

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.

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.

It cost the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia RM 30,000.00 a year to produce both print and Braille.

Your financial support will, therefore, 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 :

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

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

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. 03-20281999.

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 03-2028 1999.

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 03-2028 1999



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

ARTICLES FOR THE MAGAZINE

Readers are reminded that their contribution of articles, suggestions, poems 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 thumb drive 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.



EDITORIAL BOARD

Moses Choo Siew Cheong

Wong Yoon Loong

Wong Kwee Heong

Chin Yew Cheng



MESSAGE FROM NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND, MALAYSIA (NCBM)

Adopting The Unified English Braille Code In Malaysia

Braille came to Malaysia in the 1930's with the introduction of British Braille to the blind students at St. Nicholas', Penang, the first school for the blind in Malaysia. Later, it was introduced to the blind students at the Princess Elizabeth School for the Blind in Johor Bahru, the second school for the blind in this country. Subsequently, British Braille was introduced to the blind trainees at the Gurney Training Centre (GTC) of the Malaysian Association for the Blind, which was also the first vocational training institution for the blind in the country. Of course, British Braille was then adopted by the Ministry of Education and it was used by all blind students in the government educational programmes for the blind throughout the country.

Thus, with British Braille having been so well established in this country, it is not surprising why Malaysia remained stuck on British Braille for some time while the world has been moving on to the Unified English Braille code (or UEB). Even Britain itself, the originator of British Braille, along with a few other countries, had made the switch and they had adopted the UEB as early as 2012. Nevertheless, we are very happy indeed that Malaysia has finally agreed that the UEB should be adopted in the country by the year of 2018.

It was truly a great challenge that had been taken on by the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) in making the move and taking the lead to get UEB adopted by the Ministry of Education of Malaysia. Hence, it is most gratifying to know that the efforts of NCBM had paid off. NCBM has helped to ensure that Braille will remain relevant to the blind in this country for a long time to come. Braille will continue to be used as the literacy tool in the education of the blind in Malaysia.

So let us go forward with UEB!

THE NATIONAL VOCATIONAL CAREER CAMP FOR BLIND SCHOOL-LEAVERS 2017

by Wong Yoon Loong

Manager of CARE Services,

National Council for the Blind, Malaysia

The Vocational Career Camp was organised by the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) to help prepare blind school-leavers to face and deal with the new challenges as they go out into the great world before them. The objectives of the programme, therefore, were to instill self-confidence, provide some useful information, equip them with vocational skills and expose them to ICT (information and communicational technology).

The programme was held from 4-7 December 2017 (Tuesday to Thursday) and the venue was at the Marina Island Resort and Hotel, Lumut, Perak. There were 31 students and 13 facilitators/secretariat/volunteers taking part in the programme.

In comparison with the time of 20 years ago, employment today requires workers who are technologically savvy, creative, highly motivated and able to carry out teamwork. In fact, NCBM has been organising the vocational career camp for visually impaired Form Five and Form Six school-leavers from all over the country since 2014. With the 2017 camp, NCBM has thus adopted some new approaches in methodology, programme content and style of presentation.

Besides speeches and forums, simulation and teamwork exercises were used to help inculcate humanitarian and moral values amongst the participants. In addition, activities were organised that were aimed at helping them to develop communicational skills in English as well as decision-making, advocacy and self-enhancement skills.

Describing the programme in brief, participants and facilitators departed from Menara Sentral Vista by bus at 9.00 a.m. The first destination was Kolam Air Panas in Sungkai, Perak. Here the participants were given the opportunity to soak themselves in the hot springs which had temperatures ranging from 35-45 degrees Celsius and the springs were being fed by cool

water from the mountains. They also had a taste of the eggs that were cooked in the spring water. After lunch had been served on site, they went on to the Lumut Jetty where they had the opportunity to shop for refreshments and useful items.

They then journeyed on to the camp location, arriving at around 4.30 p.m. After registration and tea, the participants were divided into two groups according to their place of stay and camp activities. They were also given an orientation of the environment. In the evening, they attended the ice-breaking session and listened to a speech concerning employment opportunities after leaving school.

The second day was filled with activities such as the ICT workshop, a forum on careers, and a presentation on the techniques of coping with an interview.

In the ICT workshop, the participants were exposed to the use of computer software, iPhone software and adaptive equipment for the blind and low-vision persons. At the career forum session, the participants had the opportunity to look at various perspectives of employment in the private sector, in entrepreneurial business, in the academic field and in teaching. In the evening they were exposed to the decision-making process.

On the third day, they went through an interview simulation exercise, broke up for group discussions and enjoyed a barbecue meal. Every group was required to appoint a representative to take part in the interview simulation exercise. The general session was then reconvened and the participants had the opportunity to put forward and discuss strategies that could be adopted to help them get employment. Then, while enjoying their barbecue meal, they were able to share their experiences and future plans with much joy and festive celebration.

On the last day of the programme, the participants had the opportunity to visit the Turtle Nature Reserve before heading to University of Malaya. They were able to touch the turtles and the staff there had a very positive outlook.

Then at the University, the participants went on an exploratory tour of the campus. They visited the Seventh Residential College known as Kolej Za'ba,

the main library, and the Kompleks Perdanasiswa. They were then given a briefing on the services for the disabled at the university. The programme was concluded with evening refreshments.

Recommendations put forward by the participants are as follows:

1. More challenging activities should be included in the programme.
2. The Marina Island Resort should be designated as the permanent venue for the programme.
3. Educational visits such as to the zoo should be included in the programme.
4. Speakers from private and vocational institutions should be invited to give presentations.
5. Similar career camps should be organised in Sabah and Sarawak.
6. There should be more activities that help to build and develop self-confidence.
7. Include beach activities, especially from the aspect of safety and protection.
8. Speakers from the Welfare Department should be invited to provide information on the kinds of assistance and opportunities available to the disabled.

Indeed, the positive response from the participants has clearly testified to the success of the Career Vocational Camp 2017 organised by NCBM. The programme has been of great benefit, particularly for those who had just passed out from their schooling stage of life. All their suggestions will be considered for inclusion in the 2018 programme.

We take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks and appreciation to everyone who has helped, supported and thereby contributed to the success of the National Career Vocational Camp for Blind School-leavers 2017.



Check in to Marina Island Resort & Hotel



Morning Exercise



Mock up Interview



Certificate Presentation

NEWS FROM NCBM AND MEMBER-ORGANISATIONS

They Are Blind But They Just Love Books

Indeed, visual impairment is no hindrance at all when it comes to reading. Kong Meng Fatt lost his eyesight at about the same time when he learned to walk but this did not stop him from developing a love for reading. In fact, the passion eventually led him to win the 2018 Nilam Special Education Award in the visually handicapped category.

The 11-year old from Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas Jalan Batu in Kuala Lumpur was diagnosed with cancer in both eyes when he was just over a year old. The doctors tried to save at least one eye with rounds of chemotherapy but their efforts were in vain.

"I love learning and reading and I can read two books a day," Meng Fatt said, adding that he reads the books from the school library.

