Spreading the joy of reading

NGO reaches new milestone with launch of its 10th library at low-cost apartment

By BREND A CH'NG and ADELINE GOOI
metro@thestar.com.my

MORE underprivileged children will now get the chance to experience the joy of reading thanks to Friends of Mankind which launched its 10th library in less than a year.

The international non-profit organisation built its first library at an orphanage in Kota Damansara in June last year, and launched its Book Effect project two months later.

Now, it boasts 10 libraries built at deserving community centres, low-cost housing areas and orphanages in the Klang Valley with over 20 smaller community libraries where it donated books.

However, the organisation does not determine where the libraries are built but will help put one in place whenever there is a request or need for one.

The latest success is at Block Four in Desa Mentari 1, Bandar Sunway, where a community library was built at the ground floor of the low-cost flats.

“When we started this project, we had a goal of sourcing 10,000 books and building 12 libraries at most, but because of the endless support, we managed to reach our milestone much sooner than expected,” said Book Effect project lead Apshy Vimal at the library’s launch.

She added that they had managed to raise over 50,000 books so far and gives out 1,500 to 2,000 books to each library built.

In Desa Mentari 1 however, they were able to stock about 5,000 books with the help of Sunway Group, which is the corporate sponsor for this project.

The group donated RM10,000 and successfully collected 2,000 books from Sunway employees across the region through a book donation drive.

Apart from that, art students from Sunway University also painted a beautiful mural on one of the walls of the library. There are also plans to give public speaking classes to the children here.

Apshy thanked Sunway Group for their generous support and contribution and added that this library would not have been possible without them.

“Something that I have learnt and really love about this project is how it brings people together. It is the same way books bring us together,” she said, adding that the project was close to her heart.

Also present at the launch was Friends to Mankind patron Datuk Patikka Noor Aini Abdullah, representatives of Sunway Group and MyPJ chairman Jeffrey Phang who worked with Friends of Mankind and acquired the community hall where the library was built.

MyPJ is a non-partisan coalition of 41 residents associations and Rukun Tetangga in Petaling Jaya. It is also the lead non-governmental organisation (NGO) for Komuniti Prihatin-Kerajaan Prihatin of Desa Mentari, which is a pilot project that focuses on developing four out of 11 blocks of the Desa Mentari low-cost flats.

Phang also commended the residents who welcomed and helped the project with open arms.

“They stayed back and cleaned up the place until morning before the launch, so thank you very much,” he said.

“Our objective is to empower the community to regulate themselves,” he said.

Joining them was Tunku Zain Al’Abidin, founding president of the Institute for Democracy and Economic Affairs and The Star columnist.

“There is nothing like physical human interactions and conversations with each other that really give intellectual concepts substantial meaning.

“It is not just about literacy and learning about the world but it is also about developing the community and that is what I love about this project,” he said.

He hopes there will be more community interaction and involvement in future projects.

The Book Effect has plans to set up libraries for children in orphanages, drug rehabilitation centres, Orang Asli communities, refugee homes and juvenile detention centres.

Their upcoming library project is at a juvenile detention centre.

Those who are keen to donate or help out can visit www.friendstomankind.org or call 03-6157 7746.