

## Centre to help people with intellectual disabilities

*A look at Mamre Oaks in this series on Catholic social service organisations*



**A volunteer with a Mamre Oaks member. Mamre Oaks runs a day activities centre for those aged 18 and above who have intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD).**

### Jared Ng

Five days a week, Ms Ong Pek Hoon, 49, visits Mamre Oaks where she joins her friends and takes part in numerous activities.

Mamre Oaks, a Church social service organisation under Caritas Singapore, runs a day activities centre for adults (aged 18 and above) with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) in Agape Village, Toa

Payoh Lorong 8.

It is here that Ms Ong, who has IDD, has learned to open up through her participation in the various programmes and daily social interactions with staff, volunteers and others like her.

She shared with Catholic News that she enjoys all the activities at the centre such as art and craft, and music sessions.

However, “cooking is my favourite,” she said.

Another member, Mr Fong Kee Yung, 53, said he loves coming to Mamre Oaks because of the many friends he has here and also because he gets to enjoy his favourite art and craft activities.

According to Mr Joseph Lim, 57, Mamre Oaks Centre Manager, the programmes for members are designed to “empower them to lead lives of meaning, dignity and fulfilment” as well as create an environment where they are “welcomed and valued” regardless of their abilities, race and religion.



**A member working on a Hama Beads design, part of therapy at the centre.**

Mr Lim said that some members, after spending time with Mamre Oaks, were referred to job placement agencies and found work.

Mamre Oaks currently serves 12 members. The centre can serve up to 30 people. It operates from 8.30 am to 6 pm from Monday to Friday.

The organisation was founded in 2015 by a group of friends from Faith and Light Community, another Caritas Singapore member organisation that serves intellectually disabled people and their families.

Since then, Mamre Oaks has reached out to churches to raise awareness about its services with the hope of assisting families and caregivers who have or know of adults with IDD.

The Churches of St Ignatius and Risen Christ have helped in reaching out to parishioners and fundraising projects for Mamre Oaks.

Other parishes are soon to follow, according to Mr Lim, who is one of six staff at the centre. He credits a strong volunteer force for assisting with the running of programmes. Everyday, up to six volunteers are at the centre engaging the members in various activities.



**A volunteer showing members how a volcano works.**

During lunch, they accompany the members out to the neighbouring hawker centre. “It is important for these members to be out in the public and with the community,” said Mr Lim.

Once a month, volunteers also bring the members out to popular attractions such as the Singapore Zoo, River Safari and Gardens by the Bay.

The biggest reward “is to see the happiness on all their faces, to see them laugh and grow together,” said Mr Alex Chia, 62, who has been volunteering since January.

Another volunteer, Ms Jean Zee, 65, said she volunteers because she enjoys being with the members.

“We are all God’s children. He loves us all in different ways,” she said.

According to Mamre Oaks, the organisation’s name came from the Book of Genesis where Abraham welcomed three strangers and provided them with food by the oak of Mamre.

Similarly, the organisation hopes to bring hospitality, nourishment, good news and hope.

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### Events in September

There are three events by Mamre Oaks scheduled in September with the aim of raising awareness, assisting parents and caregivers of adults with IDD, and providing persons with IDD an opportunity to interact and have fun.

- **Sept 15:** Summer in the Forest. Screening of a film about four people with intellectual disabilities coming together and revealing what it really means to be fully human.

In conjunction with the CANA Film Festival, the film will be screened at Golden Village Vivo City from 3 pm-5 pm.

- **Sept 22:** A conference for parents and caregivers of adults with IDD.

Prominent professionals speak on legal, mental health and behavioural issues; self-care concerns; and how to fully integrate into communities for persons with IDD.

This conference aims to reach out to parents and caregivers of adults with IDD and interested people.

The conference will be held from 10 am-4 pm at Agape Village.

- **Sept 23:** A tea dance event will be held for persons with IDD at Agape Village from 2 pm-5 pm.

There will be games, dances and other activities for persons with IDD to enjoy. There will also be a lucky draw.

The event is free and open to the public.

For more information, visit <http://mamreoaks.sg/>.