

Getting the young involved

THE image of Singapore's inter-faith efforts is getting a facelift as participants, some as young as 10 years old, get involved.

This month, youth leaders from various religious groups organised a one-day inter-faith workshop for 40 children aged between 10 and 14.

Called Project Encouragement, the workshop was held on a recent Saturday at Toa Payoh's OnePeople.sg, a centre to promote racial harmony. The children were of various faiths and from different ethnic groups.

The theme of the Jan 10 event was to show support for the family during the economic downturn.

Throughout the day, the upper primary and lower secondary students from

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various schools sat in groups of eight to play games and discuss topics such as "What's the difference between a 'need' and a 'want'?"

Activities also included card-making, where the students were given time to reflect on their values, before writing them down on a card for their parents.

Each group was mentored by two youth leaders.

Ten-year-old Sivapriya Chandrasegaran, a Primary 4 pupil at Park View Primary School, described her experience as "excellent".

Mr Zainudin Nordin, Mayor of Central Singapore District and the chairman of OnePeople.sg, attended the workshop as the guest of honour. "Project Encouragement builds resilience and empowers teens and youth to play active and positive roles," he said.

Youth leaders at the event stressed the importance of starting inter-faith dialogue among the very young.

"There is so much violence and discrimination in the world today," said Miss Jayasutha Samuthiran, 18, a volunteer at the Hindu Centre.

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Miss Samuthiran and the other youth leaders were from the Harmony Centre, Hindu Centre, Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery, Taoist Federation Youth Group, the Church of St Mary of the Angels, and the NUS Interfaith Interest Group.