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90 kids from three orphanages had a 'Fun In Nature' day at FRIM. — Photos: RCPC



Cooling off at the pool near the FRIM waterfall.

Forest fun

Kids show that they are far more capable of handling the jungle than adults give them credit for.

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ON a bright Saturday several weeks ago, 90 children from three different orphanages were treated to an exciting jaunt at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM) in Kepong, Kuala Lumpur.

The event, themed "Fun In Nature", aimed to educate the children to appreciate Mother Nature. This was the first collaboration between the Rotary Club of Puchong Centennial (RCPC) and OCBC Bank, Ampang Branch.

The event saw 34 children from Sunbeam Ampang, nine children from Rumah Shalom Puchong and 47 children from House of Joy Puchong, accompanied by 52 bank staff members and 20 Rotarians, doing various nature-based activities.

After all the children were ferried from their respective homes (in three different buses) to FRIM, they were then split into groups according to their ages.

The 37 children in the 12-and-below group visited the FRIM Research Gallery Museum where they saw various wooden artefacts and scientific specimens.

The kids were understandably puzzled by certain animal and insect specimens that they could not identify. One child was even fearful that the replica of a pitcher plant would bite his finger off and refused to go anywhere near it.

After the museum visit, they proceeded to explore the jungle trails of FRIM. Most of the children were captivated by the flora and fauna there and showed rapt

interest in the explanations given by the forest guides.

Some of them were too young to completely understand the information given to them. But their ears perked up when the forest guide informed them that the liana vines were Tarzan's mode of transport in the forest. As for the older children, most asked inquisitive questions and were eager to soak in the greenery.

A FRIM forest guide commented, "Everything went very well, some children could understand, while some couldn't, but they shared the same excitement and joy of being in nature."

An OCBC staff member who accompanied them through the trek expressed her surprise that the children required little assistance from the adults in hiking up a challenging trail.

The younger children showed commendable bravery and had no complaints about jungle trekking. This was a far cry from the initial worries of the adult chaperones. Perhaps kids are indeed tougher than most people believe!

This was very encouraging as most urban kids these days have a kind of "Nature Deficiency Disorder" thanks to well-meaning but over-protective adults who cultivate an often irrational fear of nature in children. Kids need to learn to have fun in Mother Nature and be at peace with her!

Mud crawl

The children who were above 12 years of age were split into teams and partook of an Amazing

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Race facilitated by the FRIM staff members.

Their tasks included looking for marbles in the forest and crawling through mud on their knees and elbows. They also had to attach a nail to a wooden log without touching the nail nor the log. Instead, they had to use rubber bands and their wits.

The race lasted two hours. Three participants from the House of Joy Puchong – Wei Wei, Ho Fei, Hiu Inn, all aged 14 – remarked that they found the race rather thrilling and that had learnt a lot about teamwork and perseverance.

They added that they had to redo a task in the obstacle course if they failed to comply with the rules. So some teams found themselves crawling through mud repeatedly because their teammates had crawled through it with their palms, instead of their elbows.

Throughout the race, OCBC staff members also joined the children as team mentors.

At 1pm, all the participants gathered to have lunch. A banner was prepared with colourful handprints of the 90 children and signatures of the 52 OCBC staff members.

Goodie bags were given out to all the children. A mock cheque of RM9,000, the balance of the initial

funds used for the event, was presented to the three homes.

The results for the Amazing Race were then announced. The Bee team buzzed with joy as they did their team cheer before receiving their prizes as the winners.

Bee team member, Charunesan from House of Joy commented, "It's all for fun. I'm so glad that I got to know the kids from other homes," before promptly returning to celebrate with his teammates.

The Organising Chair of the event, Rotarian Alan Chan and RCPC President S.Paramesh gave their closing comments before the photo session. The OCBC representative stated that they wanted to fulfil their duty as an organisation to give back to society and help the needy. She also expressed her happiness that the event really helped in cultivating staff teamwork.

Steven, 11, from Sunbeam Ampang, thanked the organisers for hosting the event. The precocious child, who aspires to be a zoologist, was very fascinated by the big fishes in the pond at FRIM and expressed hope that he could go on more nature trips.

The event was a success and all participants returned home tired, but fulfilled, after having a fun day in nature.

1 The kids being briefed on the nature activities at FRIM.

2 It was a successful event for the kids and organisers.

3 One of the challenges was to put hands into a mystery box.

4 A puzzle that participants had to complete.

5 During the Amazing Race challenge, the kids had to crawl on their elbows and knees through mud.



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