

September 2009

*The Sovereign Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like the feet of a deer, He enables me to go on the heights.
(Hab 3:19)*

2009 has been a year of many significant changes for Hephzibah. There have been very real challenges for us all as we have gone through major adjustments. We do give thanks to the Lord however and to the many people who continuously pray for us and who by their support have enabled us to finally implement the relevant transitional measures. We have moved on to an increasing focus on special needs children's education and have transferred hands-on daily care for babies and young children to the Main Welfare Centre (MWC) who are now financially supported by another organisation to enable fulfillment of that role. Here are some of the major events and changes which happened in the first half of 2009.



Jireh School

We have provided more practical and sustained training to students in Jireh School, since we began providing accommodation to some older special needs children from the MWC. The children who live in the Living Waters building have established a stable relationship together. They have become like one family, taking care of each other. In the photo, they have just planted a birthday tree to celebrate **Emily's** birthday (seen to the left of the picture in a red skirt).



There is a new store—Jireh Store which opened in May. It is a training place for some older students who

can apply their working skills in real life. The photo on the left shows the ribbon cutting at the opening ceremony of Jireh Store

Although Hephzibah has undergone major reform, Jireh School students were not affected at all. They had many cheerful and interesting activities. The photos below show some of their outings. The photo on the left is the trip to the dam near the MWC. The middle one is a sports meeting held by another NGO. The right one is a visit to the Science museum. Look how excited **Katherine** was!

This month we have enrolled six new students into our younger students' class—Valley of Sharon. They are about six years old. We are going to develop the early childhood education for children aged 4-6 from the MWC. Our staff **Susan L** and **Sarah C** will take charge of that class.



Child care

We vacated the 4th floor of the MWC at the end of April this year and transferred the last ten toddlers to the 2nd floor of the MWC. They are all now looked after by some of Hephzibah's previous carers together with Half the Sky carers (another organization working with the MWC). We continue to help them maintain the same quality of care as previously given by us in Hephzibah.

Simultaneously with reducing the emphasis on direct institutional baby care, we have developed foster care including training for parents and also provision of rehabilitation. Our carers visit the foster families every two weeks and provide some support.

Fostering

We know that foster families can provide a safe and stable environment that approximates to the birth family care which is normally the best for a developing young person. Fostering encourages children's meaningful family ties and a sense of community belonging. We encouraged our former carers to become foster mothers and appointed two group leaders **Alice G** and **Grace C**, (see photo on the right) to be responsible for the fostering which is taking place near to the MWC. We have made much progress in this area. By July, we had already placed 12 children into their foster families. The photo on the left shows the foster mama **C T** (our former carer) with **Stephen** and **Lynda**.



We closed Bethlehem the family group home in July having placed most of the children in foster families (see photo right). They really enjoy being with their family members and feel loved and needed. But one or two children have problems with school enrolment. We still need prayer and the Lord's guidance to smooth the road for the integration of these children into main stream schooling.



Social Welfare Centre (TYG)

Five older children will be transferred to TYG when an agreement is ready. We plan to provide some vocational training for those young adults already in TYG as well. We also hope we can find appropriate foster families near TYG for two girls—**Lily** and **Hannah**.

In 2009, there were so many challenges for both staff and children in Hephzibah. We continue in the process of learning to rely on God to lead and to guide us. We keep praying that the Lord will help our focus not to be on what has been in the past, but on what His new way forward is now and this will become ever clearer as we continue to be rightly related to Him.

We appreciate your continued prayer and support during this ongoing time of development and as we continue to move forward into this new season with Him.

To support the work and for further details and information about opportunities, please contact
Kathy Porowski – CFC Coordinator P.O. Box 10444, Santa Ana, CA 92711-9998.

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