



A shelter boy drawing a card...

Helping our boys get good nutrition

Few people can understand how bad child neglect can be, but not shelter manager Joseph. Three of the eight children under his care were very thin and weak, and experiencing malnutrition, when they joined the new shelter programme. The boys, aged between 11 and 13 years old, were also stunted and very short for their age.

Some of their parents face unemployment and find it hard to make ends meet, tirelessly caring for critically ill elderly at home, or are distressed over managing the children's education. They love their children affectionately but struggle with how to care for them because they themselves were either undergoing depression, a divorce or on the way to jail.

Over the last few months, the shelter, which cares for boys with multiple traumas, has also seen cases of young boys beaten into fear by their family members, and others who have been out of school for months due to financial difficulties.

Because of these ordeals, the boys require intensive care and therapy. Joseph and his team look after them daily, offering their support to the children and their families, as well as seeking voucher and food donations from friends and relatives to help keep operation costs down.

Their social worker would also gather donations of milk, cheese, bath towels and Bata shoe vouchers for these unfortunate children, to let them have a good start in the programme.

Joseph, 52, explained how malnutrition does not damage only the body, but also the child's psychology: "The boys suffering from malnutrition don't grow very well. Sometimes their cognitive skills are impacted, they don't perform well in school, and have difficulty expressing themselves. They require special help with their delayed development and impaired intellectual functions."

With Boys' Town's help, the boys are now healthier, and enjoying better welfare. Joseph and his team work hard to reduce the effects of malnutrition, and help the boys gain strength as well as confidence.

The young boys relish simple activities such as visiting the park, or having a treat at KFC. These outings help with their emotional well-being. They have also been going to school regularly, and showing improvements in their studies, with the support of our volunteer tutors. One of them is even getting ready for his transition home.

BOYS' TOWN INTERVENTIONS

We are committed to help children in need achieve a better, more secured future for themselves and their families. We partner with supporters and the wider community to address the children's well-being, educational needs and help integrate them back to society.



Having fun in a charade with the older boys



Baking pastries with volunteers



NEW ADDRESS

Notice: Vehicles to enter by Assumption Pathway School, 30 Cashew Road, until further notice (est end 2015).

Message from the Executive Director

Dear Supporters of Boys' Town

As we look back on the new services and integrated building, that have allowed us to reach out to many more less-fortunate individuals, we are once again humbled.

Apart from serving the youth-in-need in our community, we have contributed to caring for children who suffer from physical and emotional hurt, and older boys entering adulthood without a family or other forms of support. Our heartfelt appreciation and admiration go to our donors and volunteers for bringing joy to our beneficiaries through their dedication in supporting our work.

In this issue, may the struggles, hopes and aspirations of the boys be a voice of renewed hope for you. We have been blessed by your collective partnership over the past months, and believe that together, we will go a long way in sustaining care for those who need our help.

"In His time, He will make all things beautiful."


Irene Loi
Executive Director, Boys' Town



Mini renovation for outreach centre

The Lend Lease team, Boys' Town's boys, and youth from Youthreach worked together to give the outreach centre a mini renovation for the New Year.

Together, they patched up cracks and old wall paints, and helped to install a new projector in the multi-purpose room so that the youth workers can screen motivational videos and movies as part of their engagement work. A set of mirrors was fixed up for dance classes for the girls. Lend Lease also worked with the youths to transform selected walls into creative spaces using chalk board paint.

Looks like the year kicked off on an exciting new note for our street outreach team. Thank you Lend Lease!



Delightful Evening of Music

Singer Veronica Young delighted the audience at a concert held at the Boys' Town campus in an aim to raise funds for the organisation.

Belting out popular 1960s hits, she and her band – The Silver Strings – entertained the crowd with dance moves to songs such as “Frankie” and “Hippy Hippy Shakes”.



We would like to thank Veronica and The Silver Strings, as well as good-hearted individuals and corporations for their great support.

Christmas cheer for the boys



Sadly, a handful of boys had to spend Christmas in Boys' Town because their families could not afford to take them home, or they were under child protection orders.

But they were in for a delightful surprise when volunteer working adults, students and staff of soccer facility company The Cage joined our team to throw them a Christmas party with a buffet spread, mini soccer game and training session, and a movie show.

The boys also received Christmas presents, in the form of Kinokuniya book vouchers. Programme supervisor Hafidz added on to the joy by taking them out for a day to buy their favourite reads.

From the social worker's desk...

Update on Xander

Last issue, we shared about 16-year-old Xander* who struggled with feelings of anger and resentment over his parents' divorce. He often quarrelled with his teachers, and refused to hand up his homework.

"Whenever there were problems at home, I would be blamed. It was chaotic. I felt lost and had no purpose in life. I've never had an inspiration", he once said.

When he was 13 years old, he met 15-year-old Louis at Boys' Town. That was when his life changed.

