

As a way of addressing the theft of bicycles in a neighbourhood, we facilitated a community cooperation effort that involved the Police, the grassroots organisations and Pramerica Financial Asia Headquarters Pte Ltd called Cycles for the Community with the tagline Reviving Old Bikes, Renewing Teen Spirit. Last Saturday, 18 volunteers from Pramerica worked with 22 residents to refurbish 30 old bicycles as gifts for children and youths in the neighbourhood. 4 other residents prepared the drinks and food.

Those receiving the bikes helped out too and it was explained to them that the event was organised to reinforce this message;

1. Don't steal bikes or break the law, you will only hurt yourself, your family and people who care about you;
2. Talk to your parents and other adults you know and together we can find ways to help ourselves;
3. The event is an example of parents, neighbours and friends cooperating to bring a little joy to children and youths in your neighbourhood.

The old bicycles were a collection of used and abandoned bikes that were donated to us. When they were ready, the police registered them and gave its new owner a bicycle lock. Pramerica covered the cost of the parts and the food and we had the honour of Mr Heng Chee How, Senior Minister of State (Prime Minister's Office) and MP for Whampoa SMC dropping by to thank the volunteers and encourage the children. It was a meaningful day of sharing and giving for a total of 82 members of the community.

When the event ended after lunch, 7 bicycles could not be fixed. So together with the help of 2 teenagers whose bikes were not fixed, I brought them to a nearby shop. At the shop, a colleague called to inform me that one of the boys did not have a bike as he came late and the bike designated to him was given to someone else. So I asked him if it was true and he nodded. After a while, I noticed that I was missing one bike and I saw this boy not too far away with a damaged one. Well, one can't go very far on a bicycle with a chain that keeps coming off.

His friend was in cahoots with him but I got him to bring the boy back. When they both came back, I told the boy that if he really wanted a bike he could have one that was working as we definitely did not want to call him a thief. What he had to do was show the bike he received to my colleague so that we could account for it and get a replacement for the person it was intended for. They listened as I reiterated what the morning's event was trying to achieve and were most appreciative when their bikes were done. I was grateful for the opportunity to give these 2 boys something they really wanted and hopeful that they cycled away a little less distrustful of adults.

I was at the Teck Seng Ban Kee Bicycle and Motor Shop and as the bikes were being fixed, the supervisor asked me what I was doing with so many old bicycles. I explained the morning's event and when I loaded the last bicycle up the van and proceeded to pay him, he told me "Never mind, there's no charge."

I went home humbled and thankful for having spent a most meaningful day being revived and renewed by community.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

*It is the intention behind your giving and receiving that is the most important thing. The intention should always be to create happiness for the giver and receiver, because happiness is life-supporting and life-sustaining and therefore generates increase. - Deepak Chopra*