

# NCBM OUTREACH



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# **VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT OF NCBM**

To ensure blind people will receive appropriate training and enjoy quality services regardless of where they live in the country.

## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

Moses Choo Siew Cheong

Wong Kwee Heong

Inungkiran Mongijal

Chin Yew Cheng

## **SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**



It is with deep regret, we inform you of the demise of Mr James Lau Kung Wuong, our dedicated NCBM Treasurer on 24 March, 2017.

We extend our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the family, relatives and friends.

## **ANNOUNCEMENT**

### 1. Articles, suggestions and Jokes for the Magazine:

Readers are reminded that their contribution of articles, suggestions and jokes are most welcome for inclusion in “NCBM Outreach”.

Please note that it would be helpful to the editor if such contributions could be submitted on a thumbdrive or similar mode or in Braille. If the article is in Braille, it should be on single-sided pages in order to facilitate editing.

You should include your full name (as in the identity card) with your address, telephone number and bank account number so that the money can be banked into your account.

For details concerning payments, please see the last page.

## SUPPORT OUR CAUSE

The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) provides a vital link between the organisations serving the blind in this country by acting as the national coordinating body. Through NCBM, the organisations for and of the blind have a channel to discuss and formulate national policies and plans and to pioneer new programmes for the benefit of the blind and vision-impaired (BVI).

It costs the NCBM RM30,000 a year to produce NCBM Outreach in both print and Braille.

Your financial support, therefore, will go a long way in helping to bring about new developments and progress for the blind. All contributions are deeply appreciated.

Donations should be made in the name of the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia or Majlis Kebangsaan bagi Orang Buta, Malaysia.

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*\* NCBM has not appointed any agent to collect cash on our behalf.*

# **NCBM'S SUPPORT SCHEMES FOR THE BLIND**

## **1. NCBM's Job Pioneering Scheme**

This scheme was launched in 2012 whereby NCBM collaborates with prospective employers in providing employment opportunities for the blind. The blind person will work for a period of three to six months and be paid a monthly allowance of RM1,200 by NCBM. At the end of the period, it is hoped that the employer will be convinced of the blind person's capabilities and give him permanent employment.

Please contact the NCBM secretariat for the application form.

Tel. 03-2276 2973.

## **2. Equipment Loan Fund for the Blind**

NCBM would like to see significant improvement in job opportunities for the blind in Malaysia. Therefore, blind persons in employment who face the difficulty in obtaining adaptive equipment to help them in their work can get in touch with NCBM for such assistance.

For more details, please call the NCBM secretariat at 03-2276 2973.

## **3. Research Grant**

Anybody, blind or sighted, interested in carrying out research on employment for the blind or on blindness prevention can make application to NCBM for a research grant. The amount to be provided can range from RM3,000 to RM5,000.

Please contact NCBM at 03-2276 2973.

# THE UNIFIED ENGLISH BRAILLE CODE AS THE NEW INTERNATIONAL STANDARD

*Editor's note: This excerpt is from the ABC's of UEB authored by Constance Risjord under the auspices of the Braille Authority of North America.*

In April 2004, the ICEB General Assembly declared the Unified English Braille Code to be substantially complete and that it could be recognised as an international standard to be considered for adoption by individual countries. Subsequently, after official adoption in five countries, the ICEB at its July 2010 meeting, determined that the development phase was complete.

The following questions will help to clarify why the new international standard for Braille is needed.

## 1. Why change the UK Braille code when it is working very well?

There are three main reasons why the Braille Authorities across the English-speaking world decided to look at the Braille code and to see if it could be improved.

### 1.1 There was a desire to unite the different literary, technical and language codes into a single comprehensive Braille code to make learning Braille easier.

Children learning Braille had to learn a range of new codes when studying at anything other than the basic level. In the current system, for example, numbers are written in three different ways depending on context, i.e. the computer code, Maths and Chemistry or the general literary code.

UEB simplifies this so that numbers as well as brackets, at signs, superscripts, etc. are written in only one way.

### 1.2 There was a will to unify the Braille code being used across the English-

speaking world. Over time many countries have developed their own “flavour” of Braille and were spending time and money on maintaining their own Braille code and producing resources specific to their country. A unified Braille code would lead to the possibility of sharing Braille books and teaching resources.

It would also mean that the cost of maintaining one code could be shared with other countries for all to benefit.

- 1.3 The major change over the past thirty years in education, work and home lives has been the advent of the computer. The UEB code, stripped of its ambiguities, should simplify print to Braille translation, thereby reducing production costs and increasing the availability of Braille materials. It would also improve the reliability of Braille to text translation, thereby assisting the situation in education and elsewhere.

## 2. Who created the UEB code?

UEB was first conceived in 1992 by the Braille Authority of North America (BANA). In 1993 other English-speaking countries became interested in the project and it became internationalised under the auspices of the International Council on English Braille (ICEB). The ICEB has representatives from all the major English-speaking countries.

UEB was refined and developed by ICEB over the next decade. In 2004 it was agreed that the code should be recognised as an international standard which member-countries could choose to adopt as their national Braille code.

3. What are the main differences between the UEB and the code used in the UK.

Concerning the literary code, there are relatively few differences. They are:



### 3.1 The removal of sequencing:

For example, you can no longer write “the” and “for” un-spaced from each other or “to”, “into” and “by” directly next to the following word.

3.2 Nine contractions are no longer used - ble, com, dd, ally, ation, o'clock, to, into and by.

3.3 The potential inclusion of type form indicators such as font changes, bold and underlining have been introduced.

3.4 The revision of some punctuation signs e.g. there are now different symbols for open brackets, close brackets, and dash).

3.5 There are Braille signs for more print symbols (e.g. up and down arrows, backslash, underscore) and for shapes (e.g. square and circle).

### 4. Why has UEB been designed to make Braille materials longer?

The changes made in UEB do reduce ambiguities. Moreover, the literary and technical Braille are incorporated into a single code. However, this means that UEB does take up slightly more space than the UK Braille code. This increase is minimal for literary materials and more for technical materials.

For example, some punctuation signs now take up two cells instead of one cell. This is to remove ambiguity as in the case of brackets - there is now a different symbol for open brackets and close brackets.

Fortunately, the majority of decisions regarding the development of the UEB code do favour the current UK rules.

### 5. Why not just change the technical Braille codes?

The technical codes have been changed quite considerably to bring them into line with the UEB literary code. However, to synchronise the codes fully and to maximise the opportunity to remove ambiguities, it has been

necessary to amend the literary code in some places.

6. Why are the capital letter indicators needed?

In theory, it is possible to have UEB without capital letter indicators. However, this would necessitate creating extra rules.

Moreover, it would breach the UEB principle that significant print features should be represented in Braille such as capitalisation. In addition, pupils in the U.K. who have learnt Braille over the past 15 years are already well used to reading and writing capitalised Braille.

7. Will UEB be cheaper to produce and can more Braille be produced?

UEB has been designed to reduce ambiguity so that one Braille symbol will only have one meaning in UEB. Thus, automated translation software will be more accurate which means that the need for detailed proof-reading should be reduced. Less time spent on proof-reading should in theory mean that more time and effort can be put into producing more Braille materials.

8. What kind of training will be available in UEB, who will teach it what reference materials will be produced?

The important issues around training for teachers and individuals and the availability of reference materials and teaching courses in UEB will be addressed during the development of the UK's UEB implementation plan.

Fortunately, it is possible to learn from other countries who have implemented the code and to have access to a wealth of resources that have already been developed and are in use by those countries.

