

Lakeside e-News

Mar 2013



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*"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure."
~ Hebrews 6:19a*



From the desk of the executive director

A Healing Anchor

We all need anchors to see us through the storms of life. Some find their anchor in religion; others in philosophy. Some find it through the arts and music, sports, meditation, or the pursuit of physical health and fitness. But for the majority, the family is the most important anchor in our lives. Whether one is going through stress at work, health issues, or heartbreak and disappointment, the family is the place where we most often find peace and comfort.

Salvador Minuchin, family therapist, has said that **"every family is different, and every family is the same"**. Every family is different in that each family will have its own unique character, with its different personalities and issues. No two families are identical. At the same time, every family is the same, in that every family will go through a similar life cycle of couple formation, child-rearing, launching adult children, old age and demise. And every family will go through storms. The lightning and hail, earthquakes and tsunamis that assail families may come in different forms: a teenager who runs away; a marriage torn apart by addiction, violence, unfaithfulness; a family under stress due to unemployment; a serious illness; a disability; a sudden death. All these are but some of the storms that families sail through. **During such times, the family is both ship and anchor. It is the ship which holds each member together as they ride the waves; it is the anchor that gives strength, stability and hope to each member in the midst of the tempest.**

Lakeside Family Centre's mission involves strengthening families so that they are better able to ride through the storms of life. To illustrate this, I will use the acronym **HEAL**.

H is for Healing. We help families find healing of relationships through individual, marriage and family counselling. Through counselling, we facilitate communication and understanding between husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters.

E is for Enrichment. We enrich the lives of families through activities that promote family togetherness and bonding. We conduct talks and workshops on marriage enrichment and parenting.

A is for Assistance. We assist by providing financial help, shelter and education for families and their children through assistance schemes, the FIT (Families in Transition) Shelter, and tuition programmes.

L is for Love. We help individuals and families find love and hope to go on living. Love is the fuel that keeps the home fires burning. Love is what anchors and protects the family through the storms of life.

In this issue of eNews, you will see the various ways in which Lakeside serves as a Healing Anchor for families, so that families, in turn, can be the anchor for their members. Thank you for being a part of our work in serving families in our community.

God bless
Teo Tee Loon
Executive Director

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Family Life

In partnership with Marriage Central, Lakeside Family Centre conducted *LOVE Notes*, a marriage enrichment programme, over two evenings on 10 and 24 October 2012. Our trained Family Life Educators facilitated this unique programme specially tailored for soon-to-wed and newly-wed couples. The couples enjoyed the lively discussions and debates on topics such as families of origin, budget management, household chores division, decision-making and spouses' personality differences. One participant reflected after the workshop: "*LOVE Notes* has helped me learn about the differences between spouses and even guided my husband and I to plan activities based on our personality differences!"

On the parenting front, parents of the youths under our Streetwise and Guidance Programmes were invited to a talk held on 8 December 2012. **The emphasis was on encouraging parents to build stronger relationships with their teens to steer them away from trouble.** Parents also gained greater awareness of the emotional and psychological changes of their teens, so as to reduce tension and conflicts within the family. One of the skills learnt by parents was to give positive attention to their teens, like spending time with, and listening to them.

*Wendy Koh and Theresa Pong
Counsellors*



Active Seniors' Club

On 25 October 2012, our Active Seniors toured the Changi Airport before ending with a lunch sponsored by Dignity Kitchen. They were also served by disabled students on training there, and **it was truly an eye-opening and meaningful experience for the Seniors.**

On 23 Nov 2012, the Seniors were once again treated to another outing to the Hort Park. We truly appreciate the time and effort put in by the 16 staff from Procter & Gamble (P&G) for planning a very interesting trip for them. The guided tour of the Park brought back sweet memories of Kampong days for the Seniors. A short talk on keeping fit and having the right diet provided some food for thought for the Seniors, and generated a lively discussion.

It was a very good experience for both the Seniors and the staff volunteers from P&G. The Seniors were especially delighted with the goodie bags and instant snapshots taken with the volunteers. The P&G staff volunteers were caring and attentive, interacting well with the Seniors, and overcoming all language and cultural differences.

