

No job too big for one-legged handyman

By YIP YOKE TENG

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Chin Wei Fui is a much loved volunteer at several welfare homes under the care of Persatuan Rumah Caring Kajang.

From the porch to backyard and even up on the roof of these homes, he attends to all the maintenance so that the residents can live there comfortably.

Such chores are strenuous but Chin, who has only one leg, does them with a grin.

He only received a prosthetic leg last September. Before that, he was moving about the homes using crutches.



Hardworking volunteer: Chin places his prosthetic leg on the side as he carries out repairs on the roof, a task that even an able-bodied person may not be able to do.

The burn scar that covers 70% of his body used to frighten the new residents at these homes, but they soon felt at ease with this hardworking 45-year-old.

Chin feels that he should work harder, because he has lost more than 20 years of his life to drug dependency.

He also does painting and other tough jobs that require him to work under the sun.

He gives all his earnings to the drug rehabilitation centre he graduated from and keeps only RM200 a month for himself.

"I think giving back to the centre that saved my life means much more than spending money on myself.

"The centre brought me to my faith, showed me love, hope and my worth," he said.



Great helpers: Chin (left) having a chat with 'Uncle Boy' Ngiam (centre) and Lau Heau Yuen, 49, a former drug addict who lost his hand in a gang fight.

Being involved in drug abuse from a young age had caused Chin unimaginable pain.

At 23, he went to Taiwan hoping that he could be rid of drugs but his bad temper resulted in gangsters setting ablaze the paint factory where he worked. He was badly burnt.

"It was so painful that if I had been able to move, I could have jumped off the building," he recalled.

He was bed-ridden for three months and his condition was compounded by a bad infection on his back.

Chin survived the ordeal and returned to Malaysia, but could not beat drug addiction that sent him in and out of prison.

It went on until 2005 when a road accident cost him his leg. The loss of limb pushed him deeper into addiction as he took more drugs to escape from reality.

"I could not accept it. It was painful for me not just physically but mentally too. It was indescribable," he said.

His injury took six months to heal but Chin hid in darkness for a good four years, until a pastor brought him to the drug rehabilitation centre where he volunteers now.

He is grateful for the lessons learnt at the centre, one of which is to count his blessings for having good health.

"Being disabled only means that it is less convenient but it is not a deterrent. We have to face it and we must not blame others," he said.

But most importantly, he learned the meaning of having a sense of responsibility.

"I've never thought of others all my life, but the social workers and volunteers I met here showed me the way," he said.

He is especially thankful to Ngiam Thong Eng, 64, whom he fondly calls "Uncle Boy". Ngiam, also a former addict, devotes most of his time to welfare homes even though he can enjoy retirement. He is a role model for many former drug addicts.

"Patience is the only way to guide them back on the right track," said Ngiam.

"Do not expect to wake them up with a single remark no matter how meaningful it may sound. Their parents have tried to teach them for decades, who are we?" he said.

Chin has a new project to take care of. He is helping the association's founder Wendy Yap to raise funds for the establishment of a job centre in Broga to help homeless people.

"I am praying that the project will come through. Many people can actually contribute to society but they lose their way in life. All they need is a place to take them in and someone to show them the right path," he said.



Do Good. Volunteer.

The 'Do Good. Volunteer' Campaign is an initiative by *The Star*, in partnership with social enterprise subsidiary, Leaderonomics.

This campaign aims to promote volunteerism amongst Malaysians with the hope of cultivating a spirit of sharing and giving.

Recognising the significant role of volunteerism in the social development of a society, *The Star* will shed light on various causes, volunteer opportunities, insights and stories with the aim of inspiring Malaysians to act.

Realising that many well-meaning Malaysians wish to volunteer but are not aware of the opportunities available or how to take action, *The Star* has also set out to create a portal to act as a rich resource of volunteer opportunities while at the same time enabling NGOs to connect with these volunteers for much needed help.

This portal is targeted to be launched in June.