We have raised RM1 Million for our Building Fund Project!

Inclusion International: Global Conference on Inclusive Education, Salamanca, Spain

by Johari Bin Jamali

Inclusive education is for everyone including all races, all religions no matter who they are either they are people with learning disabilities, disabled or without disabilities or difficulties.

No matter what people think, it is the best way to include everyone. People with disabilities should also have real school life like other children. I think we can learn more from one another by studying together. People without disabilities can understand us better when we grow up together with them. If we are separated all the time, people will not understand us and they will not learn how to relate with people who may be different in the way they talk or respond to things around them. I also hope more teachers will be trained to support students with mild or severe disabilities.

The education should be more fun and encourage students to mingle with one another. We can have more understanding of each others faiths, without racism or picking on other students who are different.

Garcia’s (which means thank you in Spanish)
I work at Malaysian Milk Sdn Bhd for the passed three and a half years. Malaysian Milk has a factory that produces Marigold and Vitagen products. I work at Marigold packet drinks or milk factory. Aunty Saw Gaik found this job for me.

I work as a lift attendant. The workers will load all the ingredients like sugar, creamer, etc or ready made products into the lift and I will take these things to any floor they want me to send. Another group of a few workers at each floor will unload the things from the lift. When the lift is not working, I have to report to the engineering department. I also clean the lift everyday before I start work or any time when the lift is dirty.

I work from 8am to 5pm for day shift. Most of the time I work till 8pm for over time. I work night shift from 8pm to 5am on alternate week. OT for night shift is until 8am. Usually I go home only at 8am. Sometimes I feel sleepy when I work night shift. I will go to the canteen to have either tea or coffee.

This job can be quite boring at times. But, I have to keep thinking of the money I’ll get at the end of the month. I am happy with my salary. My boss is a good boss. We get two months bonus every year. And we also have nice company function like football competition.

There are four staff taking care of the lift. Two workers per shift. My brother Khong Weng is also working here. He always work different shift from me. He is one of my triplet brothers. Khong Weng got the job first. I joined him few months later.

Usually, after work, I have my shower, go out for dinner and then watch TV in my room. I am renting a room near my work place. I have been staying here since I started working in Malaysian Milk. Before that, I stay with my aunt at Old Klang Road. I am happy that now I am staying with my 2 other triplet brothers in this place. I feel independent staying on our own.

I have day off on Saturday and Sunday. But, two times a month I work on Saturday – at day shift only. During my day off I’ll go back to my aunt’s house. I will chat with her and we catch up. Sometimes, I go out with my friends. We go out jalan-jalan at shopping complex, have a drink or watch Chinese movie once a while.

Malaysia Milk is my 4th job. I worked at a printing company, supermarket and restaurant before. I prefer this current job because I get better pay. I give some money to my family every month and I try to save a few hundred ringgit a month.

I am 31 years old this year. I feel time pass by so quickly. I met my old classmate recently and we talked about our school days. But, now we are already 30 something.

In the future, I wish to learn to ride the bike or drive a car. This is just a dream. I don’t know when I’ll start. I need to save more money first.

I have been a member of United Voice since 1995. I was one of the pioneer members. There were less than 10 of us then. I think UV is better now because it is an independent society and we have many members. UV is helping many people with learning disabilities. Nowadays because of work I don’t have much time with UV. But, I still keep in touch with staff like Swee Lan and Moh Foong. They will invite me when there is a party, meeting or outing. They also encourage me to write stories. One of my dreams is to write a book on the story of my life. I hope my dream will come true one day.
United Voice was invited by Foundation for Advanced Studies on International Development (FASID) to give talks for the Workshop of ASEAN project on Disability and Development. This training was for the Government officers and NGOs leaders in Cambodia. Swee Lan and I were resource persons for the workshop.

This workshop was held from 13-17 July 2009 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Swee Lan presented about what is learning disabilities. I presented about Self-Advocacy, United Voice and my life experience. The objective of the workshop is to help government especially Social Affairs Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation Department and NGOs of Cambodia to set up better systems to benefit people with disabilities in Cambodia. The participants of this workshop were from the government and the NGOs like National Council of Disabled People in Cambodia.

