BEYOND SOCIAL SERVICES VOLUNTEER PLAYS THE ROLE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD MOTHER
by Siti Aisyah Nordin

‘Ibu GG’ (GG Mother) became the nickname given to her by the children in her neighbourhood. Mrs Suraiyah Mohamed Ghaus, 46 years old, or ‘Ghaus Girl’, recognises that her care and concern goes beyond the confines of her household.

Whilst fulfilling her responsibilities as a mother of five, Mrs Suraiyah plays an important role as a mother figure taking care of the children living in the Jalan Tenteram Neighbourhood. This forms part of her responsibilities as a neighbourhood leader and resident volunteer of Beyond Social Services, a Voluntary Welfare Organisation (VWO).

“I would go down and ‘patrol’ around the block at night from about 2 to 3 am occasionally to see if any of the youths were still out, and to see what they were doing if so.” When she discovers any of the youth or children in troubling situations, she approaches them to offer advice.

Mrs Suraiyah mentions that the relationships she’s developed with her neighbours for over 15 years has contributed significantly to her ability to carry out this task.

“I try my best to get to know every resident in the area and talk to them, whether they be long-term residents or newer ones.

“I’ve watched many of their children grow up, and I try my best to get to know them and ask about their lives. After a while they get more comfortable with me and receptive to the advice I give,” Mrs Suraiyah shared after being contacted by Berita Harian recently.

Having moved to the Jalan Tenteram neighbourhood following her divorce in 2000, Mrs Suraiyah credits Beyond Social Services for having helped her children with their studies. Although medical issues caused her doctor to discourage her from working, Madam Suraiyah resolved to give back to the community through volunteering with Beyond Social Services.

Beyond Social Services helps youth from less-privileged families and aims to create a positive environment for them to feel comfortable. This also discourages them from getting involved in troubling situations. Amongst the services that it offers are an education and development programme and a programme providing career-seeking caregivers with opportunities to upgrade themselves.

As the neighbourhood leader of Jalan Tenteram, Madam Suraiyah, accompanied by a team of volunteers, encourages families in the community to participate in Beyond’s activities, with the aim of fostering stronger relationships between parent and children.

“As a single mother, I’m aware of the challenges of raising a children, and so I want to help others out with watching their children as well.

“At the same time, my wish is for families to attend activities that could potentially strengthen the family bond,” she discloses.

The mother of 5 children, who are aged between 14 years and 26 years old, hopes that she continues to have the strength to devote more time and attention to her volunteer work, and to expand her scope of interactions further to reach even more residents within the community.