

Club Rainbow (Singapore)



Celebrating 30 years of
Club Rainbow (Singapore)

ECOSYSTEM



Interview with

Dr Sashikumar Ganapathy,

President of Club Rainbow (Singapore)



The journey thus far

My journey with Club Rainbow started when I was invited by the then Medical Director to be part of the volunteer medical team at Camp Rainbow 2007. As a Junior Medical Doctor, witnessing the children enjoy some respite from their daily medical routines gave me the drive and passion to continue being part of Camp Rainbow. Later, I would become Council member in 2011 and eventually serve as President of the Council in 2015.

Club Rainbow has changed a lot in the last 15 years. Our core mission and vision has evolved. As a result, the programmes and services we provide have also improved significantly. We've embraced new technology to keep up with the times, too. Instead of simply focusing on events and social support, we're now looking at supporting every child holistically with therapy treatment and programmes that help them transition smoothly into adulthood.

We even took on the challenge of integrating non-conventional art, play and animal assisted therapy into our programmes. Traditionally, it's been difficult for healthcare organisations to move into non-conventional therapy, but members of Club Rainbow Council and staff team have been diligent with their research on how such treatments can improve the mental, social, and educational development of our children. Today, we're proud to report that these programmes have received positive feedback from families for helping our children realise their developmental potential.

Celebrating 30 years of Club Rainbow

The dream Club Rainbow team

As president, it is my duty to ensure that Club Rainbow has the right people to keep this charity moving forward on the right track. We carefully screen and select every council member not just for the right skills, but the right heart. The same goes for our operational team, who are equally vital. Right now, I can confidently say that our team is very self-sufficient and independent.

Everyday is a successful day, because we have a team that constantly goes above and beyond to improve lives.

Typical Council responsibilities aside, what I really enjoy about my role is in connecting people. Linking up families that are going through similar struggles, and with the right social worker who can help them allows us to fulfil our mission of providing every child with the tools they need to succeed.

Above all, I'm proud of how meticulous the Club Rainbow Council and committees have been in ironing out processes and improving governance matters over the years. It is not easy to manage audits with so many stakeholders involved, but they have worked hard to produce results that are top notch. We take public funds very seriously here, because we don't want to waste people's efforts. Knowing that we have anchored strong governance as our foundation makes the organisation more equipped to best serve our children and their families.

Even as we celebrate major milestones, let us not take our foot off the pedal of continuous improvement. As a doctor, it is my hope that Club Rainbow can do as much as possible to help children with chronic illnesses. The moment we start becoming complacent is when troubles will start catching up to us.

I'm constantly asking myself, 'what's missing?', 'what else can we do?'. As long as children with chronic illnesses are out there, we must never rest on our laurels.

Looking beyond the horizon

I am thankful for the many opportunities that Club Rainbow has given me to be involved in the lives of children outside of the hospital. Club Rainbow's existence has allowed me to be part of their community and their lives. Watching how these children and their families deal with and overcome unimaginable struggles has impacted my life and the lives of others around them in a very positive way.

Looking ahead, I hope that Club Rainbow continues to make a difference in the lives of children both within hospitals and beyond. My vision is for the charity to continue being the best charity for helping children with chronic illnesses achieve a fulfilling and independent life. Achieving this is not simple, because it's so easy to veer off track. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, could have knocked us off the rails. But Club Rainbow toughed it out by evolving, developing ourselves, and adapting to new problems so that we could constantly deliver for the children. That's what the Club Rainbow team is all about, putting their hearts together and doing what's possible within the limitations.

I know we are headed towards creating an enterprise opportunity as well, where future children can grow together with Club Rainbow. This means preparing the children to be self-sufficient and workforce ready, even without assistance from Club Rainbow. But let us not forget our values as well even as we strive towards that lofty goal.

Sometimes life is not about achieving, it's about living. We can't just constantly achieve, but we have to make sure that the achievements are sustainable as well. So let us strive to constantly outdo our past, while also giving ourselves enough time to smell the roses.

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Mission

We support and empower children with chronic illnesses & their families by providing compassionate relevant services in their journey towards an enriching life.



Vision

To be the charity of choice that inspires hope and makes a difference in the lives of children with chronic illnesses and their families.

Values

Teamwork • Professionalism • Respect
Integrity • Compassion • Excellence



About Club Rainbow (Singapore)

Established in 1992, Club Rainbow is a non-profit organisation and charity with the mission to support and empower children with chronic illnesses and their families. Armed with the firm belief that every child deserves equal opportunities to lead a fulfilling and independent life, Club Rainbow supports our children and their families in more than 30 critical programmes, services and assistance schemes. Adopting a holistic approach based on five core pillars of support, Club Rainbow partners our children and their families in their journey to achieve the following objectives at different stages of their lives:

KEY THRUSTS

Living with Dignity
Building resilient families

Maximising Developmental Potential
Developing independent adolescents

Achieving Full Potential
Empowering individuals to be active contributors

5 CORE PILLARS OF SUPPORT



SOCIAL WORK INTERVENTION



THERAPY INTERVENTION



EDUCATION SUPPORT



ARTS DEVELOPMENT



VOCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

As an independent charity, Club Rainbow relies largely on corporates and public donations to support our mission. Granted the Institution of a Public Character (IPC) status by Ministry of Health, monetary donations received may be tax-exempted.

OUR CHILDREN

In 2021, Club Rainbow served a total of 1,244 children who range from new-born to youth up to the age of 20. Many of them require frequent hospital visits for treatment or surgery, complicated therapy and long-term medication. Referred to Club Rainbow by their doctors, these children suffer from a wide range of health challenges, from having very low birth weight to developmental delays and many other forms of organ disorders. With over 85% of children surviving into adulthood, Club Rainbow provides the resources and opportunities to support their development towards becoming empowered, independent individuals and active contributors to society.

Message from

Teo Siang Loong

Executive Director of Club Rainbow (Singapore)



This year marks a very unique year as Club Rainbow celebrates its 30th anniversary. This is a momentous milestone, as we reminisce and celebrate our past achievements and reflect upon the strong foundations laid by our founding members and past leadership. This year also presents the opportune moment for us to look ahead with gusto, armed with the courage to Dream the Future.

Club Rainbow was founded 30 years ago, driven by clear intentions of the founding members who wanted to make a difference in the lives of children with chronic illnesses. The intentions transfigured into an aspiring vision, and Club Rainbow continued to strive with the same conviction and compassion over the years.

More recently, radical changes within the organisation were effected. A refreshed leadership team saw the inception of the five core pillars of support and reinvigorated our purpose that every child deserves equal opportunities to lead fulfilling and independent lives.

Club Rainbow will consistently deliver holistic and compassionate programmes and services with a lucid ambition to build resilient and self-sufficient families, develop independent adolescents, and empower individuals as active contributors.

In the years ahead, Club Rainbow will carry on its momentum to take progressive strides towards being the leading centre of excellence in transformative care and development of children with chronic illnesses and their families. Invariably, we are only able to achieve this when we are part of an integrated ecosystem.

We will continue to work closely with partners in domains of paediatric care – medical institutes, primary care providers, and intermediate and long-term care service providers – for cohesive transition from healthcare to community care. We will leverage on our unique position and autonomy to form a consolidated support network with fellow social service agencies, community and educational institutions, and government agencies to holistically support our children and their families in varied aspects of their lives.

Launching our new centre, Sandbox in conjunction with our anniversary year exemplifies our desire to do more and do what is best for our children and their families, particularly amid the dynamic and evolving social landscape which is exhibiting increasing complexities. Beyond merely a space, Sandbox epitomises a safe environment defined by autonomy and social inclusivity, which will be achieved through building purposeful communities that cater to the unique abilities, strengths and interests of our children and their caregivers. Always adopting the ethos “Talent beyond Illnesses”, this will be a collaborative journey with industry practitioners, subject matter experts and professional mentors for deepened development and co-creations with our children. The ultimate goal is that they can be a part of society, and not apart from society.

