



YEAR OF GIVING

KT BACKS UAE'S RESOLUTION OF DELIVERING HOPE



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George V Itty

Living many years of giving through his social activities

Ashwani Kumar

ABU DHABI — For George V Itty, 57, the habit of giving is very much a part of his existence. In supporting children with special needs or spreading awareness about saving water, focusing on the marine environment, enlightening students about the Internet or publishing free books of inspiring stories, Itty lives and breathes the ethos of giving. These are just some of the initiatives from the man who went on to form Nahtam Social Responsibility, a social organisation based in Abu Dhabi, focusing on the areas of education, environment and humanity.

The road to social responsibility it all started in 1993, when Itty landed in Abu Dhabi to make good in the advertising sector by starting an agency, but destiny too had other plans for good.

Even while working as a creative director, Itty's humanitarian side nudged him to act. He first launched a Save Water campaign after he saw its message in various quarters. "I published a booklet in Arabic and English, and distributed it freely outside exhibition halls in the city."

He also designed a stamp with the message 'Save Water' and asked companies to use it for correspondence, so the campaign reached maximum people. After receiving positive feedback for such initiatives, he took the next step for children with special needs. "I developed a campaign 'Donate a Brick' to build a school for children with special needs in Abu Dhabi. Now, the programme under the leadership of Al Fakhri Group chairman Mohammed Al Fakhri, has led to the construction of a special care center in Al Hail."

The centre is likely to be opened later this year. Itty also focused on environmental issues and did many programmes with the Environment Agency of Abu Dhabi. He called out a CD video game in which children had to identify the fish and match them with their names. This initiative helped spread word about the UAE's traditional fishing culture among children. He now plans to make it an online and mobile game. "I developed many such CD games



After a string of social and charitable initiatives, George V Itty's most ambitious project is creating the world's largest manmade forest.

like Good Habit, Good Health among others." All such ideas, coming from a creative advertising brain, were successful.

Caring for the community Further, making the big push to community-driven campaigns, he gave up his job and launched Nahtam Social Responsibility organisation in 2008.

"I did so with the help of Ebrahim Al Haddar and Isabelle Le Bon-Poonoosamy. We three started Nahtam, which means 'We Care' and focused on humanitarian efforts in the field of education, environment and humanity," Itty said. "Among our campaigns was the

World Future Council meeting in Abu Dhabi, where we got with top 50 experts, who spoke about ways to protect interests of future generation. We also did 'Face Internet' in which we taught students from 40 schools in Dubai how to get the best out of Web."

Children with special needs in another issue close to Itty's heart and he was instrumental in introducing volunteering programmes for school students at the centre.

In 2011, Nahtam found inspiration in the words of Nelson Mandela, who on his 93rd birthday asked the community to dedicate 67 minutes to community service. "Mandela had fought 67

years for human rights in South Africa. In the UAE, we took that initiative and requested people to do community work. As many as 4,800 people participated in the programme. Also, we had a canvas campaign where people were urged to sign. Three ministers and 97 ambassadors signed on the canvas."

From these community works, '67 Inspiring Stories' were selected to be made into a book. "It was distributed freely to all schools, ministers, government departments, embassies and libraries. The first edition was in English and now we are doing it in Arabic, thanks to requests from local

schools. We are looking at sponsors for this programme."

In 2012, to inculcate a habit of saving money, the group set 25,000 football-shaped saving boxes called 'Halaal' in malls across Abu Dhabi.

With a whole bunch of humanitarian activities on his plate, Itty is in no mood to put breaks on his humanitarian endeavours. "One of the campaigns I have in mind is Good Deeds - Inspire the World book, which will have interesting and inspiring stories of the people and for the people."

In the Year of Giving, he is looking to create the world's largest manmade forest "as a tribute to the

40 schools were part of the 'Face Internet' campaign
67 inspiring stories made up the Good Deeds - Inspire the World book
7.2 million trees planned for the world's largest manmade forest

late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan who transformed a desert into this wonderful land."

"The largest tree-made infrastructure is a 30-metre-tall with 0.8 million trees. We want to go for 7.2 million trees from all over the world." Itty is yet to finalise the location for what he calls his most ambitious plan for mankind. And his act of giving and living for others is not without a reason. He has privilege - it's in his DNA. "Community work is in my blood. My father, mother and grandfather all committed their lives to social work. My mother, at 83, runs social organisation for the elderly in Kerala," said the man, who hails from Kanyakumari district from Kerala. ashwani@khalijtimes.com

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