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Nurturing Futures through Education and Charity

The Expat , Malaysia

getting involved
BY SUE ANN KUNATH

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Anne Rajasaikaran

Anne Rajasaikaran was born in Melaka on 26 September 1981 and is a proud mother of three children. She has launched her own line of skincare products tailored to Asian women called Karra Cosmetics, and she loves to spend her free time doing Indian traditional dance, taking walks and doing meditation and yoga exercises. Anne is also a winner of multiple awards such as the 2019 Women Icons Malaysia Award, Mrs. Malaysia International Global 2022, and Mrs. Malaysia International World in 2023.

With several key positions in educational organisations and deeply involved in philanthropic work aimed at impacting and changing the lives of underprivileged children in Malaysia, her mission is nothing short of extraordinary. We invited this remarkable woman to sit down with us and share her insights on a variety of contemporary issues.

THE RIGHT TO BASIC SHELTER, FOOD AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Anne leads The Budimas Charitable Foundation and the Maaedicare Charitable Foundation while also serving as the CEO of Edumaax Education Group, which oversees Imperium International College, St. John's International School, and Pusat Tuisyen Kasturi. You can see why this lady is busy with the tremendous challenges of nourishing and nurturing Malaysia's future generation! Anne's journey with Budimas began in 2010 as part of an external social welfare project initiated by her

company. However, it soon became clear that a more structured and sustainable approach was required to provide meaningful support to children in need. Budimas now offers this support through shelter, free meals, and access to schooling and education. Anne firmly believes that providing underprivileged children with access to education is essential for breaking the cycle of poverty.

When Covid-19 struck and restrictions were imposed, Anne and her team swiftly launched the 'No-Hungry-Child' programme to ensure families in need, especially those with children, received essential aid. The programme focused on providing daily household necessities, healthcare items, toiletries, and other critical supplies to support those financially impacted by the pandemic. Anne's determination to make a difference is evident in every aspect of her work, as the initiative

has successfully reached over 9,000 families across various regions.

When Orang Asli children faced challenges accessing educational facilities due to their remote locations, Budimas recognised the need to bridge this gap. With facilities in cities often out of reach, Anne and her team built 12 libraries in remote areas across Malaysia, bringing essential resources closer to Orang Asli children, ensuring they have better access to education and learning opportunities.

Anne's vision extends beyond education. Since taking the helm of the Maaedicare Charitable Foundation in 2023, she has also focused on improving access to affordable healthcare for underprivileged Malaysians, offering subsidized dialysis and cardiac treatments to those in need.

STRIVING TO PROVIDE A HOLISTIC EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE

In addition to her philanthropic work at Budimas and Maaedicare, Anne also leads the schools under the Edumaax Education Group. Her passion lies in providing high-quality, holistic education that prepares students for life. She firmly believes that children in Malaysia deserve the opportunity to experience this level of education, and she envisions her schools as game changers in the field.

For Anne, a well-rounded education must include activities and experiences that shape character and



Anne Rajasaikaran spreading smiles and hope during a donation drive for children in Pulau Ketam



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Anne Rajasaikaran and the Budimas team celebrating Chinese New Year with joy, unity, and festive spirit

prepare students for the challenges of the future. She emphasises the importance of developing soft and social skills through sports, teamwork, and extracurricular programmes, which she believes “make for better adults - people that can handle stress, anxiety, and life as a whole.”

To achieve such high standards in the schools that she manages requires a commitment to continuous improvement. Being the constant learner that she is, Anne will literally walk the schools’ hallways and grounds in search of stories, recommendations and feedback from students, staff and parents alike. In her view, educating and guiding children effectively also requires active parental involvement and providing tools and platforms that allow students to express their concerns. She has experienced first-hand how mental health issues and stress have affected some students and has ensured that all her schools hire a counsellor to handle such matters.

GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN’S EMPOWERMENT
This year’s International Women’s Day theme, as designated by the United Nations, is “For All Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment.” Malaysia’s Minister of Women, Family, and Community Development, Datuk Seri Nancy Shukri, recently highlighted the ongoing issue of gender wage disparity in the country, noting that women often earn less than men despite having similar academic qualifications.

As one of the few female CEOs in her industry, Anne shared that she had encountered similar biases during her career, often feeling the need to go above and beyond to prove herself. However, she credits her success to the strong role models who inspired her, including her mentor, Chairman Tunku Dato’ Yaacob Khyra, and her father, who consistently offered words of encouragement and instilled in her the belief that she could achieve anything she set her mind to. Anne emphasises that true women’s empowerment begins from within first: “Believe in yourself and do not rely on others to do things for you.”

A CHANGE IN MINDSET
“Society must embrace the mindset that girls deserve the same opportunities as boys.” Anne believes that fostering this perspective starts with educating boys from a young age - not just at home but also in schools. Boys need to understand that anything they aspire to achieve, a girl can achieve as well.

Growing up in an environment that fostered equality and independence, Anne had the privilege of being surrounded by strong role models, including a working mother and mother-in-law, as well as supportive men in her family. Their parenting approach emphasised discipline and a strong work ethic, encouraging both genders to become self-sufficient and independent. When parents support their children, especially girls, by believing in them and allowing them to reach their full potential, it instils much-needed confidence in them.

On another level, companies also have a role to play in supporting women. Society places immense pressure on girls and women to juggle multiple roles - working professional, mother, wife, daughter, sister, and more. Anne, having gone through this herself, knows how overwhelming it can be. To address this, she makes it a priority to regularly sit down with her female colleagues for open conversations, checking in to see if they need support and offering help whenever possible.

BELIEVE IN YOURSELF AND BELIEVE IN YOUR CHILDREN
In my conversation with Anne, it became clear that she exemplifies what a true role model should embody: a blend of kindness and empathy, paired with a strong work ethic and a persistent drive to learn and create meaningful change. She approaches life with realism and practicality, always focused on finding solutions. Above all, her mantra resonates deeply: “believe in yourself, believe in your children, and always support them.” ■

Did you know that over 150,000 children in Malaysia live in poverty? A simple act of giving can make a difference in these children’s lives. All donations are more than welcome! If you like to know more about the Budimas foundation, please have a look at budimas.org.





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SUMMARIES

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