

Needy kids to get Christmas musical treat

StarHub clients 'exchange' festive hampers for tickets to show for kids

By SAMANTHA BOH

IT IS that time of the year when offices are filled to the brim with hampers and gift baskets sent by companies to other firms to show their appreciation.

But at least one organisation has opted to turn those festive goodies into an opportunity to do good.

Telco StarHub is giving its corporate clients and partners the option of forgoing their hampers and instead giving a child from a low-income family a chance to watch a musical.

Response to the initiative has been encouraging, said StarHub.

Around 10 per cent of its corporate clients, partners and media friends have opted to do without a Christmas hamper this year, the telco said.

StarHub typically sends out 1,000 Christmas hampers each year, with the value of each hamper equivalent to two to three tickets to musicals.

Some 50 customers signed on within the first week of the initiative, which started last month.

Beneficiaries of the StarHub-Central Singapore Nurture Programme - a free English literacy programme - will receive tickets to the musical *Junior Claus*, which is playing at the DBS Arts Centre Home of Singapore Repertory The-

atre from now till Dec 14.

"This effort aims to provide the children with some valuable time spent with loved ones, while enjoying an aspect of the arts that they would normally not have the chance to enjoy," said Ms Jeannie Ong, StarHub's chief marketing officer.

Ms Julienne Loh, MasterCard's group head of consumer credit product for Asia Pacific, is one of those who gave up their festive hampers.

"Organisations can spend a lot on hampers each year, so we thought, why not take the opportunity to help the underprivileged," she said.

Singapore Children's Society executive director Alfred Tan said it is good to expose children from less privileged backgrounds to such experiences.

"Most of the essentials are generally provided by the voluntary welfare organisations. What is more important are such experiences to boost their self-confidence and self-esteem," said Mr Tan.

But he noted the need to be mindful not to overdo it.

"If (the treat) is every other week, then it is no longer appropriate because the child would think he should expect such experiences all the time in normal circumstances."

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