF TEAM LEADER:

NAME OF ASSISTANT TEAM LEADER:

WORK CAMP CODE: GVC-WC1001

DATES: 15-28 OCT 2010

MS ESTHER NEW/ MR YEO CHING KHEE

MR TAI SEOW WOON/ MR SIM KAY WEE

LOCATION: SINGAPORE

THEME: TEENAGER EDUCAMP

NUMBER OF FOREIGN VOLUNTEERS: 25

NATIONALITIES: INDONESIAN

AGE GROUP: 22 TEENAGERS OF AGE 12-14 YEARS OLD, 1 TEACHER OF AGE 32, 2  
DEJAVATO TEAM OF AGE 20 & 29

NUMBER OF SINGAPORE VOLUNTEERS: 4 from GVC and 12 from Woodlands Ring  
Secondary School





### **ACCOMMODATION: Amigos Hostel**

ADDRESS: 55 Lavender Street, Singapore  
Telephone: 65 6298 2908

Amigos Hostel is clean and staff is helpful. Facilities are basic but sufficient for a hostel. Facilities include free wireless, a rooftop terrace, share toilet and bathrooms, free internet station and free laundry. The location is near to MRT and 7-ELEVEN and is walking distance to Little India (about 15 minutes walk), and 1-2 MRT stops to the central district.

However, surrounding area may not be conducive due to hourly-rated hotels in the region. It is also quite troublesome for leader (who did not stay with the group) to access the hostel as the main gate is locked. This can be overcome by requesting an additional key from the Hostel for the leader.

The price of the hostel is the cheapest among those in the nearby region. And the hostel has been receiving volunteer groups.

### **FOOD**

Breakfast provided at the hostel was just bread with butter and jam. It was a bit basic and minimal. This could be improved as breakfast is important especially for teenager and youth. During certain days, the leader and Singapore volunteers helped to buy traditional local breakfast and brought to the hostel for the volunteers.

During most of the lunch and dinner provided, volunteers were given a budget to buy their meals in Singapore food centre such as Food Court, Hawker Centre, Coffee Shops. This helps to provide the volunteers the opportunities to interact with the locals and chances to speak English. Also this would expose them to more Singapore delicacies. A disadvantage of this is that the group may not be always in the tables together or nearby; and sometimes it will take longer time for the food to arrive.

To save time, some lunch and dinner can be planned with reservations and pre-ordered dishes at coffee shops or restaurants in advance.

In a special moment, we celebrated the birthday of a volunteer by cooking longevity noodles soup (Mee Sua) with hard boiled eggs - a local Chinese tradition.





## **TRANSPORT**

The volunteers were being transported to the next destination by chartered coach if the destination was far and punctuality was important. Else as far as possible, the volunteers would take the local transport such as Mass Rapid Transit (MRT) or buses. This was made easy by providing the volunteers each with a transport card called Ezlink or NETS Flash, where the volunteer just need to tap in and out when onboard and alight.

When travelling by MRT, the starting station and the destination station was pointed out. If required to change line, the volunteers were also being informed.

However, certain volunteers were careless and lost their cards and had to pay for the replacement. Through this, we hoped to teach them individual responsibilities.

For further improvement, we perhaps can get the MRT line map from the MRT station and give them to the volunteers, during the orientation time on their arrival day.



## **WEATHER**

October is rainy season in Singapore. The weather in Singapore can be, warm, rainy, cloudy, all on the same day. Maximum day time temperature is 32 degree Celsius and minimum temperature is 26 degree Celsius.

During the camp, we encountered haze for a few days due to the burning in Indonesia. Some had breathing difficulty due to the haze and outdoor activity was cut short to the minimal. Luckily, we did not encounter much rain and during that few hours of rain, the volunteers were sheltered either at the hostel or in shopping centre. During wet weather, we could have engaged the volunteers to do some sharing and reflection.

It was sunny and humid for most of the days and most volunteers could not get use to the weather. They felt tired easily after some walking and were encouraged to drink more water.





## **SITE:**

**(1) Moral Home for Disabled** - One of the many centers under the Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society.

Address: 20 Jalan Eunus, Singapore 419494

Tel: 6745 9926

Email: [mhd@thkms.org.sg](mailto:mhd@thkms.org.sg)

## **Mission Statement**

The Moral Home for Disabled gives warmth, care and love to intellectually disabled children, in particular those without parental support or those whose parents cannot support them. The Home provides these children with comprehensive education, including the moral and civic aspects of life. The Children residents at this Home live in harmony and respect each other's race, colour, culture, creed, language and religion.



## **Background**

In the midst of every community, there will always be people who are less fortunate than others. These include those who are poor, weak, sickly, or disabled. But it becomes more unfortunate when more than one element of misfortune befalls a person simultaneously. This is so when a disabled person also happens to be poor or happens to come from a poor family. In these circumstances, it is clearly impossible for him to struggle alone, without help or support from others. And it becomes more tragic when the poor, disabled person happens to be too young to take care of him or herself.

Set in this background, and at the request of the Ministry of Community Development, Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society set up this Home since 1989 to look after and care for the poor, young and intellectually disabled persons, irrespective of language, race, colour, creed or religion.

