

Friends make a difference at PPR flats

NGO in Kota Damansara has been going the extra mile to make changes that benefit community there

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WHEN Jeffrey Phang first stepped into PPR Kota Damansara, he was shocked at its dilapidated state and the social problems faced by residents.

This spurred him to help the community there.

Phang met the residents when his group, Friends of Kota Damansara, was lobbying for the Kota Damansara Community Forest to be gazetted.

"The flats are just across where I live and I thought it looked like a condominium.

"I was shocked to find out otherwise when I went there.

"The building was in a dangerous state. The rusted railings led to the deaths of two boys from top floors," he said when met at the flats at Jalan Pekaka 8/1 in Petaling Jaya.

He said the lifts were often not working, and sometimes there were no lights around the flats.

"There were many cases of women residents being molested," said Phang, who is also the chairman of Friends of Kota Damansara.

He added that vice activities among the teenagers such as glue sniffing were also widespread.



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Determined to turn things around, Phang became involved in making improvements to the flats.

Today, the buildings are freshly painted, the grass well-maintained and a community vegetable farm



(From left) Phang with Nur Sahura Sahara, 37, Firda Nuraisyah Zainal, one, and her mother Salina at the PPR Kota Damansara community vegetable farm.

brings people together.

Friends of Kota Damansara is working with several non-governmental organisations to implement programmes for the community.

Phang said English classes were conducted every Sunday from 1.30pm to 3pm for children aged between five and 17 years old, and for parents as well.

"On Thursdays and Fridays, we have personalised tuition in the afternoon for PT3 and SPM students for subjects that they need help with," he said.

He said there were activities for youths on Saturdays.

The youths must speak in English and join the Sunday class in order to take part in Saturday's activities.

"We want to give them a platform to speak in English as they may not have that avenue with their friends and families," he said.

On Wednesdays, there is a "Shining Star Playgroup" for children aged between six months and five years old, with their parents in attendance.

Phang said the programmes have brought a spirit of togetherness among residents.



Phang joins in to give the sixth floor of the flats a fresh coat of paint in 2015. — filepic

Salina Abdul Halim, 42, said the programmes have made a difference to her family.

"I have seven children and four of them attend English classes.

"I also attend the class," said the housewife.

She said her children's grasp of the English language has improved since joining the classes.

"One day, I heard one of them singing songs in English, which pleasantly surprised me."

She added that by attending the classes, she was able to help her children at home and monitor their whereabouts.

"I know where they are and they are not involved in unhealthy activities," she said.