

Serve When You Can

I first met Aunty Cheng on 4th December 2022. She was there to attend the first Malaysian Children Hospice Festival fund raising event organised by the Malaysian Association of Paediatric Palliative Care (MAPPAC). The objective of the event was to raise funds to set up the first Malaysian Children Hospice (MCH) Kuala Lumpur which will offer palliative care services for those children with the condition of life-limiting illnesses and their family members.



Our path crossed again when she was present for the launch of MCH Kuala Lumpur on 16th July 2023. She was given due recognition for her commitment in fund raising for the setup of the First Children Hospice in Malaysia. That was when MAPPAC mooted the idea to pay her a home visit to learn more about what makes her tick in enveloping herself in the fine art of bear crocheting at the ripe age of 74. Is it a matter of an interest in a hobby, keeping oneself preoccupied or with a clear desire to do something that contributes to the needs of serving the less fortunate? Volunteer Pearl Thor was quick to arrange for a meeting with Aunty Cheng when I sounded my profound interest to do an article on her.

I was soon at the doorsteps of Aunty Cheng's house to hear her familiar warm voice, "Welcome, welcome!" And hubby Mr Law was just as enthusiastic, reminding me to re-park my vehicle directly at the front of the gate. Once seated and before I could barely acknowledge the pleasantries, I was offered a nice barley drink to quench my thirsty throat.



Right there in front of me was Aunty Cheng... with a beaming smile to say, "How would you like me to share my story?" I commenced by asking her how she had first ventured into the bear crocheting. She was equally spontaneous in attributing her interest years back during her schooling days. She had discovered the delights of her nimble hands for a thimble craft like bear crocheting. But she was also quick to mention that it was eventually parked aside; when schooling and academic interest took priority over a hobby. Thereafter she was preoccupied with a working career and culminating to raising a family as any mother would be.

Her passion was rekindled during the COVID 19 pandemic when she was "stranded" in Singapore at her daughter's home. Sensing the need to keep the mother pre-occupied, the daughter was quick to get her a first book on crocheting. The designs revolved extensively on the making of bear toys. Madam Cheng soon discovered the utter joy of making bears as gifts to close friends and family members. It was sheer delight and fulfilment when the bears were quickly snapped up by her daughter's friends. This is the value of a toy made with lots of love and care... and lending the personal touch to each of it. With growing encouragement, she was soon soaked into producing different varieties of toys. Each additional piece only heightened her capacity on expanding her designs and creativity. It is an acumen she has learnt to enjoy to this day.



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Post the Covid pandemic, she was soon back in Kuala Lumpur. At that point in time, MAPPAC was in the midst of organising the Malaysian Children Hospice Festival, a bazaar fund raising event. Volunteer Pearl Thor realising the quality of the handmade toys proposed to Auntie Cheng to make more bear toys for adoption by the sponsors and public. Armed with the opportunity to do something worthy like raising funds for the set up of the First Children Hospice in Malaysia, she was soon in full throttle preparing them for the bazaar sales event. With an astute commitment and the desire to serve, she painstakingly crocheted 35 delightful bears in a matter of 3 months. When one is 74, undaunted by the challenges ... that was a marvellous achievement.

I asked her, "What does it take to excel in this fine and delicate craftwork"? She said "It is like preparing a nice meal; seasoned with lots of patience, equal amount of persistency, full of enthusiasm and ample time at hand to complete the one and only bear of a kind... as no one bear shares a resemblance" She quickly added that she also meditates for the composure of her mind to stay focus in all that she does. To her it is till to-date her simple and sweet success story of her craftsmanship.



In the coming twilight years, she will continue to devote her time for hospice visit, participating in food fairs to keep her abreast engaging in charity work. She has selflessly given a good part of her as a dutiful wife and mother, indulging in the obligations of raising her family. She will now have more than ample time to do what she loves, continuing to explore new designs, make more innovative crochet toys in support of all the noble causes ahead. There is no doubt that we can count on Auntie Cheng to be around for us at MAPPAC at the coming Malaysian Children Hospice Festival fund raising event on **26th May 2024** at the Pusat Kreatif Kanak Kanak Tuanku Bainun, Tman Tun Dr Ismail. Our salutations to Auntie Cheng.



L-R Pearl and Auntie Cheng

Our appreciation to Auntie Cheng for consenting to the interview by Michael. Also to Volunteer Pearl for the coordination