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Amber Chia Academy

The Salvation Army

👤 Priscilla Tawie

📌 Feature (<https://www.newsarawaktribune.com.my/category/life-and-tech/feature-lit/>), Lifestyle (<https://www.newsarawaktribune.com.my/category/life-and-tech/>)

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Jones in front of the main building at their new centre in Kota Samarahan.

From adversity to opportunity

The Salvation Army has been doing well in its new centre since its recent relocation to Kota Samarahan. Sharing further, its Director of Public Relations, Nigel Jones, said that while the children are settling in, it has been an exciting change.

Empowering the Next Generation

The Salvation Army has a longstanding and reputable presence as a charitable organisation and church service provider in Malaysia. As of now, the organisation has 10 centres throughout Malaysia, including two in Sarawak – a relocation centre from Kuching in Kota Samarahan and an old centre in Bintulu.

The organisation has cared for countless children throughout the decades, and many notable graduates have left the centre to make names for themselves.

Speaking to the Salvation Army Regional Headquarters Malaysia recently, Director of Public Relations Nigel Jones shared that their move in late September to a new centre in a different district has been exciting.

“The children are happy and excited to be able to stay in a new and much larger compound. The new centre has more facilities, such as classrooms, playrooms, and computer rooms.”

Jones also mentioned that with a huge parking lot and a big hall, the children are able to ride bicycles and play sports. The public can also rent the multipurpose hall, which has a capacity of 500 people. This new facility, which has a stage, sound system, lighting, air conditioning, and other amenities, could help the centre in raising funds as well as other means such as sponsorships and events.

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(<https://www.newsarawaktribune.com.my/worlds-largest-artifact-to-be-housed-in-norwegian-museum/>)

With the move, he also hopes that the Salvation Army will be able to work together with the local council in the Samarahan district to provide community support.

"We hope to do more for the local community as well as the residential care. This place will also give us the opportunity to take in more children."



The recent relocation was really exciting for the children, especially because of the larger compound and improved facilities.

History of the Salvation Army

Jones talked about the origins of the Salvation Army, emphasising that it has always been a platform for community service. In 1865, a Methodist married couple, William and Catherine Booth, observed the social problems of the community in the East End of London.

"They wanted to reach out to the poor and destitute in the area. With social problems such as alcoholism, prostitution, and poverty, the Booths realised that churches at the time only accepted people from the middle and upper classes, so they started a church for the lower class," he said.

The Booths also established mission stations to feed and house the poor. According to Jones, the couple realised that because of their dissolute lifestyle, the people of East End London had to be structured to help with their social problems.

"That is how the Salvation Army and their mission to help began. We have constantly been associated with our social work and churches."



The recent relocation was really exciting for the children, especially because of the larger compound and improved facilities.

Ready to serve since the 1950s

Singapore was the first country in Southeast Asia to receive community support from the Salvation Army in 1938. Penang Island then received social support in 1940. However, due to the Japanese occupation that began in the early 1940s, the organisation was unable to pursue their goals to expand here. Nonetheless, the army's help was extended to Kuching, Sarawak in the 1950s.

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"In 1950, an officer named Elsie Willis was brought here on a mission to save groups of young girls who had been trafficked from China. Back then, the problem was rampant, which is why Willis was dispatched on a rescue mission. The Colonial British Administration at the time gave her the title of 'Protector' in recognition of her service."

Jones added that because so many girls were rescued, Willis saw the need for establishing a girl's home under the Salvation Army organisation.

"The first girls' home was located at Jalan Haji Taha in a colonial building. Then, in the mid-1950s, it relocated to Jalan Uplands, where it remained until today. Along with the centre, the Salvation Army established a church at Jalan Sekama in 1952."

According to Jones, the church is registered with the Association of Churches of Sarawak and once housed a kindergarten.

The boy's home was later established in 1959 at Jalan Ban Hock, and by then, the Salvation Army also took in locals and referrals.

"The Salvation Army is an army without guns. But we do have different ranks, we march, and we wear white uniforms. Our operation is in the sense that we serve the people through our community works."



Growing up in the Salvation Army

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Born and raised in the United Kingdom, Jones was brought up within the organisation as his parents were pastors in the church. In 1985, at the age of 21, he began working with the Salvation Army and was assigned to Singapore. From 1995 to 2005, he served at the centre in Kuching.

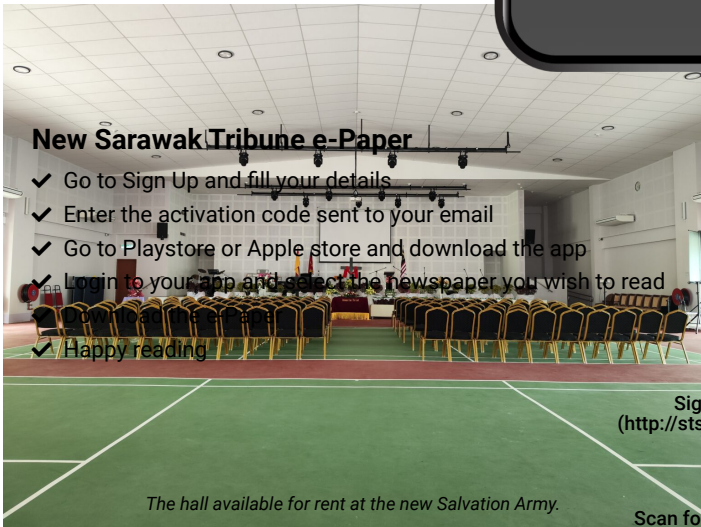
When asked what life lessons he had gained while performing charity work, he responded that there were many times where children he met changed his perspective on life.

"I've worked at different Salvation Army centres before, and people always say that I helped the children, but I always say that they helped me more. I learned a lot from them. I learned that even if you don't have a mother or father, you can still do something with your life. I also learned to be happy and appreciative of life whenever I saw children having a good time, laughing and joking around."

Jones regarded the children in the centres as a family, with many brothers and sisters.

"These kids are always content with simple happiness. For example, if they receive new clothes or someone sponsors them a meal, they will show their gratitude by taking good care of the clothes or finishing the meal because it is so precious to them.

"And, because many of the children are not sponsored, if they want to further their studies, they must work in order to support themselves not just financially, but also emotionally. They must be independent and strong from a young age," he added.



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