His mother, Jenny Tham Chooi Peng, said, "Meng Fatt is rarely seen without a book when he is at home. He will even be reading while waiting to go to school in the morning."

Jenny said that her son knows Braille. "He is an independent boy who does not require any help with reading because he has Braille books."

Another winner of the same award is Saw Xin En, aged 13, who is also an avid reader. She is a student from Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas Sungai Patani, Kedah. She was born blind in one eye and she does not read Braille as she can still read normal text.

"But I have to hold the reading material close to my face," she said, adding that she reads at least two books a day and that she is fond of Bahasa Malaysia novels.

Her mother, Goh Siew Kee, said that Xin En normally reads books borrowed from the school.

During the award ceremony, the Education Director-general, Datuk Dr. Amin Senin, said, "The Ministry wants to inculcate the reading habit among students as it helps them to develop an inquisitive mind. Certainly, an inquisitive mind leads to higher order thinking skills. HOTS allows students not only to analyse and apply knowledge and also to use creativity and innovation in solving problems."

Both Meng Fatt and Xin En received RM500 and a certificate each together with four other students in the special education category. Another twenty students from all over Malaysia also received the awards in the mainstream education category.

Celine Lean Yew Lin – First Blind Person To Graduate From Methodist College Kuala Lumpur



Mr. and Mrs. Lean certainly had reason to be proud and to rejoice in the success of their 19-year old daughter, Celine Lean Yew Lin, when she graduated from Methodist College Kuala Lumpur (MCKL) on 27 January 2018. At the graduation ceremony held at the Dream Centre in Section 14 of Petaling Jaya, Celine was awarded the A-level certificate with such excellent results – she scored two A-stars for Law and for Psychology, two A's for Economics and English Literature, and Distinction for Malaysian Studies, Moral Studies, Character Formation and Community Service.

At the age of four, Celine suffered from APML Leukaemia causing internal bleeding and retinal detachment which ultimately resulted in blindness. Fortunately, Mrs. Lean was able to get her young little daughter enrolled in the pre-school programme of the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) which helped to prepare Celine for admission into school three years later.

On the advice of the pre-school teacher and supervisor, Cikgu Rosnah, the parents got their daughter admitted into Standard One of the S.K. Klang Primary School at the appropriate age of seven as mandated by law. She subsequently joined the Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Khas (SMPK) Setapak for secondary education.

However, she made the conscious decision to move away from the well trodden path of her predecessors by going to a college where no other blind person had gone before, i.e. Methodist College Kuala Lumpur. Being the first and only blind person there, the College had no idea how to help Celine in her studies. Fortunately, they were able to reach out to NCBM which provided the much needed assistance and support in producing Braille textbooks as well as tactile diagrams for Economics and tactile maps. NCBM even made available some special plastic paper which gave her the opportunity to answer the questions usually omitted for the blind in the examinations – with the special plastic paper, she was able to produce her own drawings required to back up her explanations on certain economic theories.

With her excellent results, Celine has been awarded the Yayasan Khazanah Scholarship to study law in University of Cambridge in England. She will be leaving for Cambridge in September 2019 when she is 21 years of age which is the requirement for admission into the Mature College at University of Cambridge.

Job Placements For The Blind In 2017

47 blind persons were found employment by the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) in 2017 in various parts of the country.

11 Telephone Operators and Administrative Assistants were placed in Kumpulan Pertubuhan Johor Sdn. Bhd. (or the KPJ Medical Centre in Johor); 1 Telephone Operator in the Cardiac Vascular Centre in KL Sentral; 14 Telemarketeers in the Ringo Star Group; 1 General Clerk with KPC Artee Architect; 1 H.R. & Administrative Assistant in San Francisco Coffee-House; 4 masseurs in Serai Sta Sentul; 10 masseurs in several other massage centres; 1 Telemarketeer in the Sunner Group International; 1 crew serviceman in McDonald's of Section 14, Petaling Jaya; and 1 Cafe Attendant in the MAB Cafeteria. Contract work was found for 2 multi-handicapped persons who work from their own homes.



Letter from Wong Kow

I read with great interest the article which appeared in NCBM Outreach of January - March 2018 entitled "Technology Update: Be My Eyes". I am amazed how Be My Eyes can bring sight to the blind and visually impaired through sighted helpers from around the world via live video connection. Incredibly, once the iPhone has been connected with Be My Eyes, sighted assistance is made available anytime and anywhere with little waiting time required.

Wow! Such a wide range of assistance can be obtained just simply with this connection – describing pictures and paintings, matching the colours of my clothes, seeking lost items, reading labels on household products, reading computer screens, and so on. Indeed, there are so many other circumstances in which blind persons can get sighted help!

It's so wonderful to know that the sighted helpers can also share the joy of being able to be helpful to the blind through Be My Eyes. Because of this,

there are now thousands of sighted volunteers who have generously offered to make themselves available to the blind.

Now there is another app which I find to be both useful and interesting. This is the Google Translator. In fact, some of my sighted friends and family members love to use the Google Translator to help in translating from one language to another. However, as a blind person myself, I use it mostly to scan and read text.

Once the smartphone has been downloaded with the Google Translation app, you just go to Google Translate, select the wanted language and open the Translate Camera.

Now look for Scan, focus on the book or label or any other printed material to be read. Tap twice on Scan and the system will say, "Use your finger to highlight text". Being a blind user, however, I would normally choose "Select all". Amazingly, within seconds, the text that has been scanned will be read out accordingly.

Interestingly, there was an occasion when I accidentally placed the wanted text upside down. And yet the scanner could still read the text correctly. In fact, however, at the point of "Select original language", I would actually prefer to select the Chinese language because it could also read English as well.

Frankly speaking, I am really not smart enough in handling the smartphone. I would, therefore, like to suggest that perhaps in the "Technology Update" section of NCBM Outreach, Mr. Moses Choo could help to enlighten us on the proper settings and the usage of Google Translate and much more.

CAREERS IN AUDIO PRODUCTION FOR THE BLIND

By Moses Choo Siew Cheong

Reflecting back on the years of my youth, I would think of the good times we spent in St. Nicholas' Home for the blind in Penang. In those days, we had plenty of opportunities to play around with tape-recorders and turntables and later on with cassette recorders and even CD players. Some of us, who were in the bands, also had the opportunity to learn how to set up the electrical amplifier and even an MIC mixer.

Most of the equipment actually belonged to St. Nicholas' Home but the blind were given a free hand in dealing with the equipment. No question was raised as to whether the blind had the ability or knowledge to use the equipment. As a result of these open-ended opportunities, quite a number of the blind were able to develop their musical talents.

Eventually, some of the bands that sprang up in St. Nicholas' included the Junior Jets, the Braillettes and The Granites. I myself was a member of The Granites which existed from 1971 to 1974. Other musicians who emerged were Benjamin Ampulardon, Grenville Perera, Edward Cheah, Simon Woon, John Kim and Roslan Ibrahim.

