

# Outdoor Sports Kakis: Promoting active living through inclusive engagement in nature and sports

text by  
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We pay attention to how we treat and make each other feel during the companionship.

## Introduction

Outdoor Sports Kakis (OSK) is a community-based initiative that connects individuals with additional support needs with volunteers from different walks of life through nature and sports-based experiences. It is founded with the aim of promoting inclusivity and a healthy lifestyle. Throughout this article, we will use the term additional support needs, not just special needs, to encompass all individuals, who require any additional help or support beyond disabilities.

At OSK, participants with additional support needs are the “Kakis” while the volunteers are the “Kawans”. These names are inspired by terms in the Malay language, where Kaki refers to a buddy and Kawan refers to friends. Hence buddies and friends.

The activities are held monthly. Each session is purposefully crafted and takes place at different outdoor spaces. While the invitation to participate is extended to anyone with additional support needs, as well as their families, most Kakis who have joined so far are individuals with Autism.

OSK is founded by two enthusiasts, Maria and Kian Seng. Maria is a trained physical education educator for people with additional support needs. In the course of her work, she has witnessed many of her students gaining weight and becoming sedentary after graduation from school. This prompted her to want to do something to change the trend. Kian Seng is a professional paddle sports coach and a certified Forest Therapy Guide. Similarly, he has observed that opportunities and access to outdoor sports programme for individuals with additional support needs are few and far between. There was meeting of the minds, and very quickly the OSK was founded on the shared vision that everyone, regardless of abilities, can be connected with nature; to enjoy the tranquilities and benefits it has to offer. Further, they can be empowered to care for the environment, while keeping the body and mind fit and healthy.