



Getting along through books

Pupils use reading activities to strengthen the community spirit.

Amanda Phoon reports

Rapt with attention, the children sat close to one another, enthralled by a National Library Board storyteller.

Nearby, residents browsed books, played five stones and posed with props at a photo booth.

The activities were part of a community engagement project – We Care, We Share! – held on April 18, at a block of flats beside Greenwood Primary School.

The project was mainly conceptualised by a core team of five Primary 5 and 6 pupil leaders from the school, to strengthen community spirit among residents and encourage a love for reading.

The pupil leaders were assisted in the project's execution by 15 other pupils.

Their project was one of 20 proposals shortlisted for implementation under the Good Neighbours Project, which aims to inspire and facilitate initiatives to encourage neighbourliness.

"We were discussing in the

library and most of us wanted to do an Amazing Race," said Madhumitha Udayasankar, 11, referring to the television reality show series, where people dash from place to place solving puzzles and exploring.

"However, our school already did an Amazing Race last year and that had its pros and cons," the Primary 5 pupil added.

The idea of centring the event on a book-exchange activity, alongside traditional games such as capteh, and a photo booth, then struck.

Added 11-year-old Primary 5 pupil Stefanie Poh: "We thought of using the books which our school library wanted to discard to promote the culture of reading and interaction between neighbours."

In the three weeks leading up to the event, the pupils helped to prepare for the big day by learning to play the traditional games for the booths,

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among other things. The journey was an enriching one, as the pupils stepped out of their comfort zone to try new things and develop new skills.

Stefanie shared that she is usually shy and quiet and does not talk much. However, she has now learnt to communicate better and work in a team.

"Now, my confidence has improved and I have learnt to



Children engrossed in a storytelling session conducted by the National Library Board. PHOTO: AMANDA PHOON

talk to people, listen to them while they are speaking, and help them when they are in need."

The pupils' efforts paid off, with about 100 residents attending the event.

Sarunisha Vasu, eight, a Primary 2 pupil from Greenwood Primary School, attended the event with her

neighbour, who is also her schoolmate. They joined the storytelling session, played hopscotch and received two books through the book exchange.

She said: "It was interesting because all the neighbours came together. I also liked the books. They were interesting and I enjoyed reading them."

Find out more about the student initiatives under the Good Neighbours Project at the Housing Development Board (HDB) Community Week 2015.

Held at the HDB Hub Mall from May 22 to 31, the three winners from each of the categories (Primary,

Secondary and Post-Secondary) will share their projects and experiences.

The community projects aim to bring together neighbours and deepen their sense of belonging to their neighbourhood, among other things.



What other ways can you think of to encourage neighbourliness?