



Law student Nathaniel Yeo and pharmaceutical sciences student Kareena Kaur taking part in the National University of Singapore's fund-raising carnival, Rag and Flag, at University Town on Aug 10. Through the event and flag day donations, more than \$212,000 was raised. ST PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

NUS students raise over \$212,000 for 15 social service agencies

Shabana Begum

On July 2, undergraduate Kareena Kaur spent a day interacting with children with special needs at Minds' Towner Gardens School.

The second-year National University of Singapore (NUS) pharmaceutical sciences student and her hostel mates at King Edward VII Hall had carefully planned a day of engaging activities such as a simple Zumba routine, face tattoos and a popsicle stick scavenger hunt for the children, who had autism and intellectual disability.

"There was one student who

would keep returning to the station to have more sticker tattoos. Some of the kids held our hands as they looked for the popsicle sticks. The excitement they showed when finding the sticks was memorable," said Ms Kaur, 21.

Those children were on her mind a month later, when she was at the Botanic Gardens with her schoolmates to collect donations for various social service agencies, including the school.

She was among around 1,300 NUS students who fanned out islandwide on July 27 and Aug 3 to places such as the Botanic Gardens, Potong Pasir and Little India to canvass for donations for the Community Chest.

Their efforts culminated on Aug 10 in a day of performances and a fund-raising carnival, Rag And Flag, at University Town.

Through the flag day donations and Aug 10's event, more than \$212,000 was raised for 15 social service agencies.

In 2023, close to \$170,000 was raised.

This initiative – an annual varsity tradition since 1958 – is considered something of a rite of passage for incoming undergraduates. The aim of the programme is to inculcate the values of volunteering and giving back to society.

Attending the event, Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, a former president of the NUS Students' Union council, reminded undergraduates about the three Cs behind the initiative – the collective involvement of freshmen, the creativity needed to build elaborate props and sets for the concert, and compassion for the charities at the heart of the event.

Second-year law student Nathaniel Yeo, 22, said seeking donations from the public can be intim-

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idating for some students.

"For a lot of the freshmen, it was their first time truly approaching people and asking for donations... It was about being very specific about where the money would go, to children at risk, for instance, and that made the public more receptive," he added.

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