

WHY IS SWAP ORGANISING A STUDENTS COMPASSION FORUM?

- To awaken compassion for animals in the hearts of the students,
- To increase awareness about animals, their needs and ways of meeting these needs amongst the students,
- To teach young people the basic ways of caring for their pets and domestic animals,
- To encourage young people to carry out activities that contribute to the protection of wildlife and the environment and
- On the long run, they are distracted from doing things that will adversely affect the environment amongst other social vices.

The forum is a HUMANE EDUCATION initiative of the Society for the Welfare of Animals Protection (SWAP). Humane education is so important because, "it provides an opportunity for children and adults alike to develop a sense of awe and responsibility for the natural world, their environment and for the animals that share it." (WSPA). It recognizes the interdependence of all living things.

Consider the following VIOLENCE LINK

Some people think that when young people abuse animals, this is just a phase they go through. However, young people who are violent to animals rarely stop there. Violent acts towards animals have long been recognized as indicators of a dangerous psychopathic tendency. For example, Albert De Salvo, the notorious Boston Strangler, trapped dogs and cats, and shot arrows through the boxes in which they were confined (Fucini, 1978).

Animal abuse does not occur in isolation; rather, it takes place in a complex net of disturbed family relations. For example, animal abuse is frequently found in homes where child abuse and domestic violence are also present. In one national survey of American women seeking shelter from domestic violence in safe houses, 85% of the women with companion animals reported that their abusers had also hurt or threatened the family pet (Ascione, F. R. 1997). Children in such disturbed families, who witness domestic violence or are victims themselves, are more likely to become animal abusers, imitating the violence they have seen or experienced. A study conducted in 1995 (Ascione, F. R. 1995) noted that 32% of the pet-owning victims of domestic abuse reported that one or more of their children had hurt or killed a pet.

Teaching students to have empathy for other beings is essential to raising kind, compassionate citizens. Humane education is needed to develop an enlightened society that has empathy and respect for life, thus breaking the cycle of abuse. *(Copied from the WSPA Member Society Manual).*

A SOCIAL CAUSE

Simply put, SWAP's Students Compassion Forum could be referred to as a *social cause* because it will on the long run train young people to be more compassionate in their dealings with people in future. The following statement further buttresses *this* point.

“CHILDREN TRAINED TO EXTEND JUSTICE, KINDNESS AND MERCY TO ANIMALS BECOME MORE JUST, KIND AND CONSIDERATE IN THEIR RELATIONS TO ONE ANOTHER. CHARACTER TRAINING ALONG THESE LINES IN YOUTHS WILL RESULT IN MEN AND WOMEN OF BROADER SYMPATHIES: MORE HUMANE, MORE LAW-ABIDING IN EVERY RESPECT MORE VALUABLE CITIZENS.” ~ 1993 US National Parent-Teacher Association Congress

STUDENTS COMPASSION FORUM

GETTING STARTED

The compassion forum is for pupils in primary schools and students in secondary and tertiary institutions only.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The Compassion Forum can run in a primary school with a teacher coordinating as Compassion Guide. He receives the materials from SWAP and teaches/guides the pupils in the lessons and activities. The Compassion Forum meetings can be held during school break, after school or during the weekend, ideally on Saturdays. These meetings must not exceed 45minutes.

SECONDARY SCHOOLS

For secondary schools, they need a Compassion Forum Coordinator who must be a Student (preferably a Senior Secondary student who is interested in Environmental and nature conservation activities). His role is to coordinate the activities of the other members of the Compassion Forum. The Agricultural Science or Biology teacher may be of help in choosing the person.

INFORM

Some schools like to inform the students on the assembly ground and ask those that are interested to meet with the Compassion Forum Coordinator during school break. During this time,

- § He passes the information that they need to know to them,
- § They all agree on a conducive time to hold meetings either on a weekly or on every two weeks basis,
- § They fill the form and nominate other officers of the forum. They include the Secretary General and a Publicity Officer.

INVITATION

The next thing is to send the form to the SWAP office. This is automatically inviting/requesting for the forum's materials, a participation certificate, membership forms and other relevant documents.

TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS

Interested students in tertiary institutions should consult their Students Affairs Handbook to know the guidelines for registration of clubs and societies and organizations before filling the form for tertiary institutions. On completion of the forms, it should be sent to the nearest SWAP liaison office.