Indeed, the opportunities that were given to the blind to play around with the audio equipment helped them to develop an interest in audio recording. Some of us like Joseph Soon, Moktar Soon and I myself tried a hand on making our own audio programmes.

In fact, Joseph Soon came up with the idea of creating an audio programme called "The Link". The objective was to link up the blind students of the Princess Elizabeth School in Johor Bahru, St. Nicholas' Home in Penang and the Gurney Training Centre (GTC) in Kuala Lumpur. Unfortunately, the programme was short-lived due to the fact that only a handful of persons were involved in running the programme and there was no sponsorship from any of the institutions.

And so this brings me to the topic in question, "Can the blind have a career as a recording technician or a recording producer"? Well, let me share further on what I know concerning this matter. During the 1970's and the 1980's, the two blind persons who really had their hands in recording were Roger Kiew Poh Sin and Alfred Ho Ah Let. Indeed, both of them had aspired to become deejays! Alfred moved on to carve out a career as a singer and he produced several records of his songs. In fact, he still has a number of his CD's in the market. As for Roger, he actually set up his own studio in Singapore and eventually settled down with his family in Canada.

Now this leads me to providing some information that I have taken from the AFB website. There's the story essentially about Nick Boggs as an audio engineer/producer. While he had these skills to keep himself employed, he had to become an entrepreneur and business owner in order to gain such a position in employment. Somewhat surprisingly, in fact, the audio recording industry did not seem to be open to the idea of hiring audio engineers who are visually impaired.

As an audio engineer, Nick would record, edit and mix various types of audio productions, including radio and music commercials. Since 2002, he has primarily produced audio descriptions for film and television.

In his producer role, he oversees production teams, casts voiceover talents, communicates with clients, ensures production quality, and enforces deadlines and budgets. As a business owner, he analyses financials, policies and practices as well as develop marketing and strategic plans. His other responsibilities include writing proposals, agreements, web content and dealing with all business correspondence.

Typically, his day starts with him wearing his "business owner" hat. In this capacity, he handles email and voicemail from clients, partners or prospects. He confirms bank account balances, checks competitor websites for new developments, and checks the calendar for meetings. Then he switches hats and becomes the producer to review notes about the day's tasks, calls members of the day's production team to confirm everyone is on schedule, and loads the latest version of the voiceover script into his Braille note-taker.

If he is not scheduled to engineer, his job will be to direct the voiceover talent while he listens carefully to each take and makes aesthetic decisions about the tracks and the placement of descriptions. He may also need to follow the script to ensure that the words being recorded are as written. Afterwards, he will listen to the final mix and suggest adjustments if necessary. If there are questions about the recording, he will consult with his consumer advisors or the client before making a final decision.

If it is his day to engineer, he will file up the Mac G5 and Pro Tools audio workstation with all of the associated peripherals as soon as he arrives at the studio. He will use the built-in Apple screen reader software to navigate the Mac and the C/24 Ethernet control surface to gain physical control of faders and knobs that appear on the computer monitor.

Audio is digitised from a pro video deck, or it is imported from a DVD. He will check all connections between the voiceover booth and the edit bay and test the system. He must also ensure the proper placement of microphones for the recording, cue up each spot for recording, and then actually record the performance.

The next step is to edit the tracks, removing breaths and mouth noise, mix the descriptions with the original programme audio, and either transfer the finished recording back to videotape or generate an electronic file and upload it to a server for the client.

A production team for audio description consists of the audio describer who writes the script, the description quality specialist who is a visually impaired expert consumer, the engineer, the voiceover artist and the producer.

Actually, there are very few people in society who really understand the nuts and bolts of this work and even fewer who have any experience doing the work. This makes hiring in this field always a great challenge.

For Nick Boggs, his path to this career was certainly not planned. It is truly fortunate that it worked out at all. Looking back, he now understands that his biggest problem in planning a career was his failure to address the fact

that, at his core, he is an artist. From his youth, he learned to play multiple instruments, composed music, painted, sculpted, and he wrote short stories and poetry.

However, he could never afford professional lessons of any kind. To a handful of generous people who cared enough to make a difference in a young person's life, he felt that he owes a great debt. Some donated instruments while others volunteered their time to teach him everything from music notation to synthesiser programming and MIDI.

His career is really the culmination of two simultaneous pursuits: firstly, trying to learn how to record his own music; secondly, capitalising on acting and voiceover opportunities that kept coming along.

The best part of his job is creating something of quality. He also finds much pleasure in the fact that everyone who works for him agrees that they have a fun, congenial and sometimes inspired workplace.

And so, as you can see, for a blind person to be an audio technician, an audio engineer or even an audio producer is not impossible. Undoubtedly, nonetheless, the job is most challenging but the blind person can do it if he is equipped with the knowledge, skills and the know-how!

ISHAK NGAU – EXEMPLARY MODEL OF THE BLIND IN EMPLOYMENT

By Godfrey Ooi Goat See



Ishak Ngau is indeed an exemplary model of courage, inspiration and help to other blind and visually impaired persons in feeling their way to a brighter future.

When Ishak Ngau became totally blind at the age of sixteen, his world came crashing down on him.

"When I was 14 years old in Form Two, I started having problems with my eyes due to Glaucoma," Ishak recalled. "First it was one eye, then both eyes. Within three years, I couldn't see any more even though I had tried hard to save my eyesight. It was really hard trying to adjust to a dark world!"

Ishak's courage and determination to earn a decent and honest living certainly deserves respect and admiration. He had to struggle every day just to have enough to survive but he was determined to beat the odds.

Ishak is taking a leading role in organising skills training for his fellow blind masseurs. He learned how to massage at the Sarawak Centre for the Blind in Kuching, Sarawak after having come to terms with his fate.

"I had to accept my blindness," Ishak explained. "So I went to Kuching and then to Kuala Lumpur in order to upgrade my skills."

Ishak spent twenty years in the federal capital and became a recognised trainer for blind massage and he set up a massage-cum-training centre in K.L.

Subsequently, Ishak took up the chairmanship of the Sarawak Branch of the Society of the Blind in Malaysia. He now lives in the state capital and he operates a massage centre there and offers training courses in blind massage. He is married to a fellow blind person, Christina Nyohen, and they have a son with normal eyesight and he is in Form Two.

Ishak said that the blind must help themselves. "While we need welfare assistance from the Government, we must also help ourselves by getting ourselves equipped with more advanced massage techniques," he stressed.

"The Human Resources Ministry offers a lot of technical help through its Skills Development Department while the Sarawak Labour Department and Welfare Department are of great help to the blind," Ishak added.

In fact, Ishak has organised skills training programmes for the blind and visually impaired in collaboration with the Ministry and Welfare Department in Miri as well as in Sibul, Kuching and Kuala Lumpur. "We blind people do need to upgrade our skills constantly if we are to remain relevant," Ishak said as he called on the general public to come and utilise their massage services.

He said that instead of patronising the massage centres that do not offer genuine massage, he urged members of the public to seek out blind masseurs for good physical therapy. At the same time, they will be helping the blind folks to earn a living.

