

# Yale-NUS students hold carnival to thank construction workers



Ms Tara Dear, 21, a Singaporean Year 2 student at Yale-NUS College, dancing with workers at a karaoke session yesterday. It was part of a carnival organised by students to thank the workers for building the campus. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

By **AMELIA TENG**

FOR two years, Yale-NUS College students have been making efforts to get to know the construction workers building their new permanent campus in Dover Road.

Yesterday, about 50 of them organised a carnival for more than 500 workers, to thank them for building the 63,000 sq m campus, which is in the final stages of construction.

The students are currently living at a residential college block at the National University of Singapore's University Town campus but will move to their \$310 million campus in July.

The workers – mostly from Bangladesh, India and China – were treated to an evening of food and games, including cricket, foosball and basketball, with students on the UTown campus.

They also had fun “fighting” with each other on an inflatable gladiator arena.

More than 200 undergraduates, faculty members and staff from the college interacted with the workers – even singing karaoke together and taking pictures

at a photo booth.

Mr Helal Uddin, 30, a site supervisor from Bangladesh and the father of a nine-month-old boy, came to work in Singapore in 2007. “Education is an important thing so we are happy to help,” he said. “The students here are friendly. They come to the site and ask us about our work and families.”

Mr Mathan Mohan, 32, a safety coordinator from India and the father of a three-year-old boy, added: “It feels good to be able to communicate with the students.”

American student Tiffany Sin, 19, who helped to plan the event, said: “We’re trying to get people to be conscious of others in the community.

“It all started when a group of us waved to some workers and they waved back. We realised we’re part of the same school environment.”

She and five schoolmates belong to a student group, the Committee for Appreciating and Meeting People On Campus (Campos), which organises such initiatives.

In 2013, the group took students and professors to the college’s construction site to meet the workers during their breaks.

Last year, it also invited 600 foreign workers for a Chinese New Year dinner to encourage students to mingle with them.

Mr Tee Zhuo, 21, a first-year student who joined Campos last year, said: “Watching the new campus being built right next to us was interesting... We heard the construction noise but most of us didn’t know the people behind the project.

“We want to be an inclusive community – and that’s not just including the faculty members and staff of the college, but also the people who are helping to build our campus.”

Ms Jordon Bovankovich, 19, a first-year American student and Campos member, said: “People coming here from other countries to work and not immigrate was something new.

“We want to meet them as people for who they are. Despite our differences, we can still have a conversation.”

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