On the 1st June 1989, the Home took over 22 disabled children from the various Government Homes for Children and Young Persons which were closed down.

## **Standard of Care**

As the Home is not a profit-making Home, its aim is to look after disabled children who need a place to reside. Thus, the Home is geared to accept all unfortunate people. The Home does its best to ensure that they not only have a place to stay but also have a place to call Home. Dedicated staff is therefore essential and a precondition to ensure a high standard of care.

Cultural, civic and spiritual facilities have also been provided for the children. Counseling services provided by Senior Consultant Psychologists in private practice (on a monthly basis) have also been set up. Non-medical counselling for residents of the Home was provided by social workers from our Home and the Moral Counseling Centre.



### **Programme for Residents**

The Home provides a comprehensive range of services for the residents:

- 24-hour residential care;
- Children under the age of 16 are sent to special schools if they are not accepted by normal schools;
- Children above 16 are sent to workshop for training or to work in sheltered workshops;
- Healthy activities are conducted for the residents, both indoor and outdoor;
- Outings and gatherings are organised for the children by other kind-hearted organisations, such as NTUC Income, Singapore Technologies group of Companies, and Cummins Inc. and that have built up great rapport with our children.
- The Home celebrates the 6 major Religious Festivals in Singapore, namely the Holy Birthdays of Lao Tze, Buddha, Confucius, Christmas, Hari Raya and Deepavali. This is to bring cheer to all our residents and to foster deeper understanding and respect for each other's religions;
- Volunteer groups from temples, religious groups, CCCs, RCs and other community groups, clans, associations, schools etc. volunteered time and effort in community involvement.
- Foreign volunteers from Scandinavian countries came to teach and interact with our children;
- Younger volunteers volunteered and taught the children at the Home how to play and use computers. The training took the volunteers extra commitment and patience since most of the children are mentally challenged; and
- A full programme was organised by the Occupational Therapy Aide. Residents are taught daily living skills, training in handicraft, drawing, dancing etc.

### **Visits to Places of Interest**

Over the last year, residents of the Home visited many places of interest, organised by many kind-hearted organisations. The children visited the Jurong Bird Park, Palelai Buddhist Temple, New Water Plant and others. They have been made aware of and to appreciate all cultures and religions. Specifically, the children celebrated the lighting up ceremonies of the various religious festivals in Singapore, including Deepavali, Christmas, Chinese New Year and Hari Raya.

The children were also taken to shopping centres to expose them to mainstream Singapore society and individual living.

### **Muster**

The Home is almost filled to its capacity with 38 children. It has 20 male and 18 female residents.

### **Accessibility from accommodation**

The home is easily accessible from the hostel as it is only 3 MRT stops from Lavender MRT to Eunos MRT. From Eunos MRT, we just need to cross a road to reach the home.



### **Activities at the home for the volunteers (2 hours per day)**

The volunteers performed their local songs and dance for the residents. Initially, the volunteers were shocked with the residents behaviour though they were being briefed prior arrival. It took some effort to get the volunteers to befriend the residents. A few manage to chat with them but most were too shock to know what to do. Our Singapore volunteers organised 2 simple games for the volunteers and residents to interact. The games were simple and easy to understand. All of them enjoyed it.

The visit was made possible with the help of Kampung Kembangan Community Centre Youth Group. A balloon entertainer was also present to provide free balloon sculptures. Some food was also donated by Food Empire.

Recommendations: The volunteers can be briefed and get prepared for some simple songs, dance, games or art and crafts which can engage the residents better. Outings would be possible if the volunteers are above 18 years old.

**(2) ACRES** (Animal Concerns Research and Education Society - [www.acres.org.sg](http://www.acres.org.sg)).

Address: 91 Jalan Lekar Singapore 698917

Tel: 68929821

### **INTRODUCTION TO ACRES**

Mission of ACRES

"To create a caring and socially responsible society where animals are treated as sentient beings and where the environment is preserved for future generations."

The Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) was founded by a group of Singaporeans and registered as a society on 24th May 2001 (Registration No.: 0176/2001). It was registered under the Charities Act on 11th January 2005 (Registration No.: 1849) and registered as an Institution of Public Character on 1st June 2007 (Registration no. IPC000559).

ACRES aims to:

- Foster respect and compassion for all animals.
- Improve the living conditions and welfare of animals in captivity.
- Educate people on lifestyle choices which do not involve the abuse of animals and which are environment-friendly.

ACRES also operates the 24-hour Wildlife Crime Hotline (9783 7782) which provides an avenue for those who know of anyone who illegally owns or trades in exotic animals, to blow the whistle on these wildlife traders and owners. In the past two years, the work of ACRES has led to the rescue of more than 200 wild animals.

ACRES has worked closely with several schools and thousands of students have volunteered for ACRES as part of their Community Involvement Programme (CIP).



In all projects undertaken:

- ACRES aims for the research to result in practical changes for the animals.
- The approach is scientific, creative, practical and positive.

ACRES has the Institute of Public Character (IPC) status.

