

# Expanding the scope of mentoring those at risk

After working only with girls for a decade, Beautiful People will now reach out to teenage boys as well. **BY CHEAH UI-HOON**

**T**EN years after it started a befriending and mentoring programme for at-risk teenage girls, Beautiful People SG Ltd has launched a similar programme for boys, named Heroes' Journey.

"It came about when both sides wanted it," explains Yoke Yoek Ling, a volunteer with Beautiful People, adding how the boys at Gracehaven Home, a residential rehabilitation home, had asked why they weren't included in the programme.

The request fitted into Beautiful People's family philosophy, which was missing the male component.

"This is a significant revisiting of our fundamentals where we worked only with girls. As a family, we believe we need to engage the fathers, brothers, husbands as part of the solution to repair broken relationships. It is

equally important to nurture boys who will grow into responsible men who care for the women in their lives," says Melissa Kwee, founder of Beautiful People.

The organisation recruited 14 men to be the first mentors who have had their first two sessions with the boys, says Albert King, who heads up Heroes' Journey.

A trainer with much experience in volunteerism and community work, Mr King has been familiar with Beautiful People's work for the last three to four years.

### Long-term benefits

"They have a good support system for volunteers and I also greatly respect the commitment level and calibre of volunteers, most of whom are working professionals," says Mr King.

He also sees value in the pro-

gramme to befriend and mentor the teenage boys while they're still in a "safe" institutional setting but notes that the benefits are long-term.

The mentoring support really kicks in when the teenagers have left their institutions and are out in the world on their own.

Beautiful People, started in 2006, has come a long way and expanded its programmes significantly. It was originally very activity-based, recounts Ms Yong, one of the volunteers. "Under Beyond Social Services, a number of volunteers came together to run make-up and hairdressing classes. But over time, we realised that the girls came back because of the volunteers and the people."

Beautiful People now has 100 Big Sister-Small Sister pairs across all

locations. Its other programmes include Baby Reader, a reading programme for young families and Free for Good, a pre-release programme for female inmates, which were developed to support girls and women throughout various life stages.

### Collection of stories

In 2013, Beautiful People was awarded the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre's President Award for Volunteerism (Informal Group Category), in recognition of its work in the community.

Later this month, it will launch a new logo at their annual Family Day event and a "Dreambook" featuring a collection of stories and quotes in a notebook with original designs to raise funds for upcoming projects. [uihoon@sph.com.sg](mailto:uihoon@sph.com.sg)



(Clockwise from above) Beautiful People's 'family' members doing circle painting; displaying the trophy of the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre's President Award for Volunteerism; volunteers of the mentoring programme showing camaraderie; and volunteers attending a training programme. Since it started in 2006, Beautiful People has come a long way and expanded its programmes significantly.



Big and Little Sisters of Beautiful People are engaged in community service. The organisation now has 100 Big Sister-Small Sister pairs across all locations