



# FACES

A newsletter of Filos Community Services

April | 2014

## Season of HOPE

Happy Families

Transformed Overcomer

Persevering Youth

Empowered Women



## From the ED's desk

*A young child prays with hope that her daddy will return home.  
A father perseveres on to provide for his 4 children, even as his wife walks out on him.  
An elderly lady with not much means cheerfully shares her food with her neighbours.  
A daughter struggles with an abusive father, yet tenderly cares for him in his old age.*

**H** OPE SHINES in the midst of despair and discouragement .

I recently read about the story of a 31 year old Canadian, called Spencer West. At age 5, he lost both his legs and doctors told him that he would not be able to walk or lead an active life again. But this man defied all odds. With the support of family and friends, Spencer reached out for the impossible : he climbed Mount Kilimanjaro!

Spencer spent 12 months in intensive training, making sure his arms and hands would be strong enough to take the extreme physical pressure. It took him 7 days to make it to the summit, wearing shoes on his hands,

when he had to travel using only his upper limbs for a good 80% of the trek. He raised over \$600,000 for a Children's Charity through his inspirational climb!

HOPE SHINES in seasons of difficulty.

Shel Silverstein, author of ' The Giving Tree' aptly describes HOPE

*"Listen to the mustn'ts, child.*

*Listen to the don'ts.*

*Listen to the shouldn'ts, the impossibles,  
the won'ts.*

*Listen to the never haves,  
then listen close to me...*

*Anything can happen, child.*

*Anything can be."*

This issue of our FACES newsletter gives snapshots of those in our community who have soldiered on with HOPE through the obstacles and challenges they had to face. May their stories warm our hearts and prompt us to journey with them to support them and others like them, and perhaps help to turn their hopes and dreams into reality!

Dr. Foo Fung Fong  
Executive Director  
Filos Community  
Service ◆







## Persevering Youth

## FILOS CAMP

From 18th to 19th November 2013, the much awaited Filos 2D1N Camp took place at Costa Sands Resort. We had new beneficiaries on board this time, but through icebreaking games like Whacko, strangers soon became friends.

The theme of the camp was : "Persevere to do good; to do right". The children and youth learnt what

it meant to persevere in different aspects of their lives. Through activities and games, they bonded, learned to work together, cared for one another and barbequed food for one another.

We were blessed with youth volunteers who modeled what it meant to speak well, do good and do right through informal interactions.

During the camp, the children and youth were asked to pin their thanksgiving on a Gratitude board. The move prompted them to share simply about their teachers, families, their time at Filos and the camp itself. The whole experience was, as one camper concluded, "super tiring but super fun." ♦



## Bursary and Scholarship Awards and Volunteer Appreciation 2013

On 23rd November 2013, Filos organized a movie treat to celebrate the Bursary and Scholarship award recipients and to appreciate our volunteers and partners. The families of the award recipients and other beneficiaries also came together to enjoy the film "Justin and the Knights of Valour". Everyone was treated with popcorn or hotdog buns and a pepsi drink in hand.

The film was about a young prince's journey towards becoming a Knight to rescue his kingdom. He was far from the average prince, with his scrawny physique and soft heart - nobody believed in his decision to undertake the immense task. But as the story unfolded, it was clear from the audience's reactions that we were all rooting for him as he uncovered and reconciled conflicting family expectations as well as persevering on in trial after trial.

This movie treat was made possible through the International Volunteers Day (IVD) grant. Filos submitted more than 50 My Volunteer Hero stories. These were stories written by beneficiaries, sharing about how volunteers had made a difference in their lives. Through the collection of the stories, we were able to see how volunteers had truly touched the lives of our clients, encouraging each one to persevere on and to try their best. ♦



## Empowered Women

## STORY OF JANE



Jane\* (not her real name) was happy to meet Filos staff at the hawker centre near our office. As we chatted over lunch we could not help but notice how happier and relaxed she has become since we first met her a year ago.

We received a call from her last year to enquire regarding Filos Active Minds programme. She suspected that her dad has been suffering from dementia for over ten years before he was finally diagnosed. It had been a very challenging journey for her family. Her father has a strong character and is a stern man, and Jane was not close to him. He had been behaving inappropriately, for example, urinating into flower pots and laundry baskets, and was always looking for food even

late at night. She and her mother are exasperated and resentful as they could not get him to change his ways. She felt angry and hurt each time he yelled at her.

Jane saw a poster about Filos' Active Minds service, and in desperation called for our assistance. Jane only wished for some respite and for his condition not to deteriorate further, for the strain had proven too challenging for them.

We started activities with Jane's father at their home, to help him maintain his cognitive abilities. It was encouraging for Jane to notice that her dad, who has a very short attention span, was able to focus well on activities we

conducted with him. He really enjoyed playing chess. She was surprised that Filos staff were able to relate lovingly and gently with her father, when even they themselves and other people are usually hostile to him.

As we were finishing up the conversation with Jane, she said she was glad we encouraged her to consider having caregivers' support and training at Alzheimer's Disease Association. She finally realized it was not her father's rudeness but his deteriorated condition which reduced his speech to single-words. Her dad recently fell quite ill and she realized they do not have much more time with him. She has since renewed her love and motivation to care for her dad. ♦

**P**.L.E.A.S.E. (Parents Learning English and Speaking Excellently) is an English course aimed at Chinese speaking mothers. It is now in its second run as feedback from participants had been excellent. The mothers, including one grandmother, have been marching into class with an enthusiasm that is highly infectious. They have progressed from trying to repeat simple words and sentences by rote, to communicating with people they meet outside at work. One of the participants, Mdm Tan, exclaimed that she was able to speak to the Malay conservancy personnel about her rubbish chute's door being stuck, and the other party was able to converse with her. "I understand her, she understand me. Simple English!" she chirped happily one evening, laughing as she recounted the incident.

Although the initial aim of the class was to equip these mothers to

communicate with their customers at work, their children's school personnel, and non-Chinese acquaintances, the empowerment has taken effect in a domain nearest to home - their own families. At the dinner table where conversations would mostly take place in English, because her university-graduated children would converse with their own children, Mdm Tan would join in only occasionally when they do switch to Chinese. Now, she participates in the conversations through active listening, understanding and sharing her thoughts.

The name of the class "*Parents Learning English And Speaking Excellently*" may have sounded more hilarious than realistic in the beginning. However, it seems that the ladies are moving in the right direction towards that goal, slowly

but surely. Besides learning English, they look forward to each lesson because of the fun and lessons learnt - lessons about communication, understanding the younger generation, parenthood and ageing with purpose and grace. While on a discussion topic about being active, another mother responded that "(they) come here (Filos) to feel young!" What an encouragement to see them being empowered! ♦



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## Please Donate

Filos' programs and activities are funded largely by contributions from donors. Your contribution will help FILOS improve the well being of the less fortunate in our midst as we endeavour to reach many more individuals in the community.

### Cash / Cheque Donation

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For cheques, kindly make cheques payable to "Filos Community Services Ltd" and mail to 408B Upper East Coast Road, Singapore 466484.

\*All donations to FILOS are tax deductible.

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