The UEB rule-book and Symbols lists are available on the ICEB website <http://www.iceb.org>

9. Who is this change for - is it just for the Braille producers and transcribers?

Whilst there is no doubt that the introduction of UEB in the UK will benefit producers and transcribers by reducing the costs and time taken to proof-read Braille materials, UEB will also make it easier for people to learn Braille and study technical subjects.

10. Will we be able to choose whether we get material produced in the new code or the old code?

There will be a period of transition whilst UEB is being implemented, so both UEB and the Braille code you are familiar with will be available. When the implementation begins, efforts will be made to ensure that the transition to UEB will be as smooth as possible for all stakeholders.

11. What happens to all the Braille code that we have in the old code?

Braille in the old code, especially literary Braille, will continue to be available for all those who wish to read it. New titles will be published in UEB from the agreed date that will be established in the implementation plan.

12. Will UEB be available through refreshable Braille displays? How will they be updated?

UEB is not a new issue for Braille display manufacturers. Thus, there is no good reason why this should not be possible. However, you should contact the manufacturers direct to confirm what may or may not be available.

Currently, the information is that UEB is available for use with BrailleNote Apex, Mpower and Braillesense.

13. Are there any examples of transcription software using UEB that I could try out?

The following have confirmed full UEB support, but you should contact the producers to enquire whether or not an upgrade is required. This also applies to applications such as screen-readers which support Braille displays such as Braille Master, Dolphin and Supernova, and Duxbury Braille Translator.

14. Can I try UEB to see what it is like?

If you contact the RNIB National Library Service, they should be able to borrow books for you by organising an inter-library loan with one of the countries that is already producing literary material in UEB.

15. How will computer Braille work in UEB?

The UEB Computer Braille Code, as such, does not exist. UEB is a single unified code which is used for all technical subjects. In fact, ICEB currently has a project to develop a unified 8-dot Braille code.

For further details, please see <http://www.iceb.org>

16. How does UEB deal with accents in foreign languages?

UEB has no general accent sign like the dot 4 in SEB. Instead UEB defines some two-cell symbols which show each type of accent. There are Braille signs for Cedilla below the letter, Grave accent above the letter, and so on. These signs always precede the letter they modify. E.g. the letter e acute is written as dots 45-34-15

For more examples, please see the comprehensive listing on the differences in the UEB code, which is available from the UKAAF website ([www.ukaaf.org/formats-and-guidance/braille/ueb/176](http://www.ukaaf.org/formats-and-guidance/braille/ueb/176))

# **DUSIM OH SEONG - EXEMPLARY MODEL OF THE BLIND IN EMPLOYMENT**

*by Godfrey Ooi Goat See*

Dusim Oh Seong was the first blind person to be accepted into the Sarawak Civil Service. He reported for work on September 1, 1984 and he was appointed as the Assistant Division Welfare Officer, second-in-command to the Division Welfare Officer. His main duties were to oversee the welfare assistance schemes and the Institutional Care Programmes.

His job involved travelling from one village to another and the river-boat was his main means of transport. One day Dusim was in a boat with three of his colleagues (one man and two ladies). It was raining heavily when the boat suddenly hit a hard object.

The boatman warned them that the boat was about to capsize and that they should get ready to jump out as the water was rushing in. With his knapsack on his back and rubber shoes on his feet, Dusim jumped and swam away by holding on to a tree branch.

One of the ladies shouted to him and called out his name. She grabbed his outstretched hand and clung on to his back for dear life, nearly causing both of them to sink. He struggled on swimming and found a bigger branch. Holding on to the branch, both of them pulled themselves out of the river and landed on the bank. Fortunately for them, they were not attacked by any of the crocodiles which infested the waters there.

Indeed, Dusim's determination to achieve and to succeed in life had already been well demonstrated during the tender years of his childhood. Blinded at age five due to glaucoma, his parents had decided not to send him to school. However, Dusim would steal away from the house and sit below a class-room window in the nearby school. From the English and Arithmetic that he heard being taught, he was able to help his siblings with their homework.

Hearing of his ability, Dusim's father decided to contact the authorities. When news came that Dusim could be admitted to an educational programme for the blind in town, his mother and siblings objected for fear that he would be killed by the head-hunters. Dusim was determined, however, and so at the very young age of seven he set out with his father on the perilous journey from their mountainous village in Kampong Sadir, crossing streams, traversing jungles and climbing over mountains.

He did well in education and graduated from Universiti Malaya in 1983 with a degree in Anthropology and Sociology. Unable to find employment in Kuala Lumpur for a whole year, he returned to Sarawak and became the first blind person in Kuching to start busking for a living. When he told his blind friends about the idea, they were all filled with fear and misgivings.

Dusim had a placard made with the sign, "Professional Blind Buskers". There were four people in the group with a guitar, keyboard, rhythm box and tambourine. On the first night of busking, they earned RM400. Then on a festive occasion of the Sarawak Regatta, they earned as much as RM1,000. Later, when he found employment with JKM, he kept his promise not to forget the blind buskers and got busking recognised in Sarawak. Consequently, blind persons were no longer being arrested for busking.

Dusim observed with great dissatisfaction that the policies and schemes at the federal level were not well synchronised with those at the state level in Sabah and Sarawak. This resulted in unfair treatment for the disabled in the two states. For instance, the Employment Incentive Allowance (or EPC) for the disabled in peninsular Malaysia was RM300 a month while the disabled in Sabah and Sarawak only received RM70. He worked with the Sarawak branch of SBM in drawing up a memorandum to the authorities, which ultimately resulted in the disabled also receiving RM300 in Sabah and Sarawak.

When Dusim started work in JKM, he was only using a typewriter. One day he got some scribbled hand-written instructions from his boss which was not legible even for his sighted assistant. Thus, in the year 2000, he got a JICA sponsorship to study ICT in Japan and he learned how to use adaptive

softwares such as JAWS and Hound-Dog.

On returning to Sarawak, he put in much effort to bring about awareness concerning the need of blind employees for adaptive equipment. Hence, he helped to set up a computer lab at the Rehabilitation Centre of Physically Disabled Persons with ten computers and subsequently got blind persons to be admitted to the Centre as well. He also introduced the ICT Training Programme to the Sarawak Society for the Blind.

However, Dusim said, “The biggest challenge for me till today is the filling in of forms. There are so many forms in the department and even though they are all on softcopy, the forms are not fillable. The institutions for the blind should look at how

To create fillable softcopy forms and teach the blind how to do it. The technologists must create and the blind must be trained.”

While carrying out his work, Dusim noticed a lady bringing the old people, widows and orphans to the welfare office to seek assistance. He found her to be very caring and sought for opportunities to interact with her.

Then on his first dating out with her, he could not wait and proposed marriage. She asked for a few months to think it over. He thought if he could wait for more than a year to get a job, a few months of waiting would certainly be worth the while and it paid off. She eventually gave him the positive reply.

Now they have three children - the first is working as a police inspector in Kuala Lumpur, the second as a flight steward with MAS Wing (Sabah and Sarawak) while the third is pursuing the beauticians’ Course in a college.

# EULOGY FOR THE LATE LEE AH KOW

*By Abel Lee*

*Editor's note: The article on Lee Ah Kow and his role in establishing the Society of the Blind in Malaysia (SBM) appeared in NCBM Outreach of January – March 2017.*

My father, the late Mr. Lee Ah Kow, has lived three different phases of life - firstly as a sighted person, then as a visually impaired person, and finally as an Alzheimer's patient. In this eulogy, I shall try to cover these three different aspects of his life.

My father was born on June 3, 1939 in Penang as a sighted child. However, he went through a very challenging childhood. When he was about 4 years old, he was abandoned by his parents along the five-foot way of some shops. He roamed the streets in search of some shelter and odd jobs in order to survive.

