

Singtel Carnival brings a day of fun to special needs students



Members of Singtel's management including (from right) Arthur Lang, CEO, International; group CEO Chua Sock Koong; and Yuen Kuan Moon, chairman of the STLF and CEO Consumer Singapore, chaperoning the students at the carnival. PHOTO: SINGTEL

1,600 students attend the safari-themed event held at the Singapore Expo on Wednesday

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ALISTER ONG has cerebral palsy, but that has not stopped him from overcoming the odds.

The 26-year-old graduate from Singapore Management University is now an employee at Singtel. Working in its Group Sustainability department, Mr Ong taps his personal experience to help the company foster diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

Mr Ong was also one of the many volunteers at Singtel Carnival, Singapore's largest event dedicated to children with special needs.

About 1,600 students from 14 special education schools (SPED) – including those from the Singtel Touching Lives Fund's (STLF) six beneficiary SPED schools – were at the safari-themed event held at the Singapore Expo on Wednesday.

More than 2,000 employees from Singtel and Singapore Business Network on Disability (SBNOD) companies, a community of businesses in Singapore which share expertise to advance inclusion for the disabled, volunteered at the event.

This is the third year running that Singtel was joined by its fellow members in SBNOD – which include Bank of America Merrill Lynch, Barclays, Deloitte and Bloomberg – in hosting and chaperoning the students.

Yuen Kuan Moon, chairman of the STLF and CEO Consumer Singapore at

Singtel, said: "We've been organising the Singtel Carnival for seven years now, and it's always been a delight to see the children have a great time. We invite all the SPEDs in Singapore, and we are always looking at how to do it on a larger scale with various considerations such as logistics and manpower, as each student will have to be chaperoned by a staff volunteer."

Andrew Buay, Singtel's vice-president of group sustainability, said that such an event allows staff to interact and build empathy with this segment of society.

Mr Buay added: "There is no end to building an inclusive society, and this change will not take place overnight. Such an event will encourage families and parents of children with special needs to achieve more in terms of employment. We need to build an ecosystem where different parties, which include families and corporates, work together as a collective unit."

Suzana Soo, principal, MINDS Lee Kong Chian Garden School, said: "The carnival provided under STLF has been playing an important role in our students' well-being. It presents an effective learning platform for our students to develop their social skills. The huge indoor play area filled with a wide range of activities at the Singapore Expo has given our students ample opportunity to engage in exciting games and interact with many other people. This goes a long way to help the students gain self-confidence."