

Meals for students in need

By REBECCA RAJAENDRAM
educate@thestar.com.my

A YOUNG woman was seen wolfing down her meal by a Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) alumni.

Curious, he approached her and asked why she was gobbling down her food as if she hadn't eaten in days.

He was shocked to find out that not only was it the only meal she ate that day, but that she was an undergraduate from his alma mater.

He contacted his friend and Suria Welfare Foundation Permas District, Johor Baru, founder and chairman James Ho, and they immediately got to work to find a way to help these students who struggle to find a proper meal on a daily basis.

The foundation together with the UPM Alumni Association and Student Affairs Department conducted a survey and found that about 1,200 (5%) of the 24,000 undergraduates at the university come from hardcore poor families with a combined household income of less than RM1,200 a month.

They came up with the "Meals for UPM" programme for these students, beginning with 120 by the end of the year.

"Initially, 40 out of the 120 deserving undergraduates will receive their first meal this month," he said after the launch of the UPM Alumni Association Charity Fund on Tuesday.

Ho, who is also a UPM alumni,



Amirudin (second from left) signs the plaque during the launch as (from left) Prof Mohd Roslan, Prof Aini, Syed Razlan, Mohd Nazri and Ho look on.

said that lunches will be provided daily by Perniagaan Daya Murni's Saadiah Ahmah - a caterer on campus - for these students.

He added that without enough

food, students would not be able to study and would end up jeopardising their education.

Alumni association president Datuk Seri Diraja Syed Razlan Syed

Putra Jamalullai stressed that there is no discrimination on who qualifies for the food aid programme as long as they are from poor backgrounds.

"Anyone who feels that they do not have enough funds for their daily meals are welcome," he explained.

Selangor Menteri Besar Amirudin Shari, UPM deputy vice-chancellor (student affairs and alumni) Prof Dr Mohd Roslan Sulaiman and political secretary to the Foreign Minister Mohd Nazri Noh were also present.

UPM vice-chancellor Prof Datin Paduka Dr Aini Ideris thanked the foundation for generously helping the students in need.

Students who qualify for the programme are identified by the Student Affairs Department who work closely with the alumni association.

To date, they have collected RM20,000 for the programme. The foundation also helps poor students in other universities. Ho said they sponsored spectacles for 40 UPM students in June 2018.

He urged the public and UPM alumni to help the students obtain at least one decent meal a day.

They can bank in their donations to Persatuan Alumni Universiti Putra Malaysia's Maybank account 5121-4752-8039. Ho added that donors should inform him once they have banked in their donations, adding that he can be contacted at 019-772 4172.