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Reluctant volunteer runs shelter for HIV victims

By ZAZALI MUSA

zaza@thestar.com.my

JOHOR BARU: K. Rasasoran was reluctant when he was approached to become a volunteer at a shelter for HIV-positive men and women in Taman Abad here six years ago.

Today, he runs a home for HIV-positive women and children.

The 60-year-old said the pastor who had first persuaded him to volunteer for the task later convinced him to change his mind during a church service in 2008.

"My reluctance was due to the negative perception of such patients, which I believe still persists in our society," he said.

Rasasoran said he then told the pastor that he would give himself a three-month trial as a caretaker at the centre.

"I ended up serving for two years,"

recalled the father of two sons, aged 28 and 19, who worked as a sailor for 15 years before quitting to become an assistant operations manager with a property developer here.

Prior to volunteering at the centre, Rasasoran went on the Internet to learn more about HIV and AIDS and how to deal with those afflicted with the virus or disease.

After leaving the centre in 2010, he set up Loving Hope Society in April that year to shelter HIV-positive women and children.

He forked out RM30,000 from his savings to set up the facility in a double-storey terrace house adjacent to his home in Taman Suria here.

"There was then no dedicated

place in Johor Baru for the group," he added.

Rasasoran said most women at the shelter had been banished by their families after they contracted HIV from their drug addict husbands.

He said over the years, about 200 women and children from different races and religions had sought help at the home and some of them had been reunited with their families.

Rasasoran said he needed RM10,000 a month to run the home, including to pay for rent, food, utilities and the salaries of two caretakers.

For more information, contact Rasasoran at 012-740 0390, e-mail: harapankasih11@yahoo.com or visit Loving Hope Society at 43, Jalan Murni 7, Taman Suria, 81100 Johor Baru.



Making a difference: Rasasoran (background) with inmates of the centre.