

# BANK RAKYAT

## A BIG HEART & PASSION FOR PEOPLE

Since 1954, Bank Rakyat, the biggest Islamic cooperative bank in Malaysia has played a significant part in fortifying the growth of cooperatives in the country. Aptly named the “bank for people”, its core values have always revolved around people, including their commitment to CSR initiatives. *CSR Malaysia* talks to Nizam Sani, Head of Marketing and Communications of Bank Rakyat about its recent CSR initiatives geared towards supporting the autistic community of Malaysia.



Nizam Sani, Head of Marketing and Communications of Bank Rakyat



Autismlympic programme by Bank Rakyat held in 2017

In 2016, Bank Rakyat won the Best Annual Report in Bahasa Malaysia in the National Annual Corporate Report Awards. Besides the logo and tagline, nothing else on the cover represents the traditional look of an annual report. Instead, it looked more like a children storybook, graced with an illustration of five children interacting under a lush green tree.

“Our CSR work with the autistic community in Malaysia was the main

inspiration behind our 2016 Annual Report,” says Nizam as he explains the rationale behind the unconventional design. In fact, the illustrations in the report were designed by a group of autistic students who took part in a drawing competition organized by Bank Rakyat itself.

Since November 2016, Bank Rakyat’s CSR initiative has been heavily focused on the advocacy and support of the autistic community in Malaysia. The direction stemmed from the basis of Bank Rakyat’s

support for children as a whole, narrowing down to supporting autistic children through therapy and education.

“We aim to increase awareness on autism, as well as helping underprivileged schools raise funds for their operations by implementing the four pillars which are Education, Social, Therapy and Fund Raising as we hope to make a world of difference to the children and their families,” says Nizam.

To date, Bank Rakyat has organized up to a hundred events nationwide, collaborating

with various societies, organizations, and schools for autistic needs to organize fundraising events and encourage autism students in their curricular and extra-curricular activities.

In late 2017, one of the major events organized by the bank was the Autismlympics, a unique sporting event to encourage sports in autism students. Held in Dewan Panasonic Shah Alam, the event witnessed a huge turnout of over a thousand people who came to support their families and friends from a total of 28 schools.



“We aim to help increase awareness on autism, as well as helping underprivileged schools raise funds for their operations...”

“The success of the first Autismlympics brought us to continue the franchise to other regions in the country, namely Melaka, Perlis and then the East Coast,” says Nizam.

The highlight of Bank Rakyat’s CSR initiative this year would be the *Anugerah Dari Hati Ke Hati* awards, an award ceremony that will be held on 9th April 2018 in conjunction with World Autism Awareness Day. The exclusive award is meant to celebrate individuals, media and organizations active in the work and advocacy for autism.

“*Anugerah Dari Hati Ke Hati* is yet another way for us to expand autism awareness into the society, by making people realize that they too can play a part in helping to support the cause,” says Nizam.

A total of 11 awards will be presented during the ceremony, including an Autism Icon award and Best Journalism in Autism award dedicated to recognizing the role of media in the awareness work for autism.

Besides fundraising and community events, Bank Rakyat also organizes a variety of therapy sessions for the autistic children such as occupational therapy, play-based therapy and horseback riding therapy for their internal staff and public at large.

“The responses were overwhelming. Once we had a 100-pax event that turned out to become an event for 600, but we are glad to anticipate this next time,” says Nizam as he shared the positive feedback received from their CSR activities.

Although a large corporation, Bank Rakyat’s CSR initiatives are close to the heart of its people. The team is never short of volunteers to help with the planning and execution of each event, as everyone takes ownership of the CSR values promoted by the organization.

With full and unwavering support from top management, Bank Rakyat’s CSR initiatives effortlessly align with the company goals and culture.

“As the bank for people, it is our duty to give back to society, and by doing this we hope we are helping to make a positive change in the autism landscape in this country,” he adds.

“Every child deserves a champion and Bank Rakyat wants to be the voice of children with autism in Malaysia, who need help because they are often misunderstood. It is a blessing to be in a position to help because everyone deserves help from one another. As a human being, it teaches you humility and gratitude. On a larger scale, it is more meaningful when a large corporation such as Bank Rakyat is promoting this value to the society at large,” says Nizam with a smile.

# CSR Malaysia™

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