

Experience Nature's Gifts

A treat for the senses at Pulau Ubin

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All ready to set foot on Pulau Ubin for a sensory experience

A gentle breeze blew and sounds of the rustling leafstalks accompanied whiffs of a familiar fragrance in the air. It was a beautiful day on September 16 at Pulau Ubin and the pandan valley along the sensory trail was filled with the laughter, chatter and footsteps of 30 children led by volunteer nature guides and CapitaLand staff volunteers.



The sensory trail led children to the fragrant valley of pandan leaves

Aged nine to 11 years old, the children from Xishan Primary School and Boon Lay Garden Primary School were treated to a half-day educational sensory trail at Pulau Ubin. They had the chance to touch, see and smell plants used in traditional medicine, fruit trees as well as spices and herbs for cooking.

"It is my first time to Pulau Ubin and the bumboat was quite scary at first! But it turned out okay," said Nurin Asyura from Boon Lay Primary School. "The lipstick plant was my favourite because there is colour when you take and rub it in your hands."

"I liked the pandan valley," said Saravanan from Xishan Primary School. "The nature surrounding us is very green and nice so we must not destroy it," he added as an afterthought.



Figure 1 The rambutan-like fruit of the lipstick tree can be used in the making of dyes for makeup and fabric



What's that citrusy smell? *Citronella* oil is extracted from these grasses for a wide range of uses



Curious children took turns to peer into the old well

One of the plants even drove the children into a smelling and rubbing frenzy! It was the *citronella*, a major ingredient used in mosquito repellent. The children wanted to rub some on themselves to ward off the mosquitoes.

As the children made their way along the trail, they reached the 'Secret Garden' section where an old well awaited their discovery. According to the guides, dwellers used to throw live fishes into the well to see if it survived, as an indication of whether the water was safe for drinking!

All for a Good Cause

Food is a topic that is close to the heart, especially since these children participating in the sensory trail are beneficiaries of Food From The Heart (FFTH), a voluntary food distribution programme, which distributes food to needy families in Singapore. Under FFTH's Food Goodie Bag programme, students from these needy families receive a monthly goodie bag containing basic food items.

The educational sensory trail at Pulau Ubin was a treat for them and it culminated with the rare opportunity to watch the filming of "The Perfect Meal Asia", a reality television cooking competition, which pits up-and-coming chefs against each other. Everyone sat hushed and watched in wide-eyed wonder as the cast and crew sprung into action.

The eventful day marked the beginning of a year's treat from CapitaLand. CapitaLand Hope Foundation (CHF), CapitaLand's philanthropic arm, donated S\$100,000 to FFTH, which will enable 100 children from Xishan Primary School and Boon Lay Garden Primary School to benefit from a year's supply of nutritious food starting this month.



Children were filled with excitement as they made their way to the filming set of "The Perfect Meal Asia"

Henry and Christine Laimer, founders of FFTH were all smiles when they received the cheque donation from Tan Seng Chai, Senior Vice President (Human Resource) of CapitaLand Limited. "We have always been looking at providing the basic staples for children," Laimer said. "With CHF's support, we are now also able to look at providing nutritious food, on top of just the basics."



Nutritious food is on the way to 100 beneficiaries from Xishan Primary School and Boon Lay Primary School, all thanks to CapitaLand Hope Foundation's donation to FFTH

Reaching Out with Kids' Food Fund

CHF's donation to FFTH marked the official launch of CapitaLand's Kids' Food Fund programme. In support of United Nations World Food Day on 16 October 2010, CapitaLand is devoting the month of October to improve food security and nutrition for underprivileged children.

As part of the programme, CHF has donated a total of S\$525,000 to provide nutritious food for over 11,000 underprivileged children in Singapore, China, the Philippines and Thailand. In Singapore, CHF contributed a total of S\$150,000 to four charities. CHF has also donated a total of S\$50,000 to the three

charities selected by "The Perfect Meal Asia". They are Jamiyah Children's Home, Singapore Anglican Community Services and Children's Aid Society (Melrose Home).

In China, the Philippines and Thailand, CHF has partnered Plan International, an international children's organisation, and will donate S\$125,000 to each of Plan International's local offices in these countries.

Mr Liew Mun Leong, President and CEO of CapitaLand Group, said: "We hope that together with the strong support from Food From The Heart and Plan International, we will be able to effect positive, sustainable changes to these children's lives."

A Small Step towards a Big Aim

Meanwhile, the positive impact was immediately felt by the children during the food trail at Pulau Ubin. As the children heartily tucked into teatime, they chatted easily with the volunteers.

Team leader Hirman Abdullah, Residence Manager of Somerset Grand Cairnhill, was enjoying the camaraderie with the children. "It was an enriching time to mix with the kids and to spend some time with nature," he said. "The kids got a chance to see where the ingredients that are commonly used in food came from. They normally would see them in the supermarkets where everything is processed."

One of the CapitaLand staff volunteers, Serene Lee, manager at Orchard Turn, CapitaMalls Asia even went around giving out hearts she specially made from plastic straws.

"This heart represents love," said Lee. "I wanted to show that somebody cares for them in this world, and hope that it will make them strong."

Everyone was in high spirits as they took the bumboat back to mainland Singapore. It was perfect ending to a perfect day and clearly a day well-spent that made a difference, to both the children and staff volunteers.



Hirman Abdullah enjoyed the interaction and felt privileged to be part of a significant movement



Children were all smiles when Serene Lee (left, centre) dished out the colourful hand-made straw hearts (right)