

Gift of greens

Concerned about the plight of flood victims in Kota Tinggi, Johor, Metro.com hatched a plan that led to the delivery of fresh fruits and vegetables to residents in hard-hit areas. Although saddened by what they saw, volunteers experienced a lift in discovering the fun in giving. >M2 & 3



Aid brigade

Star Metro journalist Mak Khuin Weng (right) helping Sunway Pyramid public relations executive Teoh See Wei to haul up a trolley-load of cabbages onto the lorry bound for Kota Tinggi.
- BRIAN MOH / THE STAR

To Kota Tinggi with

Group brings lorry-load of fruits and vegetables

Metro.com is a project that aims at connecting communities. This time around, we cross borders to bring the kind folks of the Klang Valley to help spread a little cheer to the flood victims of Kota Tinggi. These high-spirited volunteers show that charity is not just an obligation, but a sincere action from the heart.

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The sun was only beginning to greet the day when a few volunteers were excitedly loading boxes of vegetables into a lorry.

It was 4am and the city folks seemed unperturbed by the chaotic scene in the Selayang wholesale market in Kuala Lumpur as they continued with their loading.

A petite Teoh See Wei was seen heaving large bags of vegetables and fruits onto a three-tonne lorry.

"I've never done this before but it's fun, like a morning exercise. The cabbages are really heavy though," said the Sunway Pyramid public relations executive.

The vegetables and fruits were meant for the flood victims of Kota Tinggi and the volunteers were all part of the Metro.com

project to help bring some cheer to the families affected by the disaster.

Sunway Pyramid provided the funds for this initiative, while Khoo Wee Ming, a wholesale vegetable seller at the market, coordinated the supplies, ensuring that the stock was purchased at the best price.

"Prices are usually higher near the weekend, that's why I have to pre-order the stock. I hardly have pre-orders so you can say it's a chore, but it's not burdensome as the sellers are my neighbours," said Khoo, who came to the market earlier than usual to oversee a smooth loading.

A businessman who only wished to be known as Kamsol offered to provide the lorry at no charge.

"What can you contribute when someone is in need? It may not always be in cash. What I can do is contribute my lorry for this project," he said.

Indeed, helping the less fortunate is a joy when everyone does what



Special delivery:
Chear handing a pack of vegetables to a resident as StarMetro intern Priya Menon looks on.



Market's early birds:
Star Metro journalist Mak Khuin Weng (right) and Teoh carrying a bundle of cabbages while Chear (left) and Tengku Nazaruddin Zainudin look on.

love

to flood victims



Supplies coordinator: Khoo helping to source out vegetables for the Metro.com initiative at the Selangor wholesale market.

»What you read in the newspapers is one thing compared to coming here to see the real thing«

SUNWAY PYRAMID PUBLIC RELATIONS SENIOR EXECUTIVE DARREN CHEAR

he can with a willing heart. And age does not matter, too.

All PJ Pro Action Committee member Tengku Nazaruddin Zainudin, 58, sacrificed his sleep to be at the wholesale market for the task. Yet he looked fresh and even shared jokes throughout the journey.

Lorry driver Abdul Karim was also all smiles throughout the road trip. It was he who made sure that all the supplies arrived safely in Kota Tinggi. His wife Siti Zaiton also tagged along to lend a helping hand whenever she could.

"My husband told me what he was doing and I thought I had nothing to lose by tagging along!" said Siti.

During the five-hour journey to Kota Tinggi, the volunteers had fun exchanging banter and jokes in the car and new friendships blossomed.

Sunway Pyramid public relations senior executive Darren Chear shared the buns he brought, while Tengku Nazaruddin regaled everyone with stories of his rally race adventures.

At Kota Tinggi, the volunteers gathered at Bethany Church and got down to hard work. They quickly unloaded the supplies and repacked the cabbages, carrots, cucumbers, potatoes, oranges and



Repacking station: The volunteers hard at work as they pack the vegetables into individual bags at the compound of Bethany Church.



Help is at hand: The curious villagers of Kampung Tembioh coming out of their homes to receive the packs of vegetables.

apples into individual packs to be distributed to the families.

The kind people of Bethany Church helped to pack the vegetables and provided the volunteers with more plastic bags when needed.

The group was in good cheer as they continued to tell more 'vegetable jokes' and attempted to sing some 'vegetable songs' although nobody could get the lyrics right.

They finished the task in about an hour and took off for Taman Kuso where they began to distribute the supplies.

As they moved from street to street, the volunteers gave out the packs from door to door, while the good-humoured Abdul Karim honked and shouted 'Sayur! Sayur!' from the driver's seat.

Curious residents began coming out of their homes to receive the supplies while little children ran and giggled around the volunteers.

"What you read in the newspapers is one thing compared to coming here to see the real thing. You realise why they are so hard-hit as everything they had was destroyed overnight," said Chear after spending some time with a lady who was in tears while recounting her flood experience.

"What they need is also emotional support," he added.

The group then moved on to Kampung Tembioh, the worst-hit village in the floods. As the volunteers entered the village, many residents were seen repairing and cleaning out their homes.

The volunteers gave away vegetables and fruits to the adults,

and sweets and chocolates to the children before wrapping up their day's work in Kota Tinggi and heading home.

"I was tired but very satisfied. Seeing what the people have been through, you begin to appreciate life," said Tengku Nazaruddin, who felt moved after seeing a house with barely any furniture.

"It was worth the effort, time, drive and loss of sleep," he said.

Transport provider: Lorry driver Abdul

Karim arranging the bags of potatoes and cabbages on the lorry.

