



CHANGING LIVES

A boy transformed

Thanks to KidzSHinE, Irfan surprised everyone with his PSLE results and change in temperament

SINGAPORE – So grateful was Mr Arman bin Hashim that he brought his son to the Children Service Centre (CSC) the day the PSLE (Primary School Leaving Examination) results were released to thank the counsellors for their guidance.

Mr Arman proudly showed the counsellors the certificates his son, Irfan, received — the PSLE certificate and the Best Progress Award from Yu Neng Primary School.

Irfan had been attending the KidzSHinE (Seeing Hope in Every Kid) programme at CSC since he was 10. Run by the Singapore Children's Society and

supported by the OCBC-TODAY Children's Fund, the drop-in programme is targeted to help and support children aged nine to 12 years from disadvantaged families.

Irfan, along with other children, did their homework and played under the supervision of staff and volunteers. He also participated in support group sessions conducted by social workers and counsellors.

Ms Ann Hui Peng was one of the counsellors at KidzSHinE who nurtured Irfan during his time at the centre. The CSC director said: "We were more proud of Irfan getting the Best Progress Award than of his PSLE grades because it shows that the school believes he has potential."

VICTORY'S ROCKY ROAD

Attending KidzSHinE was initially a struggle for Irfan, who would often play



Irfan (right) with his father, Mr Arman bin Hashim. PHOTO: KOH MUI FONG

truant. To resolve the issue, the centre communicated closely with his father to ensure that Irfan turned up for the KidzSHinE sessions.

But Irfan soon found himself embroiled in a long-drawn custody battle. He was unable to attend the programme whenever the court ordered that he stay with his mother. It was during those spells that his grades and behaviour suffered without the support of KidzSHinE's counsellors.

When Irfan finally returned to KidzSHinE, his grades were at their lowest. Under the patient guidance of the counsellors, however, Irfan surprised his teachers with his PSLE performance, said Mr Arman.

GUIDANCE FOR THE JOURNEY

According to Mr Arman, KidzSHinE had transformed Irfan, now aged 13, into an

even-tempered teenager.

Previously, when Irfan flew into a rage, he would grab the nearest object and hit his provocateur with it. Today, his temper has improved, said his father. And he has KidzSHinE to thank for it.

A regular weekly session at KidzSHinE comprises 45 minutes of homework coaching and 45 minutes of play time, during which the counsellors impart life skills to the participants.

One such activity that helped Irfan control his anger involved stacking cards into pyramids. Teachers would bump into tables or find other means to distract him. They would then guide him to respond to his antagonists and manage conflicts.

Irfan has forged some close friendships with his fellow KidzSHinE mates. Today, he still plays street soccer with them at a court beside the CSC. **PRODUCED BY THE TODAY SPECIAL PROJECTS TEAM**



19-year-old Timothy* has suffered for years

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*Timothy's name has been changed to protect his identity



The OCBC-TODAY Children's Fund focuses on the emotional needs of children from distressed homes. Donations go towards the Singapore Children's Society and its beneficiaries. It supports the cost of counselling and therapy to build up the children's self-esteem and empower them to strive towards a better future.

DONATE TODAY

Timothy once had to fend for himself in a house that was often empty. His mother was ill and his father had been drifting in and out of his life. He was also not going to school.

There was no money for bus fare or recess. Staying home meant he did not have to go hungry as he could cook instant noodles.

Timothy's life changed when he was referred to Sunbeam Place, a residential home and gazetted place of safety for abused and neglected children, seven years ago. At Sunbeam Place, he found a nurturing environment, support and another chance to go to school.

Today, the 19-year-old is a polytechnic student. He has plans to pursue a career in information technology and business management.

You can make a difference. Help these children rebuild their lives.

