

Dear Team

As a beneficiary of the Singapore Turf Club's Annual Charity Race Day held in conjunction with the Longines Singapore Gold Cup last Sunday, our work received a substantial donation. I had the privilege of receiving the cheque from Mr S.R. Nathan, the former President of Singapore and enjoying the fine hospitality extended to all 23 beneficiaries. Each beneficiary stood for a different cause and quite naturally we talked shop while waiting for the proceedings. It was obvious that we were all doing our utmost for the betterment of society but doing it in a way we were good at. Some of us cared for the sick while others preserved our traditions and the beauty in our culture. There was a group that sought innovations in the social sector and several others worked at getting the disabled to lead active fulfilling lives.

As I listened to the others I found myself thinking about how the people we supported perceived us. Did they see us as a friend or simply as a resource for their needs? It is usually the latter as we are more comfortable being a helper rather than a friend. The relationships with those we support are defined by what we do for them rather than by what we have learnt together and appreciated of each other.

On Tuesday evening, with the help of 8 volunteers we reached out to more than 50 homes trying to locate children who may need some educational support. We were also inviting residents to help out with various activities in their neighbourhood. The volunteers comprised 3 teenage girls from the neighbourhood and 5 adults who came through SG Cares, a portal for volunteering opportunities. One of the 5 was a tourist from Korea and as everyone was working together for the first time, it was not just about getting to know the community but getting to know each other as well.

Our volunteers were pleasantly surprised that people were friendly and happy to chat but we believe that residents were responding to their sincerity. Instinctively, the residents realised that the volunteers meant well and were not trying to impose a view or gain from their efforts. Hence, the outreach effort succeeded because people were genuinely interested in getting to know each other. Perhaps, it was because we had a tourist in the team but it was nonetheless lovely to see volunteers and residents posing for photographs at the end of their little chat.

Enjoy your weekend.

Gerard

*Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light. -*

*Helen Keller*