After some time of doing a few odd jobs for different people who did not treat him well, he went back on to the streets and he was picked up by the authorities and sent to a Catholic orphanage. After a while at the orphanage, a man by the name of Mr. Lim Chong Hai, came and adopted him. From then on, his life changed for the better. My grandfather, the late Mr. Lim Chong Hai and my late grandmother, Mdm. Gan Kheng Choo, took care of him and they treated him very well.

My late father began his education and entered standard 1 at the age of eight at St. Xavier's Institution in Penang. Although he was one year over aged, he did very well in school, getting a double promotion whereby he jumped to standard 3 after completing Standard 1, which then put him at par with the other students of his actual age.

After completing primary school, my late father continued with his secondary education at St. Xavier's Institution. He excelled in his education, especially in Mathematics. He did General Maths, Add Maths, Further Maths and all the other Mathematics you could think of at the time. Besides that, he also excelled in sports and he was a very good footballer.



After completing Form 5, he was also chosen to do Form 6, which at that time was very difficult to enter. In the entire state of Penang, there were only three schools offering Form 6 and my father got in. In fact, he was classmates with the prominent lawyer and MP, the late YB Karpal Singh, and they even sat beside each other in class.

My father's ambition was to become a lawyer. All of my late father's successes made his adopted parents very proud of him and my late grandfather had pinned all his hopes and dreams on his eldest son. Sadly, however, tragedy struck - one night while he was still in upper 6, my late father lost his sight totally overnight due to Glaucoma. When he was sent to the hospital, the doctors said that nothing could be done to restore his eyesight. All his hopes and dreams were shattered and he took it quite badly at the time. He had to learn to adjust to life as a visually impaired person.

My late grandfather sent him to learn Braille in the evenings at St. Nicholas' Home, Penang. Later, he was sent to the Gurney Training Centre (GTC) in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. At the GTC, he was trained to be a stenographer. It was at the GTC where he met my mother, Susan, and they became friends.

In 1964 my late father formed the Selangor Society of the Blind (SSB), which is an NGO to enable the blind community to have a say in affairs affecting them in society. He became its Founder and the first President. He worked tirelessly to form the SSB and he managed to get it registered with the Registrar of Societies (ROS).

After completing his training at the GTC, he joined the Government service and was employed as a stenographer by the Attorney-General's Chambers, Kuala Lumpur in 1965. The Attorney-General's Chambers was initially located at the Sultan Abdul Samad Building opposite the present Dataran Merdeka. Later, it moved to the Bank Rakyat building along Jalan Tangsi.

On February 24 1979, my late father got married to my mother, Susan Yew. They were married in St. Mary's church (now St. Mary's Cathedral), Kuala Lumpur. On April 4 1983, I was born to them.

Throughout his tenure at the Attorney-General's Chambers, my late father had served a number of bosses, including the former Lord President the late Tun Salleh Abas himself, who had interviewed and employed him. My late father served the Attorney-General's Chambers faithfully from the very first day he was employed in 1965 right up till the day he took optional retirement in 1992 at the age of 53. At that time, the mandatory retirement age for Government servants was 55.

After his retirement, he stayed at home and lived a very relaxed life-style, turning day into night and night into day. He would sleep at any time he wished and wake up as and when he wanted and he really enjoyed his retirement life. He loved listening to the BBC programmes and the Singapore radio stations broadcast on short wave.

He also had a Braille computer with which he would do his work and keep a record of all his documents. Occasionally, he would also listen to his collection of CD's, ranging from the oldies to Country and Western to Classical on his hi-fi set. Although he had retired, he was ever willing to lend a helping hand in legal consultancy and in drafting legal documents such as Tenancy Agreements and Wills, using the experience that he had gained while working at the Attorney-General's Chambers.

On the other hand, my late father also used to have a very hot temper and he was straightforward and frank when speaking. He would not care who you were. Whenever he disliked someone, he would seem to keep it in his heart and he would never want to have anything much to do with that person. He did have a lot of bitterness in his heart and he found it difficult to forgive anyone who had wronged him. My mother and I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of my late father to sincerely apologise to anyone whom he may have confronted or hurt or offended in any way throughout his life.

In recent years, tragedy struck again when he had Alzheimer's. We are not too sure when exactly his Alzheimer's started but we could probably trace it back to around 2004 when he began losing his memory and he kept on misplacing his things. Then things got worse as the years went by and he even became quite aggressive. 2012 saw the peak of his Alzheimer's and it

was the most difficult year for my mum and me to cope. Thus, in 2013, we were left with no choice but to put him in a nursing home.

Finally, let me give you an account of the episodes that took place in the last couple of weeks that led to the passing of my father. On Wednesday, August 24 2016 while he was at the nursing home, the staff had difficulty waking him up after his afternoon nap. After a few tries, they noticed that he was having some breathing difficulties. He was rushed to the Emergency Ward of Universiti Hospital (UH) in an ambulance.

At the hospital, he was given the oxygen mask to help him breathe. On that evening, while at the Emergency Ward, his heart stopped. The doctors managed to resuscitate him through CPR and he was then put on the ventilator.

Since the day he was admitted into UH, he had not regained consciousness. Although there seemed to be some very slight improvement on one of the days, his general health was on the decline. The doctors mentioned that there was an infection in his lungs and that his kidneys were not functioning as they should. Finally, he also had some bleeding in the stomach. We saw that he was bloated due to water retention in his body.

It was on Saturday, September 3 2016 when he passed away peacefully at 4.25 p.m. in Ward 11U of Universiti Hospital at the age of seventy-seven.

I am truly thankful to God for having him as my father even though he was a strict disciplinarian and I was always fearful of him right till the end. May his soul rest in peace and rise again in glory.

# **ST. NICHOLAS' HOME HAS BIG DREAMS FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**

*Editor's note: This message was given by the Archbishop Datuk Ng Moon Hing, President of St. Nicholas' Home in the Annual Report 2015.*

*For us at St. Nicholas' Home, 2015 was an eventful year. And now we are engaging with the 2016 theme of "Dream Big". For the past 90 years we have faced many challenges, yet we have risen above them all. We will be dreaming big for the next ten years and hope to make significant achievements for the blind and visually impaired by the time of our centennial celebration and beyond.*

*In 2015 we initiated some ground-breaking and innovative programmes such as:*

## 1. The Music Literary Centre for the Visually Impaired:

We launched this project with our first Braille Music Literacy Workshop on October 27-29, 2015, bringing together sighted music teachers and officials from the education ministry and State Education Department with the hope of expanding career opportunities for visually impaired musicians. Plans are under way to set up a music room with all the necessary equipment to facilitate both theory and practical music lessons for gifted blind musicians.

## 2. Online Study Resource Programme for Visually Impaired Students:

This is a collaborative project involving resource teachers of St. George's Girls' School, FrogAsia, and the Wawasan Open University with funding support from The Edge Education Foundation.

The purpose of the project is to make available educational resources to visually impaired students so that they can excel in their academic studies and compete on a level playing field with their sighted peers.

Better academic results lead to greater opportunities for higher education which, in turn, increases employment potential.

We are thankful to various publishers for their support for this project. We hope the project will be launched in early 2017.

### 3. Indoor Navigation System for the Visually Impaired:

One of the main hurdles of the visually impaired to achieve independent living is the lack of blind-friendly navigation guides. With Smartphones and GPS, most visually impaired persons can now move around fairly independently.

However, GPS does not work indoors. Therefore, there is a need for an Indoor Navigation System designed for the visually impaired. In collaboration with the USM Computer Science Faculty, the project utilises low-energy bluetooth technology and a specially developed Smartphone app to provide indoor navigation similar to the GPS app used outdoors. The pilot system will be tested at the home by visually impaired residents and trainees before further development.

