



**BUDDING LOCAL
COMMUNITY
ICT CAPTAIN**

**RUZIELAWATI
MOHD. KHALIB**

Ruzie is finding fulfilment by working on the frontlines of the initiative to bring ICT services to underserved areas of the nation.

Many would define an ideal job as one that would allow the person to earn a decent living, contribute to society, located near loved ones and which allows the person to pursue entrepreneurial dreams. By those criteria Ruzie, as she prefers to be known, has the perfect job.

Since the start of 2008, Ruzie has been running a UCC (USP Communications Centre) in Bandar Baharu, Kedah. The position has brought this young IT graduate face to face with the challenges and thrills of introducing rural Malaysians to the advantages and wonders of a connected world. UCCs are cybercentres set up by SKMM in rural and underserved areas and are aimed at giving those without access to the Internet the opportunity to join the online world. UCCs are currently operating in locations all over Malaysia and form part of the national broadband rollout programme. The UCCs provide Internet access for free and in a safe environment to people living around the area. Since many people in rural areas have not been exposed to the Internet, the UCCs also provide training classes to people wanting to learn how to access and utilise the power of the Internet.

This bubbly young lady has no regrets so far about taking an unconventional career path. If she had not heard about the UCC programme from a friend, she probably would have continued working in an ICT desk job like many of her college mates. Ruzie completed a Diploma in Business Studies at UiTM in Arau, Perlis before earning a B.Sc. (Honours) in Business Computing at UiTM Shah Alam. Ruzie did work in the ICT call centre industry with VADS in Kuala Lumpur and later, Dell in Penang.

Job satisfaction however eluded her and when she heard about the UCC programme, Ruzie jumped at the opportunity to be her own boss - sort of. The UCC programme is run in a unique collaborative model. TM, as the appointed broadband access service provider for the centre, has engaged its training partner Medan Sedunia Digital Sdn Bhd (MSD) to hire Ruzie to operate the UCC.

Ruzie was ecstatic upon learning that a UCC was being set up in Bandar Baharu which is not far from her hometown, Taiping. Even though she would not be earning as much as she could if she had stuck to more traditional jobs, she never hesitated for a second to take up the challenge for the sheer satisfaction of providing social service to the rural community.

Equally strong was the desire to aid deprived rural citizens. "Every time I help someone understand what the Internet can do, I feel so much satisfaction." She has seen people become empowered just by obtaining an email address. The interest in the Internet has skyrocketed and even adults in her area have become interested in learning how to use computers.

On what has it been like so far, Ruzie says that she has seen a steady growth of interest in UCC activities from the community. After almost a year, the UCC is firmly placed with patrons utilising its services in reasonable numbers. The most difficult challenge was getting adults interested in ICT. But since it is a rural area, word of mouth travels fast and the impact Internet had on the first few batches of adults ensure that others are coming forward to learn.

"Those who attend our Internet introductory courses usually end up asking us to help them get computers for their homes," said Ruzie.

Ruzie is also not sitting still as far as personal development goes. She plans to further her studies. The facilities at the UCC and flexible work hours will be useful when she starts.

The biggest joy Ruzie gets from running the UCC comes from seeing the effect her UCC is having on Bandar Baharu and the role that UCC plays to complement other community services such as the library. "Students previously used to go to libraries and use books to get the information they want. These days they come to my UCC centre and search the Internet. I am so proud that my UCC has become a real community centre used by both young and older people. I am glad to be part of something that is useful to the people of Bandar Baharu." 