

Dear Team

Last Sunday, 2 of our volunteers had the honour of having tea with the President and Mrs Mary Tan. It was the National Day cum Hari Raya Open House at the Istana and the President had requested to meet volunteers who have been consistent and reliable; work quietly and humbly and have not been recognised publicly for their good efforts. Only 6 volunteers were present, the other 4 were from the Pertapis Senior Citizens Home for the Aged and the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore.

Wiganda Ivan has been providing maths tuition to our children and youths since 2004. The President remarked that it was not an easy task and asked whether he has had any success. Ivan agreed that it was not easy because even those who are already in polytechnic continue to SMS him for advice. To which the President smiled and noted that SMS is really quite useful for young people to keep in touch with adults they trust. President Dr Tony Tan was once a lecturer with the Department of Mathematics at the National University of Singapore and he was fully aware of the challenges in teaching the subject. Both the President and the First Lady nodded in understanding when Ivan shared that he got on with his students because he worked with them on a one to one basis. It was the relationship that helped him make headway and not so much his teaching methods. Ivan is a naturalised citizen and volunteering deepens his roots in Singapore.

The other volunteer that represented us was Mohamed Kasim, a 17 year old who brings together residents both young and old to community events. He also manages WeCommunity@KimSeng which is a Facebook group that promotes mutual help. When asked, he told the President that he has been volunteering since he was 12 years old and he has seen how things have changed for the better within the neighbourhood. The several interest groups involving youths in sports and dance have given participants a sense of purpose. He added that sporting competitions and performances built confidence in young people as they got to showcase what they loved and were good at.

It was a good day for both Kasim and Ivan and perhaps, the only moment Kasim felt a tad uncomfortable was when he was being ferried in a buggy from the main gate to the reception room. A few members of the public approached him asking if the buggy was for the elderly to get around the Istana grounds. It was not but I know if he had it his way, he would have wanted it so.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

Work hard to nurture both unity and diversity in society. You will need to build a strong sense of national identity, while appreciating differences across cultures and countries. The policies you create and implement must be done not in an ivory tower, but through strong connections and engagement with the community. – Dr Tony Tan, President of the Republic of Singapore