These are all highly relevant programmes to address real and urgent challenges faced by the visually impaired community. I am pleased that the Home has lived up to its reputation as a pioneer of impactful programmes that benefit our visually impaired clients.

Indeed, the success of the Home should be measured by the achievements of those we serve. Their success stories bear testimony to the devotion and dedication of all our staff and volunteers who have worked so hard to help each of them fulfil their potentials as human beings.

Here are but a few of them.

1. Mohd Razlan Ibrahim bin Mukhtar

One of our ex-trainees, Razlan, was a recipient of a full scholarship from Maxis totalling RM330,000 to pursue a two-year degree in Business Innovation and Entrepreneurship at the University of South Australia. He has settled down in Adelaide and by all indications is a star student at the university.

2. Samantha Khoo Hern Yong

A graduate of our IT programme, Samantha scored a distinction in the Grade 5 practical music examination. In recognition of her achievement, she was invited to perform at a public concert.

Samantha also joined the IWA Choir and along with fellow musicians of the Penang Philharmonic Orchestra (PPN), performed at a Christmas Charity Concert to raise funds for charity homes.

Samantha is the first trainee of the Music Literacy Centre and will be sitting for her Grade 4 theory test soon.

3. Jimmy Teoh Hong Yang

Jimmy lost his sight when he was fifteen, after which he gave up on his studies. However, with much encouragement, counselling and support from the Home, he started studying again at 21 and sat for the SPM as a private candidate. To prepare for the examination, the Home arranged for a private tutor for him. He scored very well and was accepted by Disted College to continue his studies in Computer Science from May 2016.

#### 4. Lee Yong Pin and Nich Toh Chin Yuan:

Both Yong and Nich were two of the initial batch of ex-trainees accepted into Disted College. The Home worked very closely with the college to provide Braille transcription of course notes as well as tutoring to support them in their studies for a Diploma in Business Information Technology.

Both of them have successfully completed the course. Nich was named as the recipient of the Presidential Scholarship Award by Disted College.

Both Yong and Nich will be continuing their degree studies at Disted College with scholarships from the Hong Leong Foundation, who also kindly sponsored their diploma course.

The Home has certainly achieved much in its 90-year history, but there is more that needs doing, and higher mountains that must be scaled. So, while we are proud of our past accomplishments, we realise that we cannot rest on our past achievements, but must continue to push forward strongly, ever seeking ways to expand our services and support for our clients.

It is our hope that St. Nicholas' will continue to be the light that brings hope to the visually impaired in Penang, all of Malaysia and beyond.

The title on the cover of the Annual Report, "Just Possible", is taken from a quote by Bethany Hamilton. The quote in full says, "I don't need easy, I just need possible". Bethany survived a harrowing shark attack that claimed her left arm and went on to become a champion surfer. This quote, in fact, echoes the voice of the disabled everywhere, and I see it as the rallying cry of St. Nicholas' Home as we go forward.

**LET'S JUST MAKE IT POSSIBLE!**

# NEWS FROM ST. NICHOLAS' HOME

## Early Intervention Programme

Five new children joined the Programme in 2015, bringing the total of families served to 20. As this is a home-based training programme, each child received two visits a month. Training is provided for the children and their care-givers in their home environment.

All the children in the programme are progressing well. For example, meet Jin, a four-year old boy who suffers from Oculocutaneous Albinism and has been diagnosed for Autism. He also has low vision rendering him almost completely dependent on others since birth.

He has made the greatest improvement in communication. He is learning how to communicate best through repetition. He is also learning how to communicate in multiple languages. His parents are encouraged to continue speaking to him in multiple languages to help further his development in communication.

His parents have taken another step towards Jin's development by sending him to Prospect Rainbow, which offers support to children with disabilities.

**(Jin is not his real name)**

The Deaf-Blind and Multi-Handicapped Programme:

The year 2015 began with nine in the programme. Meet Ravin who is nine years old and he is diagnosed with Congenital Rubella Syndrome, which caused extreme low vision, Sensorineural Deafness, and hyperactive behaviour.

He arrived at St. Nicholas' when he was seven years old and two years later he has had many accomplishments and much growth. He is gaining cognitive and motor skills, learning daily living activities, and increasing his communication skills.



He is gaining independence through learning how to communicate via gestures, signs and objects. This has enabled him to gain confidence in navigating his surroundings and completing daily living tasks. He is no longer diaper dependent and has learned to eat with limited supervision.

#### Celestica Sensory Garden Project:

The senior management and staff from Celestica Electronics visited St. Nicholas' on July 30 2015 to carry out their CSR project. Apart from funding the replacement of new roofing for the corridor adjacent to the covered car-park and building a sensory garden for the deaf-blind and multi-handicapped children, they also presented St. Nicholas' with five computers for the IT Training Lab.

#### Vocational Training and Employment Services (VTE):

The VTE Department not only offers various vocational training programmes to the blind and visually impaired but also extends job-seeking support and services to them. The courses include Pastry-making, Massage, Basketry, Rehabilitation and Information Technology, depending on their capabilities and interests. There are two intakes per year - January and July - and the duration of training ranges from six months to a year.

In addition, the trainees are taught other soft skills such as social skills, English language and Braille. They are also exposed to other activities such as tandem-bicycle rides, sports, social gatherings, motivational talks, workshops and competitions. These activities help the blind to gain self-confidence in communicating with others, in grooming and deportment, and in achieving independent living in society.

On April 25 2015, the trainees attended a ukelele performance after which they were given the opportunity to learn how to play the musical instrument. After barely three months of tutoring by Mr. Chew, everyone was impressed by their lively performance.

On June 16 2015, the trainees visited the Muzium Padi Kedah and they were able to touch and view some of the equipment and tools used for various agricultural operations such as the plough and the flour mill. They learned about the versatility of rice flour used in many delicacies and desserts. This was indeed an eye-opener for some of them who had no idea that some of the desserts they enjoy were made from rice flour. In addition, they were educated about not eating too much of rice, especially processed rice flour, which could be damaging to health.

Bride and Breakfast:

The Ride for Sight 2015 was a cycling milestone. It was held in the evening in conjunction with the Earth Day celebration at QueensBay Mall on March 28. Some 1,200 participants turned up to cycle with the blind and a sum of RM49,000 was raised.

Team LP from Bukit Mertajam donated thirty safety vests with reflective strips, especially for the evening ride. Every cyclist, young and old, was excited to pedal in the cool and dark surroundings. It was indeed a ride to remember!

On October 19, St. Nicholas' was asked to accompany the wedding entourage of Mr. Ang Gim Guan and Ms. Lim Yam Sim (both former SNH massage trainees). Ten pairs of tandem-cyclists accompanied Gim Guan to the house of his beautiful bride for the tea ceremony.

Special thanks go to the group of volunteer cyclists from Bukit Mertajam and Penang in creating such a once-in-a-lifetime moment for the lovely couple.

Information Resource Centre

The IRC at SNH is made up of the Library Services, Braille Production and Brailler Repair Service. With three staff and a pool of dedicated volunteers, the IRC strives to serve both local users around Penang and the BVI nationwide.

Braille was given focus through several special events such as:

1. An awareness Talk at the Penang Chinese Girls' High School on April 24 2015. There were over 380 students and they were given a brief overview of Braille history, getting groups to decipher quotes in Braille, and showing them the devices used for "writing" Braille. Many tried producing their names and messages in Braille by using the slates and writers.

The team from St. Nicholas' was thrilled to be presented with a special "Thank you" plaque with the word, "thanks" in Braille creatively made with screws.

2. On June 11 2015, the three visually impaired students at Disted University and fellow group members organised an awareness campaign on the theme, "the world through my eyes". Staff and students visited various stations to get an idea of how the blind live. Those who did so were rewarded with a goodie bag.