As an independent charity, the unwavering support of several corporate partners and numerous individuals through philanthropy and volunteerism has inspired us in our persevering pursuit. It has made it possible for us to implement innovative programmes with optimal outcomes that will create a long-lasting and positive impact on our children and their families. Our next phase will include exciting plans to further empower our children, as they enter adulthood, and caregivers to develop enterprising ideas at the micro level such as creating viable products they can sell in the marketplace. The support from corporates and individuals will yet again be most critical in uplifting their quality of life through such gainful activities.

The motivation and dedication by the team at Club Rainbow in the pursuit of excellence for our children and their families remain at the heart that binds all branches of Club Rainbow’s extensive ecosystem as one. This commemorative book is a tribute to the team – leadership, staff and all volunteers – past and present for their invaluable contributions.

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child”. Undoubtedly, in today’s context, it will take an entire ecosystem to provide the best opportunities for a child to realise one’s dreams and aspirations. As Club Rainbow strives towards being the centre of choice for children with chronic illnesses and their families, we invite you to join us in this amazing journey of hope and making a difference that will be an inspiration to all now and in the future. Together, we can **Dream the Future!**



OUR MILESTONES

1991

First Camp Rainbow

In 1991, the Rotaract Clubs of Singapore came together to organise a special camp for children with various chronic and life-threatening illnesses. The camp was aptly named after the rainbow to symbolise the innocence and beauty of childhood. At the time, Camp Rainbow was one of the few camps that paid attention to the health and well-being of each child by pairing them with an adult befriender throughout the entire duration of the camp.

Over 1,000 children have participated in this annual, medically supervised residential camp since 1991, with the exception of the SARS outbreak in 2003 and COVID-19 pandemic from 2020 to 2022.



Camp Rainbow 2010



Camp Rainbow 2018

1992

Birth of Club Rainbow (Singapore)

Following the success of Camp Rainbow, the organising committee decided to set up a special charity tailored towards providing comprehensive and sustained support services that children with chronic illnesses and their families need. Club Rainbow was formed to address the pressing need to provide holistic support that includes access to emotional, informational, educational, social and financial support to these children and their families.

1996



First Council President,
Mr Gregory Vijayendran

Appointment of First Council President

The Founder and first Council President Mr Gregory Vijayendran served Club Rainbow between 1996 and 2015. The early years saw Gregory, the Council members and committees doing everything from organising events and programmes to visiting the Rainbow children in hospitals in their own time, without the support of staff nor volunteers. Under his visionary leadership, Gregory and his Council began putting the pieces in place for several initiatives such as Rainbow Annual Overseas Trip and Talent Development Fund that would have a lasting impact on the lives of children and their families.

“The story of Club Rainbow for the first twenty five years has largely been about doing small things with great love. In speeches to the families, I used to say that when you take the heart out of this charity, you have nothing left. Compassion is the centre of all we do.”

– Mr Gregory Vijayendran

1997

First Rainbow Annual Overseas Trip

Club Rainbow organised the Rainbow Annual Overseas Trip to Bangkok, Thailand – the first of its kind tailored towards children with chronic illnesses and their families. For many of the families, the Rainbow Annual Overseas Trip marked their first ever travel experience. This was made possible by a volunteer team of paediatricians and nurses who provided medical supervision throughout the duration of the event.



Annual Overseas Trip 2019

Between 2010 and 2019, Rainbow Annual Overseas Trip, aptly renamed Club Rainbow Family Retreat has seen more than 600 families participated in a retreat where they could bond with other families while enhancing their physical and emotional well-being through psycho-education and enrichment activities.

2005



Talent Development Fund 2015

Introduction of Talent Development Fund

Since its inception in 2005, the Talent Development Fund has been disbursed to more than 500 children to recognise their non-academic talents and interests, and encourage them to cultivate their own unique strengths. Being the first of its kind when introduced, the Talent Development Fund also celebrates the children's achievement in sports, performing and visual arts, culinary arts and many other talent areas, regardless of their background or medical conditions.

2007

First Purpose-Built Facility – Rainbow Family Care Centre

Club Rainbow established its first purpose-built facility – the Rainbow Family Care Centre (RFCC) in 2007 to provide a focal point for many programmes and services. RFCC would also double as a front-facing office to facilitate discussions with several community, corporate and institutional partners.

In more recent years, RFCC pivoted its focus to Social Work Intervention and Therapy Intervention. The centre now focuses on developing greater resilience and independence among our children and families through relevant clinical intervention services.



First Purpose-Built Facility - Rainbow Family Care Centre

Celebrating 30 years of Club Rainbow

2010

Launch of KKH Rainbow Care and Resource Centre

This year saw the launch of Club Rainbow's second strategic satellite hospital centre, the Rainbow Care and Resource Centre in KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH). The first centre was set up back in 1999 within the National University Hospital. Both centres sharpen our outreach to Rainbow families by catering to inpatient needs and strengthening our informational resources, and other support services such as counselling and respite care for caregivers.

Today, the centre continues to exemplify the critical and collaborative role that Club Rainbow plays in the healthcare support system. The centre's opening would not have been possible without the generous contributions of our philanthropic partner, Nu Skin.



Second satellite hospital centre launched at KKH



Rainbow Care and Resource Centre in NUH was set up in 1999.

2012



Inaugural Ride for Rainbows 2012

First Fundraising Event - Ride for Rainbows

The first Ride for Rainbows was participated by a group of 34 cyclists who each cycled 120km through the night and raised a total of \$75,000. Since then, Ride for Rainbows has become an annual flagship event aimed at raising public awareness on chronic illnesses as well as funds for the children and families. The event challenges the resilience and tenacity of riders to complete a gruelling ride around the island, exemplifying the same qualities that Club Rainbow hopes to inculcate within our children in their journey towards an enriching life. The event saw a record turnout of 707 fundraising riders in 2017 and record funds of \$1,039,423 raised in 2019.

2015

Key Leadership Succession

Dr Sashikumar Ganapathy assumed the presidency of Club Rainbow in 2015. His journey with Club Rainbow began in 2007 as a Camp Rainbow volunteer and subsequently as Council Medical Director. Under his visionary and selfless leadership, the organisation has undergone exponential growth. Since 2014, the number of Club Rainbow beneficiaries increased by a significant 95%, reaching a record of 1,248 by the end of 2020. This monumental achievement would not have been possible without his efforts to enhance the organisation's strategic direction and programme delivery.

Though Dr Sashikumar assumes multiple academic and clinical appointments, he still finds time to dedicate tremendous efforts in reaching out to and engaging the expansive community of children with chronic illnesses, even those beyond Club Rainbow. For his contributions as President of Club Rainbow, Dr Sashikumar received The Public Service Medal (FOS) during National Day Awards 2022.



Dr Sashikumar Ganapathy

"Having been part of Club Rainbow since 2007, I am immensely proud and humbled to be on this extraordinary and fruitful journey, not just to help the children but at the same time, learn and grow with them. As we reflect on past accomplishments, we should also look to the future to fulfil bigger dreams and strengthen our cohesive ecosystem."

- Dr Sashikumar Ganapathy



Exemplary Caregiver Award 2017 Recipients

Introduction of Care Connection and Exemplary Caregiver Award

The first Exemplary Caregiver Award was presented at the inaugural edition of Celebrating Heroes to recognise and celebrate caregivers who displayed resilience and resourcefulness in improving the well-being of our children. Award recipients inspired others by sharing their stories of strength and resilience in the face of adversity, while letting other caregivers know that they are not alone in their caregiving journey.

