



Volunteers and children playing a game at Sentosa



Fun in the Sun

By Lim Fang Yi and Owen Png

The annual Camp Simba was held from 7 to 9 June this year, with students from Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School and Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (YLLSoM) coming together to organise three fun-filled days in the sun (and rain) for the children and grandchildren of cancer patients. This year's theme, Hakuna Matata, a Swahili term meaning "there are no worries", highlighted that the children are not alone in their predicaments, and that they will ultimately find their way in life.

While interacting with our beneficiaries, we saw for ourselves how patients' illnesses inevitably place heavy responsibilities and emotional burdens on their children, robbing them of their childhood and forcing them to grow up before their time. Although most of these children put on brave fronts and appear as normal kids, we strongly feel the need to reach out to them, especially as more than 10,000 cases of cancer are diagnosed in Singapore every year, and children are implicated in many instances.

Our camp thus aims to give these children a chance to simply have fun and just be kids, away from the grim reality

of disease and death, and in the process, befriend their facilitators and others who are in the same boat. Ultimately, we hope to build a sustainable Simba community that these children can rely on in times of need. To further reinforce our camp's sustainability and strengthen our Simba community, we are planning quarterly reunions, including two mega-reunions where past and present campers can meet and interact with one another.

This year, our camp expanded to include both the National University Health System and SingHealth health clusters, in a bid to recruit more children and obtain more resources to benefit them. We linked up with more sponsors for additional funding and more partners to touch base with more children. Our partners included KK Women's and Children's Hospital; HCA Hospice Care; National Cancer Centre; National University Cancer Institute, Singapore; and Singapore Cancer Society.

With these additional tie-ups, we were able to pack our camp to the brim with activities on Sentosa Island. The children zipped down slopes on the Luge, embarked on a scavenger hunt around Sentosa, explored the depths of

Photos: Kenneth Goh, Colin Ng, Soh Yuda and Edwin Yang



She ain't heavy, she's my sister



Captivated by the diverse marine life in the S.E.A. Aquarium



Letting creative juices flow

the ocean at the S.E.A. Aquarium, and took thrilling simulator rides at 4D Adventureland. All these built up to the finale, a night carnival at Duke-NUS, the first ever carnival in Camp Simba history and undoubtedly the highlight of this year's camp, which also doubled up as a mega-reunion for past campers. After jumping and sliding on the four-metre high bouncy castle, trying their hand at classic carnival games like ring toss, whacking pinatas, arming themselves with balloon hats and swords, and stuffing themselves with popcorn and candy floss, the children were visibly tired but elated, their hands proudly clutching the tokens they had gained at each booth and their bags brimming with prizes.

The camp concluded with a myriad of performances at YLLSoM, including tribe dances by the children themselves, songs, magic shows and skits. To some people, the closing ceremony marked the end of a wonderful joyride, but to the children and their families, their battles against disease rage on. As cheerful photos of the children flashed across the screen, it was truly heartwarming to know that Camp Simba had brought smiles to the children's faces and served as a welcome escapade for them. While we do not know how long this bliss will last for them and their parents, what's more important is that at the very least, the children now know that there is a helping hand, a listening ear, and an entire community whom they can fall back on as they venture on their arduous journey. **SMA**



Fang Yi is a third year medical student at YLLSoM and Codirector of Camp Simba 2013. This is her second year in the Camp Simba Executive Committee, as she strongly believes in reaching out to cancer patients, their children and families to help them cope with the multiple repercussions of the disease.



Owen is a first year medical student at Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School and Codirector of Camp Simba 2013. He is the Vice President of his class, primarily engaging his classmates in community service and fundraising projects across the school and several nonprofit organisations.