SNH was invited to set up some of these stations such as a library exhibit, Braille corner, massage, pastry and basketry and some blind-fold games and activities. There was even a blind bowling lane.

The boys raised RM250 through the sale of bookmarks.

3. Braille Music Literacy Workshop (October 2015): With the kind sponsorship of CIMB Foundation and Genting Plantations Bhd., Mr. William Mc'Cann, owner of Dancing Dots, was invited to conduct a workshop on Braille Music Literacy, an introduction to Braille music. The workshop was attended by about 20 participants, both local and from Singapore, sighted as well as blind, music teachers, therapists, lecturers, and musicians.

Besides the lecture, there were live sharing sessions via "go to meeting" with Albert Milani, Bill's business partner, and James Palmer, a music teacher at the Overbrook School for the Blind in Philadelphia.

During the three-day workshop, they learned about the Goodfeel Suite of programmes for transcribing print music into Braille.

4. “Making Melody” - Samantha Khoo Hern Yong: Samantha started making music on a toy keyboard from the age of two. Over the years, church friends in Sabah helped her master playing the piano.

Throughout her high school education at St. George’s school in Penang, she played the piano, keyboard and flute in the school band. Her blind resource teacher, Teoh Cheng Poo, introduced Samantha to Braille music notation.

Samantha’s gift of music was accidentally discovered when she was asked to help out at Christ Church’s Praise and Worship team. Then Peter Chin, a blind volunteer pianist, began to coach her on Braille music notation. At the same time, she also took music lessons at the Starz Music Academy and she joined the IWA (International Women’s Association) Choir.

She was lucky to catch the attention of Jerome Quah, one of Penang’s “Jazz Wizards”, who included her in one of his bands, which grooms up-and-coming young musicians of the future.

A search for a suitable music teacher willing to take on the challenge of working with a blind student in music theory led to Michelle Toe. She graciously took it upon herself to learn Braille and Braille music notation in order to teach Samantha and help her advance in her music.

Samantha owes her achievements in the last two years not only to her own efforts, but also to the many dedicated individuals and groups who came forward to lend her their support. She has scored several notable distinctions in the past year, ranging from a gold prize at Asian Youth Music Competition to public performances with various noteworthy Penang groups.

It is hope that Samantha, together with her family, will continue preparing herself to meet life’s challenges so she can enjoy a rich and well-rounded life in the future.

“No level of success is ever too great to stop striving and thriving”  
- Edmond MBIaka.

# MOHD RAZLAN IBRAHIM BIN MUKHTAR MOVING TO AUSTRALIA WITH A BLIND LEAP OF FAITH

*by Simone Mazengarb*

***Editor's note: This article is taken from the Annual Report 2015 of St. Nicholas' Home, Penang.***

The idea of packing up your life and moving to another country is daunting for most people, but when you're young and you have a physical disability, the task can require an immeasurable amount of courage.

Upon meeting Razlan Mukhtar, a blind 21-year old Malaysian national studying a Bachelor of Business Design and Innovation at the University of South Australia, you quickly realise that he has been overcoming obstacles and barriers throughout his entire life. The way he talks about navigating traffic in KL and the foodstalls on the footpath in his hometown of Penang makes it sound like child's play. But when he recalls the way he came to Australia in pursuit of the course of his dreams, it's hard to describe it as anything short of miraculous.

In July 2015, Razlan was offered a place at the University of South Australia in Adelaide. However, he needed to find AUS\$150,000 (RM460,000) in two weeks in order to make it happen. He began applying for student scholarships, but with time against him, the Malaysian community, politicians and businesses rallied around him and came up with the total sum.

YB. Yap Soo Huey, a local MP, called a press conference asking the general public to donate what they could while Maxis, a local telecommunications company, agreed to pay for his university fees and living expenses. The Universiti Teknologi MARA in Shah Alam bought Razlan his plane ticket and the President of the Penang Botanic Gardens offered to pay for an electronic Braille Display device to assist him with his studies in Australia.

"I feel very thankful. It makes me feel quite proud actually," said Razlan concerning the culture of giving in Malaysia.

When Razlan arrived in Adelaide, he had just a few days to orientate his way around the city, memorise the path to the university's campus and settle into his student accommodation before classes started.

“I was incredibly nervous about him coming to Australia because of the short time frame,” recalls Jayne Ayliffe, the university's Disability Advisor. “But he was quite amazing. He was only shown a couple of times how to get to his apartment from the university and he got himself there independently on the Monday morning,” she said.

Ayliffe introduced Razlan to the staff at the Australian Royal Society of the Blind who facilitated his orientation, and met with his lecturers to ensure his course materials were provided in electronic form. She said that like most universities in Australia, the University of South Australia has a range of facilities for people with a disability, such as adaptive technology suites with screen-readers, extensive Braille signage and additional security services for students with late classes.

“And he did have a couple of late classes, so we linked him up with the security staff here who accompany students to the bus and got him using the campus safety app, just in case he had any difficulty.”

In the last four months, Razlan has taken up swimming at the Aquatic Centre once a week. He plays Goal Ball for a local team and hopes to join the national team next year. He has also recently moved into a house with friends further out of town, and he enjoys taking evening walks around the city after class.

“It's really convenient for me to get around here. I'm not so scared of crossing a road here, compared to Malaysia where even though there is a crossing light for pedestrians, there will be something like a motor-cycle or car or bus stopping right under the light. Here the pathways are free from any barriers so anyone including people with a visual impairment can walk safely and freely, and that is very good,” he said.

But the move down under has not been without its challenges. Unlike Penang where the streets are lined with stalls selling delicious treats, Australia's food prices have pushed Razlan into the kitchen.

“I’ve had to be brave against the fire,” he said, laughing about his early attempts at cooking. After setting off the smoke detector and meeting a few of Adelaide’s metropolitan firemen, Razlan has mastered a couple of dishes - ones his mum would be proud of.

“I love to fry anchovies and I work with vegetables a lot,” he said. “I always tell mum about how the weather here is different compared to Malaysia and how I feel very excited to experience four seasons here.”

Razlan said that while his course has been “quite tough”, the attitude of his Australian peers is very relaxed. “Just walking around, sometimes I listen to people or talk to people and I find Australians have good stress management,” he said. “I can easily communicate with Australian people because they are trained to understand my accent.”

“Whether Razlan is playing sport or learning to cook a new dish, he just really embraces life,” said Ayliffe. “He makes the most of every opportunity he has, but he also tries to create those opportunities for himself. And he has a wicked sense of humour to match, so we do have a lot of fun,” she said.

“She’s like my mother,” said Razlan speaking about his relationship with Ayliffe. “She’s a good one. We have contact at least once a week.”

Looking to the future, Razlan said he hopes to travel around Australia when he finishes his course. “I’m happy here. I think I’m more independent and accepted here, and I can participate in more events. I’m able to meet people from all around the world, not just Australians, and that’s a new experience for me,” he said.

# TWO WONDERFUL PATHWAYS OF BEAUTY

by Siti Huraizah

*Editor's note: Siti Huraizah is totally blind and she is dealing with public relations at the Malaysian Association for the blind. She has experienced climbing the highest hill in peninsular Malaysia which is Gunong Tahan. She has also taken part in the climb up the highest mountain in South-East Asia which is Mount Kinabalu in Sabah.*

*Here she is to relate her mountaineering experiences:*

Mountain climbing as a hobby provides the opportunity for travelling to experience the sights, sounds and smells of beauty and wonder. The gentle breeze dancing through the greenery invigorates the tired body after an exhausting journey over the mountain. The mountain climber is swathed all round by the high-reaching mountain wind so that she feels completely at ease with the peaceful environment. In fact, climbing a mountain is like journeying through life in the face of all kinds of challenges and hardships.