Care Connection is another initiative that was launched to spotlight caregivers who play a pivotal role in providing unceasing support for our children to ensure that the psycho-emotional and support system needs for caregivers were adequately addressed. In 2020, two key initiatives, Caregivers' Programmes and Caregiver Support Groups were established to provide caregivers with activities for therapeutic intervention, psycho-education, respite and relaxation.

2016



First Inclusive Arts Festival in 2016

First Inclusive Arts Festival

Dreamseeds Arts Fest was conceptualised in 2016 to champion and celebrate the artistic pursuits of our children and empower them towards achieving their full potential, fulfilling their aspirations, and striving towards independent living and community inclusivity.

The flagship Arts Development Programme gave our children the opportunities to discover and pursue their aspirations and areas of interest within myriad visual and performing arts genres. The structured, progressive development pathway also provided our children with advanced development with creative practitioners, public showcase platforms, mentorship programmes and community collaboration projects

Celebrating 30 years of Club Rainbow

2017



Appointment of First Patron

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin has been a steadfast supporter of Club Rainbow since 2016, when he first joined us as the Guest-Of-Honour for Ride for Rainbows. Since then, he has participated in our 40-storey vertical marathon, as well as subsequent editions of Ride for Rainbows, cycling around the island to raise funds and awareness of our children.

Mr Tan believes that every child should have the opportunity to grow into their potential, regardless of their health or family background. He accepted our invitation to be the Patron of Club Rainbow in 2017, with the hope of furthering our cause, and positively impacting the lives of children under our care.

“It’s really my privilege and honour to be a patron of Club Rainbow, and I continue to passionately support the work here alongside so many of you. Let’s all journey together.”

–Mr Tan Chuan-Jin

2018

Inauguration of Five Core Pillars of Support

Following a paradigm shift in the strategic direction for Club Rainbow through purposeful revisions to the organisation mission, vision and core values in 2016, the key thrusts and strategic objectives were institutionalised in 2018. This sets a strong foundation that primed the organisation to be future-ready and relevant to meet the evolving needs of our children and their families. The overarching service model adopts a holistic approach based on five core pillars of support – Social Work Intervention, Therapy Intervention, Education Support, Arts Development and Vocational Development – for Club Rainbow to partner and empower our children and their families in their journey to achieve changing priorities at different stages of their lives towards being active contributors to society.

Conferment of Charity Governance Award and Charity Transparency Award

Club Rainbow was conferred the Charity Governance Award, representing the highest honours and standards in governance excellence within the sector. Continuous efforts to adopt and strengthen transparency and exemplary disclosure practices have also led Club Rainbow to receive three consecutive Charity Transparency Award between 2018 to 2022.



Club Rainbow was conferred the Charity Governance Award and Charity Transparency Award in 2018.

**Awards were put on hiatus in the years 2020 and 2021.*

2020 Reinforcement of Purpose during COVID-19 Pandemic

Getting whitelisted by relevant authorities during the circuit breaker and tightened COVID-19 restrictions meant that Club Rainbow could continue distributing essential aid to ensure that vulnerable families could meet their basic sustenance needs. Close to 1,200 families were supported to ensure that development of our children would not regress and heightened support was given to families whose situations were exacerbated by the pandemic, despite unprecedented challenges.

In recognition of our efforts, President of the Republic of Singapore Madam Halimah Yacob, awarded Club Rainbow with the Certification of Appreciation for the President's Volunteerism & Philanthropy Awards 2020 Special Edition.

2022 First Expansion of Club Rainbow (Singapore)

Even amidst uncertainties during the pandemic, Club Rainbow did not lose sight of its vision and growth plan. A new centre was launched and aptly named "Sandbox" to epitomise a safe environment defined by autonomy and social inclusivity.

At Sandbox, our children and family members have been able to participate in more programmes such as visual and performing arts workshops, caregiver-centric activities, social integration programmes, and LEAP Education Support programmes. The purpose-driven space will also house new initiatives such as the LEAP Early Intervention programme for our younger children, vocational training in F&B tracks, and WSQ courses.

Introduction of First Mascot

Club Rainbow's highly anticipated mascot was unveiled at the Education Awards Presentation Ceremony 2022. The mascot, Ray, is a character that embodies the brand personalities, which are Compassionate, Empowering, Resilient and Nurturing. The cloud head was inspired by Club Rainbow's namesake and is a sign of hope after stormy weather. The name itself was adapted from the phrase "a ray of sunshine", and is a reminder of how the sun peeks out from the clouds to create a rainbow after the storm. From Ray's heart emerges five different colours, each representing one of Club Rainbow's core pillars of support.



Club Rainbow staff with Patron, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, at the soft launch of Sandbox



A Cajon Drumming session taking place at the Performing Arts studio in Sandbox



Ray greeted Club Rainbow families for the first time.

Strength In Weakness

Kendre Tan

8 years old

Child supported by
Club Rainbow (Singapore)



A shocking discovery

Madam Yeap and her son Kendre Tan are no strangers to the surgical room. Though doctors had initially detected Kendre's congenital heart issues during Madam Yeap's pregnancy, the trisomy 21 chromosome linked to Kendre's down syndrome was not discovered until after his birth. Kendre would undergo an artificial valve insertion surgery just a month after entering the world before going under the knife again at one and a half years to install a conduit to replace the first artificial valve. In the next couple of years, Kendre will require yet another surgery to replace the existing valve in his heart.

Staying strong despite the challenges

To say that the past eight years have been challenging for the family would be an understatement. Madam Yeap even spent several days sleeping in the ICU ward to keep her son company while he was on life support for three agonising weeks. The family would suffer a similar scare a year later when Kendre's heart stopped beating after his second surgery once more.

“They told us that the first surgery was a success, but then later called us again to tell us that Kendre’s heart had stopped. We were even told to prepare for the worst, but we simply refused to pull the plug on Kendre.”

At the age of three, Kendre was prescribed medication for adrenal insufficiency, hypothyroidism, as well as therapy for speech delays. Like many families of special needs children, Madam Yeap has to juggle her work with Kendre's frequent hospital appointments every one to two months, therapy sessions and preschool, all of which severely limits her career options.

It is Kendre's strong fighting spirit that continually injects happiness into his family, allowing them to move forward. Club Rainbow's regular therapy intervention played a part in improving Kendre's mobility. He managed to walk on his own at the age of four, allowing both him and Madam Yeap to rely less on the stroller.



Social and financial support

Kendre has attended Club Rainbow's LEAP - Early Intervention Programme which helps to build strong foundations for our children at a younger age and prepare them for primary school education. Though the programme was targeted at children up to 6 years old, Club Rainbow made an exception for Kendre as all our programmes are based on individual child's needs.

To aid his development, Kendre has been attending home-based occupational and speech therapy at Club Rainbow since 2018, and Madam Yeap has seen significant improvements in Kendre's development. Since resuming speech therapy at Club Rainbow, Madam Yeap has seen marked improvement after sessions with speech therapist Gin commenced in January 2022. At first, Kendre was reluctant to even meet with Gin. But over time, Kendre began opening up and has enjoyed these sessions much more, so much so that Kendre even requests his mother to leave the room for alone time with Gin.

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One of Madam Yeap's biggest, longstanding concerns is whether Kendre can communicate his needs effectively and integrate with society.

“At the very least, I want him to be able to buy food and take public transport on his own”.

Madam Yeap would therefore intently observe Kendre's speech therapy sessions and mimic the therapist's sign language and teaching style between sessions to accelerate Kendre's development. Her proactiveness has been critical for Kendre's transition to childcare. Impressively, Madam Yeap juggles all these between working on ad-hoc jobs to provide for the family as a single parent.