Currently, there are only a few schools for children with learning disabilities in Cambodia. We encouraged the government to establish more schools for children with learning disabilities so that they can go to school like other children, be educated and trained as future resources for their country.

Swee Lan and I stayed in Phnom Penh, Cambodia for four day (11-14 July 2009). Besides attending the workshop, we also have opportunities to visit some souvenir shops and restaurants that are run by NGOs, we also visited Museum, Buddhist Temple, sight seeing like Mekong River, Palace and visited a Cambodian home, went for window shopping and etc.

I really learned a lot from the trip in Cambodia. I saw a lot of things that I have never seen in Malaysia.
Koh Sher Li, age 32, passed away peacefully in her sleep on the early Monday morning of 16 Nov 2009. Sher Li has been a blessing to the staff and members of United Voice. Wendy says “We miss her a lot. She was very nice and friendly. We have lost a friend in UV.”

Sher Li was one of the pioneer members who worked in United Voice Employment Project (EP) established in 2003. We remember Sher Li’s diligence. She would paste the cards one after another diligently and carefully. Pavala says “I feel sad. I supervised her pasting work. She was very hardworking.”

Sher Li often shares her joy with friends and contributes to group meetings. She would often say “Good” by showing thumbs up sign to others when asked about her work during self-advocacy meetings after work. We remember Sher Li’s meaningful sharing.

Often, when Sher Li had lunch with UV members, she would eat her food very slowly due to her digestive problems. We remember Sher Li’s suffering. But she carried on working with a gentle smile inspite of the difficulties she faced. We remember Sher Li’s strength and determination. Intan says “Sher Li baik. Dia kurus kesian. Dia kawan baik Intan.”

We remember Sher Li’s sincerity in knowing people. She would smile and say and spell the names of people she knew. We will miss her very much.

Tribute to Sher Li

Institute Pendidikan Ilmu Khas

Saya pergi ke Institute Pendidikan Ilmu Khas (IPIK) bersama mak saya, Puan Fadzillah dan Puan Nareah. United Voice dijemput menjual hasil kerja tangan Employment Project. IPIK terletak di Cheras. Ramai guru dan cikgu di sana belajar tentang pendidikan khas. Saya bersama Puan Fadzillah dan Puan Nareah menjual hasil Employment Project di sana.

Inter Self-Advocacy Groups trip to Malacca

story narrated by Pavala Vaani

On 14 November, I went for a trip to Malacca with Aunty Fadzillah, Intan, Wendy, Johari, Izzuddin, Hooi Ting, Nazmi, Eric and his mom. The trip is organized by Dragon Club from Persatuan Kanak-kanak Istimewa Kajang as an outing for all the self-advocacy groups in Klang Valley. Many members from United Voice, Dragon Club, Friendship Club and Adventure Club as well as supporting friends came for this trip. We went there by bus. A filming crew from Astro also followed us for the trip. They interviewed a few people and film UV members for a program on Astro. It is my first time visiting Malacca. We went shopping at Malacca Mall. A few UV members went for trishaw ride. We visited A’ Famosa and St. Paul’s Church. Some also went to Jonker Street. We took a lot of pictures. I also get to mix with members from other self-advocacy groups. I meet a few new friends. We reached back to Kuala Lumpur at about 9pm. I really enjoy and had fun at Malacca.

Sharing on Employment at SMK Batu Unjur, Klang

by Wendy Yeong Sau Kuen

On 29th Oct 2009 Shi Wei, Izzuddin and I went for a graduation event for students from the Special Education class from SMK Batu Unjur held at Concorde Hotel.

After graduation most of the students do not know what to do, so United Voice was invited to share about employment opportunities. About 80 students, parents and teachers were at this event. I presented about United Voice and also my work experience. Shi Wei presented about Employment Opportunities for Persons with Learning Disabilities using Aslam who is working at GIANT as an example. During Q&A session the parents and teachers asked a lot of questions and also share their experience.

After United Voice presentation they presented the school leaving certificates to the students.
We are pleased to announce that we have raised more than RM1,000,000 for our Building Fund Project. Since embarking on the journey to raise funds to purchase our own building in September 2007, United Voice has organised numerous fundraising events and has collected funds through various donations with help and support from staff, volunteers, United Voice members and parents.