"We are trying to earn a decent living every day instead of sitting around and waiting for government aid," he pointed out. "We are genuine and professionally trained. Our massages are proven to be beneficial for physical therapy and health," he emphasised.

Indeed, there is a blind couple here, Philip Asui and Diana Lai, who are in their late 30's. They are struggling to survive in their massage business as they have only a limited number of clients due to stiff competition from the massage centres that offer young girls for other types of "massage" deals. Recognising their plight, Ishak recently came to Miri to provide them with skills training and eventually presented the couple with certificates. He explained that the certificates were issued by the Human Resources Ministry's Department of Skills Development.

"Our certificates are advanced level certificates equal to the certificates issued by other Government training institutes," Ishak said.

Ishak expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Human Resources Ministry, the Labour Department and the Welfare Department for the assistance given him in order to organise programmes for the blind. He earnestly hopes that all the blind masseurs in Sarawak will sign up to undergo massage skills training in order to boost their qualifications.

Asui and Lai expressed very sincere and grateful thanks to Ishak Ngau for his years of dedication towards helping the blind. "He has been a great source of inspiration and service to the blind community," said Asui. "He often organises training programmes and other activities to help the blind progress and enhance their relationships."

THE OPPORTUNITIES, JOY AND DEVELOPMENT THAT MUSIC BRINGS TO MY LIFE



Editor's Note: Andrea Pui Jia Hui was a student at St. Nicholas' Home in Penang when she took part in the 14th WBUAP Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest. The Excellence Works Prize was awarded for her essay in the Group A category. [Here](#)

is the essay:

Nearly everyone enjoys music for it does not matter whether you listen to it, you sing it, or you play it on a musical instrument. I have myself had a passion for music as a child so that I had been able to develop my interest in music since young. Indeed, I really loved listening to music while I was doing my work and even while I was sleeping.

I truly believe that learning music has many benefits as it can bring precious opportunities, endless joy and meaningful development into one's life. In fact, something tells me that learning a musical instrument such as the piano will help me to become a piano teacher in the future. I have a very strong feeling that by pursuing my music studies, a wide range of opportunities will be opened up to me in the future. For example, I may be able to consider opening up a music school as a business venture.

I have discovered, however, that learning music for a vision-impaired person is quite different from people with normal vision. Knowledge of this has given me a better understanding of how I should teach music to blind and vision-impaired persons.

If I have a successful music business and I can earn a very good income, then I would be able to live up to my social responsibilities and contribute to society. I would be able to support charitable causes like giving donations for the orphans and for the disabled, to provide scholarships for needy students who wish to continue their studies, and to hold charity concerts in aid of the needy in society. Indeed, I would love to organise cultural exchange programmes and events in order to promote all the different cultures in the world through music.

Truly, I do find much joy in listening to music or in playing a musical instrument such as the piano. After learning to play the piano at the age of nine, I found it very relaxing for the mind as I played my favourite music on the piano. I found great pleasure in listening to soft music as I carried out my everyday chores. Music can really lift my spirits and fill me with such happiness when I am down. Truly, I feel such a sense of joy, satisfaction and achievement when I am able to play and complete a musical piece, thereby scoring a distinction for my examination. Most of all, I am truly grateful for the overwhelming feeling of joy and crowning success when I am able to put up a good music performance.

I do feel such a sense of wonder when I am able to create or compose my own music pieces as a pianist. It gets even more interesting when I am able to work with and in a group to share our creativity, ideas and talents in coming up with new music pieces. Sometimes I would collaborate with my sister, who is also a talented pianist, in creating a piano piece. Working this way does relieve me of stress; it takes away all my worries and troubles and it brings meaning to my life.

Music has certainly brought much development in many aspects of my life. Firstly, needing to pay full attention when playing a music piece either alone or in a group has given me the training to concentrate on the task that I am doing.

Music has also helped me to improve my memory. Being blind, I am unable to play a music piece while reading the music sheet, which is in Braille. The only way, therefore, is for me to memorise the piece before playing it. This has been a great help to me in my studies whereby memorising is an important skill that can help me to achieve results.

Moreover, learning music has taught me how to work in a team. While I am able to contribute my ideas, I am at the same time also able to accept and respect the ideas that are coming from other people. In fact, I have been able to learn how to divide up the work equally amongst the group members in order to complete a group assignment or project.

Furthermore, I have learnt to manage my time more effectively. As a music student, I always had to set aside some time for piano practices. This has helped me to realise that time is an important asset and that we should be time-conscious and avoid wasting time.

Even more important is the fact that learning music has given me training in overcoming nervousness, anxiety and fear. When I have to sit for my piano examinations, I need to remain calm so that I will be able to play the piece with confidence in front of the examiner. Music has thus helped me to be more confident in whatever I do as, for example, when I have to perform in a concert.

Last, but not least, music has helped me to be more creative in generating new ideas. The need to play the piano with creative expression has helped me to develop creative thinking in other areas of my life.

In conclusion, I personally feel that music has really beautified my life and made it so meaningful and enjoyable. I am truly grateful and thankful to God for having endowed me with the talent of music. Indeed, as music is my passion, I am hopeful that my ambition to become a pianist in the future will come to realisation.

BRICKFIELDS AND THE STORY BEHIND ITS NAME

By Dr. Gordon Tan Tok Shiong

I believe that Brickfields is rather unique as I think there is probably no other place on earth where you can find so many blind people congregating together. Indeed, many of the flats in Brickfields are being occupied by the blind and their families. Moreover, many of the business enterprises, mainly the massage business, are being operated by the blind while in many nooks and corners, you can find the blind tissue-paper sellers or the blind buskers making music.

In addition, many of the organisations serving the blind are located in Brickfields, which includes the three main organisations, i.e. the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB), the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM), and the Society of the Blind in Malaysia (SBM). Thus, you can also find many of the services for the blind in Brickfields such as the vocational training centre (which is the Gurney Training Centre or GTC), the Braille library or Braille equipment shop, computer skills training centre, telemarketing and contact training centre, and many more programmes run by MAB and other organisations serving the blind in the country.

And there are various smaller groupings such as the Blind Massage Association, Malaysian Blind Sports Association (MBSA), and the adaptive equipment shop (which is run by a sighted person, Selvarani). The shop specialises in selling equipment for the blind such as white canes, talking watches and clocks, talking calculators and talking blood pressure machines.

The large presence of the blind has also resulted in the idea of many charity organisations such as the Buddhist Society, YMCA and the Lions Club actively providing free food and medical assistance, not only to the blind but also to other needy persons in society.

The original name of Brickfields is "sap mm bei" in Cantonese or "Chap Goh Ki" in Hokkien (which means "the fifteenth mile"). The average Chinese person in Malaysia has difficulty in pronouncing the word "Brickfields", and so they prefer to call it by the name "sap mm bei". As for the elderly Malays,

they know Brickfields as Batu Lima Belas while the elderly Indians know it as Pathinanjang Katai (which also means The Fifteenth Mile).

