

Children get out and play with help from volunteers



A 6th Sense volunteer helping a child make Christmas cards earlier this month. The ground-up initiative runs regular sessions with children from rental flats in Kebun Bahru, with volunteers assuming a different role each time – from art teachers to skate instructors, based on activities the children request. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

The rental flats in Kebun Bahru are never quiet on Saturdays, with children from the area rushing down to the void decks to tell Mr Abhishek Bajaj about their week while they engage in activities of their choice. This could be arts and crafts, playing sports or even putting on a fashion show.

The co-founder of 6th Sense Singapore wanted to ensure that children living in less privileged environments are still able to enjoy a childhood filled with fun and enrichment despite not having the same opportunities as others.

Mr Abhishek, 29, started the project with Ms Jezamine Chua, 27,

and Ms Manisha Nishad, 29, in April 2019 after he got to know children in the Kebun Bahru neighbourhood through his previous job with non-profit organisation, Beyond Social Services.

6th Sense, a ground-up initiative, ran sessions every other Saturday. But when the pandemic struck, Mr

Abhishek realised the need for stimulation for children became more urgent.

“The kids are mostly home throughout the week, so they may feel quite isolated. How much television can a child watch every day?” he asked.

“That’s when we decided to just

go and play with them as often as we can. Our role in the community is to be a friend... so they have a safe space to share whatever is on their minds,” said the full-time student at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Mr Abhishek and 6th Sense’s volunteers assume a different role each time – from art teachers to skate instructors – for 20 children, based on the activities the children request.

They even facilitated a fashion show with recycled materials at Thomson Nature Park during a session in March last year.

Reha Ashcroft, 13, said she would usually be on her phone watching YouTube videos on Saturdays.

“I don’t bring my phone downstairs for the sessions because I know we will be busy playing and trying new stuff. I always wait for Saturdays to come,” she added.

During the long months that they could not gather because of Covid-19 safe management measures, the volunteers set up video calls with the children and conducted activities virtually.

When the measures were relaxed, the team cheered at the prospect of being able to conduct face-to-face sessions again, which are now almost weekly.

Mr Abhishek said no matter how much he gives to the cause, the love he gets back is tenfold.

“The parents would always feed me dinner after the sessions. So after a while, these children started to feel like my family. There was no longer any differentiation.

“That in itself motivates me to keep going and growing 6th Sense, because why wouldn’t I want to help my family?”

Syarafana Shafeeq

• You can learn more about this cause by contacting Mr Abhishek Bajaj at bajjabhishek92@gmail.com or at the Facebook page 6thSenseSG