*Chong Lai Ha (Senior Counsellor)
and Bin Juat Wah (Counsellor)*



Far East Organization's Family Staycation 2012



Families posing in front of Orchard Parade Hotel for a group photo upon checking out

Last December, about 40 less privileged families and their children were treated to a 3-day 2-night staycation during the school holidays at Orchard Parade Hotel, organised and generously sponsored for by Far East Organization (FEO). It was a welcome year-end break for these families in need of rest, recreation and reunion. For many, it was their first time staying in a hotel and this made it very memorable for them. We were especially touched when one 'staycationer' commented that his family had never taken so many photos together in the heart of Orchard Road's Christmas décor while enjoying a leisurely stroll after a sumptuous dinner.

Besides having their own free-and-easy time as a family, our clients also attended a workshop on "How to Manage Finances" through group discussions facilitated by our volunteers and staff. A parenting talk on "Effective Communication with Your Child" was also conducted and this led to some parents sharing about how frustrating, yet fun, parenting can be. Many left the sessions with helpful tips that they could apply for more effective parenting.

The children and youths were also treated to a special programme lined up for them while their parents sat through their workshops. Through a movie screening, the children learned about what it means to be a responsible child, while the youth participants carried out their roles as "big sisters / brothers" in helping the staff conduct games and activities.

Steve Boey,
Senior Counsellor



David sharing about his life story and giving tips on managing finances



Children listening attentively to instructions

Mutual Blessings

In 2012, Lakeside Family Centre saw a significant increase in the number of corporates coming forward to volunteer their time as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) projects. From outings to the Singapore Zoo to Cheesecake-making lesson in our Before and After School Care (BASC), these corporates brought with them their expertise, skills and most importantly, a passionate attitude.

I was particularly impressed with a particular group of corporate volunteers from *Procter & Gamble (P&G)*. They organised not just one, but two events, which took place within a span of two weeks! And while most volunteering activities take place during the programme itself, things were certainly different for the volunteers from P&G.

Months before the event itself, the volunteers got together and brainstormed on how they could raise funds for the events. They eventually decided to sell food items to their colleagues. They even held a mini competition among the various departments to raise the most funds!

For their first event, the volunteers brought out seniors from our Active Seniors Club to the Hort Park for a morning filled with fun and learning. A guided tour was arranged by the volunteers. Through the tour, the seniors learned about the various types of plants and their medicinal value. For the second event, the volunteers brought children from our Families-in-Transition (FiT) Shelter to the Jurong Bird Park. The children were divided into smaller groups and they were tasked to identify different birds with the help of the volunteers. At both events, beneficiaries were given goodie bags personally prepared by the volunteers.

Through these events, both Lakeside Family Centre and P&G benefited. One of the volunteers said that she really appreciated the fact that these events gave her a chance to interact with seniors and children from displaced families. This allowed her to develop attitudes and skills that made her a better person back at her workplace. Getting involved first-hand allowed the volunteers to see things in a different light, and made them more thankful for what they had!

Indeed, when such CSR events take place, both the volunteers and beneficiaries are blessed, and Lakeside is grateful for the mutual benefit that takes place through our partnerships with our corporate partners.

