



Eleanore D' Orville (seated) making a Saori (a form of Japanese weaving) at the centre.



Members of United Voice Self-Advocacy Organisation for People with Learning Disabilities Selangor and Kuala Lumpur are seen working on their craft projects. With them are (from left, standing) the centre's supervisor Wendy Yong Sou Kuen, Datin Joan Hoi, Datin Jasmine Ab...





Centre supervisor Wendy Yong Sou Kuen and the array of hand-made products for sale.

The disabled help the disa

K. HARINDERAN talks to the people from United Voice Self-Advocacy Organisation for People with Disabilities Selangor and Kuala Lumpur

PETALING JAYA: The United Voice Self-Advocacy Organisation was set up by the disabled for disabled. They run it, and they help each other to improve their quality of life and be independent.

Its full name is the United Voice Self-Advocacy Organisation for People with Disabilities Selangor and Kuala Lumpur. It is a pioneer in self-advocacy for the disabled set up in 2005.

The society has embarked on many projects and training programmes to equip its members with skills and the confidence to speak and act on their own behalf and on behalf of others. It also helps its members to find jobs or create their own employment opportunities.

The society's assistant administrator James Lim Ming Koon, who himself has a learning disability, said: "The

objective of United Voice is to empower those with disabilities, to help them make their own choices and know their rights. The centre also helps us obtain employment and offers support services to enable people like me to contribute in an inclusive society."

The society has 115 members, aged 14 to 50, of all races. They have disabilities such as global developmental delay, Down's syndrome, autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and cerebral palsy.

Its centre in Section 17 is a place for members to come together to give support and to learn from one another.

United Voice vice-president Teoh Hooi Ting said: "The centre is a beacon for us to push for equality in society, and we have well-trained teachers to help us lead a normal, meaningful life.



United Voice vice-president Teoh Hooi Ting



United Voice assistant administrator James Lim

"Self-advocacy is about speaking up and making decisions for ourselves. In most cases parents and teachers automatically assume we can't make any decisions and they make all the decisions for us."

All committee members and staff are chosen by the members themselves.

Members unable to get jobs are taught self-support activities such as making greeting cards, fridge magnets, bookmarks, key chains,



... and Kuala Lumpur making greeting cards at the centre in Section 17, Petaling Jaya.
Datin Jasmine Abdullah Heng and Datin Fatima Mariah.

e disabled



(From left) Members of United Voice, Intan Dzulaikha, Jean Ng and Ng Ten Jui, preparing chocolate chip cookies for sale. —
Pictures by L. Manimaran

People with Learning

cookies, business cards and Saori products (a form of Japanese weaving) at the centre.

There are now some 25 members working at the centre, which helps those with more severe learning disabilities earn a living and socialise with other members.

This group are remunerated with a monthly salary that includes EPF and Socso deductions, and a yearly bonus. They also receive the government allowance of RM300 a month for people with disabilities earning less than RM750 a month.

The centre also has an ongoing employment project — finding jobs for members in supermarkets and factories and in administrative positions.

United Voice also provides support to 12 self-advocacy groups in seven states.

The society is trying to

raise RM1 million to purchase its rented shop house and improve its facilities. It is organising a fun fair and fund-raising dinner this month.

The Fund-raising Food and Fun Fair 2009 will take place at the Bandar Utama Community Centre on March 14 from 9am to 3pm. There will be over 60 stalls selling a variety of food, games and costume jewellery. There will also be handicrafts and an art exhibition by United Voice members. The pieces will be up for sale.

The fund-raising dinner will be held at the Sheraton Subang Hotel and Tower on March 17, featuring popular Singapore comedian Phua Chu Kang.

All contributions to both events are tax exempt. For more information, visit www.unitedvoice.com.my or call 03-7954 0701.



Members are also taught how to make bookmarks and fridge magnets.