

# "THE GIFT OF HOPE" STORY

## *PAY-IT-FORWARD PROGRAMME*

'Pay-it-forward' is a novel concept to encourage the children who have benefitted from our hostels to think about how they can help others in similar situations. They contribute not back to the persons who gave it but forward to others in dire need as they themselves once were and it is hoped that this process will continue. It reinforces their understanding that they have the capacity to give and bring benefit to others.



"The Gift of Hope, Pass It On..." variety show enables the children from Asrama Desa Pukak (ADP) and the girls from Asrama Gereja St James Tenghilan (AGSJT) to contribute in a meaningful way towards providing educational opportunities for other poor children particularly those from Kampung Nibang, Pitas.

Kampung Nibang in Pitas is situated about 4.5 hours from Kota Kinabalu. Village accessibility is only by 4-wheel drive through some very rough terrain especially during the last 20kms of the journey. Road conditions progressively worsen evolving from grade two gravel roads to grade five mud tracks nearing the village. Of the 9 rivers to cross, 4 are major ones. The last river, the Bengkoka River is the third largest in Sabah and is known to swell its banks during a downpour, cutting off Kampung Nibang for days until the water subsides.



Over the past year two visits have been made to Kg Nibang by Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd. During both visits there was a constant plea for a primary school hostel as currently school attendance is a mere two or three days a week due to long walking distances. During bad weather, when the Bengkoka River overflows its banks and Kampung Nibang is no longer accessible, attendance drops even further. Many primary school children are over-aged as they only start school at 9 or 10 years old when they are physically stronger to take on the 4 to 5 hour walk each way each day over rough terrain to get to school. A number of 16 year olds are only in Primary 6 when they should already be in Secondary 4.



The plight of the children from Kg Nibang was shared with the children of Asrama Desa Pukak and the girls from Asrama St James Tenghilan during their first holiday camp where for the first time the children from ADP met their *kakak-kakak* from AGSJT. It was from the immediate response of wanting to do something to help the children in Kg Nibang that this variety show "The Gift of Hope, Pass It on..." was conceived.

*"In gratitude for so many graces, let us accomplish our work lovingly and fervently."*

*St. Mary Euphrasia*

# Asrama Gereja St James Tenghilan

Tenghilan, a small village is located at the mid point between Kota Kinabalu and the town of Kota Belud to the North.

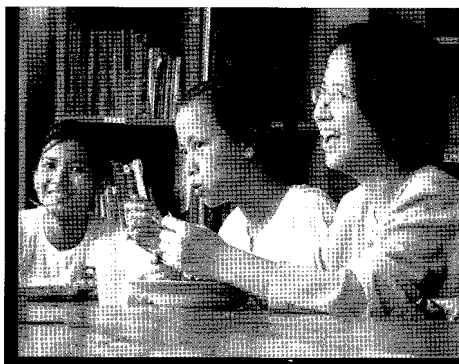
Prior to 1991, secondary students in the villages fringing Tenghilan were left at a disadvantage as the schools in the area did not cater for live-in facilities. As a result, many children were compelled to either drop out of school upon completion of their primary school education or walk for hours just to get to school. To ease the burden of walking to and from school, the Community of St James set up a home for students who wanted an education.

With the help of Father Felix Chung, a hostel was set up in 1995. The Good Shepherd Sisters helped in the running of the girls' hostel which came under the care of the St James Chapel in Tenghilan. In 1998, the Good Shepherd Sisters officially took over the running of the Asrama and today the St James hostel is part of the welfare services of Pusat Kebajikan Good Shepherd.

Programmes are formulated and activities organized to help the residents develop physically, spiritually and emotionally, thus becoming more responsible and caring citizens. The residents themselves raise funds for their activities by selling cakes at Sunday fairs, conduct gotong royong to maintain the vicinity and carry out educational activities for the community in Tenghilan, particularly for the children. The residents conduct weekend camps and activities and provide free private tuition for younger kids.

Today, the Asrama St James Tenghilan has become more than a hostel to 24 secondary school girls from the surrounding villages and remote kampongs. It provides an opportunity for holistic development and promotes healthy relationships through interaction and team work. It has become a home filled with love and joy, one with a caring and sharing attitude and of course, a learning centre.

In the spirit of caring and sharing, the girls put the gift of their voices together, formed a choir in 2007 towards a charity concert in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur to raise funds. Their efforts materialized in the building of the Good Shepherd Rural Training Centre and Asrama Desa Pukak both of which are located in Kampung Pukak Kiulu. With the construction of Asrama Desa Pukak, primary school children from the remote villages of Kg Liposu and Kg Kelobaan are now able to attend school regularly. Continuing in this spirit of giving, the girls will once again pass on their gift of hope to others in tonight's performance.



# Asrama Desa Pukak

Nestled in the gentle rolling hills of the sub-district of Kiulu is Asrama Desa Pukak which is home for 14 children from Mondays to Fridays. These children who are students of SK Pukak hail from Kg Liposu and Kg Kelobaan. For many years now, the children from both these villages have had to walk for more than 4 hours a day to go to school and back. Trekking through the jungle and hills were part of their everyday routine. Being on time for school meant they had to leave their homes by 5 am and could only return home by 3 pm.

The plight of these students was highlighted to the congregation of Good Shepherd Sisters who visited Kg. Pukak in 2004. In response to this need, the Sisters and their lay collaborators organized a charity performance in Singapore and West Malaysia and through the gifted voices of the Asrama Gereja St James Tenghilan girls' choir, funds were raised to build a hostel for these children in the chapel grounds of St Yohannes, Pukak. Asrama Desa Pukak which is literally a hop, skip and jump away from SK Pukak commenced operations in January 2008 with a total of 18 kids.

Sr Imelda Sikul was the first Supervisor for the hostel. Together in partnership with Dora Lansan and Julie Jude Kanun they have successfully established the hostel to be a home-away-from-home for the children. The roles they play are wide ranging from that of being a surrogate mother to a teacher and to being a buddy to the kids.

Besides providing food and shelter, the kids at Asrama Desa Pukak also undergo a formation programme during their stay at the hostel. The aspects of formation include spiritual, academic, emotional, social and moral values. Life skills are also emphasized and the children are required to do their own personal chores as well as general housekeeping responsibilities.

Preparing for this concert was not an easy task for the children as English was in every sense of the word a foreign language to them. Nevertheless, they remain determined and committed to the purpose of repaying the kindness shown to them by helping other poor children, now those from Kg Nibang, Pitas. The children have made many personal sacrifices such as staying back during the holidays in the Asrama, forgoing precious family time with their families and giving up their play time to prepare for their performance.

The community of Kg. Liposu and Kg Kelobaan hopes for a better future for their children, and together with the Good Shepherd Sisters and their partners we can make this a reality. Aside from funding, volunteers are needed for the various activities being conducted throughout the year. Together with the children, let's help to spread the joy of giving and sharing.....pass it on.