Breakdown of funds collected through fundraising events & donations:

**Events:**
- Dec 2007 Fruitcake Project RM 43,270
- Dec 2007 1-Utama Charity Booth RM 7,575
- 25th April 2008 Fundraising Golf Tournament RM 116,000
- 17th August 2008 Fundraising Dinner RM 94,000
- 14th March 2009 Food & Fun Fair RM 125,300
- 17th March 2009 Fundraising Dinner RM 221,400

**Donations:**
- Dignity & Services Bhd RM 30,000
- United Voice members RM 3,050
- Hong Leong Foundation RM 118,426
- The Edge-Bursa Malaysia Rat Race 2008 RM 87,000
- Other Companies & Organizations RM 78,550
- Individuals RM 27,306
- ICU, Prime Minister’s Department RM 150,000

Total RM 1,101,877

Expenses (Salary for 1 year contract staff and publicity) RM 33,600

Total RM 1,065,877

When our renovation is completed, we will have an Art Gallery and a Card & Craft Studio, a bigger Bakery area and a Gift Shop to sell our Employment Project products. We will also have a bigger meeting hall, better storage cabinets, some new furniture for our office and a furnished computer room. To create an accessible environment for all, we will be installing a chair-lift at the staircase.

The United Voice committee would like to thank all who has supported us throughout this journey to raise funds for our Building Project. We are indeed thankful to have volunteers who are dedicated in helping us. Without your help we could not have been able to raise the amount in such a short period of time. To all of you who have contributed financially, we say a BIG THANK YOU for your generosity.
Removing the wooden platform and zinc roof between ground floor and 1st floor

Constructing beams to support the new concrete floor

Breaking down the library walls

Breaking down kitchen top for more space

Building a stronger support for the beams

Building new toilets on the 1st floor

Building beams at the back of 1st floor to support new roof

Building concrete walls for the side of the building on the 1st floor

Fixing a new roof

New concrete floor on 1st floor

Fixing plaster ceiling

Putting in door and glass window between Card & Craft Studio and Bakery area

New wall and window at the back

Wash basin and pantry area on 1st floor

Art Gallery, almost completed

Renovations @ United Voice
A total of 147 students from various colleges, universities (including 20 from overseas), nursing college and schools visited United Voice this year. Some of the groups who came were:-

- Students from University of Malaya who conducted research in UV as part of the requirement of their Special Education coursework
- 10 trainee nurses from Kolej Sains Kesihatan, Sg Buloh who participated in a short term attachment programme with United Voice
- SWEEP – a Social Work Exposure by Fellowship of Evangelical Students sent 9 students from a few universities to be volunteers
- 8 students from The One Academy
- 15 students from University College Sedaya International

The students who visited United Voice were given a powerpoint presentation on What is Learning Disability, Self-Advocacy and United Voice to have a better understanding about persons with learning disabilities. The students asked many questions to know more about persons with learning disabilities.

After the presentations the students worked together with the Employment Project (EP) employees. They learnt how to relate with UV members while working with them. Some of them also helped to design cards and promote our products at a nearby coffee shop.

The students from SWEEP taught UV members about grooming and social interaction by role playing. The One Academy students were given an assignment to create 8 sets of festival greeting cards for the Employment Project.
University Students Visits United Voice for Awareness and Coursework

At the end of the day the students had a debriefing to share and discuss about their experience working together with the EP members.

The students who came to United Voice as part of their coursework or internship or as volunteers were able to foster social integration of UV members with the community as they made many new friends among the students. The students were also able to have better awareness and understanding about persons with learning disabilities. Many students expressed that they would like to come back to visit UV as volunteers.

Some of the students also went out for lunch with the EP employees and had a good time interacting with one another. At the end of the day, the students join in the Self-advocacy meeting with the EP employees. It was a good exposure for both students as well as UV members to learn how to relate with one another.

CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU, MR PRESIDENT!

On behalf of United Voice committee, staff and members, we would like to congratulate Mr President of United Voice, Johari Jamali for being selected as OKU CEMERLANG in the category of person with learning disabilities.

Award of OKU CEMERLANG was given during the celebration of International Day of Disabled 2009. There were four persons with disabilities from four different categories of the disabled selected for the awards. Thanks to the Department of Social Welfare for including person with learning disabilities as one of the categories to win the award.

