

PERSATUAN DAYBREAK

NEWSLETTER

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Disabled Adults & Youths Being Rewarded, Encouraged & Accepted in Kinta

For Private Circulation Only

In line with Daybreak's vision to Make a Difference in the lives of trainees and their families, we bring you another heartwarming story in this issue of Daybreak News. Happy Reading!

The Story of Liew Wai Keong - The Happy Gardener

The slightly unstable man with the wheelbarrow weaved purposefully between the rows of plants, adding soil to the ground, lovingly bending over to pick out the weeds from among the saplings. He hummed to himself, and the smile never left his face. One could tell just by looking at Liew Wai Keong, hard at work, that this was someone who enjoyed his job and took it very seriously.



▲ Wai Keong transporting saplings at Taiko Gardens.

As a Nursery Hand-cum-Gardener at Taiko Gardens, Wai Keong's job is to look after plants: watering them, adding soil where necessary, growing new plants, sweeping, pruning and weeding. It is a job that he takes pride and satisfaction in, a job he enjoys, not to mention one that he is good at.

But it has not always been like this. Born with a genetic disorder (mental retardation) in 1982, Wai Keong left school after Standard 6 with a

decidedly bleak future. **Who would ever give anyone like him a chance at life, let alone the opportunity to be in meaningful employment?**

Wai Keong's father, however, was unwilling to give up so easily on this son, the third child in a large family of six children. (Wai Keong has an older brother and sister, two younger brothers and one younger sister). Mr. Liew had heard of **Persatuan Daybreak**, and with much hope and some trepidation, he approached Daybreak in May 2003. Subsequently, Wai Keong was registered as a Trainee at Daybreak's centre in Pengkalan.

Turning Point

That was the turning point for Wai Keong and his family. After the initial induction programme, Wai Keong started work at Daybreak's Plant Nursery in June 2003 and he has been paid a monthly allowance since then.

The big break for Wai Keong came when dedicated staff at Daybreak, specifically the Occupational Therapist, Cik Siti Shaikhah Aziz, and Trainers, identified the potential in Wai Keong for employment in the Gardening/Nursery sector.

It was to Wai Keong's great advantage that staff of Taiko Gardens Management (Taiko Gardens), particularly its Supervisor Mr. Gobi, regularly visits Daybreak centre to provide consultation and advice on the latter's nursery. Wai Keong's hard working nature, his cheerful disposition and good attitude had not gone unnoticed. Provided he fulfilled certain criteria and there was a vacancy at Taiko Gardens, the company's Assistant Manager Mr. Pathmanathan, would be happy to offer him on-the-job training at Taiko Gardens, with a view to long-term employment.

Wai Keong's on-the-job training at Taiko Gardens took place in the entire month of March 2005, monitored closely by Cik Siti and Community Based Rehabilitation Officer, Mrs. Barathy Devi, together with the Conductor at Taiko Gardens, Mr. Amelen a/I Govendasamy.

Employed at last!

When Wai Keong finally received an official letter of employment from Taiko Gardens for him to start work on April 1, 2005, that marked a major breakthrough in this young man's life. Daybreak had been instrumental in giving Wai Keong his first big break.

From someone considered of little value to society and with next to no selfworth, Wai Keong today is a proud income-earner with a job he thoroughly enjoys. Just drop by to visit him at the Taiko Gardens nursery and you will see a happy gardener among the plants!

But the story does not end here.

Routine Visit-Rude Find



▲ *Appaling living condition.*

A routine visit to Wai Keong's home by Daybreak staff revealed an appalling find. Nothing could have prepared them for the sight that greeted them; the repugnant living conditions of a ramshackle shelter which could scarcely be called a home. And yet this was home to Wai Keong, his parents and five siblings.

The greater shock still was to find that Wai Keong's three brothers all have hereditary disorders and are mentally challenged, two of them very severely.

One sister who left school after completing Form 3 works in a supermarket, while the other sister also has learning disabilities and has since left school.



Their mother is a housewife, while their father, a lorry attendant on a meager income, had long exhausted whatever funds he had on his disabled children. Whatever he earned was barely enough to feed the family. It was a case of hand to mouth existence daily. How could he afford to rehabilitate his other disabled children? And so they were just left at home, aimlessly passing time with no purpose or direction for tomorrow.

◀ *Siblings passing time aimlessly.*

Resigned and without hope

No one visiting their home and seeing the conditions of the house and its occupants could have left without being affected by the pitiful scene, or being made acutely aware of the harsh reality of poverty. Poor sanitation, poor hygiene and terrible living conditions had reduced its occupants to a miserable existence. One that they were resigned to. The photos taken tell their own story. There seemed no hope.. or was there..?

Daybreak staff immediately reported their findings to Datin Sandra Lee, Executive Chairperson of Persatuan Daybreak, who took immediate actions to investigate the situation and seek proposals on ways to help the Liew family.

Hope was finally on its way!

Light at the end of the tunnel

When Mr. Liew registered Wai Keong at Daybreak, he had not revealed that he had four other children who had even more severe hereditary disorders and who needed similar rehabilitation. The first order of action therefore was to register them as trainees at Persatuan Daybreak. Next, came the issue of helping to meet daily needs with food and clothing and finding alternative housing for the family.

Datin Sandra Lee and some members of Canning Garden Methodist Church came forward to provide them with food rations every month and help find donors to get them a new house. Touched and grateful, the Liew family did not yet dare hope for too much.

However, before very long, came the news that they had wanted so much to hear, but had been so afraid to hope for. A kind anonymous donor had pledged to finance the family for the purchase of a low-cost house in Pinji Perdana near Persatuan Daybreak.

No time was wasted as Mr. Siu Tack Chuan, Chairman of Daybreak, promptly settled legal procedures. The purchase of the house was complete. It was not a dream. The Liew family were indeed the proud owners of a brand new lowcost house, way beyond their wildest dreams.

A dream come true!

Volunteers pitched in to help the family with renovations, painting, plastering, tiling and building a wall around the porch. Well-wishers donated furniture sets and other house warming gifts.

In mid-April this year, the Liew family finally moved into their new home. A dream had come true.



▲ Wai Keong & family in front of their new home.

Real Homecoming

Daybreak had made a difference to the lives of the Liew family. Not only is Wai Keong gainfully employed, they now live in their comfortable own house and Wai Keong's other disabled siblings are now undergoing vocational training at Daybreak. All these years no one had come forward to help this poor family and they did not know where to turn. In the end it was Daybreak who decided that they deserve to experience God's unconditional love and went all out to make a difference in the lives of the Liew family.

Post Script

Daybreak would like to appeal to members of the public to come forward and volunteer your time to visit our trainees and get to know them. **You** too can touch and make a difference in someone life!

Interested? Please get in touch with Linda at Daybreak. **You** can do your bit for Daybreak trainees.... and for the Lord. May you be much blessed.

By The Management:

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Donations:

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