

# BUILDING A CARING NATION

THIS YEAR'S "START SMALL DREAM BIG" INITIATIVE FOSTERS A STRONG COMMUNITY SPIRIT.



Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for National Development Mr Desmond Lee (in green) reciting the national pledge with SAF veterans and preschoolers

The fourth edition of "Start Small Dream Big" (SSDB), a President's Challenge initiative by ECDA to encourage young children to give back to society, kicked off on 6 April 2018.

Some 39,000 children from over 670 preschools have joined the SSDB movement this year, almost five times as many participants as during the inaugural run in 2015. In line with the SG Cares national movement, this year's theme, "Caring for Others Together", aims to inspire the young ones to contribute towards building a more compassionate and inclusive society, through simple acts of care and kindness.

Two preschool operators, My First Skool and Kidz Meadow, share their plans for their respective SSDB projects, which will be implemented from April to September this year.

## Learning By Serving

A total of 80 My First Skool (MFS) centres have come on board this year's SSDB project. Their aim is to make service learning an inherent part of their curriculum in a creative and relatable manner.

"We need to 'unpack' the concept of service learning for young children.

That means getting children to understand that, in receiving care from the people around them, they too can reciprocate," says MFS' Deputy General Manager Ms Thian Ai Ling.

Service learning activities are now carried out at each centre in any of four tracks: Caring for My Family; Caring for My Friends, across different races and backgrounds; Caring for the Community, especially seniors; and Caring for the Environment and Animals. The educators are also developing a children's storybook to foster values such as caring and sharing, and an Educators' Guide for teachers and parents, comprising activities and ideas for games to promote service learning. These resource materials will be published in the four main languages and shared with other centres.

"We want children to think: 'I can, in my own way, extend help to others,'" says Ms Thian. "Volunteerism is not merely the number of community hours; it is the simple acts one can do to brighten someone else's day."

One of the participating centres is My First Skool at 10 Jurong West, where a celebration was held on 12 April 2018 to launch their SSDB project. Minister for Social and Family

Development and Second Minister for National Development Mr Desmond Lee joined the children in various activities. This included a plant-potting activity, card and board games in the different Mother Tongue Languages, a presentation on Singapore's history by Singapore Armed Forces veterans, and serving food to senior visitors from NTUC Health Silver Circle.

Speaking at the event, Mr Lee noted that SSDB is a good way to create "teachable moments" for children and impart values such as empathy and appreciation for diversity. "A good preschool system should not only prepare our young for our national education system. More importantly, we want preschools to be holistic and inculcate values like active citizenry, compassion and caring for others."

Mrs Ruby Rajesh, 36, who attended the event together with other parents, remarked that the project will benefit her daughter, Reina, 6, who is in K2. "I want Reina to learn good values and morals while she is still young, so that she will be more likely to hold on to them when she grows up," says Mrs Rajesh. ♥

**Through your projects, you show love and care for people around you, and you make Singapore a better place to live in.**

Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Social and Family Development, in his Facebook video to children as part of the SSDB 2018 Virtual Launch



Scan the QR code to find out more about the SSDB 2018 Virtual Launch.



A plant-potting activity underway at MFS at 10 Jurong West during its SSDB project launch

Photos by Kelvin Chia

## ON THE HORIZON

SSDB will culminate in a finale exhibition showcasing the participating centres' community projects on 5 and 6 October 2018, in conjunction with ECDA's Early Childhood Conference. In the meantime, check out what they are doing at [www.startsmalldreambig.sg](http://www.startsmalldreambig.sg).



A Project C.A.R.E. pledge board displaying personal messages from Kidz Meadow students

no one can do everything but everyone can do something

FROM 2015 TO 2017, OUR PRESCHOOLERS HAVE SPENT A TOTAL OF more than 1 million hours ON SSDB-RELATED COMMUNITY PROJECTS.



Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam (back row, right) was the Guest of Honour at Kidz Meadow's SSDB launch on 20 April

## PILOTING C.A.R.E.

Aligned to the SSDB theme, all six Kidz Meadow preschools have embarked on an initiative called Project C.A.R.E. (being Caring, providing Aid, being Responsive, showing Empathy). Their focus is on three areas: Care for the Differently Aabled, Care for the Elderly and Care for Safety.

To develop empathy and to better comprehend the challenges faced by people with disabilities, children had opportunities to emulate painting using their mouths and feet. Visits to senior care centres will give the children an opportunity to interact with seniors. Lessons in basic first aid will help them to understand how they can ensure their own safety and that of others.

"It is important that we guide our young children to embrace and understand the values embodied in Project C.A.R.E.," says Ms Hanisah Binte Mohd Taha, Senior Educator at Kidz Meadow Childcare @ Buangkok Crescent. "These young children will one day lead the country. Hence, character building should start now."

Project C.A.R.E. is the result from a collaboration among Kidz Meadow, the Singapore Red Cross (SRC), Association for Early Childhood Educators (Singapore) and Preschool Market. It serves as a two-year curriculum for SRC's brand new Red Cross Junior Club. The Club is open to all K1 and K2 children, who will acquire basic first aid skills during the two years there. The children will also go on learning journeys to the Red Cross House and have volunteering opportunities with SRC. Preschool teachers will receive first aid training from SRC as well as an Educators' Guide containing suggested classroom activities in the three focus areas. The

Kidz Meadow educators were involved in co-creating this guide.

"The SSDB project is an opportunity to work in partnership with preschools. Children are never too young to learn how to perform basic first aid, or at least stay calm and ask an adult for help in an emergency," said SRC's Ms Angeline Yong, Head of Red Cross Youth, at the launch event.