Indeed, I am most happy for the opportunity to share with readers my experience in climbing Gunong Tahan, the highest mountain in peninsular Malaysia and the highest mountain in peninsular Malaysia and the highest mountain in Malaysia which is Gunong Kinabalu.

## A Lesson in Climbing

The physical preparations are necessary no matter what mountain you are going to climb. In particular, you need to build up your stamina by taking long walks and climbing various difficult terrain in order to prepare yourself to overcome the mountaineering challenges ahead of you, thereby achieving your objective.

For Gunong Tahan, my participation in the climbing expedition was delayed by a few months as I had to complete my studies in higher education so that I had less opportunities to undergo training. I prayed that I would not be the cause for the failure of the expedition as the sponsor had warned that if one person could not reach the peak, the whole team would not be permitted to



climb to the top.

Although I was troubled by this thought, I am one who loves to take on challenges and so I accepted the offer to take part. I felt that climbing to the peak of Gunong Tahan would provide me with the opportunity to explore and discover the many secrets of nature. Moreover, my love for Gunong Tahan had been kindled by the novel, *Putera Gunong Tahan*, which I read when I was in standard five.

As Gunong Tahan was actually a mountain chain consisting of a number of mountains, I therefore had to practise climbing some other hills of similar terrain. As I was late in joining the expedition, I was immediately assigned to climb Gunong Nuang. During the climb, I lost four of my toe-nails which was caused by the long hours of my feet being soaked in water.

Then I took part in the training expedition to Gunong Irau before our departure to Taman Negara, Pahang. Besides the exercises in mountain climbing, we had to work out at the gymnasium and do some physical exercises in order to strengthen our arms as well as our legs.

Mental preparedness was also an important factor to ensure that we were ready to accept whatever challenges that may be posed by the mountain or the thick jungle over a period of eleven days. Our mental spirits were thus boosted by a number of motivational classes in order to expose us to the techniques of climbing, the prohibitions to be observed while climbing or jungle trekking, and how to manage a bag-pack.

In the case of Kinabalu, the emphasis of training was on climbing steps and on running. While Kinabalu was not as difficult as Gunong Tahan, the main challenge was being able to acclimatise to the cold weather, adjust to the rarer oxygen atmosphere and to tackle the greater height of the mountain. Thus, we had our training expeditions at Tasik Perdana, Bukit Istana and Bukit Gasing. We were also at the Cameron Highlands for several weeks in order to experience the cold weather conditions. Indeed, although climbing Kinabalu took only two days, both the mental and the physical endurance required cannot be under-estimated.

## **Equipment needed**

Gunong Tahan is still covered with virgin jungle and it needs to be preserved in order to maintain the original eco-system there. Thus, climbing through such jungle over a period of eleven days is no easy matter as there are no facilities as in Kinabalu.

Climbing Gunong Tahan is like going back to the past age without any daily conveniences or means of communication. Thus, we had to equip ourselves with things to be used by the group or community and things to be used by the individual.

Items to be used by the group included the following:

1. A tent for sleeping.
2. A big tent for meals and for gatherings.
3. A small gas-tank for cooking: We needed about 20 of the gas-tanks in order to last for eleven days.
4. Cooking utensils and food for our own cooking.
5. Items for cooking: They included rice, sardines, bread, chicken curry paste, sambal ikan bilis, Maggi Mee, tea, Nescafe, coffee, Milo, and individual preferences such as musli.
6. Sulphur to be sprayed around the tent to keep snakes away.
7. Emergency kit in order to treat injuries.

Items for the individual had to be spare in order to meet our basic needs only. We were not allowed to bring soap, shampoo, scented oil or perfume, etc. The objective was to preserve the original eco-system of the jungle and protect the life that may be on the threshold of extinction.

Personal items could include:

1. Bag pack and rain cover to contain personal items.
2. Sleeping mat.
3. Sleeping bag - for the nights which can be very cold.
4. Socks to prevent the leeches from getting on to the body.
5. Ponchos (or jungle coat).
6. An extra pair of clothing (for the cold weather).
7. A pair of pajamas.
8. An extra pair of climbing shoes and stockings.
9. A pair of slippers for use in the camp.
10. Tooth-brush and tooth-paste.
11. A small towel in order to reduce weight.
12. Your own medical needs.
13. Your own personal edibles and drinks, especially the energy boosters like dates, chocolate, power-bar, power-gel, raisin, ikan bilis, 100 plus, etc.
14. A candle.
15. A whistle to attract attention in case of emergency.
16. Sun-block for protection against the sun's rays.
17. A foldable knife, which may be handy in certain situations.

Indeed, both of the mountains, Gunong Tahan and Mount Kinabalu, have given me the opportunity to appreciate and enjoy two wonderful pathways of beauty. Although I could not see, the journey up and down the mountains was amazing, exhilarating and marvellous!

# **TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: MY NEW HOBBY - LISTENING TO INTERNET RADIO**

*by Moses Choo Siew Cheong  
Executive Director,  
National Council for the Blind, Malaysia*

After moving to use a Smartphone, I soon caught on to the idea of listening to all the broadcasts online, known as internet radio. Some of us will remember the old days when we had to sit next to a short-wave radio and concentrate on the different programmes amidst all the noise coming out from the same speaker of the radio.

With a Smartphone that talks, blind persons are now able to have almost full access to the information on radio stations prior to listening to the station of one's choice. In fact, there are quite a number of internet radio stations that are being hosted by blind people.

So what is internet radio? Well, internet radio actually involves the streaming of media, i.e. presenting listeners with a continuous audio stream that typically cannot be paused or replayed, very much like the traditional broadcasts on radio. Thus, internet broadcasts, like radio broadcasts, are quite distinct from podcasts or on-demand file serving. Podcasts involve downloading rather than streaming.

Internet radio services offer news, sports, talks, and various genres of music. In fact, many internet radio services are associated with a corresponding traditional (or terrestrial) radio station or network, i.e. every format available on traditional broadcast radio stations is also available on internet radio. However, low a start-up and on-going costs have resulted in the substantive proliferation of independent internet-only radio stations.

Internet radio services are usually accessible from anywhere in the world if there is a suitable internet connection available. For instance, one could listen to an Australian station from Europe and America. This has consequently made internet radio particularly suited to and popular amongst the expatriate listeners.

Nevertheless, some of the major networks like CBS Radio, Pandora Radio, and Citadel Broadcasting (except for news-talk and sports stations) in the United States and the United Kingdom restrict listening to in-country due to music licensing and advertising issues. One good example would be listening to CNN broadcasting from Malaysia.

Internet radio is also suited to listeners with special interests who are often not adequately served by the local radio stations. In Malaysia, for example, talk-shows and discussions are rather limited. For this reason, I get most of my news and up-to-date information from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

In fact, internet radio is typically listened to on a standard home PC or similar device, which is an embedded player programme located on the respective station's website. In recent years, special devices resembling the traditional radio receiver, which offer listeners a similar experience, has arrived on the market. In Malaysia, most of us started by listening to such international broadcasts on a desktop computer by using applications such as TapinRadio, Tunein Radio or even iTunes. Now tablets have been introduced equipped with applications to tune in to internet radio

As I became aware of the availability of such special dedicated radio devices, I got a friend to bring me one of these devices from the United States. With this device, I have been able to enjoy many hours of listening to internet broadcasts without the necessity of booting up a computer.