I have asked many people why Brickfields had been called The Fifteen Mile. The most common answer I have been given is, "I don't know". Once as I was sitting in a Brickfields coffee-shop, I posed this question to an eighty-old man. He said that he had come to Brickfields at the age of eighteen when the place was already been known as Brickfields, but he did not know why.

I had heard from some sources that Brickfields was called The Fifteenth Mile because the river in Brickfields started from Klang, which was once the capital of Selangor, about fifteen miles upstream. However, my logical mind gave me the feeling that this was very unlikely – this was because Brickfields is actually 40 miles down from Klang. Furthermore, Klang was the capital of Selangor for only a very brief period of time, i.e. from 1875 to 1880.

Others say that perhaps Brickfields was called The Fifteen Mile because the fifteen mile starts from Kuala Lumpur. And yet others say that it could be because the founder of Kuala Lumpur, Yap Ah Loy, had built fifteen kilns to make his bricks in Brickfields. Another answer is that there may be fifteen tombstones in the Malay graveyard nearby. Again I had the strong feeling that all these answers were quite unlikely.

Another explanation came from a taxi driver who was taking me from Brickfields to my home in Subang Jaya. The Indian driver was in his sixties and he said that he knew how Brickfields derived its name and that probably he could be the only one on earth who knew the story. He had heard the story from his father during his childhood days and the explanation had been retained in his mind for a long time afterwards.

He fully agreed with his father's explanation – the first rubber estate set up by the British was the Sungai Renggam Plantation which is now known as Shah Alam. Many of the Tamils were recruited from India to work as labourers in the estate at the time. The only mode of transport in those days was either by boat along the Klang River or by bullock cart along the mud road next to the river.

At the time, the people were accustomed to naming a place according to its distance. The main agriculture in Brickfields then was coconut planting and Brickfields was, of course, famous for its toddy. Thus, Brickfields was called The Fifteenth Mile by the estate workers because it was the distance from the Sungai Renggam to this place.

After much research, I have settled on the explanation given by an architect, Teoh Chee Keong, as the most appropriate answer to The Fifteenth Mile dilemma. According to this story, Kuala Lumpur in the late nineteenth century was an important trading centre due to the tin mining activities in its surrounding areas such as Ampang. The main mode of transport for people or for goods then was by river-boat or by bullock cart on the road.

During the dry season when the water level in the rivers was low, the boats from what is now Port Klang to Kuala Lumpur could only reach the Damansara Village, i.e. where the Damansara River joined the Klang River. In 1886, a 16-mile long road was, therefore, constructed in order to link Kuala Lumpur with the Damansara Village. This road passed by Batu Tiga and Penchala and the fifteenth milestone was located in Brickfields.

In fact, Teoh had examined a railway alignment map which had been drawn up in 1883. He discovered that Brickfields was really and exactly fifteen miles away from the Damansara Village (now known as Kota Kemuning).

Unfortunately, this place is gradually losing its name either as The Fifteenth Mile or as Brickfields. This is because the main road called Jalan Brickfields has been renamed as Jalan Tun Sambanthan and even the monorail station in Brickfields is called Stesen Tun Sambanthan instead of the Brickfields Station. As a result, most people who are new to this area prefer to call it Tun Sambanthan rather than as Brickfields.

On many occasions when I board the Rapid KL bus from the Pasar Seni bus station, the drivers would be quite puzzled when I say that I want to stop in Brickfields. They would ask me if I meant KL Sentral. It is most likely that they do not even know where Brickfields is!



PROF. STEPHEN HAWKING – CHAMPION OF THE DISABLED

By Ooi Hock Tiam

Stephen Hawking was born in Oxford, England on 8 January 1942. In fact, he was born 300 years after the death of Galileo Galilei, something of which he was very proud. Stephen's parents were students of Oxford University and he had two other sisters, Mary and Philippa.

When Stephen was in school, his teachers did not think much of him. One of the teachers even told him that he will never be somebody great. Nevertheless, Stephen's classmates called Albert Einstein, who was the famous physicist in the 19th century.

In actual fact, Stephen's father had wanted him to take up medicine in Oxford but he signed up for physics instead. Stephen graduated with a first-class degree in physics. He then registered for the Ph.D. programme (also in physics) in Cambridge in 1963.

Unfortunately, two years later he was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS), known as Lou Gehrig's Disease. It is actually a kind of motor neuron disease which causes the body to degenerate.

In spite of his disability, married his first wife, Jane Wild, a language student in Oxford and a friend of his sister. She bore him three children – Robert in 1967, Lucy in 1970 and Timothy in 1979. Robert later became a software engineer for Microsoft in the U.S.A., Lucy became a journalist, and Timothy was a language student.

In 1985 the family went for a holiday in Switzerland. While there, Stephen fell ill and he had to be put on a breathing machine. After a few days, the doctors told Stephen's wife to take the machine off as they had given up hope on him. However, she refused and very fortunately he recovered.

In fact, in the year 1965 when Stephen was first diagnosed with the disease, the doctors gave him only two years to live. But he proved the doctors wrong and went on to live for another 50 years.

In 1974, Stephen became the professor of Applied Mathematics and Physics in Cambridge University. This post had been held by Sir Isaac Newton some 200 years before.

Despite his disability, Stephen was able to have his most famous book, "A Brief History of Time", published in 1988. The book sold more than ten million copies and was translated into 40 languages. Indeed, it was the best seller for about three years.

In 1990, Stephen and Jane Wild were separated and they were officially divorced in 1995. Jane married her church choir friend, Jonathan, whom she had met in 1977.

In 1995 Stephen married Elaine Mason, who was one of his nurses. Elaine was previously married to David Mason and she had two boys from her first marriage. By the time Stephen married Elaine, he was already completely bedridden and speechless. Thus, rumours had it that Elaine had married Stephen for his money. This was because by the time of their marriage, Stephen had become a millionaire as a result of his famous book, "A Brief History of Time".

It was believed that Elaine had, in fact, abused Stephen. A police report was made by his colleagues in Cambridge, but when the police came, Stephen denied that he was being bullied by his wife. However, the bruises found on his body were left unexplained.

It was also rumoured that Elaine had even left Stephen in the toilet in the sun for hours. Ultimately, in 1996, Stephen divorced Elaine and paid her a large sum of patrimony.

At the age of 71, Stephen continued to work as usual in Cambridge. Jane Wild, his first wife, came back to him as a friend. By this time, Stephen could only use his brains and with the help of his cheek muscles and his eyes, he was still able to read, write and talk through a computer via the Dectalk Voice.

In spite of his difficulties, Stephen was able to travel round the world to give lectures on the Theory of Everything, i.e. the theory which combined Einstein's theory of relativity with the theory of quantum mechanics.

Stephen Hawking is actually famous for his Hawking Radiation Theory which in simple terms upholds the belief that the blackhole in the universe will eventually evaporate. A blackhole is a hypothetical star with very strong gravity. According to Einstein, the gravity in a blackhole is so strong that nothing can escape from it.

