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Nilai goes extra mile with Ribbon Week



Datin Dr Fadilah Zowyah Lela Yasmin Mansor launching Nilai University College's third annual Ribbon Week.

NILAI University College has raised awareness on a number of health-related issues with its third annual Ribbon Week.

"Organ donation is not merely charity out of moral obligation. It's a passion," proclaimed Datin Dr Fadilah Zowyah Lela Yasmin Mansor, chief national transplant coordinator procurement manager in her opening speech at Nilai UC's Ribbon Week recently.

"It is through events like Ribbon Week that I hope to address issues of fear, ignorance, and misconception that are prevalent in society at large."

Organised by Nilai UC's Nursing Faculty, the event was designed to raise awareness of AIDS, breast cancer, organ donation, as well as safe motherhood and childbirth (each denoted by a different coloured ribbon — red,

pink, green and white respectively).

The green ribbon has been a key campaign at Nilai UC for many years under the banner of "Project Humans for Humans". Nilai UC has long been a strong advocate of organ donation and continuously supports organ donation pledge drives.

This year, Nilai UC went the extra mile to deliver a Ribbon Week packed with exhibitions, religious forums, talks, and demonstrations by various non-governmental organisations and wellness organisations such as the National Transplant Resource Centre,

Unicef, Makna, and AIESEC. Included in the programme was an organ donation pledge drive as well as free health screenings.

The President Hall at Nilai UC hosted a full audience as Fadilah kick-started the event by highlighting the incredibly low number of organ donors in the country (25 per million) in comparison with countries such as Spain (1,550 per million).

Students and staff also got to experience first-hand the life of a kidney transplant survivor, pharmacologist Mohd Ghazali Ismail, who asserted that his will and motivation to live on has never been stronger because his mother, Ruhana Talib, sacrificed one of her kidneys to save his life.

His testimony was an ideal illustration of Fadilah's emphasis on organ donation being a passionate gift of life and hope to 10,342 individuals on the current waiting list. "Don't take your organs to heaven with you. Heaven knows we need them here," she pleaded.

Ribbon Week participants proceeded to actively engage the various myths and misconceptions surrounding organ donation

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in an interactive forum facilitated by religious leaders representing four major world religions — Islam, Christianity, Buddhism, and Hinduism, all strong advocates of organ donation.

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Going beyond classrooms to mould mature students

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"Syariah ruling permits organ donation with valid expert advice and a general consensus among those involved," declared Abdullah Jalil, a lecturer from the Faculty of Law, Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia.

"In Islam, organ donation is a most commendable act as it is the highest sacrifice one can make — giving away one's most prized possession." The other speakers — Pastor Voon Yuen Woh, Venerable Kondanna, and Guhanatha Swami — who agreed that organ donation is a permissible act of love and giving enshrined in the teachings of all four religions, unanimously echoed his verdict.

Nilai UC also extended an in-

itation to Fourth Formers from nearby SMK Mantin to enlighten them on the dangers of AIDS and HIV via workshop sessions conducted by a team of youthful international facilitators hailing from Sweden, Netherlands, Czech Republic, Mauritius, China, India, and Hong Kong.

"We are delighted to discover that Nilai UC students as well as their younger high school counterparts are one of the most responsive crowds we've worked with since we embarked on the AIESEC-funded Red Ribbon Project," commented Matthias after teaching the wide-eyed audience to say "no" to unsafe sex in Swedish.

"It is also very encouraging to see that Nilai UC is taking constructive steps in educating their students as Health Ministry statistics from June 2007 revealed that almost 38 per cent of the 73,427 Malaysian HIV cases involved youth between the ages of 13 and 29," added Tracy from the Czech Republic.

"At Nilai UC, we go beyond classrooms and take extra measures to mould our students into mature and well-rounded citizens. It is hoped that by spearheading this initiative, Nilai UC's

Ribbon Week has helped in promoting a non-apathetic attitude towards organ donation and other pertinent health issues in Malaysia, starting with our students," said Datuk Dr Sothi Rachagan, Nilai UC vice-resident of academic affairs at his closing speech.

"I hope this will eventually pave a way of life for Malaysian youth to be able to make a free and informed decision and be active advocates for a noble cause."

In fact, the numbers of students and staff who signed up as organ donors continue in an upward trend. It seems that Nilai UC's Ribbon Week is having a positive impact among the young as the talks and exhibitions were well-attended and generated much discussion.

Nilai UC was established in 1997 and is located in the picturesque suburb of Putra Nilai. Its Nursing Faculty is the largest on campus offering diploma and degree programmes. Other programmes available at Nilai UC include degrees in tourism management, computing and business administration.

For information, visit www.nilai.edu.my or call 06-8502338 / 03-79603089/07-3332336.