

Building values and confidence

Duo assist needy Indian students change for the better



Good choice: Ketheswaaran (second from left) guiding parents on tertiary study options for their children.

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Photos by **AZHAR ARIF**

VOLUNTEERISM is like an addiction; once you feel the high from reaping your efforts, it is difficult to get out of it. Or, at least, that's the view of two young men.

When almost everyone else their age are busy partying on weekends, Kartick Arumugam, 25, and Ketheswaaran Nadarajah, 22, have their schedules packed with tutoring and coaching young children. Being beneficiaries of kind hearts themselves, the duo are carrying on the torch by dedicating their time and effort to help others in need.

Kartick, a final-year dentistry student, recalled how difficult times were for him and his family after his father passed away when he was 17 years old. Just as he was about to embark on his tertiary studies, his family was hit by a financial crisis.

"While looking for help, I came across an NGO who was willing to partially support my studies and I took up the offer. I realised what an important role these types of organisations play in people's lives, and it naturally came upon me to give back to the community," he said.

As for Ketheswaaran, his father played a vital role in instilling the value of dedication and compassion.

"My father was a very dedicated discipline teacher, working in a school with a high record of problematic students. I grew up watching how he would go all out even during his off days to visit his students and their parents to ensure that they were doing well.

"True enough, the school's discipline records got better by the year and I believe my father played a big role in the change of behaviour. I saw that these children needed attention and with the right approach, they can change for the better," he said.

Although being a teacher's son,



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—KARTICK ARUMUGAM

Ketheswaaran would not say that he was an exemplary child.

"I gave my father a hard time too with my unfavourable antics," he said, adding that he attended a different school.

"I was enrolled in a "mentor-mentee" programme which brought about changes in my behaviour. Since the mentor was someone older but still in my age range, my friends and I tend to look to him for guidance and he influenced us in a good way," he said.

The duo are now part of the team at Educational, Welfare and Research Foundation (EWRF), a charitable NGO dedicated to assisting the less privileged Indian students in the country.

Kartick, who leads the team of volunteers in Subang, explained that they work by assigning a team to cover an area.

"A programme can kick off once we can gather a pool of volunteers to work in a specific area. We are starting with the young ones by working with Tamil schools to identify Year One and Two pupils who are struggling with the English language. These pupils are then enrolled for free English tuition conducted by us.

"The English language plays a vital role in instilling confidence in them to communicate with the other races, and prepare them for equal participation once they step into secondary school.

"We also have a 21-day camp for Year Six

Do good. Volunteer.

Anyone can be a do-gooder. All it takes to help someone in need is the willingness to lend a hand. The tough part is getting started: where to go and who to help. The 'Do Good. Volunteer.' campaign is an initiative by The Star, in partnership with Leaderonomics, to help Malaysians do just that. It seeks to raise awareness of and connect readers with worthy causes that need volunteers.

self-discipline. We have a system of rewarding them, with gifts like sports merchandise, for good conduct and the response has been encouraging.

"Not only does sporting activities tire them out in a healthy way, it also deters them from joining bad company," said Ketheswaaran.

Besides that, EWRF conducts personality tests for students from all races from Form Three to Five to guide them on their career path.

"I personally would have benefited from this test as I recently found my interest to be linked with management, but I am currently pursuing a degree in civil engineering. Many are unaware of the various career choices available and only stick to the famous professions.

"We also coordinate the placement of underachieving students in government skills-training institutes," he added.

Established in January 1979, EWRF holds a mission to promote education as key for advancement in the community and generate a sense of self worth as well as discipline, which in turn encourages greater participation in the social and economic development of the nation.

Initially, the activities were directed more towards medium and high-achieving students to improve and maintain their social behaviour and progress in education. However, the focus has been switched to the under-achievers in view of the increasing number of school dropouts and rise in juvenile and criminal activities.

EWRF is based in Kuala Lumpur and has 23 branches throughout the country. The headquarters is at 3rd floor, Wisma RA, 12 Jalan Dang Wangi, Kuala Lumpur. Many programmes are running concurrently throughout the year.

To sign up as a volunteer and for more details, call 03-2693 4671/03-2693 4672 or the toll-free number 1800 883 973 or visit www.ewrf.com.my

pupils after the UPSR examinations. The activities instill good values and self-confidence to ensure a smoother transition to secondary school," he said.

Ketheswaaran leads the team of volunteers in Ampang.

"We also have an innovative programme to prevent youths from getting involved in crime. Similar to mentor-mentee programmes, a team of volunteers will have regular sporting activities like football training during the weekends at the school to encourage the boys to participate.

"Generally, boys are very interested in sports and we find that this is a good way to inculcate good values like punctuality and

Volunteer opportunities

For more information on the volunteer opportunities below and for NGOs which wish to have their activities listed, email: contact@dogoodvolunteer.com.

Category	Event (NGO/Organiser)	Location	Date	Time	Contact person for registration	Event description	What volunteers will be doing
Special needs	Daily/ Weekly guidance for Adults with Learning Disabilities (Persatuan Kanak-Kanak Istimewa Kajang Selangor (PKIK))	Kajang, Selangor	Mondays - Fridays	Time for each event: (1) 9am - noon (Food) (2) 1pm - 4pm or subject to volunteers availability (Handicraft) (3) 9am- noon or 2pm - 4pm. (Classroom/ Sports)	Name: Ms Lai Tel:03-8736 6385 Email:pkik@streamyx.com	PKIK are having activities to help special adults learn various skills.	Volunteers will be guiding those in need: (Time slots for each event as per 'time' column) 1. Cafeteria food preparation 2. handicraft such as sewing 3. Classroom guidance and Sports activities.
Youth	Rounders with the Youths (KL Krash Pad)	Dataran Merdeka, Kuala Lumpur	Every Sunday	9am-11am	Name: Ian Werrett Tel: 03-2697-0137. E-mail: ian@yck.org.my	A session of fellowship and fun over a game of rounders with the youths of KL Krash Pad.	To escort, engage and enjoy a game of rounders with the youths.
Children	Motivational and Leadership Camp (Y2A Network Berhad)	Prima Selayang	June	Contact organiser for timings	Name: Ann H. Jackson Tel: 017-345 3500	Y2A Network is conducting a youth and children camp that will focus on leadership skills as well as provide motivational guidance for participants.	Volunteers will be facilitators that will be participating actively with the children in the camp.
Community	Gardening (Pure Life Society)	Jalan Puchong, Selayang	Saturdays	4.45pm - 6pm	Name: Ms Selvi Tel: 03 - 77829391 Email: selvi_pls@yahoo.com	Pure Life society needs help in gardening to beautify the compound and provide a conducive place for the children to play in.	Volunteers will be helping Pure Life Society do gardening work.