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By SANDRA LOW
star2@thestar.com.my

The match-maker

A local corporation initiates a donation portal to link charity homes and donors.

WHILE giving or donating to the needy, whether in cash or kind, is something to be lauded, what happens when the gift becomes more of a burden than anything else?

This is exactly what a local corporation discovered, through its years of corporate responsibility work.

Colin Ng, head of Corporate Investments of Goldis Bhd, said they assumed that charity homes required certain things but they were surprised to learn that it was not always what they thought.

Ng cited the case of a boys' home in the Klang Valley which needed window panes.

"We learnt that the young boys fought a lot and the window panes would get broken, hence the need for replacements," said Ng. "Another home which we visited had just too many bags of rice, given by donors. The home couldn't turn away the kind gestures."

They also noticed that some homes would receive half-broken machines or old equipment, and ended up as a storehouse for junk.

As a result of these observations, executive chairman and CEO of Goldis Bhd, Tan Lei Cheng, came up with the idea of a donation portal - GivingIsGold.org.

In 2002, Goldis Bhd was formed following the merger exercise between Tan & Tan Developments Bhd and its associated company, IGB Corporation Bhd. IGB emerged as one of the largest property corporations in Malaysia and Goldis became the major substantial shareholder of IGB.

"Goldis is basically the holding company of IGB," said Ng. "It is an investment company with private equity investments in Malaysia and China, having gone

into aquaculture, ICT, water/waste water treatment, property and paper manufacturing.

"Our group's mission is essentially to invest in entrepreneurs to grow our company. Our group is owned by the Tan & Tan family, and they have a philosophy to give back to society. It is in line with our company's vision to enhance people's lifestyle, and we felt that a donation portal such as this would enhance the lives of those in need," Ng explained.

The GivingIsGold.org portal was launched in Kuala Lumpur recently as part of Goldis Bhd's corporate responsibility programme.

"We reviewed some of the existing foreign donation portals and consulted the charity homes and their trustees, and created our own portal," Ng said.

According to Ng, the portal is the first of its kind in Malaysia. They appointed a local firm to come up with the design and layout.

"This portal will allow the charity homes to list down their real needs so that these can be properly fulfilled. Our portal, with its tagline 'Fulfilling the needs of the needy', is designed to minimise wastage," Ng pointed out.

GivingIsGold.org works like a match-maker, matching charity homes with donors.

"This portal allows charities, especially those which have no opportunity to be heard, to showcase their home and their mission," he said.

On the portal, donors - whether individuals or corporate bodies - can look at the profile of the charity homes listed to see what the home is all about, its mission and what the home needs.

Ng came across a woman who adopts HIV-positive children. She needs various forms of support but she does not know how to market her cause, so such a portal will give her the opportunity.

The portal will allow donors and charity homes a platform to deal directly with each other for the items that the homes have requested for. The portal does not collect cash or items.

"Before a charity is registered, we verify the legitimacy of the

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- COLIN NG HEAD OF CORPORATE INVESTMENTS OF GOLDIS BHD

charity. We start with the Klang Valley and hope to expand to include other charities around Malaysia," Ng pointed out.

The charity homes' wish list is also verified before it is posted online to ensure that requests are legitimate. For security purposes, the exact location of the charities will not be revealed in the portal.

Contact information is provided though.

"We introduced feedback ratings to allow other donors to view previous transactions. Basically, like what eBay - an online auction and shopping website - does as a third party validation. So if a particular charity has been getting repeated negative feedback, we will look into it," said Ng.

There is no registration fee or subscription fees for the charity home or the donor. The portal is a non-profit set-up.

For charity homes which do not have access to a computer or Internet connection, Ng said: "It is part of our corporate responsibility to ensure that the said homes have this facility. If they require training, we will assist as well."

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Giving back: Guests looking at the Giving for Gold website at its launch in G Tower, Kuala Lumpur.