While it may be difficult to understand physics or to understand what is Hawking Radiation, the outstanding fact of inspiration to all disabled persons is that Stephen Hawking was completely bedridden and speechless by the time of his second marriage in 1995; yet he was still able to perform his job as a physics professor with distinction. Indeed, he was in a much worse condition than the totally blind or the wheelchair users.

Although Stephen Hawking did not win the Nobel prize for physics, he was certainly the best known scientist of his time and he will be laid to rest beside Sir Isaac Newton in Westminster Abbey. He died peacefully in his home in Cambridge presumably due to pneumonia on 13 March 2018. He was aged 76 at the time of his death and thousands of people attended his funeral while many more watched the service on the computer or via television.

Here is the final message – if Prof. Dr. Stephen Hawking with his severe disabilities can do it, so can we even though we may be blind, deaf, physically disabled or we are persons with learning difficulties.



TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: REFRESHABLE BRAILLE DISPLAYS

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

Although refreshable Braille displays have been around for many years, they have been way above the affordability range for most Malaysians. In fact, I myself only had the opportunity to lay my hands on one after I had joined NCBM for a couple of years.

While many of us have got used to the idea of using voice to access a computer or a mobile phone, it is Braille that will allow us to perform our tasks with much greater accuracy.

However, before one can seriously consider investing a huge sum of money on a refreshable Braille display, one needs to think very carefully. Of course, the good news is that refreshable Braille displays have come down in price and they have even been improved with better portability.

They also have a variable number of Braille cells, ranging from a minimum of 12 cells to a maximum of 84 cells. Of Course, the more cells there are, the more expensive will be the Braille display. Anyway, in most cases, the more you pay means the more functions you will have on the unit. Furthermore, for practical purposes, you will probably not want to carry around an 84-cell Braille display which extends more than two feet in length.

Before you really commit yourself to buying a Braille display, you should give consideration to the different features that are available. There are different connections and they may be wired or bluetooth (which is wireless). There are those displays that allow you Braille input keys so that the Braille display can double up as a Braille input device. Some of the newer devices will also provide you with a simple note-taking function or even a simple calculator.

For those who may not be familiar with such equipment, let me give you a brief explanation about the Braille display.

A refreshable Braille display is a piece of hardware that provides Braille output from your computer. All of such displays have 8-dot refreshable Braille cells – meaning that the Braille cells can be changed or refreshed according to the part of the screen that has the attention of the computer. These refreshable Braille cells are the costly part of the machinery; the more cells you have, the more expensive the display will be.

Most displays being sold typically show one line of Braille at a time. For most of the time, the line that has the computer's focus is being displayed. If, for example, you are in a word processing document, the display will show the line of text at the insertion point. If you are in a dialogue box, the display will show you information about the active control and perhaps some of the surrounding controls, depending on the screen reader settings. You move the focus to the next line or dialogue box control by pressing the keyboard commands or buttons on the Braille display.

Each Braille cell on a refreshable Braille display is capable of showing up to 8 dots. In English Braille, dots 1 to 6 are used to display traditional Braille, which can be contracted or uncontracted. Dots 7 and 8, i.e. the bottom 2 dots of each cell, are used by the screen reader to show the cursor position, capitalisation, highlighting and other attributes, depending upon the screen reader's settings. Some of the European languages do use dots 7 and 8 as part of their standard Braille symbols.

It is the screen reader that drives the Braille display. You cannot run a Braille display without a screen reader. Information is sent by the screen reader to the Braille display.

In order to reduce the need to move your hands back and forth from the display to the keyboard, buttons are provided on the Braille display to allow many of the tasks to be performed with your hands on the display. For instance, most displays have a button that performs the same function as the Tab key on your keyboard.

One of the most useful features of the Braille display is the row of cursor routing buttons. These buttons are located above the line of refreshable Braille cells. Pressing one of these cursor routing buttons will "route" or move the cursor to the cell below the cursor routing button that has been pressed. Cursor routing buttons can be used to simulate mouse clicks. With the touch of one of these buttons, you can click on links, mark checkboxes, or choose menu items. Thus, if you are filling out a form, you can put the cursor right where you need it to be before typing in the information. You can then edit a misspelled word by routing the cursor directly to the incorrect character, rather than using the keyboard navigation to move to the misspelling. Cursor routing buttons are especially useful on the internet, where you can activate links or fill out forms without the guesswork that is sometimes involved in navigating a website from the keyboard.

If you are someone who needs to do a lot of editing work, then you need to ensure that the Braille display which you want to buy is equipped with such router keys. The Braille pen is an example of a Braille display that does not come with router keys.

Status cells are a feature that is being provided by certain displays. Depending on the model of display and the screen reader that is being used, there will be three, four, or five of the refreshable Braille cells that display information about which cursor is active, show the attributes such as the underlined or bold text, and so on. In many cases, the status cells can be placed where you want them to be on the display or you can have them turned off altogether. Take note that not all screen readers support status cells.

Here are some situations in which braille displays can be very useful:

1. A deafblind computer user with good Braille skills will find refreshable Braille to be a necessary tool for determining what the computer is doing.
2. Visually impaired persons who are employed in the call centres and customer services have historically resorted to listening to the computer speech in one ear and to the caller's voice in the other ear, which can be very distracting at best. With the Braille display running, the computer's speakers can be turned off with all the output being obtained in Braille, thereby leaving both ears free to attend to the caller.
3. Blind persons working in an area of Braille translation or in publication work will find a Braille display to be of great help.
4. Working with a website can be accomplished more fully and efficiently by using the Braille display's cursor routing buttons and other navigation features.

In order to choose a Braille display, there is nothing like first using one and trying it out for yourself. I, therefore, take this opportunity to appeal to all organisations to make available demo units of such equipment so that the blind will be able to try out the Braille displays for themselves.

SOME BRAILLE DISPLAYS FOR YOUR CONSIDERATION

By Moses Choo Siew Cheong

Here are some Braille displays that I think are worthwhile considering. We start with the most expensive and then scale down to the cheapest.

THE BRAILLE EDGE 40

This Braille display contains 2 four-way navigation keys and eight function keys (Escape, Tab, Control, Alternate, Shift, Insert, Windows and Application). It combines the convenience of entering text in Braille with the intuitive functionality of a PC keyboard. Braille Edge 40 offers the convenience and flexibility of multiple languages (which includes English, Spanish, French, German and Italian).

Connect Braille Edge 40 to a computer or PDA via Bluetooth and you can stay connected throughout the day without the need for charging. For even longer run time, connect via USB and you can enjoy all the great features of Braille Edge 40 while simultaneously charging the unit.

Read and save your data in the SD card. You can use up to 32GB SDHC cards with Braille Edge 40, enough to carry thousands of books and documents along with you for reading on the go.

Specifications of Braille Edge 40, Model B40

1. Keyboard: Perkins-style keyboard.
2. Braille display: 40 cells.
3. Interface: USB Slave, Bluetooth.
4. Memory: SD card (SDHC).
5. Applications: 7 applications available – Notepad, Scheduler, Alarm, Clock, Calculator, Stop Watch, Countdown Timer.