At the same time, the informal nature of Madam Yeap's employment has made the family financial situation particularly vulnerable to the pandemic. Kendre was affected from not being able to attend school and go out due to his lower immunity levels. At their lowest period, the family even struggled to purchase groceries as this meant leaving Kendre unattended at home.

To tide the Yeaps through this trying time, Club Rainbow delivered care packs, food rations, diapers, and vouchers to their home during the pandemic.

Upon the easing of COVID-19 measures, Club Rainbow extended the opportunity for the Yeaps to be a part of the Club Rainbow Family Retreat. This medically supervised overseas retreat provides much needed mental and physical respite to families who may not be able to travel otherwise. Additional subsidies were provided to ensure that the Yeaps and other lower income families would have the opportunity to travel, despite their financial constraints.

Mdm Yeap is excited for Kendre to enjoy the good food (a huge milestone considering that he had been relying on a nasogastric tube to deliver food and medicine to his stomach since he was one) and the fun-filled activities that the Club Rainbow team has planned for the retreat.



Madam Yeap's hopes for the future

For now, Kendre is enjoying reading, socialising, and spending time outdoors in big open spaces. Madam Yeap hopes that Kendre can learn to buy food, count money, and fend for himself independently as he enters his teen years. When that time comes, Madam Yeap hopes to volunteer her time to support families in similar situations, even those abroad that do not get as much financial and social support as they have enjoyed in Singapore. As a mother, Madam Yeap is also motivated to continue to provide adequate intervention support for Kendre, even if she has to do it all single-handedly.

Going The Extra Mile

Cheng Zai Jing

Social Worker
Club Rainbow (Singapore)



Zai Jing joined Club Rainbow in November 2015 and is part of a team overseeing Club Rainbow's Caregivers' Programme. Over the last seven years, Zai Jing has provided much-needed support to our children and their families.

What stands out about Zai Jing is that she takes the time to understand the unique needs of her beneficiaries and their families so that they can receive the appropriate type of care.

"From my first-hand experience with several Club Rainbow families, the amount of anxiety they face, much of which stems from a lack of knowledge on how to care for children with chronic illness. As a social worker, I step in to provide an emotional pillar of support to caregivers who are at risk of developing depression, anxiety, and burnout."

Running The Caregivers' Programme

Introduced in 2020 as part of the new initiative, Care Connection, the Caregivers' Programme is run by Zai Jing and her fellow social workers. The programme is aimed at empowering caregivers to play their pivotal role in the development of their children, as well as lending them the relevant support to minimise common stressors in their lives. The popular programme is designed to create opportunities for caregivers to mingle, enjoy respite from caregiving responsibilities, as well as learn to prioritise self-care. Some of the activities that have been most well received by participants include tea appreciation workshops, embroidery classes and game sessions.

Zai Jing also frequently provides social support and services to Kendre Tan and his mother, Madam Yeap (full story on pages 15 and 16). The pair require frequent support to ensure that Madam Yeap has enough time to work to cover the family's expenses. Unfortunately, having a limited support system means that Madam Yeap's own self-care is often compromised.

Arranging therapy support

To ensure that Kendre received the necessary critical interventive support to address early stage developmental delays, Zai Jing arranged for home based speech and occupational therapy sessions for Kendre in 2018. At the end of Kendre's session cycle, he attended intervention sessions at other organisations before resuming therapy intervention with Club Rainbow and Zai Jing recommended Kendre to join LEAP - Early Childhood Programme in 2022. Kendre has now completed one cycle of speech therapy and is on track for a subsequent cycle from November 2022 onwards.

Zai Jing also goes the extra mile to ensure that Madam Yeap is made aware of how she can apply for financial assistance. This has allowed the family to receive financial aid to cover Kendre's costly therapy sessions. Well aware of Madam Yeap's unemployment during the pandemic, Zai Jing ensured that the family was looped in to receive donations-in-kind and grocery vouchers during that challenging period.

Caring for the children's social needs

Tangible benefits aside, the innate human need for human interaction is often neglected as these families struggle to keep up with a myriad of challenges presented to them daily. Zai Jing ensured that Madam Yeap was granted sufficient opportunity to expand her social network through interactions with other families in the Club Rainbow community. Thanks to her support, the family is now well-acquainted with people and resources whom they can turn to whenever they face challenges.

"I am grateful that children and their families allowed me to be a part of their journey by opening up. I remain motivated to help them better themselves and overcome challenges."

She is grateful to have been part of the ups and downs of many families, and remains motivated to help even more families overcome challenges and create memorable moments that they can treasure for years to come.



Raising A Child with Special Needs

Mohamed Syakir Nasrudding Bin Mohamed Kamal

6 years old

Child supported by Club Rainbow (Singapore)



It all started with an unexpected diagnosis

After spending five long years trying to conceive, Noraini Binte Abdul Majeed finally gave birth to her son, Mohamed Syakir Nasrudding Bin Mohamed Kamal, in 2016. However, the initial joy experienced by the family would be short-lived as just three weeks after his birth, Syakir stopped drinking milk and began rapidly losing weight.

Though his condition stabilised after being admitted to KK Hospital, the worst was far from over. Five days later when Syakir was meant to be discharged, doctors put him under further scans to verify the cause of a sound coming from his heart. As they had suspected, Syakir had a hole in his heart as well as narrowed connecting blood vessels. Further DNA tests would confirm that Syakir suffered from Williams Syndrome, a rare genetic condition that is characterised by developmental delays, learning challenges, and cardiovascular disease.

Braving challenges that came one after another

The diagnosis came as a shock to Ms Noraini, who had experienced a smooth pregnancy and normal birth. The diagnosis therefore came as a rude shock to her. However, her faith gave her the courage to accept his diagnosis and be strong for her son.

"I was crying so badly in the doctor's office because the truth was just so hard to accept."

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The following years would prove to be challenging as Syakir had to undergo several surgeries. The first occurred when Syakir was just four months old to remove a hernia. Later, excess water in his ear drums had to be removed via tubes to alleviate hearing loss caused by otitis media with effusion. Amidst all of this, Ms Noraini and her family remained unaware of the risks of operating on children with Williams Syndrome. It was only at his third surgery when Syakir had to have adenoids and tonsils removed did the doctor inform the family that surgeries could trigger sudden death or cardiac arrest in patients of Williams Syndrome.

This information made an already difficult situation even more trying, as Ms Noraini struggled to even send her son off to the operation table. Luckily, her husband was around to send Syakir in, and Syakir did not suffer further heart complications from the adenoids and tonsil removal.

Discovering help with Club Rainbow

Prior to joining Club Rainbow, Syakir was part of an Early Intervention Programme for Infants and Children (EIPIC) at another school, which he continues to attend today. Through other parents in the school, Ms Noraini learned about the existence of Club Rainbow. Later, she would clarify Syakir's eligibility for Club Rainbow's programmes through a social worker at KK Hospital and the rest was history.

Ms Noraini sings endless praises about Club Rainbow social worker Guan You, who has been the family's guiding pillar of support since they joined in 2019.

“Guan You has helped us a lot. He listens whenever I have problems about Syakir, myself, or school. He never looks down on me or points out my faults. With him, it's all about positive vibes.”

In 2019, Ms Noraini's family also received financial assistance for a period of three-months, which helped to offset the cost of formula milk essential for Syakir's development. Guan You also frequently lists Ms Noraini's name down for food rations, vouchers, and diapers. Syakir, who is so fascinated by robot toys that he has even learned how to look them up for himself on Shopee, also frequently receives toys courtesy of Club Rainbow.



