

Singapore Children's Society marks 70 years of helping kids in need

Isabelle Liew

When Joshua (not his real name) was 12, his parents faced financial difficulties and he was left with little food and minimal supervision.

A social worker took him to Sunbeam Place @ Children's Society, a shelter in Choa Chu Kang for children who have been abused or severely neglected.

"I was warmly welcomed by the counsellors and social workers who took the time and effort to get to know me. They took notice of my struggles and would occasionally check in on me," Joshua recounted at Singapore Children's Society's (SCS) 70th anniversary celebration at the home yesterday.

"I will always remember how my birthdays were celebrated yearly, and all the chit-chat sessions that I had," added Joshua, who is now 26 and works in IT.

Sunbeam Place was called Convalescent Home when it was started in 1956, providing basic shelter, comfort and relief to malnourished children during the post-war years. It was given its current name in 2006 as it moved away from medical convalescence to taking care of abused and severely neglected children. It currently has 57 residents.

President Halimah Yacob, who was at yesterday's event, said children today have access to much better educational opportunities.

"But there will always be a segment of families with children in



need of greater support. This is where community-based efforts will be needed to complement government policies, through our many helping hands approach," she added.

SCS chairman Koh Choon Hui

said he is glad to see beneficiaries who have reintegrated with their families returning to the home to give back by volunteering, which keeps the kampung spirit going strong. "We look forward to continue bringing more hope and

smiles to our beneficiaries, like how they have always inspired us with their resilience and perseverance," he added.

Joshua said the home helped him through difficult times when he was a student.

President Halimah Yacob with Singapore Children's Society chairman Koh Choon Hui (far left) watching a performance by a resident of Sunbeam Place @ Children's Society at SCS' 70th anniversary celebration yesterday. In 2020, SCS reached out to 34,654 children, youth and families in need.

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LIANHE ZAOBAO

"When I dropped out of polytechnic, the home's staff were supportive and encouraging, helping me to find a course that is suitable for me," he added.

"I eventually graduated from polytechnic and I'm now working full-time, and I'm able to support myself."

Yesterday, Sunbeam Place residents sang and danced on stage in a talent show. The celebration also featured a heritage exhibition and a home tour.

Madam Halimah noted how an 11-year-old performer at the talent show managed to overcome stage fright with encouragement from residents, volunteers and staff.

"He said that he wants to step out of his comfort zone to perform for all who have supported him since he first came to Sunbeam Place in August 2020," she said.

"Even for residents who have already left, they continue to benefit from the positive impact of the home on their lives."

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