

# A race to raise understanding

Contest helps able-bodied foster friendship with their wheelchair-bound partners

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SOME 30 wheelchair-bound youth and 60 of their able-bodied peers were on Sentosa yesterday morning competing in the first-ever South West Amazing Wheelchair Race championship.

Organised by the South West Community Development Council, the competition sought to foster friendship and understanding between the able-bodied and the wheelchair-bound, and to give the latter an additional opportunity to experience the outdoors.

Although it is generally easy to move around Sentosa in a wheelchair, the able-bodied participants found they still had to expend some effort to help their wheelchair-bound friends as they conquered obstacles together.

"We had to learn how to handle the wheelchair before the event and it was tiring going up and down slopes, for instance," said 26-year-old competitor Engelbert Sng.

His team, Chup Xi, trumped 14 other groups to come in first in the race.

South West District Mayor Amy Khor, the guest of honour for the event, empha-



**SPECIAL BOND:** About 30 wheelchair-bound youth, with the help of their 60 able-bodied peers, starting the first South West Amazing Wheelchair Race at Sentosa yesterday.

sised the need to make buildings and structures more accessible to the wheelchair-bound and the elderly by including features for the mobility-impaired in new buildings and by retrofitting old ones.

"I myself have a mother who is in a wheelchair ... Sometimes I find that even though you may be able to move along the roads and along the pavements, when you want to get into a building, you may have

steps and then you have to try (and figure out) what is the best way to get in ... and out," she said.

The South West CDC has two schemes to help the disabled. Its retrofitting programme to make homes safer for both the elderly and disabled has benefited about 3,000 people. The other scheme is a job fair for the disabled, which has helped place 25 people.