

Residents' and Community Programmes

Through our range of residents' and community programmes, we hope to make a meaningful difference to local communities and enrich the lives of our residents.

The Ascott Group is committed to serving the needs of our residents and the well-being of the wider community. Our Heartware service initiatives focus on supporting the lifestyle needs of global business travellers by offering them the comfort, security and privacy of a home away from home as well as enriching cultural and social experiences. As an extension of our service ethic, our community programmes aim to improve the lives of the next generation.

RESIDENTS' PROGRAMMES

To create opportunities for residents to socialise and network, and to introduce them to the local culture, Ascott organises festive celebrations, cultural workshops, language courses and local tours on a regular basis.

For example, in Vietnam, a 'Secret of Lotus' workshop helped residents gain new insights on this flower much revered by the Vietnamese, and offered handy tips on using the lotus for home decoration, cooking and health. Residents also learnt Vietnamese through a two-and-a-half month course that included visits to the local market with their language teacher. In Japan, residents were introduced to the tradition of Sakura-viewing – they enjoyed the cherry blossoms in full bloom during a scenic cruise in Spring.

Local tours take residents to notable attractions in their host cities and beyond. For example, in Thailand, residents enjoyed a day trip to Koh Kret where they learnt about the lives of the Mon community and their skills in pottery. In China, residents in Dalian braved sub-zero temperatures to go on a cycling trip to Xinghai Square, one of the largest squares in Asia, while residents in the Philippines trekked up the crater of one of the world's best known active volcanoes – Taal Volcano.

Residents also get together regularly to play different sports, support their favourite sporting teams, or simply to 'rest and relax'. For example, our residents in Korea came together for bowling and pool tournaments; in Australia, besides cheering on their favourite teams competing in the Australian Football League, residents also enjoyed a carnival, complete with champagne and barbeque, during Melbourne Cup.

Through these activities, many of our residents have developed friendships with the locals, expanded their network and experienced the warmth of a home away from home with us.



CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR)

Ascott takes pride in being an integral part of the social fabric of the many cities around the world where we have a presence. Through our CSR programmes, we hope to make a meaningful difference to these communities.

In 2007, we continued to focus on making life better for the less-privileged. We hope that with our help, they can look forward to a better future for themselves and their families. We also kept up with on-going projects to build better homes and improve the social environment of local communities. In addition, our employees and residents around the world lent their support to global causes.

Caring for Children

“Our greatest natural resource is the minds of our children,” Walt Disney once said. Echoing the great man’s sentiments, Ascott remains committed to creating a better future for our next generation.

In China, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam, Ascott’s employees and residents visited various children’s homes, schools and orphanages. At these institutions, we presented the children with school supplies, gifts, necessities, food and funds donated by our employees and residents.

For example, our employees and residents visited the Shanghai Blind School as well as Bangkok’s School for the Blind, and contributed stationery, schoolbags, equipment and funds to the schools.

In Vietnam, our employees helped to set up a library with 3,000 books to give children at the Thien Binh Orphanage in Dong Nai Province a headstart in education. Ascott also contributed equipment such as a TV and DVD player as well as necessities including rice, pillows, blankets, mosquito nets, toys, food and milk to the orphanage, which houses 150 children and 40 elderly.

In Singapore, our home base, Ascott supported the Make-A-Wish Foundation by granting the wishes of children with life-threatening diseases aged between four and 15. By fulfilling the children’s heartfelt wishes, we hoped to offer them respite and encouragement in their battle against their illnesses.

Ascott also joined hands with Kythe, a non-profit organisation in the Philippines, which aims to uplift the spirits of young patients and their families. Through the sale of Christmas tree ornaments, funds were collected to help 60 terminally-ill children.

In Europe, Ascott pledged our commitment to France’s Mécénat Chirurgie Cardiaque to raise funds for children with cardiac malfunction from countries where appropriate medical treatment is not available. Under the programme, the Non-Government Organisation (NGO) flies these children to France for treatment. The NGO also trains 10 cardiologists and paediatricians every year for a month in France. Starting 2008, Ascott will host accommodation for these doctors during their training.



A Headstart for Youths

Apart from our work with children, Ascott also believes in giving aspiring youths opportunities to make good in life.

For example, we offered a young man from Vietnam's Warm Home Orphanage a job as a shoe-shine boy at Somerset Chancellor Court, Ho Chi Minh City. The 18-year-old has been performing at his best and received many compliments from residents.

In the Philippines, we provided on-the-job training at Ascott Makati for two students from Punlaan School, a non-profit technical vocational school and tourism training centre that equips young women with the employment skills necessary to break free from the poverty cycle. Following their one-month training at Ascott Makati, we have hired them as temporary kitchen staff at the property.

Building Homes, Improving Social Environments

To help families affected by natural disasters and the poor from the countryside in Thailand, Ascott contributed to The Family, a local welfare organisation dedicated to the needy and underprivileged. With the support of employees, we pledged a regular collective contribution each month.

Responding swiftly to the devastating Jogjakarta earthquake of May 2006, Ascott's employees raised funds to rebuild homes and schools. Rebuilding works of the public school, Muhammadiyah Sekolah Kalipakem II in Bantul area, continued in the following year and were completed in February 2007. In May 2007, Ascott's employees visited the children, teachers and residents of the village to encourage them as they rebuild their lives.

In the Philippines, we kept up our support for local group Gawad Kalinga's GK777 programme to build 700,000 homes in 7,000 communities in 7 years. Having successfully raised funds to finance the construction of seven homes in 2006, Ascott's employees, aided by local residents, helped to build another three homes at a new site in the municipality of Maralit, Parañaque, in 2007.

In Vietnam, our employees took to the roads of Ho Chi Minh City to promote road safety. Riding in a convoy of 80 motorbikes through the busy city streets, 150 Ascott's employees drove home the message that wearing crash helmets can save lives.

Supporting Worthy Causes

Ascott's employees and residents around the world also regularly unite to support global volunteer movements. Employees and residents in Australia, Thailand and Vietnam participated in Red Cross' World Blood Donor Day, the Terry Fox Run in support of cancer research and the Pink Ribbon movement for breast cancer awareness.

Going Green

Ascott also took active steps to protect the environment. The Group attained the ISO 14000 certification in November for putting in place environment-friendly policies and procedures.

Ascott's flagship, Ascott Singapore Raffles Place, which is currently undergoing construction, was also given the Green Mark Award 2007 by Singapore's Building and Construction Authority. The award recognises Ascott's effort in conserving and preserving the facade and interiors of the heritage building. The building also has green features, such as motion-detecting lighting system and an ozone-treated swimming pool system.