

A cool \$65k for ST fund to help kids



Mr Toh taking the freezing temperatures - which were as low as minus 40 deg C - in stride during the 6633 Arctic ultra race last month. He came in second in the 566km race across Canada. PHOTO: 6633 ULTRA

Mr Toh Poh Joo handed a cheque for \$65,393 to The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund on Tuesday afternoon.

It was a finale of sorts for the man who conquered the Arctic last month by walking 566km in temperatures as low as minus 40 deg C in the 6633 Arctic ultra race across Canada. He came in second.

Through the race, Mr Toh raised \$35,393 of the total sum by appealing to family and friends as well as the public. His employer, the Changi Airport Group (CAG), topped up with \$30,000 via its charity arm, the Changi Foundation

By getting his colleagues to chip in, Mr Toh, 41, vice-president for terminal operations, also raised a separate sum of about \$35,000 for NorthLight School, a school for those who fail PSLE or drop out of secondary school. Half of this amount came from the Changi Foundation, of which the school has been a beneficiary since 2014.

Said a CAG spokesman: "Poh Joo's perseverance to complete the race and contribution to the social cause is something that CAG is very proud of and finds inspiring."

Mr Toh used to offer free tuition to underprivileged students.

He feels for children from a needy background because as a child, he sometimes went to school without any pocket money to buy food during recess - he had to drink tap water to fill his stomach.

The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund supports about 14,000 children from low-income families a year. It provides pocket money that they can use for school-related expenses, such as buying food during recess or paying for transport.

The chairman of the fund and editor of The Straits Times, Mr Warren Fernandez, said: "I have to salute his effort, not only for his bravery and endurance, but also for his kindness and compassion in wanting to use his race to raise funds for our beneficiaries."

Downplaying his role in the fund-raising effort, however, Mr Toh said: "Even if I can do all this, it doesn't make a difference if people aren't generous enough. I'm very grateful that colleagues and members of the public came forward to donate."

Mr Toh has received invitations from schools, including NorthLight School, to talk about what he had learnt from the Arctic race. That will be his new focus for now.

A version of this article appeared in the print edition of The Straits Times on April 21, 2016, with the headline 'A cool \$65k for ST fund to help kids'.