The older youth guided him in his schoolwork, gave him the encouragement he needed, and set up goals for him to achieve. With the support of a big brother and the environment to start afresh, Xander began his healing process. It was a proud moment for him when he graduated from Boys' Town last October.

Clothed with compassion at Boys' Town



BTShop! a social enterprise initiative by Boys' Town is now open. Run by volunteers, staff and our boys, the shop has new and pre-loved accessories and wear from brands such as Harrods, Timberland and Ralph Lauren for as little as \$1. Clothe yourself with love, as you make a difference to the boys' lives.

OPERATING HOURS

Tuesday and Friday (except Public Holidays)
12.30pm - 3.30pm

The shop is located at the basement of the Boys' Town campus (beside the boys' dining hall).



Xander receiving the Boys' Town 'Most Improved in Education' Award

Well, the GCE 'O' Level results are out, and the once-rebellious boy has emerged as one of the top students in his school, with 10 points. This means he will gain entry to the junior college of his choice.

"Being successful is not about how much I have, but how much I can share. Louis and the staff at Boys' Town helped me find my dreams and hopes. I would like to be able to motivate others too. A few of the boys remind me of my younger self whenever they flare up and shoot their mouth off. I can use the struggles I've been through, to relate to them and, perhaps over time, help them improve", the champ now shares.

Who WE ARE...

Boys' Town is a non-profit organisation started in 1948 by the Montfort Brothers of St. Gabriel. Each year, we reach out to 300 children and youth typically between the ages of 10 and 21 who come from disadvantaged and disengaged families, and may have suffered domestic violence, abandonment or the lack of care and financial support.

We are an Institution of a Public Character (IPC) and a member of the National Council of Social Service. We depend largely on the support of public and corporate donations for our daily operations which include residential, hostel and shelter care, street outreach through our community service arm, YouthReach, and community and school-based programmes.

If you have an enquiry, would like to make a donation or volunteer with us, please contact our Community Partnerships Department at 66905420, email info@boystown.org.sg or visit our website www.boystown.org.sg for more details.

IMPORTANT NOTICE

REPORT SCAMS

Boys' Town is not organising the sale of ice cream and handmade pencils to raise funds.

We have put up a notice on our website to notify the public of possible scams. The authorities would like to advise victims to lodge a police report.

If you encounter these peddlers, please check with us before making any donations.

You may reach us at the contact details above during office hours Monday to Friday, 9am-6pm, or call our duty officer at 96234731.

YouthReach

Ex-gangster who left his old life to pursue his dream



(From Left) Shafiee catching up with his young friends; Alan taking part in a competition organised by Skate Garage and Tampines Sec Sch

The journey from a school bully to a skateboard champion has been long and, at times, harrowing for Alan*.

Once a member of a gang, he used to skip school, fight and extort money. Then, a meeting with YouthReach youth worker Shafiee last year, and an opportunity to take up his first love – skateboarding, turned his life around.

“Shafiee wanted me to represent the youth centre in skateboarding competitions, and said that he’ll support me in getting a new skateboard and a pair of shoes for my hobby,” the 14-year-old said.

However, his strong attachment to the gang made Alan reject Shafiee’s initial invitations, but the youth worker did not give up. He respected Alan’s decision, and told him that he would always be there if he ever needed help.

Youth worker Shafiee understood too well the lure of gangs, as well as the cost of being in one. A secret society member himself in his younger days, he had his fair share of fighting, selling illegal CDs and getting involved with drugs. Thanks to friends and family members, Shafiee began to find a new focus in life to pour his heart and soul into.

“I can’t turn back time to make amends but, without that past I would not be what I am today. I want to contribute to the lives of our youth by sharing my life lessons, and helping them make a positive transition or breakthrough,” he shared.

Shafiee shared that one needs to first understand the youth’s perspectives,

otherwise providing any form of help or intervention may cause further damage.

“There are many factors, from a lack of parental support to low family income, for a youth to go astray. I learnt not to make a quick judgment, and to put myself in their shoes. If just one young person hears my story, listens to my experiences and decides not to go down the same path, then I’ll know all of this was worth it”, he explained.

His patience and tactic worked on the wayward Alan.

“It was only when I met Shafiee that I started to think of the kind of future I wanted for myself,” Alan said. “I believed I was not good enough and could achieve very little. But he made me feel valued, and changed my mindset.”

Though his life is still undergoing changes, Alan is working hard to cope with them. His parents’ impending divorce has left him with anger management issues but, with Shafiee’s mentorship, he is learning to process his feelings of frustration and self-blame.

The bad boy-turned-skateboarder for the YouthReach Centre now has his eyes set on starting a skateboard arena for youth-in-need to hone their skateboarding skills. He distanced himself from the gang last year, made friends with a healthier group of friends, and started going to school regularly. He has also enrolled in a self-discipline programme where his teachers observed improvements in his conduct.

*Not their real names.