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# Giving their all

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**S**HARIZAN Saidin is absolutely sure she is meant to be Ahmad Rayyan Abdullah's mother. She said she knew it in her heart that the newborn baby abandoned by his HIV+ mother at the hospital belonged with her family, and the possibility that Rayyan could be HIV+ didn't deter her.

Sharizan works at Rumah Solehah, a home for women and children living with HIV/AIDS. When Ahmad Rayyan first came to the shelter, he was only 23 days old.

"At first, I brought him home with me because there was no one else to look after him in Rumah Solehah at night. There was no intention to adopt him; I was just caring for him.

"But we doted on Rayyan. My husband also loves this child, and my children took to him. When my children came home from school, they would wake him up from his nap to play with him," relates Sharizan, 50.

There were other couples who were interested in adopting Rayyan, but within two months Sharizan and her family had decided the baby was already part of their family.

Sharizan was not content to formalise her ties with Rayyan in black and white. She was determined that Rayyan would have no doubt she is his mother. "I was thinking long-term, of the future. I wanted my son to always know we have a close relationship, that he is like my flesh and blood. As a Muslim, I felt it was important that I breastfeed him," shares Sharizan who also breastfed her other children.

So, with her husband's blessings and support, Sharizan went to Hospital Pusrawi where doctors put her on medication to induce lactation.

"With God's grace, the treatment worked and I was able to breastfeed Rayyan. I used to wake up every two hours to breastfeed him, and I did it till he was about eight months old," says Sharizan, who now only has to wake up once at night to feed Rayyan.

He is now two, and thrives on the attention his parents and older siblings shower on him. He has undergone three HIV tests, and all the results have been negative.

"We were not planning to adopt a child, but Rayyan came into our lives. He is God's *anugerah*, (gift) to us. Some people say he looks like me," says

Sharizan proudly.

There is also no doubting the resemblance between 19-year-old Wong Kim Leng and her aunt Wong Yoke Chin, nor the closeness they share.

For the past 10 years, Wong has been Kim Leng's anchor as she grappled with the loss of her parents within a week of each other. It has been especially difficult for Kim Leng too because she is a slow

learner, and does not have the ability to express and communicate her turmoil.

"When my brother passed away suddenly, followed a week later by his wife, they left behind three children - Kim Leng and her two brothers. We took them in to live with us, and we have cared for them since," shares Wong, 50, who works as a cleaner.

They live in a one-room, low-cost flat in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur, and life is not always easy. But the unmarried Wong takes on the responsibilities of parenting her niece and nephews in her stride.

Wong took up driving a few years ago when she needed to send Kim Leng to a centre for the disabled in Hulu Langat, Selangor.

"Kim Leng cannot tell us what bothers her, but we know her well. When she is outside and afraid, she'd hold my hands tightly. We know she does not always comprehend what is going on, and she gets anxious," relates Wong, who is especially close to Kim Leng because "she is the only girl".

"At home, I try to teach her to be self-reliant. She has learnt to care for herself, and do household chores," says Wong, who is proud of how well Kim Leng is doing. Her niece is now earning a salary helping out at the centre.



Wong Yoke Chin (left) has been an anchor for her niece Wong Kim Leng since the latter's parents passed away.



Sharizan dotes on her adopted son, Ahmad Rayyan.