



It's song-and-dance time at the Best Buddies Welcoming Party at UCSI University.

Best buddies

MORE than 30 intellectually-challenged children and their parents attended the Best Buddies Welcoming Party held at UCSI University (UCSI) recently.

They were there to learn about Best Buddies, an international programme that is making its debut in Malaysia.

Initiated by UCSI staff and students, Best Buddies aims to enhance the lives of people with intellectual disabilities by providing opportunities for one-to-one friendships and integrated employment.

Its accredited international programme has been implemented in six continents, with UCSI as the first Malaysian chapter.

UCSI Best Buddies, with its tagline, "I see you, Kawanku" is one of six divisions.

The other five are Best Buddies Middle School, Best Buddies High School, Best Buddies Citizens, Best Buddies Jobs and e-buddies.

Through the programme, a

child is paired with a student volunteer from UCSI for one academic year. The student volunteer is committed to making weekly phone calls and monthly visits to their buddies.

All potential student volunteers are screened carefully for language as well as personality compatibility, and undergo a stringent training process before being paired with their buddies, said Best Buddies advisor, Teow Ker Shin.

The club has met with good response from the students. UCSI Psychology undergraduate Teo Hui Ru cites her passion for social work as the motivating force that got her involved in the programme.

A parent who declined to be named said he was happy to sign his autistic daughter up for the programme.

"To the special children, concepts such as race, religion and ethnicity do not exist. In some ways, we should be learning from them, and not the other way around," he said.