

Disabled does not mean

Physically disadvantaged persons work with

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Skills training: Workshop head Amy Fong teaching Kasma Saari how to use the sewing machine. (can use big)

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BEING disabled is certainly a big disadvantage. But for many of the physically and mentally handicapped persons in our midst, being disabled certainly does not mean they are not able or are utterly useless. Many of them put us to shame with their dignified and diligent lifestyle.

The disabled persons at a workshop set up by the Society for the Rehabilitation of the Disabled Selangor and Federal Territory (PPOC) are good example of how dignified and productive these lovely deprived souls are.

Take the case of Kasma Saari. The dwarfed woman in her early 40s works with dignified grace sorting out cardboards at the PPOC workshop.

She sits comfortably on a high chair rolling each bright, red triangle card and stapling the end to produce a party hat.

Seated opposite Kasma is friend and colleague Rudiana Masayu Kamarudin, who is doing the same thing, only at a much slower pace.

On the other side of the room, there are more people, some suffering from Down Syndrome, folding and stapling party hats and filling gift boxes under the supervision and help from workshop head Amy Fong.

One of them is 44-year-old Lim Lee Teeng who looks barely normal but she is doing just as good as any normal worker.

Also in the same room is Veera Panirselvam who solitarily wraps tiny soaps for hotel usage. Yet he seems content and happy doing the repetitive job with dedication.

»Some of them are slow learners, some pick up fast. But we always supervise and check their work«

ZAINAL ABDUL SALIM

“Last month they were packing condoms. They knew what condoms were for so they were giggling while packing them,” hostel supervisor Zainal Abdul Salim said.

They work six days a week -- from 8.30am to 5pm during the weekdays and a half-day on Saturdays.

incapable

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dignity and diligence



Dr Mahmood Merican: 11 residents are independent and work outside although they still stay at the hostel.

According to Mahmood, there is an urgent need to equip the young disabled so that when they become adults, they would be able to find



Hats off to her: Kasma rolls up bright red triangle cards before stapling them to produce party hats.

The workshop is at the Rumah Insaniah Dr Siti Hasmah at Taman Kanagapuram in Section 18, Petaling Jaya.

Although the PPOP was founded in the early 70s, the centre was built in 1988.

The centre is named after the PPOP patron Tun Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali, the wife of former Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Zainal said participants worked on simple packaging and sometimes sewing works, depending on what contracts they got from companies.

"Some of them are slow learners, some pick up fast. But we always supervise and check their work," she said.

At present, they are 15 participants in the workshop although there is a total of 26 residents staying at the centre.

According to PPOP president Datuk Dr Mahmood Merican, 11 residents are independent and work outside although they still stay at the hostel.

"Here we take in people with various disabilities -- the blind, the deaf, those with physical and mental disabilities -- to give them an opportunity to learn a skill at the workshop so that they can earn a living," he said.





Last process: The disabled persons at the workshop packing the finished goods before they are delivered.

jobs.
 "Ultimately, the idea is to get them back to the community. From the time we have started, there had been hundreds of people that have benefited and are currently living independently. We are just actively promoting the quality of life for these people," he said.
 The PPOP, however, does not take in those who are severely disabled and needing constant care and supervision as it does not have the facilities to care for them adequately.
 "We are open for disabled adults who can be taught to be independent," Mahmood said.
 Currently, the society is open for intakes for

their workshop training. It is open those who are 18 and above.
 Participants only need to pay a minimal fee of RM60 per month for the workshop, hostel and food at the centre.
 "We spend about RM20,000 to operate the centre every month. Right now we only have 26 people, we could do with helping 20 more people," Mahmood said.
 "Participants at the workshops will also get some wages for their work," he said.
 To apply for admission, just call the centre to arrange for an interview and assessment at Tel No: 03-7781 7681/ 0839.



Meticulous: Zuraida Ros Zulkarnain working with great care at the soap-wrapping line.



Happy to be busy: Lim Lee Teeng, 44, works as good as any able-bodied worker.



Diligent: Veera Panirselvam placing stickers on the soaps that had already been wrapped.