6. Battery: 20 hours battery life (rechargeable).
7. Compatibility: JAWS, Window eyes, SuperNova, NVDA, VoiceOver, Mobile Speak, and TALKS.

THE SEIKA MINI (also known as the Perkins Mini)

Specifications are as follows:

1. Display capacity: 16 refreshable 8-dot Braille cells.
2. Cursor routing keys: 16 keys.
3. Function keys: 4 function keys, 2 navigation joystick keys.
4. Braille input keys: 8 keys.
5. Character code: Original 8 code.
6. Memory: 4GB (mbedded Micro SD card).
7. Interface: USB, Mini USB, Micro SD card slot.
8. Internal battery: Lithium rechargeable battery, up to 10 hours of battery use (varies with use).
9. Charge time: 2.5 hours; charge time will be longer if the Mini is being used at the same time.
10. Power supply: USB or AC adapter or internal battery.
11. Size: 6.3 X 3.78 X 0.9 inches.
12. Weight: 300 grammes.

BRAILLEPEN SLIM

The BraillePen Slim works with iOS VoiceOver, Talks, Mobile Accessibility, Supernova and Window Eyes; it allows you to operate Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8 as a Bluetooth keyboard with our BraillePen Write software.

Specifications are as follows:

1. Bluetooth: It supports Microsoft, Widcomm, Toshiba and BlueSoleil Bluetooth stacks.
2. Dimensions: 148 X 67 X 21 mm. (5.8 X 3 X 0.9 inches).
3. Weight: 130 grammes.
4. Power: Internal rechargeable battery.
5. Battery life: Ten hours, standby several weeks, charge cycle 8 hours.

BRAILLEPEN 12 AND BRAILLEPEN 12 TOUCH

BraillePen 12 Touch works with many access packages including iOS VoiceOver, BrailleBack, Mobile Accessibility, MobileSpeak, Supernova, Window-Eyes and Jaws, all with both keyboard and Braille display; it allows you to control and operate Windows XP, Vista, Windows 7 and Windows 8 as a bluetooth keyboard with our BraillePen Write software.

Specifications are as follows:

1. Bluetooth: It supports Microsoft, Widcomm, Toshiba and BlueSoleil Bluetooth stacks.
2. Dimensions: 150 X 94 X 25 mm. (5.8 X 3 X 0.9 inches).
3. Weight: 236 grammes.
4. Power: Internal rechargeable battery.
5. Battery life: Ten hours, standby several weeks, charge cycle 8 hours.

Note:

While NCBM does not promote any of these Braille displays, we are willing to have discussions with anyone who may want to consider investing some money for the purpose of purchasing such expensive equipment.



A POINT TO PONDER: A PACK OF PLAYING CARDS

By Wong Kow

I suppose most of our readers and friends are quite familiar with playing cards. In some places, they are known as poker cards or as Anglo-American playing cards. Indeed, we can play a great variety of interesting games with just a pack of playing cards.

Some of the card games require the use of multiple sets of cards while for some of the games, only a small number of selected are sufficient for play. Great fun can certainly be derived from having a card game with family members and friends for relaxation after a hard day's work.

Some fortune tellers use playing cards to tell one's fortune. He would ask you to pick one or a few cards from a pile of cards. He would then analyse the cards by looking at the value of numbers, the meaning of symbols and the implication of colours.

Admittedly, there are the pros and cons of using playing cards for fortune-telling and it is true that playing cards may be blamed for some of the undesirable activities. And yet the amazing fact cannot be denied that playing cards do provide not only so much fun and entertainment but even knowledge and information during our leisure hours.

Firstly, the cards are marked with numbers from 1 to 10 and there are three other picture cards – Jack, Queen and King. Let us presume that the value of Jack is 11, the Queen 12 and the King 13. When you add 1 up to 13, it is equal to 91.

Each number or picture card has four cards with different symbols. Thus, the total value of all the 52 ordinary cards is derived by multiplying 91 times four equals 364.

However, there is a Joker card in every pack of playing cards. Therefore, 364 plus 1 equals 365, which is exactly the number of days in an ordinary year.

Some packs of cards have two Jokers, implying that 364 plus 2 equals 366, which is the number of days for a leap year.

Secondly, there are fifty-two ordinary cards in a pack of playing cards, implying that there are 52 weeks in a year.

Thirdly, the twelve picture cards – Jack, Queen and King – could mean the twelve months in a year.

Fourthly, There are the four symbols of the cards – Spade, Heart, Diamond and Club – indicating the four seasons of the year.

Fifthly, at least three of the four seasons consist of 91 days per season. Incidentally, the figure 91 is the total value of a set of thirteen cards from 1 to the King. Thus, there are also thirteen weeks in a season.

Sixthly, the symbols, which may also be called the flowers, are divided into the colours of black and red. The Spade and the Club are black in colour while the Heart and the Diamond are red. They could also symbolise darkness or night time and brightness or daylight.

Truly, playing cards may be just one of the many treasures which you could easily possess and yet not really treasure them. Just look around carefully and, who knows? – there could be many other treasures in life just within your reach but you have not tapped such resources available.

God is so gracious and he has given us life in abundance. We only need to pick up something and enjoy searching for the treasure in it, just like venturing on an outing in a fabulous treasure hunt.

99 SPEEDMART – TESTAMENT OF DISABLED PERSON'S STRIVING FOR ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS

Editor's Note: This article by Emily K. is taken from The Star of 20th September 2017. Here is an account of the very inspirational experience of the disabled person, Lee Thiam Wah.



Speeding into its thirtieth year, the minimarket chain was able to open its 1,000th store, thanks to the tenacity of the disabled founder, Lee Thiam Wah. If there is one thing that Lee has learnt in life, it is this: "Your only limit is you".

Stricken with poliomyelitis at eight years old, Lee spent most of his childhood at home with his grandmother, who took care of him while his parents worked in order to support him and his ten siblings.

In fact, unlike his siblings who were able to pursue further education, Lee had to stop schooling after completing his primary education as it was too far for him to travel to school due to his disability.

"Struck with this condition, I envied my siblings as I watched them lead normal lives – they went to school, played sports and hung out with friends while I could not do much else other than sitting up," said Lee.

"Coming from a low-income family, my parents kept themselves busy with work to provide for us. As a result, they did not have much time for us. But I was lucky to have my grandmother who cared for me and taught me the values of life," Lee continued.

He will never forget the words of his grandmother, "You are only disabled physically but mentally you are smart and you can still use your hands to do so much more. You need to be independent and find a way to live or you'll be left behind."

"The words stuck with me and since no one in the family has gone into business before, it prompted me to give it a go and earn a small income by selling snacks on our porch," Lee explained.

Being frugal, Lee was able to save as much money as he could from his snack-selling business and, by the age of 23, he managed to open his first mini-mart called Pasaraya Hiap Hoe in 1987 with his total savings of RM17,000 over the years.