Syakir as her pride and joy

Despite the financial, emotional, and medical challenges that she faces day-to-day, Ms Noraini wears her identity as a mother of a special needs child like a badge of honour. She thanks Club Rainbow for being a source of strength that she can reach out for help whenever she needs, and for gracing her with the honour of being included in the 30th Anniversary Commemorative Book.

“I'm proud to have been chosen to raise up my Syakir, and that I can do so much for him.”

Syakir will soon be graduating from preschool and EIPIC and moving onto a special needs school. Ms Noraini simply hopes for Syakir to become more independent. While she admits to feeling a twinge of sadness watching Syakir grow up, she is also proud of him for overcoming many health obstacles and making it to today. Lastly, she hopes that Syakir will no longer require any more surgeries in the future, and will bravely face whatever challenges the future holds.

Willing Hands and A Compassionate Heart

Low Guan You

Assistant Senior Social Worker
Club Rainbow (Singapore)

Assistant Senior Social Worker Low Guan You has been with Club Rainbow since 2018. More than four and a half years on, his passion for working with families continues to burn brightly as he comes up with initiatives to engage the youth of Club Rainbow and build a more supportive community. For him, social work is about providing assistance to improve and address any needs that beneficiaries and their families may have. This may involve a wide range of social issues, from financial, medical, housing, education, down to counselling and psycho-education for personal issues.



Celebrating 30 years of Club Rainbow

A unique journey for every family

Recognising how each family deals with their unique situation is important. For social workers, it is critical for them to harness their inherent strengths to empower families to cope with and overcome their circumstances. As they journey alongside families, their understanding of their unique circumstances and aid required to overcome their problems deepens.

“When it comes to social work, each family is different. It really requires us to get to know them and build rapport before we can eventually work on those issues.”

Engaging the youth

Guan You also demonstrates his ability to empathise with others as a member of the Social Work team responsible for youth engagement at Club Rainbow. He understood that older teenagers often felt left out as many of the programmes were targeted at younger children, and has been diligently planning a variety of group-oriented and youth-tailored programmes to help them transition through their season of change.

“Since ramping up youth engagement in 2019-2020, we’ve seen more participants and new activities added to the programme each year. Through various programmes like entrepreneurship, career-building workshops, and music and arts, we mentor and journey with these youths to let them know that they are not alone even as they go through this difficult phase in life where they decide their next educational or career path.”

A companion for Syakir

One of the families that has personally experienced the impact of Guan You’s dedication is Williams Syndrome patient Mohamed Syakir Nasruddin Bin Mohamed Kamal and his caregiver Ms Noraini Binte Abdul Majeed (more on their story on pages 19-20). Through supportive counselling and gentle guidance, Guan You has helped the family come to terms with the various difficulties they face day-to-day, as well as develop emotional regulation techniques to cope as Syakir undergoes several high-risk surgeries.

Above all, Guan You has been pivotal in helping Ms Noraini see the rewarding side of being a mother of a child with special needs. This assistance is part of the reason why Ms Noraini has the confidence to share her story and provide solace and solidarity to families in similar situations today.

Guan You also makes sure that Syakir and his family receive the financial support they need by putting down their names for diapers, food rations, and vouchers. By providing personalised budgeting and savings advice, Guan You has helped Ms Noraini and her family become more self-sufficient over time, so much so that the family is now practically financially independent, and will soon be proud owners of a BTO (built-to-order) flat come 2024.

Syakir himself has achieved mastery and independence in many areas of his life. Today, he only requires guided supervision with some tasks. His speech capabilities have improved tremendously and he is showing good progress with his grades at EIPIC.

“My joy comes from seeing the family achieve independence and tangible growth in many aspects of their lives. Ms Noraini and her husband have displayed empowerment in their family decisions, shown increased autonomy in managing Syakir’s medical condition, and have also portrayed resilience in their challenging journey. Credit goes to the family in achieving this significant growth. I am proud to be able to be part of their lives over the years.”

Moving forward, Guan You hopes to continue the rewarding work of helping as many families as possible through the different phases of their lives, and taking the youth development programme further each year.

Bridging The Education Gap

Annabella Tan Si En

12 years old

Child Supported by
Club Rainbow (Singapore)



Annabella Tan (right)
with her father

Diagnosed with gastroenterology disorder at the tender age of 7 years old, Annabella Tan Si En and her mother Madam Tan have struggled to manage Annabella's condition with limited resources, all while ensuring that Annabella receives the right guidance to keep up with an ever-demanding school curriculum.

Since joining Club Rainbow's free LEAP Education Support programme in 2019 at 9 years of age, Annabella has been attending individualised English tuition lessons with tutor Alexander Valcos. Beyond sharpening Annabella's linguistic abilities and building up her confidence with timed assessments, the Tan family has also received annual bursaries to help offset education-related expenses like school books and assessment papers.

Celebrating 30 years of Club Rainbow

Accessing learning materials with limited finances

Making ends meet on low income is never easy. With only so much money to keep the lights on, Madam Tan barely has enough finances left to buy relevant study materials for Annabella, let alone send her off to expensive tuition programmes.

Annabella's improvement with LEAP

Despite being a shy girl, Annabella showed herself to be an extremely hardworking girl. Always arriving on time, Annabella was always prepared to ask questions on English Comprehension. Club Rainbow thus arranged for Alexander to guide her in this area and supplement her learning in school.

One thing that both Annabella and Madam Tan repeatedly highlighted was Alexander's ability to remain kind and patient towards Annabella by walking her through every single one of her questions. Rather than spoon feeding his students with answers, Alexander would provide notes, tips, and hints to nudge Annabella in the right direction – a crucial step that has allowed Annabella to tackle PSLE papers independently.

"He never once scolded me, he was always friendly and encouraged me to think through the questions slowly. Because of him, I learnt how to answer the questions correctly, and now it's becoming easy".

Beyond the classroom, the LEAP Primary Programme has offered tremendous assistance by always being available to answer questions whenever Annabella reaches out. The result is that the Tan family has been able to overcome a lack of accessibility to knowledge and get the assistance they need.

Annabella has since improved by a grand total of 21 marks in her English exams, scoring a commendable 67 in 2022 compared to 46 in 2021. The family is currently looking forward to collecting Annabella's PSLE results, an exam which Annabella herself has described to be "very easy".



Madam Tan (left) with Annabella

Hopes for her future

Madam Tan hopes that Annabella can score the high marks she requires to enter her dream school and pursue her passions. Ideally, they would like Annabella to land a spot in Presbyterian High School, Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary School, or Anderson Secondary School but she requires high marks to enter these schools. With the help of Club Rainbow and especially her tutor Alexander, Annabella has a good chance of realising her dream and we wish her all the very best.

***“Thank you Teacher Alexander for teaching me and thank you Club Rainbow for the tuition programme.”
- Annabella***

Small Contributions, *Big Impact*

Alexander Valcos

Volunteer Tutor

Alexander Valcos may have only volunteered at Club Rainbow for one year, but the impact that he's had on the children has been immeasurable. As a dedicated English tutor to Annabella (full story on page 23 to 24), Alexander has played a pivotal role in helping his tutee gain a better grasp of the English language as well as build up her confidence to tackle exam papers that she once dreaded.

The changes in Annabella have been remarkable to say the least. According to Alexander himself, Annabella was extremely quiet in the initial weeks, but eventually opened up and engaged with his questions as time went by. The two have built such a strong friendship that Annabella now frequently shares updates with Alexander on the latest happenings in school.

Annabella's proactiveness has not just been a step forward for her in terms of character development, but has also made tutoring sessions more effective as the pair work together to identify and work on areas of weakness. Within just two semesters, Annabella's grades leapfrogged from just 46 out of a 100 last year to 67 this year.

