

Dear Team

Christmas came early for 53 families as they were presented with a weekend stay at the Bugis Village Hotel by the Far East Organisation. Over the past 2 weekends we arranged for 83 care-givers and 170 children to enjoy a rare “staycation.” The generous hospitality from Far East Organisation included meals and transportation to Orchard Road to view the Christmas light-up.

It was a privilege to be organising the “staycations” as we saw the joy and gratitude that these families felt. Witnessing the joy our efforts brought to the children and their parents was most rewarding. 5 boys aged between 11 to 13 years old greeted me politely when I bumped into them at an eating place near the hotel. I have never had a conversation with them before but I remember them being pointed out to me as the neighbourhood toughies on a previous occasion. “Everything is so nice Mr Gerard. Who pay ah? Please say thank you for us.” I assured them that I would convey their thanks and was glad that they were having a good time.

We also wanted the “staycations” as an opportunity for the families to connect with their neighbours. Hence, we were glad to hear a mother remark that the “naughty boys are not so naughty after all.” She elaborated that they were caring towards their family members and quite talented as singers and dancers. On the whole, people were cooperative and helpful towards each other. Perhaps they treated each other well because they were being treated well. This gift from Far East Organisation was not just a treat but a gift of peace. For a weekend, these families felt welcomed, experienced a sense of belonging and enjoyed their meals. They had more than enough. With contentment usually comes peace.

In the social service sector we speak of gifts as contracts, incentives and investments among other terms. While there is a time and place for different ways of giving, let us not forget and appreciate the value of a pure gift during this season of giving.

I wish you and all at home the gifts that matter most this Christmas season.

Gerard

*“I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach!”*

*– from A Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens,*