

## A baking dream come true for these girls ...

by **Tanya Fong**

04:45 AM Dec 26, 2011

SINGAPORE - Fifteen-year-old Syafiqa has always dreamed of being able to bake but could not do so because she stays in a girls' home and her family does not own an oven.

But this year, she got her wish through Project Christmas Dreamcakes, organised by non-profit organisation Beautiful People (BP).

Together with 24 other teenagers from girls' homes, Syafiqa was selected to bake and sell cupcakes as part of BP's initiative to provide financial education and on-the-job training for the girls.

In only four days, the girls made 3,000 cupcakes and raised S\$12,000 within the same week, sinking their teeth into every stage from conceptualising to selling the product and managing money. The cupcakes were sold to multinational companies and government institutions such as the Supreme Court.

Some of the money will be used to sponsor a trip for four of the girls to Mae Sot, western Thailand - led by a BP mentor - where they will teach English to Burmese refugees there.

Fifteen of the girls got a baking lesson from culinary and hospitality trainer and chef Muhammad Kamal from OSAC International College, which sponsored BP's use of its commercial kitchen, while others were involved in the sales, marketing, accounting and logistics.

One girl, Phoebe, 16, was so inspired that she said she was thinking of setting up an online business to sell cupcakes.

Said BP volunteer Madam Shindy Vij, 52, who came up with the initiative: "It's heartening to see how they embraced the opportunity. The girls are also paid a salary ... so that (they) have an idea of what it's like to earn their own money."

BP aims to connect professional women to at-risk teenage girls to provide a positive influence in their lives. Founded in 2006 by social activist Melissa Kwee, it has reached out to 400 teenage girls.

Said Ms Kwee of the project: "Each purchase will positively impact the dreams and lives of our teenage girls going through key transitions in their lives and will lead to inspiring, educating and empowering them to be at their best and to materialise their dreams in a realistic way."

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