Volunteering as a Club Rainbow tutor

According to Alexander himself, Club Rainbow's advocacy for youth with chronic illnesses in Singapore aligned with his desire to support causes that benefit the youth. As someone who has always considered tutoring as a career path, Alexander finds great joy in preparing for each lesson and working on improvised exercises in class that helps to nurture Annabella's interest and maximise her learning.

“I have always been interested in teaching and imparting a little of what I know to the younger generation. It's a very fulfilling vocation and Club Rainbow's mission to support and empower children resonates with me a lot.”

Bridging pivotal gaps in the education

Without tutors like Alexander, children from low-income families such as Annabella will not be able to achieve their potential and acquire positive learning values in their academic pursuits. Understanding the importance of his role, Alexander always makes it a point to come prepared for every lesson through pre-study of his own. His effort behind the scenes is what allows him to answer Annabella's questions in the appropriate level of complexity that is suited for her understanding. Moving forward, Alexander hopes to continue contributing to the academic growth of his mentees. For him, playing a part in a child's educational foundation and helping them achieve results beyond their wildest imagination even as they struggle with chronic illnesses is one of the most fulfilling aspects of his job as a volunteer tutor.



Creating A Safe Space

Kelly Tng

13 years old

Child Supported by Club Rainbow (Singapore)

Kelly was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder when she was 3 years old. She struggles particularly with speech development and has difficulties processing, remembering, and understanding words which can lead to conflict situations. Kelly has been a beneficiary of Club Rainbow since 2016 when she was 7 years old and Club Rainbow has been able to support this family in the form of therapy intervention.

Living with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Kelly is highly sensitive to noise which makes it difficult for her to be in crowded places, or even be around young children.

Kelly also struggles with food aversions. Over the years, her mother Madam Thong has tried to expose Kelly to a variety of foods without forcing her. By narrowing down the foods that Kelly likes, and cutting them into smaller pieces for her, Kelly has been able to improve her eating habits. It has taken time and patience to find what works and ensure Kelly has the right nutrients.



Support and coping mechanisms rendered by Club Rainbow

Club Rainbow provided much needed subsidies for Kelly's therapy sessions and education-related expenses since 2016. These are expenses which would have cost the family up to \$1000 a month. Though Kelly was already attending a special needs school with small class sizes of four, she still received very little by way of therapy intervention. Costly therapy sessions at private centres, and limited resources at hospitals and schools often meant that children like Kelly would not have access to regular therapy sessions which are critical in addressing their developmental gaps and maximising their potential. Madam Thong would later discover Club Rainbow when Kelly's doctor recommended her to be enrolled as a beneficiary.

Club Rainbow recognised this family's need for support and recommended Kelly speech and art therapy that could help Kelly to better articulate herself. Madam Thong said the art therapy that was recommended by Club Rainbow was particularly beneficial as it allowed Kelly to experience the sense of touch in a safe environment and overcome her fears. She told Club Rainbow that before the therapy started, Kelly was afraid of everyday things at home like sinkholes, peeling an egg or a potato, washing dishes, or even showering. But after being exposed to different mediums and textures at the art therapy, she became more comfortable with the unfamiliar. Even things like colouring would frustrate Kelly because there's an element of messiness to it, but with the art therapy she has become much more at ease and drawing is now one of her favourite things to do.

The therapy sessions also helped her verbal communication tremendously. Madam Thong can see Kelly trying to think before she answers her, and an improved ability in sentence structuring. Kelly also learnt how to write down, or type out her thoughts when she has difficulty verbally expressing something. Another valuable skill the family learnt was how to rely on hand gestures to communicate and also the importance of using simpler words instead of the longer synonyms that are more commonly used. This requires her caregivers to be very astute while communicating with Kelly which is not easy.



Kelly Tng's artwork done during speech therapy sessions with Sephine

Hopes for the future

Madam Thong hopes to continue the therapy sessions for Kelly as they have been life-changing for her. She has seen other children regress upon discharge from therapy sessions and does not want that for Kelly. Kelly's brother is diagnosed with dyslexia and she fears that without the therapy sessions she will not be able to help them. But with Club Rainbow, feelings of helplessness that used to plague Madam Thong have now been replaced by a new community whom she can rely upon for critical resources that help her and Kelly persevere through their challenges.

“I’m not sure what I would have done without Club Rainbow, they’ve given us so much support and hope.”

Finding The **Right Words**

Sephine Goh

Speech Therapist
Club Rainbow (Singapore)

Sephine graduated with a Bachelors in Speech and Language Pathology from the University of Queensland with top honours, and has worked with the local community since 2015. In 2019, Sephine officially joined Club Rainbow and has played a pivotal role in the implementation of group therapy, joint discipline therapy, and early intervention programmes. She also conducted numerous workshops for fellow parents, allied and non-allied professionals. As a speech therapist and mother to two young children herself, Sephine has a genuine desire to share the burden of other parents and believes that every child can shine when given the right amount of love and support.

Sephine Goh (right) with Kelly Tng (center)
and her mother Mdm Thong (left)



The diagnosis process

Sephine's job as a speech therapist requires her to investigate impediments that prevent children from pronouncing certain words, and even the sensory or structural difficulties that affect their intake of food. This requires Sephine to ask the right questions so that she can diagnose the problem accurately:

"Are they able to follow directions at home and in school? Can they use language appropriately to express their needs? Are they able to answer and ask questions that suit the contextual environment? Are they able to initiate, maintain, and hold conversations? Answering these questions helps me understand exactly how they are struggling and where they are currently at with their understanding of language."

Kelly's improvement

Sephine and Kelly met about three years ago. During the initial phases, Kelly had limited vocabulary and her expressions were limited to asking for objects that she needed. This caused Kelly to be quiet and reserved, keeping to herself in social situations.

"The main challenge came from finding out Kelly's motivations. Because she did not speak much, we tried to pick up cues from her body language and gestures. Eventually, we discovered that she enjoys drawing, music, and dancing. From there, we managed to get her to request for paper and colouring pencils to draw, and music for dancing."

Since undergoing therapy sessions with Sephine, Kelly has learned to open up about what is happening to her outside of the therapy room. She is now capable of using simple sentences to describe events such as when she has lost a tooth, how she likes dancing with her friend, or even when she has been bickering with her brother. While she still uses drawing as a means of communication, the fact that Kelly has grown to be



comfortable in conversation shows that she has made significant improvement. These are things that the once-shy girl would not have had the confidence for just two years ago.

Beyond the clinic's walls

For Sephine, creating connections and giving her clients the words to express themselves is the most rewarding part of her job. Through numerous outreach and community programmes, Sephine hopes to continue making therapy accessible and expand the learning and development of the children beyond the therapy clinic's walls.

"The instance when each child begins to reach out and communicate is one that I always remember and work towards to"



Realising Talent Through **Passion and Hard Work**

Anastasia underwent a major open heart surgery (OHS) when she was just six days old. Doctors later found out that Anastasia was suffering from profound hearing loss in her right ear after she was discharged from the hospital. Eight years later, Anastasia went under the surgical knife yet again to remove the pacing wire that was embedded during the OHS that caused skin irritation.

No secret formula, just practice

Fast forward to today, Anastasia is a vibrant 18 year old and Year 1 Engineering Student at Nanyang Polytechnic with a burning passion for music. Her love for music began to blossom back in 2014 when Club Rainbow gave her the opportunity to attend arts developmental workshops and music programmes. As fate would have it, Anastasia did not face any issues learning music or performing it. She still relies on a roger pen and I-sense to hear better during lectures and leans towards people when they speak. But when it comes to music, all that it really takes for Anastasia to master it is practice. Professional musicians who mentored Anastasia have all praised her for her songwriting, drumming, and leadership skills. From there, she quickly passed Grade 6 in Electone and Rockschoool Grade 8 Drums.

