

Romp steps up social inclusion efforts

Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu (right) shooting hoops at wheelchair basketball during the Romp sports carnival yesterday.

PHOTO:
MARCUS TAN
FOR THE
SUNDAY TIMES



Nicole Chia

Sport can be a unifying force for social good, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu said yesterday, as she called on Singaporeans to embrace the spirit of volunteerism.

She also praised events like Romp, an annual sports carnival that has partnered the Singapore Disability Sports Council, for its role in promoting social inclusion.

The one-day festival drew a record 1,700 youth participants yesterday – up from last year's total of 1,200 – and featured wheelchair basketball alongside football, badminton, basketball, tchoukball and pool. Women's basketball and women's football were new categories.

Army regular Leong Wei Ye, 21, tried his hand at wheelchair basketball against national wheelchair basketball players Michael Lee and V. Vijayan and was impressed by their skill and fitness.

"I was playing for a good 10 to 15 minutes and my arms were already aching and tired," said Leong. "I subbed out, but they continued playing on like it was (nothing), so they are quite solid."

This was a fine example of encouraging cohesion, said Ms Fu,

who was Romp's guest of honour and tried wheelchair basketball as well as electric bicycling.

"I am very happy to see that the organisers have continued to focus on social inclusivity," she added.

"By playing in mixed teams and working together, I hope all of us will come away with a stronger awareness and appreciation of one another's strengths."

Romp, organised by the W.A.D! Club, youth arm of non-profit organisation Harvest Care Centre, is supported and partially sponsored by the SportCares Foundation.

Romp organisers said they were open to the possibility of adding more sports in the future – for able-bodied and people with disabilities – as well as securing a bigger venue to house all the sports in one location.

This year's event took place at the Ministry of Education Co-Curricular Activities Stadium at Evans Road, the Singapore Badminton Hall and King's Pool at Ang Mo Kio.

Elaine Pan, the assistant chairperson of Romp's organising committee, said: "Every year we will try to do something different and think of greater things that we can do, and we always aim to increase the number of participants."

cnicole@sph.com.sg