

A WORTHY CAUSE

Lending a helping hand

Donors share their thoughts on the OCBC-TODAY Children's Fund

SINGAPORE – It takes close to S\$19,000 over an average of two-and-a-half years to help a child suffering from the emotional effects of neglect or abuse. Rehabilitation involves a combination of counselling, mentoring, different kinds of therapy and skills building, and varies depending on the children's individual circumstances. What is unwavering is the objective of using these programmes to help children from distressed families develop a sense of self-worth and lead a purposeful life.

Launched last year, the OCBC-TODAY Children's Fund was set up to do just this; donations go towards the Singapore Children's Society (SCS) and its beneficiaries, and focuses on the emotional needs of children.

The Fund aims to raise a maximum of S\$1.5 million a year — the cap was put in place to help ensure that other charity organisations can also benefit from the public's generosity. The sum includes S\$500,000 OCBC Bank is committed to donating. It contributes S\$1 for every S\$2 raised from public donations.

EVERY CHILD DESERVES A CHANCE AT LIFE

A donation can be as little as S\$25 and every bit helps in rebuilding the lives of children. Not every child has the fortune to grow up in a stable, loving and nurturing environment. Those who have been abused or neglected may develop feelings of being unwanted or unloved, and may end up with learning disabilities, disciplinary problems or depression later in life. Rehabilitation can help, said Dr Carol Balhetchet, Senior Director at the SCS' Youth Service Centre (Toa Payoh) and a Clinical Psychologist.

She explained: "Through therapy and counselling, the child is able to verbalise how he feels and be guided to change his behavior and regain confidence. Mentoring and skills building help the child to recognise his sense of self-worth as a person."

The cause has resonated with members of the public. Mr Leow Eng Chye, 43, who donated S\$100, said: "I have two daughters



PHOTO: SINGAPORE CHILDREN'S SOCIETY



HELP CHILDREN FULFIL THEIR DREAMS AND ASPIRATIONS

It takes as little as \$25 to give children from distressed families a chance at a better life. Visit www.ocbctodayfund.sg to find out more about the OCBC-TODAY Children's Fund and to see a breakdown of how donations will be used to help these children. Donations can be made via the website or through the SCS fundraising department at 6273 2010. Donations are tax deductible.

aged 12 and 18. Even if it's a small amount, helping others gives us a sense of happiness. All children need to be raised and educated with care. The (less fortunate) children should be given a fair chance to enjoy what they lack compared to others."

Mr Leo Teng Chang is another donor who believes that helping children is a worthy cause. The 50-year-old, who has three children aged 11, 14 and 16, had donated S\$200. Besides the Fund, Mr Leo has also made regular contributions to the SCS and the Children's Cancer Foundation. He said: "I'm also a dad, so I really understand the needs of children. It's unfortunate when children are born into difficult circumstances. They're not at fault."

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

Mr Jason Yap donated S\$25 in his wife's name after he saw an advertisement in TODAY for the Fund and went to read up on it on the website. He said: "Children are

our future and they have a long path ahead of them. If donating a small amount can in any way help their situation or level the playing field for them, why not? I hope that these children are able to weather their circumstances and grow up as resilient adults."

The 34-year-old is a father of a two-year-old and believes that children should be able to grow in a "happy and positive environment". He added: "As a polytechnic lecturer, I have encountered students from complex and distressed family backgrounds. After reading some of the articles on the SCS, I realised that these young children are caught in similar situations."

On top of making a donation, Mr Yap has also shared a post about the OCBC-TODAY Children's Fund on Facebook to tell his friends about it.

The Fund has also struck a chord with some individuals who have had similar experiences. Ms Ong Hui Chiung, 34, donated S\$25. She said: "Most of the children I read about have encountered great unhappiness in their families, such as their parents' divorce, frequent family quarrels, negligence, criminal issues and financial difficulties. I came from a similar distressed family situation and I can understand that emotional pain is hard to forget easily. I hope these children will be able to face their unpleasant situations bravely and work towards a wonderful life."

GIVING BACK TO SOCIETY

There are also donors who, after finding

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POLYTECHNIC LECTURER

out about the Fund, have gone beyond financial contributions. Mr and Mrs Pang (who prefer not to be named), aged 49 and 46 respectively, donated S\$2,000 to the Fund. In addition, Mrs Pang is now volunteering at one of the SCS's student care centres.

Being able to help children achieve their dreams and a better future was not the only reason the couple decided to make a donation. Mrs Pang explained that she also found compelling both OCBC Bank's commitment to match every S\$2 with a S\$1 contribution, and the fact that the Fund had a yearly cap to ensure that it does not "deprive other charitable causes".

She said: "We are fortunate to be financially independent, and while we live our lives unburdened, I am cognizant of the weight of worry other people go through in trying to provide for their family, day after day. We have the ability to help, and it is inconceivable to me to do nothing when we can."

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