

GIVE THEM A CLAP!

Monthly arts showcase highlights problems faced daily by disabled

TEXT DENIS JANSEN PHOTO SOO CHIN SAI / SINGAPORE DISABILITY SPORTS COUNCIL.

HE WAS BORN DEAF BUT MATHEMATICS TUTOR Adrian Yap never allowed his disability to hold him back. For 10 years he has been an inspiring presence at the Singapore Association for the Deaf, helping others with the same impairment.

“Even when I was deaf I was still productive. Singaporeans should understand that many people with disabilities can lead normal lives, with a little help,” said the 31-year old, who had an electro-magnetic nerve implanted in 2007 that partially restored his hearing.

That was also the year his two-man team, up against hearing competitors from around the region, won TV’s “Amazing Race Asia”. This year, he used that experience to chair the organising committee for the “Amazing Race Challenge”, held to give others a taste of what those with special needs experience.

“The idea is to make them understand where we’re coming from, what we need,” said Mr Yap of the whole-day Dec 3 event, which had disabled-specific challenges and which marked the UN-designated International Day for People with Disabilities.

The prime mover for the event was Ms Denise Phua, an MP for Jalan Besar GRC and a great friend to the autistic. It was supported by the Central Singapore CDC and more than 10 voluntary welfare groups, KFC, Carton Express, and funded in part by the Central Singapore Mayor’s Imagine Fund.

The race was capped with performances by people with disabilities at Far East Plaza, under the CLAP! series of shows organised by the Community Development Council.

There were songs by youngsters from the Pathlight School for the autistic and by Double Vision, a guitar-playing group from the Singapore Association for the Visually Handicapped who sang in English and Malay.

Representatives from the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled put on a taiko drumming item.





01 Participants at one of the Amazing Race stations
 02 Ms Denise Phua and Mr Adrian Yap
 03 Youngsters from the Pathlight School
 04 Drummers from APITOS

There was also a vocal medley from the Ge Fang Music Academy and a performance by APITOS, a group of 11 ethnic drummers.

Loud cheers were heard for the hip hop item performed by Spinning Wheelz, four youths with muscular dystrophy, who performed in wheelchairs. It was choreographed by 19-year-old Mohamad Noh Hakeem from All Smexy, which won the Street CLAP! Hip Hop Competition. He said: "It was a real eye-opener to watch our disabled partners in rehearsals. They are so lively."

Another unusual item came from Signifique, three volunteers working with the deaf who perform at least once a month. They "sang" the popular "Nobody" in sign language.

Ms Pet Tan, 31, who choreographs their songs suggested that "signing be learnt as a second language, so the deaf can be more included in society".

Six teams participated in the Amazing Race, each representing a voluntary welfare organisation. The Blue Team took the winner's prize of \$300. Contestants were required to learn basic sign language, eat while blindfolded and play basketball in a wheelchair among other challenges.

Blue Team member Evelyn Tan, 42, who works in a tech company, said every challenge was difficult. She added: "Having encountered what they have to go through every day, I'm full of admiration for them. Their willingness to try and live normally is amazing."

The race prizes were given out by Ms Phua and Central Singapore mayor Zainudin Nordin, who are co-founders of Project Include, which aims to raise awareness and positive attitudes towards people with disabilities.

Noted Ms Phua: "Don't forget, one day when we get older, many will become 'disabled' too. Surely we don't want others to treat us as after-thoughts then."



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