Congratulations Johari! You are the hero of United Voice. Continue to be the best, the greatest for yourself and United Voice!
Koh Sher Li
(16 July 1977 to 16 November 2009)

by Koh Thiam Soon

My daughter, Sher Li was diagnosed with Down Syndrome. She also suffered from Esophageal Stricture from birth – a problem that causes rejection of food.

At age of three, I brought her to Australia for treatment. I also sought spiritual treatment for Sher Li overseas. On our return to Malaysia, she continued to receive treatment from University Hospital. But the greatest relief and comfort came to us when we found support from a church in 1989. Sher Li’s life changed miraculously. She enjoyed singing hymns and worshipping God. She started to read and write. She even knew how to read the Bible. She was also blessed with a good memory.

During her 32 years on earth she attended Wisma Harapan (School of Hope), Day Training Centre run by Malaysia Care and Shelter Workshop in our church.

Her last seven years (September 2002 to 16 November 2009) were spent working with United Voice. She received good training and excellent guidance from a team of dedicated staff and volunteers. Sher Li learnt much. She was also paid a salary by United Voice and an allowance from the Welfare Department for her own maintenance thus making her a person with self worth. I want to express my deepest gratitude to everyone involved with her training and playing a part to make her life meaningful. To God Be All the Glory

Cynthia Joann a/p Thomas Raju

by Mrs Thomas

My daughter Cynthia Joann started work as a clinic assistance after completing her education at MAGIC. She worked at the first clinic for about six months. After that she joined Clinic Loh in Sea Park. In the meantime she joined United Voice. She has gained a lot of confidence and independence. Thanks to United Voice with their self –advocacy programmes. Cynthia often talks about self –advocacy. She speaks for her rights and is able to confront situations

United Voice has various activities. Cynthia is a committee member and enjoy going for the meeting and activities. Even at her working place she is well accepted and enjoys her work.

She carries herself very well and has improved tremendously ever since she joined United Voice. I wish all parents who have special children will make it a point to enroll their children in United Voice or any self-advocacy groups near their house.
Self-Advocacy Groups in Malaysia

We are pleased to announce that there are four new self-advocacy groups formed within the last 2 years. The new groups are:

- “Divine Voice” *Persatuan Daybreak Center, Ipoh, Perak
- “Permata Hati” *PDK Kampung Gual Ipoh, Kelantan
- “Seri Chepa” *PDK Kg. Chepa, Kelantan
- “Perhentian Kasih” *PDK Jerteh, Terengganu

There are now 13 self-advocacy groups all over Malaysia including United Voice. The others are:

- **Adventure Club**, *Dayspring, Klang, Selangor*
- **Bethany Self-Advocacy Group**, *Bethany Home, Teluk Intan, Perak*
- **Dragon Club**, *Persatuan Kanak-kanak Istimewa Kajang, Selangor*
- **Friendship Club**, *Malaysian CARE, Kuala Lumpur*
- **Kangaroo Club**, *Seri Mengasih, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah*
- **Aktion Club**, *Kiwanis Job Training Centre, Petaling Jaya, Selangor*
- **Mutiara Voice Club**, *Asia Community Service, Penang*
- **Hornbill Club**, *PDK Kuching, Sarawak*

*supported by*
There was a Leadership Training organized by Adventure Club from Dayspring Center in partnership with Leaderonomics Sdn. Bhd. The event was from 9am to 5pm at Segi College Subang Jaya on the 26 September 2009 (Saturday).

We learn how to communicate, make decisions and the main thing the leader of the group mentioned that teamwork is the most important. Clear messages must be taken when answering telephone calls. Interpersonal skill includes socializing with friends and mingling with guest.

These are few points I gained from the training:

1. Pay attention when the leaders are giving speeches or talks
2. Do not always argue with parents and staff
3. Stand straight during public speaking
4. Give some hand gestures when speaking during public speaking
5. Use eye contact when talking to guest or friends
6. Give firm handshake to new people you meet
7. Smile more

I would like to thank Adventure Club and the team from Leaderonomics for their great job organizing this event. Hopefully this training will educate people with learning disabilities to speak up for themselves and develop independence in them.