

Beating cancer, and blues from bullying

Helped by Children's Cancer Foundation, survivor now pays it forward as a volunteer

Tiffany Fumiko Tay and Carolyn Khew

After beating cancer at the age of 12, Tan Yi Jun returned to school only to endure another form of torment: bullies who labelled him "cancer boy".

While the name-calling and bald taunts persisted through secondary school, counselling provided by the Children's Cancer Foundation (CCF) helped him to cope, said Mr Tan, now 20 and an interactive and digital media polytechnic student.

The voluntary welfare association yesterday celebrated its 25th anniversary by launching two new programmes to provide child cancer patients with support during treatment and beyond.

The programmes, a collaboration between CCF and KK Women's and Children's Hospital, will provide CCF beneficiaries with resources such as psychosocial support and nutritional care.

Senior Minister of State for Health Amy Khor made the announcement at Concorde Hotel, where a roving photo and art exhibition featuring the works of childhood cancer survivors and CCF stakeholders was also launched.

Mr Tan's photograph of a drain in a cemetery is on display at the Together We Are Stronger exhibition, which will make stops at VivoCity, among other locations.

He was diagnosed with a rare mediastinal germ cell tumour, which grows in the chest, and underwent chemotherapy for six months followed by surgery to remove it.

"It was quite tough, I vomited al-



Mr Tan framing a shot in front of his photo of a drain in a cemetery that is on display at the Together We Are Stronger exhibition. ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

most every day during the treatment. During the operation, they had to cut open my ribcage, and my heart stopped twice," he said.

While he is now healthy, Mr Tan regularly volunteers at CCF events, such as Hair for Hope, to encourage children who are suffering.

"I want to help make them feel happy and that they are not alone."

Separately, the Singapore Cancer Society (SCS) yesterday ran Singapore's inaugural Relay for Life, a 17-hour community event which hopes to convey the message that cancer patients are not alone.

Held for the first time in Singapore, the event at Bukit Gombak

Stadium saw cancer survivors walking and running in the Survivors' Lap to raise funds for SCS.

The event is expected to draw more than 7,000 participants by the time it ends today.

Mr P. J. Roberts, 43, who took part yesterday, was diagnosed with testicular cancer in 2013 and beat it.

He praised the event for focusing on both cancer patients and their caregivers. "It's tough for the family. You're affected by it and you're dealing with it in your own way but they need support as well."

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