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Kids too can learn about AIDS

"CHILDREN must make the connection between learning what's on the computer and real life," says Linda Lim, centre director of Futurekids Computer Learning Centre, which is located at Taman SEA in Petaling Jaya.

That is why over 30 of her students attended the AIDS Awareness Night, graced by Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, at the centre recently.

They had learned in their curriculum, Mission Medical Centre, that graphic and multimedia applications can be fun in enhancing the quality of patient care by designing a system to monitor vital symptoms.

"Although most people think of Futurekids in terms of computer training, we are also concerned with providing education to children.

"Children acquire knowledge faster if they can relate to the subject matter. Naturally, we also think that it is important that we make our youth aware of AIDS if we are to stop discrimination and ignorance about HIV and those infected, especially children," she adds.

According to the latest statistics from the World Health Organisation, 10 million children will be infected with HIV worldwide over the next 40 years. AIDS will also be the leading killers of infants and children.

Azlan Arif, 14, says he learnt about AIDS and HIV from watching television and reading newspapers.

"The most important thing I learnt today is that we should not treat HIV/AIDS infected children any different from anyone else. They are human too.

"It is sad that they are being treated like outcasts. It is not their fault. We should love and support them," says Azlan.

Another 14-year-old Futurekids student, Sarah Low, says: "Now I have a better picture of what HIV and AIDS are. If a child is infected with HIV, it does not mean that his life will be cut short.

It is comforting to know that with proper care and medication, these children can lead normal lives like everyone. I hope that some day they will find a cure."

In line with the 1997 World AIDS campaign Children living in a world of AIDS, Futurekids Computer Learning centres have embarked on a donation drive for the paediatric AIDS fund running from Aug 25 to Nov 30. Donation boxes have been placed at all 12 centres in Peninsular Malaysia and students and their parents have been urged to donate generously.

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