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A day out with the girls

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HANDPAINTING to the accompaniment of rock music, live performances by your favourite celebrities, a kickboxing demonstration and a cheerleading competition. Did this sound interesting?

Then you should have gone for A Girls' Day Out event with the cast and producer of the television programme 3R.

In conjunction with International Women's Day on March 8, 3R organised a month-long series of events with the aim of empowering women and raising awareness of women's issues among the young, men and women alike.

The climax of the celebration was the two-day A Girls' Day Out event at Hall 3 Mid Valley Exhibition Centre in Kuala Lumpur.

"A Girls' Day Out was meant to highlight the rights of women and help girls step out of their house without fear," said Lina Tan, 3R's co-executive producer.

Charlotte Ann Patrick, 18, Wong Sen Yi, 14, Siti Aishah Mohd. Shahrin Merican, 13, and Nur Izzati Zafirah, 17, read the wish list of young Malaysian women before handing it over to Inspector-General of Police Datuk Seri Mohd Bakri Omar. "We want safer streets and more police patrols! And the next time we make a complaint, we want it to be taken seriously," the girls demanded.

Among the activities at the various booths were surveys about abuse of women, women's rights and other women issues. There were also other exciting activities, both on and off stage, spurring the young to be more pro-active and to stand up for their rights.

3R hosts Azah Yasmin Yusoff, Kartini Kamalul Ariffin and Low Ngai Yuen together with ex-host Rafidah Abdullah also performed a short sketch entitled Have You Ever Been Sexually Harassed? and conducted several workshops about self-protection techniques.

"The activities gave us more insight into the problems faced by women and how we can resolve them. They were both interesting and informative, which I feel is very important since some girls are still ignorant about AIDS," said one of the participants.

"It has been really fun! I spent the whole day here with my friends! We got to see a number of celebrities too!" said Zatil Ismah, 18.

There were guest performances by Ning Baizura, Amy Mastura, Dayang Nurfaizah, Nora, Reshmonu, Ferhad and Vince Chong besides popular all-girl bands like Ground Xero, Tempered Mental, O_Drive and KOHL.

A segment called "Men at Work" had celebrities like Vince, Reshmonu, Ako, Jason Lo, Ferhad, Ram and Anand being pitted against each other doing a multitude of household chores .

The 15-minute competition had the audience shrieking with laughter as they cooked, sewed, changed a "baby's" nappy and folded clothes.

It must have been an eye-opener for the participants to be in a woman's shoes for a day, or at least for 15 minutes.

Fun and laughter aside, what should not be forgotten is the objective of the event, which is: "It Begins with Respect", both for ourselves and others.

As 3R executive producer Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir, who launched the event, said: "We must all take responsibility and demand a safe environment."