

By Club Rainbow

Healing the Soul

Club Rainbow (Singapore)



Club Rainbow (Singapore), a charity committed to helping children suffering from chronic and life-threatening illnesses, is honoured to be the adopted charity of the Singapore Medical Association. Here's a peek behind the rainbow.

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak – yes it is a tired cliché but it is also a very apt description of a Rainbow Child. As doctors, some of you would have treated them in the course of your work and noticed how their lives have been impacted by their illnesses.

But while their little bodies may never fully recover, it is the stoic spirit to live life to its fullest that keeps them holding on to their dreams.

“I wish for something that would make my family and me happy. I wish to be able to stand up and walk by myself – so I will not have to trouble others. I know one day this ‘silly dream’ will come true,” said Khristine.

Suffering from Spina Bifida, Khristine wrote those lines four years ago when she was confined to a wheelchair. Today, this 12-year-old can walk with crutches. She has developed into an outgoing, confident girl and a world of possibilities now lies before her.

She is just one of more than 420 children receiving help from Club Rainbow. All of them suffer from a range of major chronic and life-threatening illnesses requiring frequent hospital visits and medical treatment together with lifelong medication.

Their illnesses receive precious little public attention. These include blood disorders such as Thalassaemia Major, Biliary Atresia and Congenital Heart Diseases. One of Club Rainbow's largest illness groups comprises children who were born prematurely with serious complications such as visual and hearing impairment and chronic lung problems.

Founded almost 14 years ago, Club Rainbow works primarily with three hospitals: KK Women's and Children's Hospital (KKH), National University Hospital (NUH) and the neonatal arm of Singapore General Hospital (SGH). To be part of Club Rainbow, children need to be referred to us by their doctors.

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Among the services we provide are professional counselling, home and hospital visits, support groups, sharing sessions and group work therapy. The charity also organises regular talks and seminars for parents to help them cope with their children's illnesses. We operate a resource centre at NUH and produce our own brochures, books and a quarterly newsletter to share information and coping strategies.

With the help of volunteers and benefactors, Club Rainbow organises regular social activities for our beneficiaries. These include our annual camp, educational trips and visits to interesting places. Mixing with others helps the Rainbow Children develop independence and self-confidence. Families in financial difficulty can also approach us for help.

Club Rainbow offers a free home tuition programme that assists Rainbow Children who are struggling to keep up with lessons they missed due to their illnesses. Last year, we started a hospital tuition scheme – the first of its kind in Singapore. Called Rainbow Academic Support Programme, a full-time professional teacher provides free bedside tuition for children warded in KKH.

Last year also saw the launch of our Talent Development Fund. By offering a small grant, this programme encourages children who are gifted in non-academic areas such as sports, music, dance, drama and the arts to pursue their dreams.

“By providing compassionate relevant services, we aim to give the Rainbow Children and their families a better quality of life and hope for the future,” said Club Rainbow’s President Gregory Vijayendran.

“This is not a mission we can accomplish on our own. We need the partnership of many generous individuals, philanthropic organisations, caring supporters and dedicated volunteers to make a world of difference and a difference to the world of our Rainbow Children.”

“There are many children like Khristine out there with dreams of their own. Maybe not all of them can be fulfilled but working together,

we can help make some of these dreams come true.” ■

YOU CAN HELP

As medical professionals, you can play an important role in helping these children:

- **Referrals** – If you come across a chronically ill child who could benefit from our support programmes, do let us know.
- **Volunteering** – Many of our activities such as our annual camp and outdoor programmes require doctors and nurses to be on hand for emergencies. We would like to widen our small but committed pool of volunteers. We welcome doctors to lead medical-related workshops for our parents. You can also sign up as a Befriender – a Big Brother or Big Sister and be paired up with a Rainbow Child to offer a comforting ear.
- **Donations** – Club Rainbow does not receive any government funding and relies totally on donations. Your donations will go a long way in building a Rainbow of Hope for all our beneficiaries. All monetary donations qualify for double tax exemption benefits.

If you would like to know more, do give us a call at 6377 1789 or email (contact@clubrainbow.org). You can also log on to our website www.clubrainbow.org.

