

Low-income families get mini-library to encourage kids to read

The initiative benefits over 1,800 families and aims to support early childhood development

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Madam Jasleasha Ong often gets invitations from her two-year-old daughter to join her – at a reading corner in their home.

The family is among more than 1,800 low-income families benefiting from an initiative called KidStart Stories that provides a mini-library in the form of a bookshelf and a set of age-appropriate books.

The initiative to support parents in early childhood development through storytelling and reading was launched by Minister of State for Social and Family Development Sun Xueling at Keat Hong Community Club in Choa Chu Kang on Saturday.

It is rolled out by KidStart Singapore, as well as SP Group and Eton-House Community Fund, which sponsored the mini-libraries.

KidStart Singapore runs a programme for low-income families with children up to six years of age, providing support in areas such as child development, nutrition and parent-child interaction.

The three organisations said the mini-library will create a con-

ducive space at home for children to explore books and enjoy reading with parents.

Parents will also have access to videos produced by KidStart Singapore on techniques for storytelling and conversational reading to infants and young children, and injecting fun and learning through pictures, songs and dance.

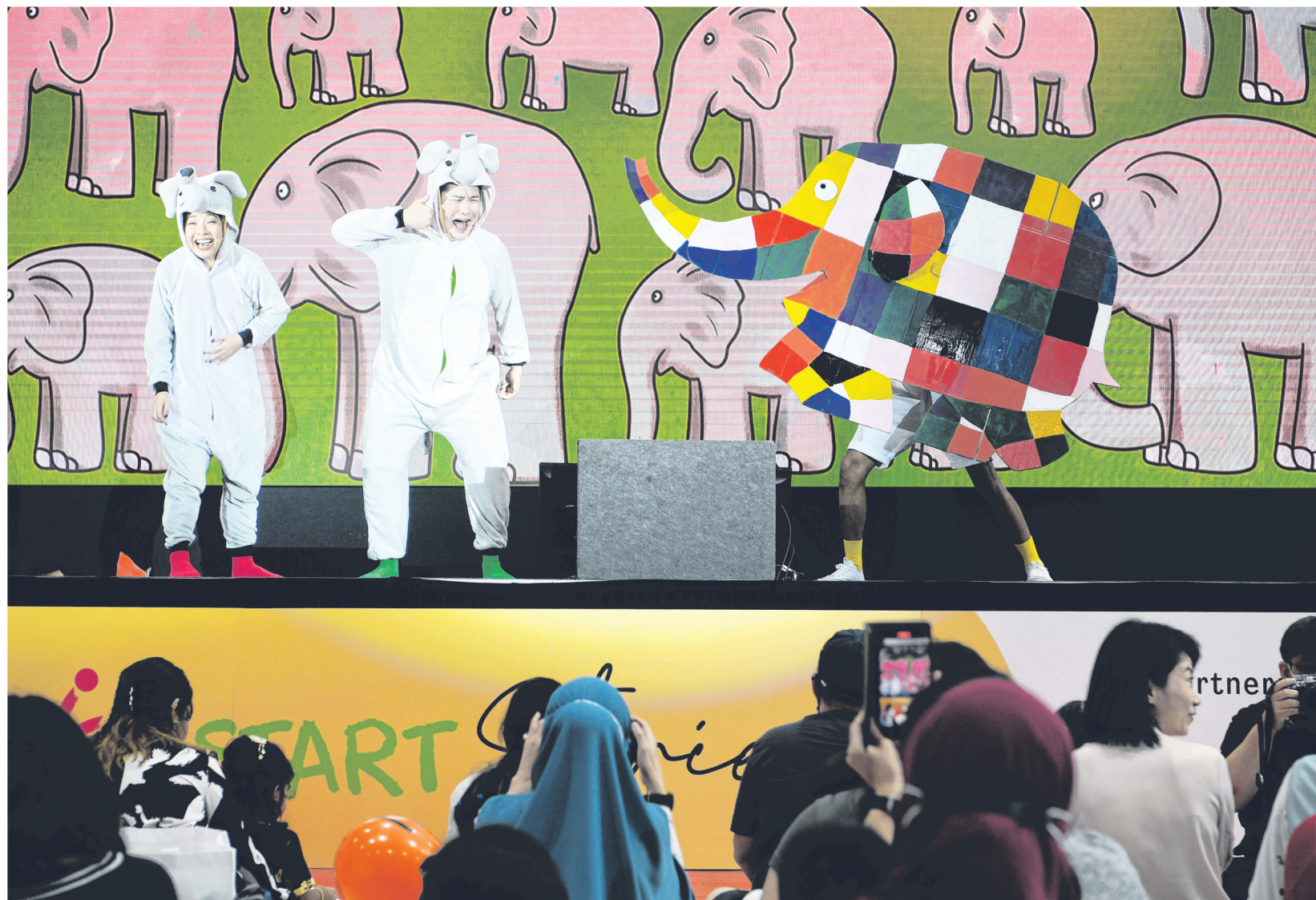
“Books are very, very important. They open up a whole new world to our children, where they are able to expand their horizons and use their imagination,” said Ms Sun.

Even if some children may be too young to read on their own, parents can help them learn and enjoy the stories by talking about the pictures in the books, she noted.

This will pique their interest in reading and also speed up the acquisition of language skills, she added.

KidStart Singapore chief executive Rahayu Buang said: “We want the newly launched KidStart Stories initiative to give families the confidence to engage their young children in reading adventures that will spark their language abilities and, at the same time, cultivate a lifelong love for reading.”

Madam Ong, 42, said that before



PLEASANT SURPRISE

My daughter is now always so excited when it is reading time, and even comes up to me to ask me to join her at the reading corner. She is very imaginative and it is such a joy to see her pretend to be part of the story.



MADAM JASLEASHA ONG (right), with her daughter Elia Erue Koh. She had thought the child was not interested in books and is now thankful for the KidStart Stories programme. She received the mini-library in August.

joining the KidStart programme, she had thought her daughter was not interested in books. She received the mini-library in August.

The administrative assistant added: “I tried reading to her but

she would flip through the pages quickly. I was surprised she was so engaged when the KidStart facilitator read books during the KidStart group sessions.”

Madam Ong learnt that it was all

about choosing age-appropriate books, and is grateful that she now has her own family reading corner.

“My daughter is now always so excited when it is reading time, and even comes up to me to ask me

to join her at the reading corner. She is very imaginative and it is such a joy to see her pretend to be part of the story,” she said.

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A stage performance at the launch of KidStart Stories at Keat Hong Community Club in Choa Chu Kang on Saturday.
ST PHOTOS:
NG SOR LUAN