

Fun in the sun for cancer patients' kids

Camp Simba's organisers take in mainly first-timers this year

By PRISCILLA GOY

MR OWEN Png was tutoring a Primary 4 boy last November when the pupil's mother suddenly started crying, and the rest of the family burst into tears as well.

"Her cancer had spread from the lung to the brain, so sometimes it just gets too painful and she starts crying," said Mr Png, 27, a first-year student at the Duke-National University of Singapore (NUS) Graduate Medical School.

That incident was a key factor that led him to accept the role of co-director of the organising committee of this year's Camp Simba, set up for children of cancer patients.

The three-day camp, which started yesterday, is organised by the NUS Yong Loo Lin

School of Medicine and the Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School.

Mr Png said people sometimes take it for granted that they have happy families, but many cancer patients' children do not have that. It is important for them to have fun, he added. There are many support groups for cancer patients but not for their children.

Now in its fifth year, the camp this year aimed to take in only first-time participants, in order to have an impact on more children and families.

In previous editions, participants were usually repeat campers. But this year, 40 of the 51 participants – or about eight in 10 – are attending the camp for the first time.

This year's event expanded to reach kids of cancer patients

at the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore. Other partners include HCA Hospice Care and KK Women's and Children's Hospital.

The youngsters, aged seven to 12, took part in activities including beach games and a scavenger hunt at Sentosa yesterday.

Today, they will visit the Marine Life Park at Resorts World Sentosa and there will be a "reunion" which past campers will attend. Other activities are also held at the medical schools.

The organisers try to promote "strength, courage and wisdom, values which the lion Simba also embodies", said Ms Lim Fang Yi, 20, another co-director of the organising committee. Simba is the main character in the popular animated film *The Lion King*.

"These are skills that the kids will need to get them through their ordeal," added Ms Lim, a second-year student from the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.



Previously, participants were mainly repeat campers, as was the case last year, when activities were held at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (above), Sentosa and National Community Leadership Institute. PHOTO: CAMP SIMBA 2012 ORGANISING COMMITTEE

First-time camper Ethan Low, 10, said he was "very, very sad" when he learnt that his mother had been diagnosed with breast cancer about three years ago.

But even before the first day of the camp was over, he told *The Straits Times*: "I feel very happy and excited. And I'm also anxious, I can't wait for what's happening tomorrow."

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医学生办露营 让癌患子女同乐

▼有趣的露营活动，让癌症病患的孩子暂时忘却烦恼。（受访者提供）

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国大医学生为癌症病患家中的小孩举办免费露营会，今年扩大规模盼让更多孩童享受童年乐趣。

这个名为“Camp Simba”的露营会是由国大杨潞龄医学院和杜克-国大研究院学生联手举办的活动，今年迈入第五年。今年活动将扩大规模，让更多癌症病患家中6至12岁的孩童齐聚同乐。

就读杜克-国大研究院一年级的主办者何书芳（21岁）透露，之前的活动都是通过新加坡保健服务集团（Singhealth）招募参与者，去年共有46名孩童参与，但他们今年决定开放让符合资格的公众报名参加，希望吸引60名孩童。

露营会将由6月7至9日在圣淘沙举行，举办者为孩童们安排了一系列活动，希望让他们尽情玩乐。

何书芳受访时说：“癌症病患一般不会有时间或精力带孩子出去玩，孩子们也需要更快速成长。所以，我们希望让他们重新当个小孩。”

她表示，患病家长不仅能趁此机会休息，更高兴让孩子有机会享乐。



对参与的医学生而言，这个露营会也让他们体会到癌症的不同面向。

何书芳说：“我们在学校都在学癌症如何产生、应该如何医治，很少会接触到其他方面，这个活动就让我们了解到癌症如何影响病患身边的家庭、看护者等。”

有兴趣让孩子参与这场露营会的公众可电邮至 campsimba@gmail.com 报名或上 www.campsimba.org 了解详情。



癌症病患者的孩子 参加露营互相勉励

马吉（13岁）三岁时，父亲患上淋巴瘤，对他而言，童年就是看着父亲不停地进出医院、在打针吃药中度过。

前年，他和弟弟参加了Camp Simba后发现，原来还有很多小朋友跟他们的处境相似，也有很多大哥哥大姐姐愿意帮助他们，自己并不孤单。

Camp Simba是新加坡国立大学杨潞龄医学院生和杜克一国大医学研究生院学生联办的常年露营，专为年龄介于7至12岁的癌病患的儿女而办，它今年是第五度举办，将于6月学校假期在圣淘沙举行。筹委会计划扩大规模，将参加儿童人数增至60名。

谈及露营的目的，筹委会主席林芳仪（21岁）说：“因为父母的病况，这些孩子年纪轻轻，就需承受比同龄孩子更大的责任，被迫加快长大。我们希望把欢乐带给他们，让他们暂时忘却烦恼。”

◀三天两夜有趣的露营活动，让癌病患的孩子暂时忘却烦恼。（Camp Simba提供）