Her next goal? To play music at a professional level.

According to her mentor, Ian Goh (story on page 33 to 34) she might already be there.

Anastasia Mary Chieng

18 years old

Youth supported by Club Rainbow (Singapore)

Talent Development Fund Recipient and

Music Mentorship Programme Mentee in Drumming





“These days, Anastasia nails songs within one or two takes. I have no problems if she wishes to go out and play. There is no question that Anastasia is already at a professional level”

- Mr Ian Toh,

Lead Mentor for Music Mentorship Programme.

Financial support to realise her dreams


To support her passion and talent in music, Anastasia has been awarded Club Rainbow’s Talent Development Fund (TDF) over several years since 2013. Thanks to the grant, Anastasia has been able to further her interest in Electone and receive lessons that have helped her improve her sight reading abilities. The grant has also helped to defray recent costs of her music theory lessons in 2020 and drum lessons in 2021.

Anastasia is now a percussion member of Singapore’s National Youth Chinese Orchestra and trained in both western and chinese percussion. Anastasia’s mother, Veronica is grateful for the opportunity that music has given Anastasia to overcome her disability and live a fulfilling life which she hopes Anastasia will continue to enjoy and share with others.

A Brother Rather Than A Teacher

Ian Toh

Co-founder of Thunder Rock School
Lead mentor for Music Mentorship
Programme



Co-founder of Thunder Rock School and lead mentor for Club Rainbow's Music Mentorship Programme Ian Toh doesn't regard himself as a teacher. Instead, he prefers to think of himself as an older brother to passionate youths under the Arts Development Core Pillar of Support, some of whom he's watched develop both musically and individually over the course of six years that he has been involved.

The most astounding part of the Music Mentorship Programme is that some of these mentees already possess a level of music mastery that far exceeds that of their healthier able-bodied peers and even bands in their early twenties.

The kids are 'real musicians' who 'know their stuff'

“The challenge of learning music in Singapore is that it’s often confined to a classroom setting. Children don’t get many opportunities to play in real-life settings. But that doesn’t stop the mentees. The dedication that they’ve demonstrated is outstanding.”

The youths of the Music Mentorship Programme recently received some much needed performance exposure when they played a tribute of three songs plus an original at Thunder Rock School’s annual concert. One of the songs they played was the famous “Don’t Stop Believing”. According to Ian, the mentees picked up the song really quickly, despite some of them being as young as 13 years old. In fact, the mentees’ musical capabilities are so impressive that Ian only has to provide them with guidance these days. The mentees simply have a firm grasp on all the fundamentals that he and his fellow mentors have taught them over the years.

“Nowadays, I just have to walk in and tell them to play. Then I listen and provide them with pointers on how they can make minor adjustments to perfect their song. The children are proper musicians who know their stuff and can rectify mistakes on their own. This is an important part of the learning process.”

Rather than drilling scales for days and weeks on end, Ian makes it a point to arrange for the mentees to be exposed to teachers with varying ideas and knowledge about music. He believes that this process is important for the young musicians to gather ideas from different people and ultimately build a music identity that is true to themselves. To Ian, connecting children with a strong network of inspiring teachers is a crucial aspect of his job.

“Music is an art form, not a book filled with facts. My goal is to help each child develop their talent and become professional artists in their own right.”

Mentoring Anastasia

Drummer Anastasia together with other members of the Club Rainbow Thunder Rock Band, Aiden, Syasya, Lee Jin and Li Li, are young aspiring musicians under the mentorship of Ian and other professional musicians from Thunder Rock School. According to Ian, Anastasia is “the rock that holds everyone together”, so much so that even Ian himself will take cues from Anastasia when he is up on stage playing the bass with her. Despite being just 18 years old, Anastasia already has a commanding stage presence and ability to lead the band.

“It’s so amazing to have someone so experienced at her age. I make sure that she has eye contact with everyone and from there we just play. It’s an amazing feeling.”

One defining feature that has allowed Anastasia to improve so rapidly is her openness to criticism and learning. This willingness to learn has allowed Anastasia to reach what Ian describes to be a ‘professional’ level. Teachers don’t have to tell her what to do. Whether it’s a practice or live recording, everyone is always assured that Anastasia knows her stuff. She just goes in, and nails it. The fact that Anastasia does not have any psychological walls up makes her an even greater joy to play with.

“In fact, I don’t really face any challenges with any of them.”

Hopes for the future

Looking ahead, Ian hopes to continue imparting knowledge to the children of Club Rainbow and see them grow as professional musicians together. He wants to expand the music program and form a band with the talented mentees that will play even outside of the programme. From there, he hopes for more youth to join the program so that knowledge can be transferred to the next generation, and more amazing musicians like Anastasia can walk out of the programme with not just musical mastery, but a strong sense of identity and confidence.

How A Music Director Ended Up Inspired By His Own Mentees

Leonard Soosay

Snakeweed Studios

Sound Engineer and Producer for
Music Mentorship Programme

Sound Engineer and Producer Leonard Soosay has been a part of Club Rainbow's Music Mentorship Programme for over six years. Since 2016, Leonard has been providing Club Rainbow with equipment and song production support for the Dreamseeds Arts Fest, an inclusive arts festival which headlines the artistic pursuits and talents of the children.

How it all began

As luck would have it, the weather was not kind to Leonard on his very first event with Club Rainbow. Held at Visual Arts Centre @ Dhoby Ghaut Green, Leonard and a team of volunteers had to carry music equipment back indoors before the rain poured in. Despite the less than optimal conditions, Leonard recalls witnessing the joy that the children had and the potential they showed as they fiddled with instruments in the room. That moment would spark his desire to become more involved with Club Rainbow. Just one year later, Leonard would be the programme consultant for the three-month songwriting programme where participating children were taught to co-write the lyrics and melody with the children under the music mentorship programme with Thunder Rock School.



Leonard's unique take on music directing

While Leonard assumed the role of the mentorship programme's Music Director, he soon realised that the programme would take on a life of its own. Because of how eagerly involved the children were in playing music and song writing, Leonard quickly stashed his plans to select the songs to be played at the end-of-year concert, and instead allowed his mentees to come up with the overall theme, and even the melody and lyrics to their own original songs.

"In the first year, one of the children insisted the song to be about a Chicken Man. Everyone laughed, but I thought, why not. I did a little bit of prodding and realised that the kid had seen a man dressed in a chicken mascot and wanted to do that someday. From there, I began asking the other children about their ambitions, and incorporated all their career wishes into the song lyrics – including the Chicken Man. The song ended up as something very special."

Takeaways from mentoring

As with many mentors, Leonard found himself gaining far more than he initially thought he would. Through his role as a mentor and music teacher, he developed deep friendships with his mentees, many of whom he continues keeping in close contact with today. Some of them still reach out whenever they face challenges in school or everyday life, and Leonard responds in kind by assisting them as much as possible.

"A listening ear is often all it takes. I usually end up learning more because these children have such a unique approach to navigating the world. I really admire their fighting spirit, commitment, and determination to complete their songwriting exercises or pick up new musical skills despite all that they go through in life."

The way forward

One of Leonard's biggest wishes is for the children of Club Rainbow to succeed as a band and perform at the Dreamseeds Art Festival. He fully believes that they are capable of playing on the big stage and hopes that the Club Rainbow Thunder Rock Band will be the success story that will inspire parents of children with chronic illnesses and show them what is possible. Even for the children who do not wish to be on stage, he hopes that the music program will open doors for them to contribute behind the scenes as songwriters and audio engineers.

For Leonard, the ultimate goal is community inclusiveness where the art community accepts these children and recognises them as the legitimate musicians they are.