Indeed, owning an internet radio has provided me with the opportunity to know and to experience the idea of controlling electronic devices with the use of Smartphones. While the Grace Radio that I purchased came with a wireless remote control, it was totally inaccessible to me as a blind person. Fortunately, I eventually discovered that the solution came in the form of an app that could be downloaded from the iTunes store. By downloading this app, I was ultimately able to do the following:

I could tune into all the stations, get into Pandora, set up my preferred list of stations, and even set up the seven alarms that had been built into the radio. The only condition, however, was that my iPhone had to be on the same Wifi

network. Eventually, a further check revealed that such brands as Yamaha, Denon, Onkyo, Magnat and even Cocktail-audio had developed apps that could use Smartphones to control the equipment that they had produced. Thus, one solution to gaining full access to electronic equipment is through the Smartphone, a device which is already in the hands of many.

There are actually two different methods of tuning into an internet radio station. One way, of course, is to go directly to the website of these radio stations. However, knowing all the different names and looking for the website may be a little complicated for most people. In view of this, certain entities have begun grouping all these different internet radio stations together known in computer language as “a database of stations”. Examples of such companies include Apple, vTuner, Reciva and a handful more.

As far as I know, many internet radio producers will sign with these companies so that the buyers will not need to browse the World Wide Web in order to look for these stations. They include companies like Pioneer and Yamaha which are collaborating with vTuner while Cocktail audio and Grace are cooperating with Reciva.

And so if you are thinking of stepping into the world of internet radio, you will be spared the headache of having to go hunting for these stations. Instead, you will have very easy access to these stations just by owning a piece of equipment that comes with a phone application control!

Great, isn't it?

# NEW GADGETS FOR THE BLIND

*by Moses Choo Siew Cheong,  
Executive Director,  
National Council for the Blind, Malaysia*

Not long ago, the only games available to a Braille reader were a deck of Braille cards and a few expensive board games. Now the iPhone has brought all manner of portable accessible diversions - from word puzzles to fantasy adventures. And anyone can play (including the blind) without any experience required.

A host of blind gamers have put together their favourite accessible iDevice game apps; they tell you how they work and what it takes to win!

The book is available in one Braille volume, on BRF, Word, DAISY, or ePub for US\$12.

## Tactile Screenshots for iPad and iOS8

You can explore diagrams with one hand while swiping through screen elements with the other. You can learn in minutes what might otherwise take hours!

You can do this by finding your way around the iPad screen tactually! These 28 tactile screen-shots of various iPad screens, by Tom Decker, show you “what” appears “where” on your iPad - from the buttons and camera lenses to the iPad home screen apps, the App Store, messages, settings, keypad, contacts, iBooks, and iTunes.

You can obtain the book in one Braille volume with 28 raised line diagrams for US\$25.

The title of the book is “iFeelaGrams: Tactile Screenshots for iPad and iOS8”.



Cook with a MasterChef:

Millions of viewers love to watch Christine Ha sweep the thrilling Season Three Finale of MasterChef. Now you can try out these very recipes at home.

Using adaptive techniques, Christine Ha, who is blind, can turn out beautiful Asian and American dishes.

One reviewer wrote, “The recipes are simple using simple ingredients, but they taste wonderful!”

You can obtain the book in three Braille volumes or on BRF for US\$23.99 (the same price as the print book).

The title of the book is Home Kitchen: Asian and American Comfort Food from the Winner of MasterChef Season 3.

Favourite iOS Travel Apps

Whether you are travelling to the grocery store nearby or to a distant place like Paris, you can get there quicker with this handy guide to the favourite iPhone Travel Apps of Judy Dixon and Doug Wakefield.

The guide-book is available in one Braille volume and on BRF, Word, and DAISY for US\$9.

### **Bracelets with Inspirational Phrases**

Jewellery Designer, Kelly Fehr, has created popular “cuff” bracelets with inspirational phrases - Braille on the outside, engraved print on the inside. These beautiful solid brass cuffs can be adjusted by simply flexing the bracelet to your size.

You can select your message and then choose the silver- or gold-plated finish.

The price is US\$30.

## **A Quote for Every Week of the Year**

Friday Morning Quotations features 52 memorable quotes spiral-bound and ready to be used in speeches, Facebook or email to family and friends, or just enjoyed - one quote each week.

These quote booklets make terrific gifts! Each booklet costs US\$9.

## **Words to Live By**

The print and Braille magnet collection features a quote that speaks to what the world needs right now.

For example, “When words are both true and kind, they can change our world” - Buddha.

The assortment of colourful magnets make great gifts for birthday, graduation, or any other occasion.

The book, Refrigerator Magnets, is available in print and Braille for US\$5.

## **Colouring Fun with Dinosaurs**

No longer does a blind child need to be excused from class while the sighted students are colouring.

You can buy a couple of these really cool raised-line colouring books from Tactile Vision! Each book includes print, Braille and tactile drawings to colour!

The Tactile Book of Dinosaurs shows you tactually what the dinosaurs really looked like. Each page features one dinosaur and a short description in print and Braille.

The last page is a size comparison that shows how large or small the dinosaurs were, compared to humans. The price is US\$12.

For further details, you can write to:

National Braille Press

88 St. Stephen Street

Boston, MA 02115

U.S.A.

Tel: (800)5487323

Or (737)2666160 extension 520

Fax (617)4370456

[www.nbp.org](http://www.nbp.org)

# A POINT TO PONDER: DREAMS, DREAMS, DREAMS!

*by Wong Kow*

Everybody has countless dreams in life. However, not many of the dreams are significant enough to be remembered by the dreamer. I must admit that I myself am no scholar in the study or analysis of dreams. Nevertheless, do kindly allow me to share with you some of my “interesting” dreams.

## Dream 1

When my eyesight had deteriorated too far and I finally gave up seeking further treatment, I decided to go to St. Nicholas’ Home in order to seek advice from Mr. William G. Brohier, who was then the principal of St. Nicholas’ School for the Blind. He advised that I should learn Braille and introduced me to Mr. Ma Kho, who was a totally blind teacher at the school.

After one or two lessons with very clear explanations from Mr. Ma, I was able to recognise the Braille dots forming the alphabets from a to z. Then Mr. Ma told me stories about Braille and its usage. He lent me a Braille book to bring home so that I could learn and memorise some of the contractions and abbreviations.

I considered myself to be “still young” at the time and I did not seem to have too much of a problem reading the book. Gradually, I managed to memorise some of the common words used in the second grade Braille reader. However, my reading speed seemed to be unbearably slow as my finger-tips were not very sensitive to the touch of the Braille dots and I was able to use only one finger to read. I often had to rub the Braille dots up and down in order to find out whether the letter was e or i, d or f, o or ow, st or ch, and so on.

In my first lesson of learning how to use the Braille writing-frame, I broke the stylus after merely poking into the Braille dots for two lines on the writing-frame. Indeed, I believe that it was my anxiety and my impatience to learn fast that had often made the learning process more problematic for me.

It is a pity that after learning and using Braille for fifty years until today, my reading is still terribly slow. I am extremely nervous whenever I am required to read aloud for somebody.

I remember that while Mr. Ma was happy with my perseverance and tireless efforts in putting in extra hours to rewrite my Braille lessons, he jokingly remarked, “your reading speed is as good as an old dog picking up new tricks!”

## **Dream 2**

After a brief period of rehabilitation and training at the Gurney Training Centre (GTC), I was offered a job as telephone operator in an international commercial organisation. My original work station was at the local sales office. I compiled my own telephone directory in Braille and I familiarised myself with the local distributors and regular customers as well as the usual business contacts. The working days went by very smoothly indeed and I called them “The Happy Go Lucky Days”.

Then came the tough times when I was required to go to the head office to relieve the telephonist there during her absence. The environment in the head office was rather different for me. My Braille telephone directory was of no help to me as the telephone contacts here were often unfamiliar to me.