Lee explained, "given my brief educational opportunity, I didn't have much knowledge about other industries but I could explore. So I settled on the retail industry because I found it to be the easiest to do as all I needed was products and then I could start selling."

Lee read up whatever he could about the industry and he learned much from experience. Indeed, he never imagined that his perseverance would one day lead him to become the founder and Managing Director of one of the leading minimarket chains in Malaysia.

Lee said triumphantly, "business was flourishing, and so in 2000 we decided to rebrand ourselves as 99 SpeedMart, thereby giving it a new and improved look. We choose the number 99 because this implied that even though we were not perfect, we were still aiming to offer our customers the best services and products at a competitive price. This also reminds us that there is always room for us to improve."

Today 99 SpeedMart has a workforce of more than 10,000 Malaysian employees with outlets in Selangor, Kuala Lumpur, Perak, Pahang, Negeri Sembilan, Melaka, Johor and Sabah.

In celebration of its 30th anniversary, 99 SpeedMart opened its 1,000th store in Section 13, Shah Alam in August 2017.

Lee further commented, "one of our challenges is dealing with the rapid expansion in various locations while catering to our customers' needs. Customers at every location have their preferences for local products and this can be difficult to meet. Therefore, to remain as our customers' first choice, we are working on scouting for products from local distributors. In addition, there are plans to tap into the e-commerce market so that we can stay relevant."

Lee says that there are also plans for overseas expansion in the pipeline, perhaps in the next five to ten years.

"We want to focus on expanding and on being the best minimart location," Lee shared.

For further information, you can visit www.99speedmart.com.my



HEALTHY LIVING

Here are five more foods recommended by Joan A. Friedrich for healthy living.

6. MILK

It is 99% fat-free and contains calcium and phosphorus. Calcium helps with regular muscle function and for strong teeth and bones while phosphorus is good for metabolic functions, including for heart and muscle contraction, digestive processes and transfer of cellular energy.

The 1% fat in milk is required to aid in nutrient absorption, especially of the fat-soluble vitamins A and D, which are usually added to milk.

7. MUSHROOMS

They are good for low-calorie and low-fat nutrition and raw mushrooms provide a pleasing alternative to carrot and celery sticks. A cup of the tasty fungi contains only 20 calories and makes an elegant addition to salads, clear soups and main dishes.

Mushrooms contain potassium, phosphorus and vitamin B (biotin).

8. ORANGES

They are a good source of vitamin C, calcium, potassium and vitamin A.

9. PASTA

They are complex carbohydrates which help promote balanced blood-sugar levels and sustained release of energy, which is perfect for extra stamina. They provide energy that fuels all body functions, from muscle action to the digestion and assimilation of foods.

10. POTATOES

They are low-calorie and complex carbohydrates and contain magnesium, iron, phosphorus and potassium.

You should enjoy them with their skins and maximum nutrition potential.

(Taken from Reader's Digest November 1985)



REFLECTION

Derrick Bresler – A Great Lesson To Learn From The Last Wishes Of Alexander The Great

On his deathbed, Alexander summoned his army generals and told them his three last wishes.

First, the best doctors should carry his coffin. Second, the wealth he has accumulated – money, gold and precious stones – should be scattered along the procession to the cemetery. Third, his hands should be let loose so that they hang outside the coffin for all to see.

One of his generals, who was surprised by these unusual requests, asked Alexander to explain.

Here's what Alexander the Great had to say:

"Firstly, I want the best doctors to carry my coffin in order to demonstrate that in the face of death, even the best doctors in the world have no power to heal.

"Secondly, I want the road to be covered with my treasures so that everybody sees that material wealth acquired on earth will stay on earth.

"Thirdly, I want my hands to swing in the wind so that people understand that we come into this world empty-handed and we leave this world empty-handed after the most precious treasure of all is exhausted, and that is time. We don't take to our grave any material wealth. Time is our most precious treasure because it is limited. We can produce more wealth but we cannot produce more time. When we give someone our time, we actually give a portion of our life that we will never take back. Time is our life."



SOME HUMOUROUS TIDBITS

BEHIND EVERY SUCCESSFUL MAN, THERE'S A WOMAN

During a company annual family trip to a crocodile farm in Thailand, the eccentric boss dared any of his employees to jump into the crocodile-infested pond and swim to the shore. Anyone who survives the swim will be rewarded with five million; but if he is killed by the crocodiles, two million will be given to his next of kin.

For a long period of time, no one dared take up the challenge. Then suddenly a man jumped in and swam frantically for his life towards shore pursued by the crocodiles and luckily he made it unscathed.

When he managed to recover his breath, the man who had become instant millionaire, shouted, "Who pushed me into the pond?"

It was his wife who did it. And from that day on, that was how the phrase, "behind every successful man there's a woman", came about.

CANNIBALS

In a land where cannibalism was practised, a son set a trap and got excited when he found something there. He asked father to look out and said this would be something good for dinner.

When father saw the young girl, he said, "no, we'll have mother for dinner tonight."

COMMUNICATION

The loyal servant of a chieftain went to see the doctor for medicine. He complained, "big chief, no shit!" The medicine did not work.

When the servant complained a second time to the doctor, he was given a double dosage. The medicine still did not work and after the third complaint,

he was given ten times the dosage.

The servant came in the fourth time, looking aghast. "big shit, no chief!"

LANGUAGE

A famous writer gave a speech. Then people came up for her autograph.

One girl said, "emachisit?" The writer began writing, "to emachisit ..."

At last, a bystander explained, "she meant 'how much is it?'"

CADILLAC AND FOUR GUITARS

When a lady heard this advertisement through her car radio, she went to the garage to find out if the company really did offer a cadillac with four guitars.

"What's wrong with that?" she asked the mechanic.

"It's a cadillac with four good tyres," the mechanic replied.

PULL, PUSH, LIFT

In a comic strip, somebody not too well versed in English approached the door and saw the sign, "pull!" So he pulled.

Then he saw another door "Push" and he pushed. At the third door with the sign "lift", he tried to lift up the lift door.



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President, NCBM/ President of Sarawak Society for the Blind

Datuk Rosalind Chew Bee Koh
Vice-President, NCBM/ President of Sabah Society for the Blind

Rt. Rev. Dato' Dr. Charles Samuel
Hon. Secretary, NCBM/ Chairman of St. Nicholas' Home, Penang

Mdm. Jasmine Khoo Khin Sheen
Hon. Treasurer, NCBM/ Hon. Treasurer of Society of the Blind in Malaysia

Dato' Kulasegaran A/L Sabaratnam
Malaysian Association for the Blind

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

Mr. Jimmy Ng Kich Sheng
Sabah Society for the Blind

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Society of the Blind in Malaysia

Mdm. Annie Soon Nyin Yin
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Mr. David Siaw Ting Cheng
Sarawak Society for the Blind



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Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment
(CEEE) Dr Ahmad Shamsuri Bin Muhamad

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



AUDITOR 2018- 2020

Inpana & Associates,
Kuala Lumpur



REPRESENTATIVES OF NCBM TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS, 2018- 2020

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.

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