"Music is a universal language. It's something that connects people from all walks of life. It's where the kids can go beyond their disability and fulfil their potential."

And that's exactly what the Dreamseeds Art festival is all about – showing children that they can achieve anything regardless of their conditions as long as they put their hearts to it. Hopefully, those who have moved on from the music programme will come back to mentor the younger ones and keep the dream alive.



Mullai (right) with a
Camp Rainbow
participant

Still Going Strong

After Serving For Over
Two Decades

Mullai D/O Pushpanathan

Long-serving Volunteer and
Camp Rainbow Committee Member

To over 1,000 children, she is “Mother Mullai”

Ministry of Education school counsellor Mullai D/O Pushpanathan’s journey with Club Rainbow started over two decades ago when she joined as a befriender. Since then, she has become a team leader and active member of the personnel recruitment team for Camp Rainbow, a three-day two-night retreat where children live away from their parents and caregivers.

Mullai has a knack for empathising with children and relating to their struggles. Her innate maternal instincts and caring nature has earned her the affectionate title of “Mother Mullai” amongst the children. In fact, the first beneficiary that Mullai ever supported was a child named Yan Ping, a shy, wheelchair bound girl whom other social workers had trouble connecting with. But through gentle patience, Mullai was able to earn Yan Ping’s trust and coax her out of her shell.

Fellow volunteer Yi Wen was first introduced to Mullai as her group leader while attending Camp Rainbow as a beneficiary at the age of 16. Till this day, Yi Wen still regards Mullai as a cheerful, caring lady who is committed to her role, and a reliable team player who always comes through. Most of all, Yi Wen considers Mullai as a loyal friend who has always been there whenever she needs a listening ear.

Celebrating 30 years of Club Rainbow

Just as with Yi Wen, Mullai still remains in close contact with many former beneficiaries. Despite her busy schedule, Mullai still finds time to chat with them over social media or meet with them for coffee, just to listen to their challenges in adulthood just like she did when they were young.

The hands and feet that make Club Rainbow activities possible

Mullai always went the extra mile, making sure that everyone fully enjoyed themselves during the annual Club Rainbow family retreat. Mullai also had to ensure that no one got lost during sightseeing and shopping trips, and also ensure that wheelchair-bound children had enough assistance whenever they visited the toilet. She also plays a pivotal role behind the scenes, securing sponsorships from kind donors such as partners from Goodwood Park Hotel, who make these events possible in the first place.

Though planning out the logistics for the camp can take as long as six months to ensure that every child has an adult befriender to supervise them throughout the camp, the memories that the children make and the respite that caregivers receive makes all the hard work worthwhile for Mullai.

Drawing strength from volunteerism to be a pillar of support

The love that Mullai has towards the children doesn't hold her back from showing tough love whenever it is warranted. She will not hesitate to point out when children are misbehaving. Ultimately, her desire is for every child of Club Rainbow to understand that it's ok to make mistakes, and that they are not alone in their struggles.

Yet, despite her years of long suffering, Mullai still feels that she has received more than she has given.

“It’s been a privilege to guide them, listen to some of their deepest thoughts and emotions, and be part of their challenging life journey. I received a lot more than I gained because it taught me how to appreciate my life better and realise that others out there are experiencing much greater challenges.”

Twenty years on, Mullai still finds herself motivated to volunteer and build lifelong bonds with the new generation of youth in the years to come. She's aware that the youth today face different challenges to the people before them, and promises to strive to understand the difficulties they face and guide them through their ordeals.

Though she understands that time is a big limitation that prevents working adults from becoming volunteers, Mullai herself wouldn't trade the experience for the world. She values the friendships she has formed with fellow volunteers, childrens, parents and even sponsors, while volunteering. Because these are the very experiences that give her the strength to stand strong and be a pillar of support for those around her.



Mullai with Club Rainbow youths who had since graduated

From Receiving to Giving

Yi Wen (left) with
her daughter



Chia Yi Wen

Former Beneficiary and Volunteer

Yi Wen is quite possibly one of the most seasoned members of Club Rainbow, having joined as a beneficiary in 1992 when she was just 1 year old, when Club Rainbow itself was just established. Thirty years on, Yi Wen still recalls fond memories of Camp Rainbow. The camp was when Yi Wen got to relish her childhood in a way that she wouldn't have been able to if she hadn't been a beneficiary.

Yi Wen has had to avoid physical activity throughout her childhood. Diagnosed with Biliary Atresia, a disease characterised by the absence or blockage of bile ducts, Yi Wen struggles with complications such as an enlarged spleen, portal hypertension and low blood platelets. Her condition forced her to undergo Kasai Procedure at just 6 weeks old, followed by two other surgeries at 7 years old to treat the complications.

Celebrating 30 years of Club Rainbow

Dreams realised at Club Rainbow

But rather than sit on the sidelines in primary school Physical Education lessons, Club Rainbow Camp Rainbow finally gave Yi Wen the opportunity to participate in outdoor activities and sport events thanks to doctors and nurses who were on standby. The children also got to enjoy the whole hall to themselves, where they partied the night away in a kid-friendly disco and movie night.

Club Rainbow also gave Yi Wen's family members an opportunity to travel overseas through the annual retreat programme. Thanks to the medical staff and nurses on standby, Yi Wen and her family were able to embark on these trips without the usual fears at the back of their minds.

“If not for Club Rainbow, I would not have had the chance to experience so many things in life. All these activities may seem trivial to other kids, but to those of us who face chronic illness, it means a lot.”

Life long friendships

But it is the long-term friendships fostered during Club Rainbow Camp that Yi Wen treasures the most, many of whom she still stays connected with via social media. One particular volunteer she stayed in contact with is Mullai D/O Pushpanathan (full story on page 37-38), one of Club Rainbow's long serving volunteer and group leader at the camp Yi Wen attended. Mullai was also present at Yi Wen's wedding, and is well acquainted with her daughter today.

Described by her closest friends as a self-motivated go-getter with a compassionate heart for serving others, Yi Wen lived up to her reputation by returning to Club Rainbow as a volunteer the moment she graduated at the age of 16. She would continue giving her heart and soul to the cause for 15 more years (and counting!). One of the most rewarding volunteer experiences that she has had was leading a team as the F&B director for Camp Rainbow. Over the course of 6 months, Yi Wen worked hard to secure sponsorships, all of which eventually paid off when she got to witness the smiles on the children's faces at Camp Rainbow.

“All the endless meetings and conversations during the intensive planning stages were definitely worth it when I got to see how happy the children were.”

Giving back

Yi Wen's 30-year journey with Club Rainbow is far from over. Rather, she looks forward to continuously giving back to the same community that made her feel included and helped her realise her potential. Despite not being able to contribute financially, Yi Wen willingly sacrifices long hours to volunteer as a Camp Rainbow committee member. At present, Yi Wen is looking forward to bringing her daughter to Club Rainbow's birthday bash on 27 November for her to learn more about Club Rainbow.

It is the effort and sacrifice of volunteers like Yi Wen that makes activities at Club Rainbow possible. Moving forward, Yi Wen urges Club Rainbow's children to make the most of the discovery programmes to learn new skills and find their passions.

“It is great to see that the children have opportunities to explore their unique interests and abilities.”



Yi Wen attended her first Camp Rainbow in 2002.

Club Rainbow (Singapore)



Our anniversary logo and key visual were designed by our beneficiary, Jared Lee Jun Le, under the mentorship of local artist Sam Lo. The tagline, **“Dream the Future”**, is prominently featured at the top. The vibrant Club Rainbow “ecosystem” shows how our stakeholders work together to create the best environment for our children to grow and thrive.

Our Locations:


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