



Florist Tara Chia and her daughter Ling Chu, who has Down syndrome, in a section of her shop with paintings by members of the DSA for sale. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Down Syndrome Association getting more help from SMEs

In recent years, the association has received an average of 50 new SME partners annually

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Raising funds for charity is not just for big-name companies.

Many small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are also doing their part to give back.

Florist Tara Chia raised more than \$10,000 from the sale of 10 paintings by members of the Down Syndrome Association (Singapore) (DSA).

The paintings were priced between \$300 and \$800, but Ms Chia's clients were willing to pay several times more.

The owner of Floret & Teddies decided on the donation drive to mark the 20th anniversary of her business, which started as a small flower shop at Wheelock Place in 1998.

Ms Chia, 45, put up 18 paintings from DSA in her shop at CT Hub 2 in Lavender Street last month.

"My customers were surprised to see the paintings. Many were also impressed with the art pieces and bought them.

"One customer offered \$1,500, almost double the \$800 price tag, for a painting of a tree with the numbers 21 written at the foot of the tree," she said.

Ms Chia said: "The customer liked the interpretation of the artist. People with Down syndrome are born with an extra copy of chromosome 21 instead of the usual two."

The remaining eight paintings will be in her shop until Christmas.

Contributing to the association is something close to her heart. Ms Chia, whose seven-year-old daughter Ling Chu has Down syndrome, said: "To me, someone with Down syndrome should be given equal opportunity and worthy of being



Some of the paintings by members of the DSA for sale at Floret & Teddies. Ms Chia has sold 10 so far and raised over \$10,000. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

seen, known and adored for who they are."

Ms Chia, who has a younger daughter, added: "Through my journey with Ling, we have had many people telling us how people with Down syndrome cannot do certain tasks. But, meanwhile, our children are paving their own path. Just take a look at all the beautiful paintings and artwork from DSA."

She highlighted the importance of the support provided by the DSA for people with Down syndrome to integrate into society.

"The DSA organises activities for its members, and the funds I raised would go towards the running of the centre and benefit others with Down syndrome."

Mr Andrew Soh, DSA's assistant director of community partnership and corporate communications, said the primarily self-funded voluntary welfare organisation needs at least \$2.7 million every year to keep the association going.

Mr Soh said: "It has been encouraging to see more SMEs coming up with creative ideas to help raise funds for the association."

There has also been more demand for artwork produced by DSA members, said Mr Soh, adding that a portion of the sales proceeds will go to the artists.

Last year, home-grown shoe label Pazzion raised more than \$1,000 from the sale of tote bags hand-painted by a DSA member.

In recent years, the DSA has received an average of 50 new SME partners annually, said Mr Soh.

Mr Kurt Wee, president of the Association of Small and Medium Enterprises, said he has also seen many SMEs "contributing in their own ways".

"Companies that integrate corporate social responsibility into their strategies show a more human side of their businesses," said Mr Wee.

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