### **Accessibility from accommodation**

ACRES is not easily accessible using public transport as it requires transfer of bus and walking, and will take more than 45 minutes from the hostel. As such, a bus was chartered for the return transfer.

### **Activities at ACRES for the volunteers (6 hours per day)**

A short introduction by the local volunteer followed by a briefing of the activities that the volunteers would be doing. The volunteers were engaged in (1) an enrichment program, (2) hands-on gardening, (3) cleaning and tidying of ACRES Volunteer Lounge & Room, (4) redoing the Notice Board metal planks by sandpapering it and spraying paint, (5) sandpapering the bear cage display and spraying of paint, and (6) spraying paint to the recycling bins.

During the enrichment program, the volunteers used bottled water to make floating platform and landscape for the animals residing at the centre. At the hands-on gardening, the volunteers were required to clear the wild weeds in the centre which most found difficult and tired.



### (3) Woodlands Ring Secondary School

10 Woodlands Ring Road, Singapore 738239

Tel: 63643712

During the school exchange program with Woodlands Ring Secondary School, the volunteers attended the school Physical Education lesson with Secondary Three students; classroom immersion; interacted with lower Secondary students to share programme, objectives and culture. The volunteers also toured the school; learned to appreciate Chinese culture through tea appreciation session, chinese dance and Gu Zheng performance. In exchange, the volunteers did a Indonesia dance and song.



The volunteers also learnt programming with Robotics as the school is famous for its Robotics Club, winning various competitions. In the end of the exchange programme, the volunteers were able to do some basic programming with the robots to perform simple task. At the end of the school exchange, the school organised a barbeque session in the evening with some games, traditional costumes and gifts exchange.



Through this school exchange, we hope the volunteers would

- A. Raise cultural awareness,
- B. Identify, accept and cope with differences in lifestyle of others,
- C. Strengthen the ability of volunteers to socialize and to be hospitable,
- D. Expand the perspective of volunteers to the international scene so as to prepare them to be global citizens.

### Volunteer's Aims and Objectives for this camp?

The volunteers came to this camp to:

- know more about Singapore - it's culture and education system,
- get more experience,
- learn English by speaking with foreigner,
- have a lot of new friends,
- be a volunteer,
- explore further study as future plan.



## **GENERAL DIFFICULTIES & SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:**

### Language

The main course of communication during the camp is by English. However, volunteers may not fully understand what the leaders/ Singapore volunteers were saying because of language differences. One of the main reason was because Singaporean tends to speak in "Singlish" and usually speaks faster. "Singlish" is part of Singapore culture and I think volunteers will learn to appreciate it. However in future, Singapore leaders and volunteers will be briefed to speak slower and to ensure that the volunteers fully understand what is being conveyed. Volunteers who can understand what is being said can help to convey the message to the rest.



### Sharing, bonding and briefing-debrief Session

It will be good if there is an alternative location for sharing session instead of at the Amigos hostel. The location should have a shelter and comfortable space for ice breaking games and debrief sessions. The rooftop of Amigos Hostel is not sheltered so during the day time it will be too hot or it will be wet if it rains.

Ice-breaking session could have been better organised by selecting a better location and timing as this will help the volunteers know each other better, and also for the Singapore leader and volunteers know them better.



During briefing session for the day, beside providing factual details, more details could have been given. This can be explaining the rationale of the program, objective and culture aspect if any. In this way, the volunteers would better understand the reason for the activity.



Sharing and debrief session is an important aspect of the camp. The leader could have imposed more sharing session for the volunteers to share their experience and what they had learnt from the activities. Most of the time the sharing session was skipped because the volunteers were very tired after a day of activity. Beside working at the site, some of the days were spent exploring Singapore on foot or public transport. Most of the volunteers were not used to walking for hours, so they were tired when returned to the hostel. One way is to have the sharing session during the day when the volunteers are having a break. Another way is to plan the programme not too packed by focusing on a few places instead of walking a number of places.

### Singapore Tour



For the tour part, the group visited Little India and City Tour. The group was not used to walking for long, and are struggling to keep up. And simply following the walk and listening to the leader explanation of the place is boring for some. A more interesting way is to focus on 2 or 3 place of interest so as to minimize the walking, and at each place of interest, provide some fun activities to complete. The answers can be found by asking the locals or reading the signboard. This way they will remember the place better and have a chance to interact with the locals.



### Games

More games can be introduced in the programme such as some traditional games (like hopscotch) or team spirit games.

### Shopping time

The shopping time was kind of difficult to manage. The group was not back on time and not all like shopping. Those who don't shop was back on time, and have to wait for the rest, who were usually late. Shopping time should be allocated at certain time only and request for other shopping time should be strictly refused. This can be made this clear on the first day during setting of the ground rules. Alternate activity during the shopping time for those who don't like shopping can be introduced, for eg. visit place of interest or sample local food.



### **CONCLUSION:**

The program overall was run smoothly and was able to deal with last minute changes. Overall the group is satisfied with the program and is able to meet their objectives. The school especially has played a great host and the group enjoyed their time in the school most.

**REPORTED BY CAMP LEADER: YEO CHING KHEE**  
**DATE: 08 DEC 10**

