

## A Heartfelt Zoo-per Good Time

Combining fun and a worthy cause help Children's Day take on a whole new meaning

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Children's Day was extra special for these children and CapitaLand staff volunteers at this year's Kids Food Fund educational food trail held at the Singapore Zoo

As the gloomy morning skies gave way to gentle streams of sunlight, almost 100 underprivileged children led by 35 CapitaLand staff volunteers happily trotted down pathways set amidst lush foliage at the Singapore Zoo. Aged seven to 12 years old, the children were from Xishan Primary School, Boon Lay Garden Primary School and Jamiyah Children's Home. Their feelings of excitement were hard to suppress – after all, it was Children's Day and they were in for a fun-filled half-day educational food trail!

This excursion is part of CapitaLand's year-long Kids Food Fund programme launched last year (see [Hunger No More](#)). This year, through CapitaLand Hope Foundation (CHF), the Kids Food Fund received a S\$360,000 donation to provide nutritious food for over 12,000 underprivileged children in Singapore, China, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam.



Dr Ooz brought a fun twist to an educational session with the help of her furry animals

### **Making a Lasting Educational Connection**

This year's exciting food trail included interactive pit stops at animal habitats, a tropical crops tour and lessons with Dr Ooz, the star of the Singapore Zoo, where children learnt about food for animals and its sources. "Dr Ooz's Wild Kitchen" was an entertaining presentation that taught children about the feeding habits of animals. The kids participated earnestly in helping Dr Ooz prepare the meals for a rabbit, a ferret and a hamster.

"I learnt that different animals have different types of teeth such as molar, incisor and canines to help them chew. Food is important for them as they need the nutrients to survive in the wild," shared Amiral Hikmah bin Hashim, a Primary Five student from Xishan Primary School.

As the kids toured the different animal exhibits, their eyes darted around in curious wonder, peppering their steps with exclamations. These experiences were especially memorable for Primary Six student Norhidayah Bte Ahmad Nazari from Boon Lay Garden Primary School as this was the 12-year-old's first visit to the Singapore Zoo. "I like the greenery and enjoyed Dr Ooz's lesson on food and animals," she beamed.

To make learning more interesting and interactive, CapitaLand staff volunteers prepared prizes and quizzed the children on fun facts about the animals as they passed the exhibits.



Interesting pit stops motivated children to sniff out the answers at the animal exhibits and Tropical Crops Plantation



## Linking Food and Fun with a Heartfelt Cause

The pit stop at the Tropical Crops Plantation made the children to go on a 'treasure hunt' for quiz answers. While there were more than 50 different species of edible plants at the plantation, the enthusiastic children set out to find the answers, constantly asking questions about the vegetables and fruits that attracted them. Without a doubt, the food trail had heightened the children's awareness of food and their origins.

*The children enjoyed a splashing good time at the Splash Safari by Phillip the Seal*

A highlight of the day was the interesting live performance at the Splash Safari by Phillip the Seal,

amusing everyone with its clever antics and tricks. The children also enjoyed a splashing good time in the end when they dashed down for a cool splash from the star itself!

Admiring all the food and fun, it is also about remembering and reaching out to the less fortunate. Staff volunteer Yvonne Cheng, Senior Leasing Executive of CapitaMalls Asia, who brought along her daughter, shared, "Kids Food Fund is doing a great job in making a difference to the less fortunate children. I'm proud to be working in an organisation that gives back to society through its donation and takes the effort to plan and organise such events for the underprivileged children."

For the second year running, CHF's Kids Food Fund gave a S\$100,000 donation to 100 underprivileged children from Xishan Primary School and Boon Lay Garden Primary School through Food From The Heart (FFTH), a voluntary food distribution programme. Starting from October this year, these students will receive a monthly goodie bag containing rice, cooking oil, canned food and other basic food items from their schools, for a year.

Mrs Christine Laimer is grateful for CHF's adoption of these underprivileged children through the Food Goodie Bag programme. She added, "With CHF's support, we are now also able to look at providing nutritious food, on top of just the basics."



Mr Tan Seng Chai, Deputy Chief Corporate Officer and Chief Human Resource Officer of CapitaLand Limited (Centre), presenting cheques of S\$100,000 and S\$40,000 to Mrs Christine Laimer (right), Founder of FFTH and Ms Mandy Low (left) from World Vision respectively.

Brendan Koh, Primary Five student from Boon Lay Garden Primary School is touched by CHF's kind gesture. He said, "Food is important to me so I can have the nutrients to grow taller and do more things. I feel very happy because there is some help for my family."

Beyond Singapore, CHF continues with its food programmes for underprivileged children in China, the Philippines and Thailand through its partner, Plan International. It has also collaborated with World Vision's Blue Dragon Children's Foundation to reach out to underprivileged children in Vietnam.

Mandy Loh, External Relations Manager from World Vision (Singapore), said, "The street children in Vietnam are going to benefit greatly from this because a full tummy means that they can concentrate better in school and they can have a better future."

## **Bonding through Fun and Giving Hope**

While the launch of the Kids Food Fund last year saw 30 underprivileged students embarked on a sensory trail at Pulau Ubin with CapitaLand staff volunteers (see [Experience Nature's Gifts](#)), this year's event reached out to more students and even encouraged staff volunteers to bring along their own children.

Staff volunteer Chia Gek Noi, Vice President of Treasury department at CapitaLand Limited, was thrilled to volunteer in such a worthy cause with her nine-year-old daughter Clare Ng. Learning about the plight of other less fortunate children certainly made them count their blessings.



*Figure 1*Volunteering with daughter Clare makes the experience more meaningful for Chia Gek Noi, Vice President of Treasury at CapitaLand Limited

"I heard from one of the teachers that some of the families are very poor. For instance, [some families survive] on an income of S\$800 for a family of four. When she visited the homes, one family had gunny sacks as mattresses and t-shirts rolled up as pillows. What the company does is very good because they don't just look at making profits, but also doing some charity work," said Chia. "It's been a very good chance for us to bond together and at the same time do our part for society. It was definitely meaningful for us today."

Vice President of Secretariat, CapitaLand Limited, Ng Chooi Peng, participated in this event with her 10-year-old daughter, Low Yuting.

"I think this is a good effort to benefit needy children. It provides an avenue for working people like us, a chance to volunteer. Yuting is happy to join me. She has volunteered with me in another Green for Hope activity in December 2009. It's a chance for us to get closer because we are usually separate at work or school," she revealed.

Regardless of children or adults, everyone enjoyed themselves learning about the animals, making new friends and contributing back to society – giving this Children's Day a special meaning to those who came for this Zoo-per good time at the educational trail!