



The story of a stream

A GROUP of 58 children, aged six to 12, spent a day learning about the ecosystem of a stream at the Bukit Kiara Park last week before proceeding to Starbucks Kota Damansara for an eco-craft workshop using recycled materials.

Taking part in the environmental education programme Project Green, they had lots of fun getting their feet wet and collecting aquatic live samples of various species with the help of Wild Asia's facilitators and Starbucks partners.

Based on their samples, the children were taught the life cycles of the various species and the stream's importance to their survival. They also took part in the role play session "River Story", led by Wild Asia facilitator Khing Su Li, to show the impact that human attitudes can have on rivers.

Back at the Starbucks store, the children made paper mache fish using waste materials under the watchful eye of crafts guru Wong Lileng.

Project Green, co-organised by Starbucks Coffee and Wild Asia, aims to spread the message on how youth can take the lead in protecting the environment and start thinking about the individual lifestyle choices they can make in order to save the planet.

It is also part of the Starbucks Shared Planet programme, whose goal is to help farmers and communities worldwide create a better environment and future.

Starbucks Coffee marketing and communication director Sydney Quays said Project Green's purpose is more than to provide a range of fun activities for youngsters.

"It is about educating our young people on the importance of good environmental stewardship and sharing responsibility with the community. Our collaboration with Wild Asia on this project fits perfectly into the Starbucks Shared Planet goal," he said.

"Led by environmental ex-

perts at Wild Asia and driven by Starbucks' partners, Project Green comprises a series of eco-educational field trips and eco-workshops that feature hands-on learning activities and events."

"Project Green is about investing in the environmental education of the younger generation," Wild Asia founder and director Dr Reza Azmi said.

"We are happy to collaborate with Starbucks to help spread the message of responsibility and awareness of steps that can be taken to green the earth," he said.

In the coming months, Starbucks and Wild Asia will conduct more such activities in the Klang Valley for teenagers and young adults aged 18-24.

If Project Green has sparked your interest, send an email with your particulars to customer@starbucks.com.my to apply. Participant numbers are limited.

KDU students are briefed on how charcoal is made at a Matang a factory.



Project Green organisers and young participants.

Proposing their own conservation ideas

IT WAS a fun yet educational outing for about 60 international tourism and hotel management students of Kolej Daman-sara Utama who went on an excursion to Taiping and Cameron Highlands recently.

The first-year degree and diploma students had the opportunity to explore Gua Tempurung in Perak, a serene mangrove forest in Matang and cool Cameron Highlands.

The non-stop activities lined up kept the participants fully occupied.

Also on the itinerary were the Night Safari in Taiping, Ecopark in the Bukit Merah Laketown Resort, the BOH Tea Plantation, Honey Bee Farm and the popular Kea Farm vegetable market in Cameron Highlands.

On their first day, the visitors explored Gua Tempurung, wading in rivers, avoiding sharp stalactites and climbing steep, slippery slopes in the cave.

Anand Raj Supramaniam, the lecturer in charge, said the objective of the expedition was to expose the students to an out-of-class learning atmosphere and broaden their minds to the importance of the natural environment.

"I'm actually teaching them how to develop proposals on improving and sustaining the natural environment," he said.

The expedition was part of a course-work assignment that required students to especially concentrate on the mangrove

forest and observe the ways in which it has been conserved and sustained.

The students are to compile a report in which they propose their own forest conservation ideas based on what they learn on the trip.

Supramaniam said that although the trip was not included in the syllabus, it was designed to broaden students' knowledge of tourism, environment and drawing up proposals.

"They don't learn about external environment in their syllabus, so I added this on," he said.

"They will evaluate and analyse the entire forest, the community and the charcoal factory here to see what can be done in the future to ensure these are sustained."

The students' proposals will not only be evaluated by their lecturer but also by the Perak Forestry Department.

Emyru Yusoff Idris, 20, said the expedition was a great idea, considering that it was his first time out with his classmates. "The experience I had in the cave was awesome. I have never taken part in something like this," he said, adding that adventurous tourists would love places such as this.

Melissa Asha, 19, said that despite the aches, cuts and bruises, she would definitely go on such a trip again. "Study is good, but more adventure would be fun. We are still young, so this is the only time we can do all this."

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Help is only a call away

FOR most people, taking their own lives is a foolhardy idea. In the eyes of the law, it is a crime.

Yet to some, it might appear the only answer or option, simply because there is no one to help them through their seemingly unsolvable problems.

But remember, help is only a phone call away. The Befrienders Kuala Lumpur is more than ready to lend an ear.

The crisis centre is a non-profit organisation founded by a group of people in 1970 after May 13, 1969, with the help of psychiatrists and psychologists of University Hospital Kuala Lumpur, to help people affected by the riots.

Some of its goals are to create awareness of the causes of suicide and its prevention, and to impart emotional support skills.

"We are not there to judge or to give callers any suggestions, but to lend them an ear, since most callers just need to let out their feelings to another person," Befrienders publicity director Vincent Pun said.

"We do not record their personal data so as to protect their privacy," he said, adding that the centre receives 20,000 calls annually.

With the current economic situation, it has seen an increase



Befrienders volunteers at a counselling training session with a psychiatrist.

in the number of calls, which puts stress on the 95 volunteers manning its hotlines.

"We are shorthanded especially during the late night hours which is when we receive the most calls," Pun said.

He said most callers are in their 20s and 30s, while teenagers prefer to email their problems as it is more cost effective.

"We often give talks to undergraduates and college students to recruit volunteers and to raise awareness of our services. We are also reaching out to the lower levels of society such as estates and rural areas to help people who need counselling."

Pun said volunteers must undergo basic training for counselling before serving

the community and attend monthly training programmes conducted by psychiatrists.

"It is very meaningful to be a volunteer at Befrienders because I get to help people and potentially save lives by listening to them and feeling for them," he said.

Befrienders KL received the Distinguished NGO Award in 2007 and was second runner-up at the Malaysia NGO Awards last year. It is recognised by the Health Ministry and the Mental Health Association.

If you need to talk to someone, call their 24-hour hotline at 03-7956 8144 or 03-7856 8145, e-mail: sam@befrienders.org.my or visit them at No. 95, Jalan Templer, Petaling Jaya after making an appointment.

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