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# Planting the seeds of appreciation

## Students help children create vegetable gardens at welfare homes

**D**RIVEN by the desire to teach children to appreciate vegetables, one group of students set out to turn their volunteer idea into a sustainable one.

The group from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu (UMT) started out under the 1Malaysia For Youth (iM4u) "My Uni Rocks" competition last year, where teams of university students pitched unique volunteer project ideas.

Competing for the RM10,000 grant under the 1Malaysia Volunteer Fund (DRe1M), the winning idea came from Team Enactus' "Green Grow Project".

"The main objective of the Green Grow Project is to plant vegetable gardens at welfare homes, so the children there can develop greater appreciation for vegetables," said 21-year-old Mohamad Hanafie Kari.

"But there are many benefits to this, because not only will they have a sustainable source of food, but they can also sell the extras at the market."

Mohamad Hanafie, known fondly as 'Epy', is a member of the team from Faculty of Agrotechnology and Food Science, which planted the vegetable seeds to create a garden.

The team, comprising eight members, was later re-named 'VGseeds' and has since left its mark in three homes around Kuala Terengganu by the end of last year, namely Taman Sinar Harapan (Bukit Besar), Rumah Tunas Harapan Darul Hilmi (Kampung Teluk Ketapang) and Darul Falah orphanage (Bukit Payong).

"We do most of the work ourselves, but for bigger homes like Darul Falah, we invited fellow UMT students to volunteer and help us out with the garden there," said Epy.

### Getting their hands dirty

VGseeds are largely independent as they sourced for the required vegetable seeds through UMT and



germinate them themselves, incurring costs of no more than RM300 per project, inclusive of tools and other materials.

"We normally use vegetables that can be re-planted and harvested more than once, which makes the vegetable garden easily sustainable."

"We save on costs by using used items such as old plastic bottles, tyres, pipes and scrapped wooden planks from construction sites to make decorative planter boxes for

the seeds," Epy added.

But VGseeds' involvement did not end with the planting of the seeds — the team would first teach the orphans how to look after the plants themselves, checking back once a week to monitor their progress until the first harvest period.

"The vegetables are usually very easy to take care of, and the children have lots of fun when we teach them to prepare and eat their own salads," said Epy.

### Something on the side

The other half of VGseeds is made up of marketing and communication students, and they took charge of how the group marketed themselves on social media as well as their side project, the Toteart Project.

Besides helping orphans with their vegetable gardens, VGseeds encouraged the orphans to express their creativity in creating their own designs on tote bags, which are then sold for small profits that went



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To register as a volunteer, go to [dogoodvolunteer.com](http://dogoodvolunteer.com)

**1 Teamwork:** (From third left) Nurul Aisah, Mohamad Hanafie and other VGseeds members with Ravi (front, third from right), chef de partie Chef Faizal Safwan (front, second from right) and iM4u volunteers admiring the completed vegetable garden behind the staff canteen.

**2** Azerah Mohd Azemem (left) and Nurul Aisah (second from left) showing the tote bags specially designed by the orphans in Terengganu to Best Western Premier Dua Sentral chef de partie Chef Faizal Safwan (right) and iM4u volunteers.

**3** The completed tomato stake structures built by VGseeds using discarded pieces of wood for the vegetable garden behind the staff canteen at Best Western Premier Dua Sentral, Kuala Lumpur.

— Photos by BRIAN MOH

to the welfare homes.

"What is special about this idea is that not only do they have fun drawing their designs on tote bags, but we also teach them how to market and sell these themselves," said 20-year old marketing student Nurul Aisah Azmi.

"That way, we are also sharing our knowledge of marketing and entrepreneurship with them, so they can benefit from it in the long run."

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## Volunteer opportunities

For more volunteer opportunities, log on to [www.dogoodvolunteer.com](http://www.dogoodvolunteer.com)

Category	Event (NGO/Organiser)	Location	Date	Time	Contact person for registration	Event description	What volunteers will be doing
Nature	Save Our Rainforest Race 2014 (Peka Malaysia)	Hutan Simpan Sg Besi, Kuala Lumpur	Ongoing	7am-2.30pm	RSusee, 016-201 0204	Save Our Rainforest Race is a symbol to race against time. This 10km race is aimed at replanting and creating awareness on the importance of conserving our rainforest. Volunteers are needed to assist in the distribution of race kits, tree saplings, gloves etc.	Volunteers are needed to assist in the distribution of race kits, tree saplings, gloves etc.
Community	Volunteers for an international team (Rocking the World)	Anywhere	Ongoing	12am-12pm	Alina, 016-282 9862	Rocking the world aims to inspire change by showing the world with our example that culture, language, religion, distance, or whatever barriers there may be, does not matter.	Rocking the World needs volunteers to help us implement the workshops, so you will have the chance to be involved in the creation and implementation of such an event, to develop yourself and to be able to bring a change in the world.
Community	Great Heart Charity Association 100 wishes project (Great Heart Charity Association)	Desa Tun Razak, Kuala Lumpur	Ongoing	8pm-9pm	Juin Hoe, 012-270 7680	For more information, please call Juin Hoe at 012-270 7680 if you are interested in fulfilling the dream of this single mother, especially if you are staying nearby Desa Tun Razak.	We are seeking volunteers who can provide free home tuition for English language to two daughters, aged 11 and 12 of a single mother from a poor family. Volunteers may conduct a one-hour tuition session once a week for the two daughters.
Community	Race in the Dark 2014 (Dialogue in the Dark Malaysia)	Petrosains, The Discovery Centre, Level 4, Suria KLCC	Ongoing	9am-7pm	Lynn Foo, 017-632 0602	Dialogue in the Dark Malaysia is hosting a Fun Race in the Dark, a Race of Discovery and Exploration in complete darkness. Participants will be led into three Different Galleries to hear and identify sounds, touch and identify items and taste to identify food/drinks in complete darkness.	We need volunteers to help out with the logistics and the registration of the participants.
Children/Community	Training of Trainers on Child Rights and Child Protection	Petaling Jaya	Ongoing	9am-5pm	Saratha, 03-7957 4344	As a volunteer trainer/facilitator, you can engage in community outreach activities to increase awareness of child sexual abuse and initiate the proper preventive measures at the grass-roots level: the first step in creating a safe environment for our children.	The Training of trainers programme will equip volunteers with the knowledge and skills necessary to facilitate and conduct personal safety and awareness programmes with Protect and Save the Children.