

Lessons of Harmony, Moments of Fellowship



Having fun, while picking up important racial harmony messages along the way — as part of their presentation skit, *RHYA Seniors* showed off their dancing skills on stage!

Almost six years since its launch, the South East Community Development Council's (CDC) *Racial Harmony Youth Ambassador (RHYA)* programme continues to cultivate the treasured values of ethnic harmony and racial cohesion amongst youths in the community. Speaking to three of the programme's senior ambassadors, *Contact South East* uncovers some of the gems and nuggets of wisdom that they have garnered throughout their ambassadorial journey thus far.

Exemplifying the spirit of racial harmony in the community, the *RHYA* programme recently saw a fifth cohort of senior ambassadors go through a four-day seniors' camp at the National Community Leadership Institute (NACLI).

Although the *RHYA* experience is about the promotion of racial harmony amongst youths through camaraderie and friendship, it was via a group of regular *RHYAs* that the message of racial harmony shone brightly. After graduating from their cohorts, these seniors have returned time and again to groom future cohorts of ambassadors. What is it, then, that inspires these zealous youths to come back and play their part for the programme?

Present to mentor the fifth *RHYA* cohort were 15-year-old Shahrul Ashraf, 18-year-old Muhammad Zarif and 15-year-old Sharmaine Giri — proud ambassadors of a youth community group that they fondly refer to as their 'home'.

"Having been with the programme since 2005, it has been really inspiring to see our juniors come back to help us with

future programmes and activities. Take Shahrul and Sharmaine, for example. Although they graduated as seniors less than a year ago, here they are today, helping to run the camp and mentor the participants," shared Zarif, a longstanding alumnus of the programme.

This year's *RHYA Seniors'* cohort saw participants engaged in activities such as dragon-boating, which fired up the sporting spirit of the youths. An interesting heritage scavenger hunt also took them on a trail of discovery around NACLI's premises.

While the youths buzzed around NACLI experiencing the stimulating array of activities on the camp's agenda, it was in the lecture room that their facilitators, such as Sharmaine and Shahrul, were busy coordinating the camp's activities.

Taking time off from the bustle of the camp, Sharmaine shared some insights on her experiences as an *RHYA* facilitator. The Changkat Changi student said, "The programme really gave me the chance to experience racial understanding and respect. That is why I chose to return as a facilitator, as it is important to promote the appreciation of ethnic diversity to other youths in our community."

Evidently, *RHYA Seniors* such as Shahrul, Sharmaine and Zarif return to the programme motivated by a calling to share the experiences that they hold so close to their hearts with their juniors. This can perhaps be best summed up by what Shahrul had to say:

"You get to inspire other youths while having fun and making new friends along the way. I hope there will be more youths coming forward as *RHYA* facilitators to enjoy this unique experience!"



RHYA Seniors presenting their colourful ideas to the rest of their cohort during a show and tell session.