*Alvin Teo
Community Partnerships &
Volunteer Management Executive*



Happy Volunteers, Happy Seniors



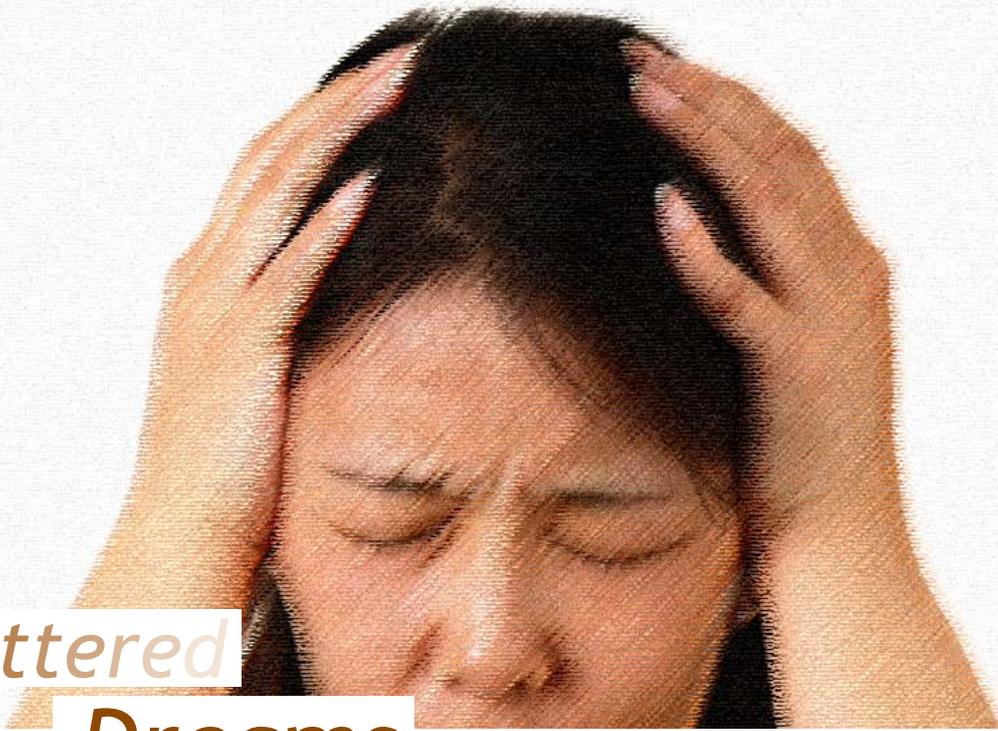
Meet and Greet Time



A heart-warming moment



Enjoying a lovely morning together



Shattered Dreams

Mdm H first came to us to apply for School Pocket Money Fund (SPMF) for her 4 children. Mdm H worked as a factory operator and her husband, an odd-job worker. This made it difficult for the family to have a stable income due to Mr A's irregular work, and it has been going on for many years.

Mdm H was frustrated with her husband for not being able to hold a stable job, and this often led to quarrels and even violence. Initially, Mdm H did not reveal to me that there was domestic violence until I probed further. Whenever the violence occurred, she would bring her children to her parents' home to avoid her husband for a few days. This pattern had been repeated many times over the years and eventually her family gave up on her for her inability to manage, or leave, this abusive relationship. During counselling sessions, Mdm H learned about the cycle of violence and how to protect herself. She also learned about the impact of domestic violence on her children, and how to apply for a Personal Protection Order from the Family Court.

At that point, I felt it was critical to engage her husband in the counselling sessions as well. However, Mr A was not keen on it despite repeated pleas from Mdm H. After much persistence and many persuasive calls later, Mr A finally agreed to come for counselling. It was a challenging initial session, as Mr A had his own perceptions of household rules and certain expectations of his wife. Moreover, he was resistant to counselling and sceptical of its efficacy.

With much care, concern and respect, I highlighted the important role that each spouse plays in the family and how financial constraints and conflicts at home impact the children. Soon after, I encouraged him to embark on a job search for a permanent job and talked through with him about his future dreams for his family. Surprisingly, he returned for a second session and happily updated me that he had found a permanent job. He had managed to stay on the job for four months, which was longer than he had ever done, in the last 10 years! We continued to discuss the challenges he faced in his

workplace, as well as his anger management issues. Mdm H was also delighted with the progress he had shown at work.

Unfortunately, matters deteriorated when they sold their flat. Mr A started spending excessively after receiving the profit from the proceeds of the flat. One day, he hit his wife again due to disagreements over financial issues. Mdm H applied for a Personal Protection Order, and has stayed away from her husband since then.

The journey of coping with domestic violence and financial mismanagement is a long and complex one, riddled with multiple issues. It requires the commitment of all parties involved, including helping professionals such as ourselves. Often, the endings are not as happy as we would hope for, but we continue to be available to them, believing that we would at least be able to help them cope better, and eventually find healing and restoration for their lives.

*Belinda Koh,
Assistant Director, Casework and Counselling*

