



Media: 938 Live
Date: 8 February 2008
Headline: Individuals and Companies Intensify Efforts to be More Socially Responsible



By Byron Ho Tiong Ghee

Individuals and companies here are playing their part besides the usual fund-raisers and donations to make social responsibility a regular feature on their corporate calendar.

As the roots of social consciousness among organisations sink deeper, more is being done by them to help the needy, the elderly and also the environment.

They are increasingly tying in these efforts to coincide with festive periods such as Christmas and the Lunar New Year.

Like six hundred HSBC staff volunteers who joined its Corporate Responsibility Challenge, two weeks ago.

In teams of 20, they gave one-room rental flats of elderly residents of the Bukit Merah area a makeover.

Chief Executive of HSBC, Guy Harvey-Samuel said its volunteers embrace the corporate philosophy towards giving.

"Fifty per cent of my colleagues volunteer their time every year in HSBC, that's over 1500 people out of 3,000 staff. Last year, we volunteered over 10,000 hours, it's out of their own heart."

The bank even managed to rope in its business partners, such as Andrew Fairbrother from Cargill TFS Asia.

"In most cultures old people, sort of once they stop working and when they become a bit less mobile, tend to get forgotten. If they're lucky, they probably got some close family to visit them once or twice a week and that's probably the highlight of their week."

In all, some 30 homes in Bukit Merah View benefitted from HSBC's All in a Day's Work project.

In a project by non-profit group CityCare, 450 students of Hwa Chong Institution spruced up the homes of 18 low-income families in the Lengkok Bahru area.

The group facilitated this project so the students learn beyond the classroom.

Its Business Development Executive, Yue Kay Boon:

"We want them to get in touch with a side of Singapore that they may not have a chance to in their daily life; and get to appreciate what they have now after seeing that there are actually some people that are living in lack, living in not so desirable conditions, so we want them to learn how to appreciate what they have right now in their life."

Recently too, a team of 50 staff from Rasa Sentosa Resort led by its GM Ben Bousnina combed the Siloso Beach and cleaned-up litter as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility efforts.

Even their regular hotel guests were invited to join the activities to mark the hotels' green activities.

And just over the weekend, some 16 needy families were invited for a special tour of the new Changi Airport Terminal 3.

There, they were treated to an early reunion meal at the new McDonalds outlet as part of the fast food chain's initiative to give back to the community.

McDonald's Senior Communications Manager Linda Ming:

"What we wanted to do was to truly spread the goodwill of prosperity during the festive period and also to share that prosperity is not just about wealth but about being prosperous in health, happiness and just being together as a family."

It seems that Singapore is on its way to becoming a caring society.