Even worse was the fact that the general manager and a number of the senior managers were Europeans. I was not used to the heavy accent in their speeches so that I had difficulty in catching the abbreviations they used for their usual contacts. Thus, I was often caught in an awkward situation when I had to keep repeating, “I beg your pardon”.

## **Dream 3**

Some of my close friends will remember that I had the ambition of becoming a teacher. When I failed to get into the teaching profession, I would often dream that I was a teacher. I dreamt that I was teaching the Arts and,

interestingly, the people and the scenes would always be similar.

In the Arts lesson of my dream, I asked my students to use their imagination freely to draw whatever picture that came to their minds. Then I collected back all the drawings for marking. As I checked through the drawings, one paper was totally blank while another was painted with nothing but black. Strangely, the blank paper was handed to me by Sek Yee Seong while the black paper was handed up by Liong Teck Yau, both of whom were my very close friends in real life.

Strange as it may be, however, they were students in my dream and I was certainly upset and confused as to why they would be so disobedient in my class. So I brought the case to my principal for advice.

In my dream, the principal was none other than the late Major Bridges, the founder of MAB. When he enquired why Sek Yee Seong had handed up the blank paper, Sek replied, “The actual drawing was an ox eating grass.”

“But where is the ox? I see no grass on the drawing paper,” Major Bridges insisted.

“The ox has finished eating the grass and it has gone home to accompany the cow,” Sek replied with a broad smile.

Then came Liong to explain why he had painted the whole picture black. “The drawing was of Africa on a moonless night when two negroes had gone to the nearby jungle and they shot two crows.”

At this moment, I was sitting next to my students, eagerly waiting for the principal’s judgment. I was keeping my fingers crossed and hoping that the principal would mete out disciplinary action or at least advise them to obey the teacher’s instructions in class.

After a few seconds of complete silence, the principal cleared his throat and said firmly, “Good, very impressive imaginary drawings! Keep it up! Go back to class and continue studying hard.”

I was amazed at hearing the principal’s remarks and I almost fainted. The

great shock awakened me from my dream.

I am puzzled and confused as this similar situation often occurs in my dreams. With a sense of humour, I would tell myself not to dream of becoming a teacher any more. I am going to dream of something more realistic. Unfortunately, we have no control over our dreams.

As I reflect, I think that dreams may serve as a reminder, a warning or even as an inspiration. It could be interesting and encouraging or it could be frightening and shocking. When I am awake, I seem to understand that sometimes dreams do send us certain messages. However, I am not good at interpreting dreams.

Still, I know that it is futile just simply “day dreaming”. The important thing is to be able to wake up at the right moment. No matter whether our dream is sweet or nightmarish, the dream can always be interesting and inspirational if we give it a positive interpretation.

While dreams can make you feel great, only actions can turn your dreams into reality. A “day dream” without action is as good as nothing. If you do have a good dream, remember to wake up at the right time for the necessary action to be taken.

Enjoy your sweet dreams, my dear friends!

# **BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN PEOPLE**

## 1. Expect the best

People who like people and who believe that those they lead have the best of intentions will get the best from them.

## 2. Study Other People's Needs

We must ask questions about what people believe, what they love, and what they hate. We must say, "Tell me about yourself".

Real leaders know that if they listen long enough, people will explain how they can be motivated.

## 3. Set High Standards

Although we may tolerate a considerable amount of individuality, we must nevertheless insist upon certain core beliefs as well as high standards.

## 4. Create a Conducive Environment

We must create an environment where failure is not fatal. "It is an ability to fail that makes for lasting success".

## 5. Use Role Models

It is very helpful to use role models to encourage success.



## 6. Use Persuasion

Great persuaders are great story-tellers. They know that we are more easily influenced by individualised experiences than by general principles.

## 7. Recognise and Applaud Achievement

Catch your subordinates doing something right; then praise them immediately. Show appreciation by expressing thanks.

## 8. Place a Premium on Collaboration

Construct the group so that there is always high esprit de corp and a tight allegiance to one another. Return your loyalty to those who are loyal to you.

However, good leaders do more than build allegiance to themselves; they also build into the organisation an allegiance to one another. Then people will take responsibility for ensuring high standards through group pride, competition within the group, and loyalty to one another, thereby keeping up group morale.

## 9. Develop Followers Who Will Surpass You

Good leaders will motivate their subordinates so successfully that the subordinates become their superiors ultimately.

For example, a mother who never went to school spent her time at home reading to her children by the hour. In the end, her daughter grew up to be a lawyer.

# GLOBALISATION AND ENGLISH

In this day and age, much emphasis is being placed on globalisation and English.

Do you think English is easy? Can you read each of the following questions correctly for the first time?

1. The bandage was wound around the wound.
2. The farm was used to produce produce.
3. The dump was so full that it had to refuse more refuse.
4. We must polish the Polish furniture.
5. He would lead if he could get the lead out.
6. The soldier decided to desert in the desert.
7. Since there is no time like the present, he thought it was time to present the present.
8. I did not object to the object.
9. The insurance was invalid for the invalid.
10. There was a row among the oarsmen about how to row.
11. They were too close to the door to close it.
12. The buck does funny things when the does are present.
13. To help with planting, the farmer taught his sow to sow.
14. The wind was too strong to wind the sail.
15. How can I intimate this to my most intimate friend.

**PRINCIPAL OFFICE-BEARERS AND  
COUNCIL MEMBERS OF NCBM  
FOR APRIL 2017-2018**

Mdm Jasmine Khoo,  
President, NCBM

Dato' Dr Hsiung Kwo Yeun  
Vice-President, NCBM/President, Sarawak Society for the Blind

Mr Ng Kich Sheng @ Jimmy  
Secretary, NCBM/Secretary, Sabah Society for the Blind

Dato' Kulasegaran A/L Sabaratnam  
Treasurer, NCBM/Council Member of Malaysian Association for the Blind

Datuk Rosalind Chew Bee Koh  
President, Sabah Society for the Blind

Assistant Bishop Designate Charles Samuel  
Chairman, St. Nicholas' Home, Penang

Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat  
St. Nicholas' Home, Penang

Dr Ahmad Shamsuri Bin Muhamad  
Society of the Blind in Malaysia

En Mohd Mustaza Mohamad Zin  
Society of the Blind in Malaysia

Ms Annie Soon Nyin Yin  
Sarawak Society for the Blind

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Dr Kway Eng Hock

Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment (CEEE)  
Dr Wong Huey Siew

Committee on Public Awareness (CPA)  
Datuk Rosalind Chew Bee Koh

Inpana @& Associates, Kuala Lumpur

## **AUDITOR 2016-2018**

Inpana @& Associates, Kuala Lumpur

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World Blind Union / World Blind Union Asia Pacific (WBU/WBUAP)  
Dato Dr' Hsiung Kwo Yeun  
and Mr Moses Choo Siew Cheong

## **EARN SOME EXTRA CASH**

Readers are invited to write for our publication, “NCBM Outreach”. For articles published, payment are as follows:

1. Original articles on the achievements of blind people or of an inspirational nature (about 500 words) - RM80
2. Articles containing ideas and suggestions for the improvement of NCBM or its member-organisations (about 500 words) - RM80
3. Articles on funny or unusual experiences (250/500 words) - RM40/RM80
4. Poems which are personal compositions depicting experiences of a blind person (about 50/100 words) - RM40/RM80
5. Articles of an informative nature written in your own words (about 500 words) - RM80.

Note: Articles submitted by officials of NCBM or its member-organisations will not qualify for payment unless the submissions have nothing to do with their daily office duties.

Also, full payment will be made if the article requires little or no editing.