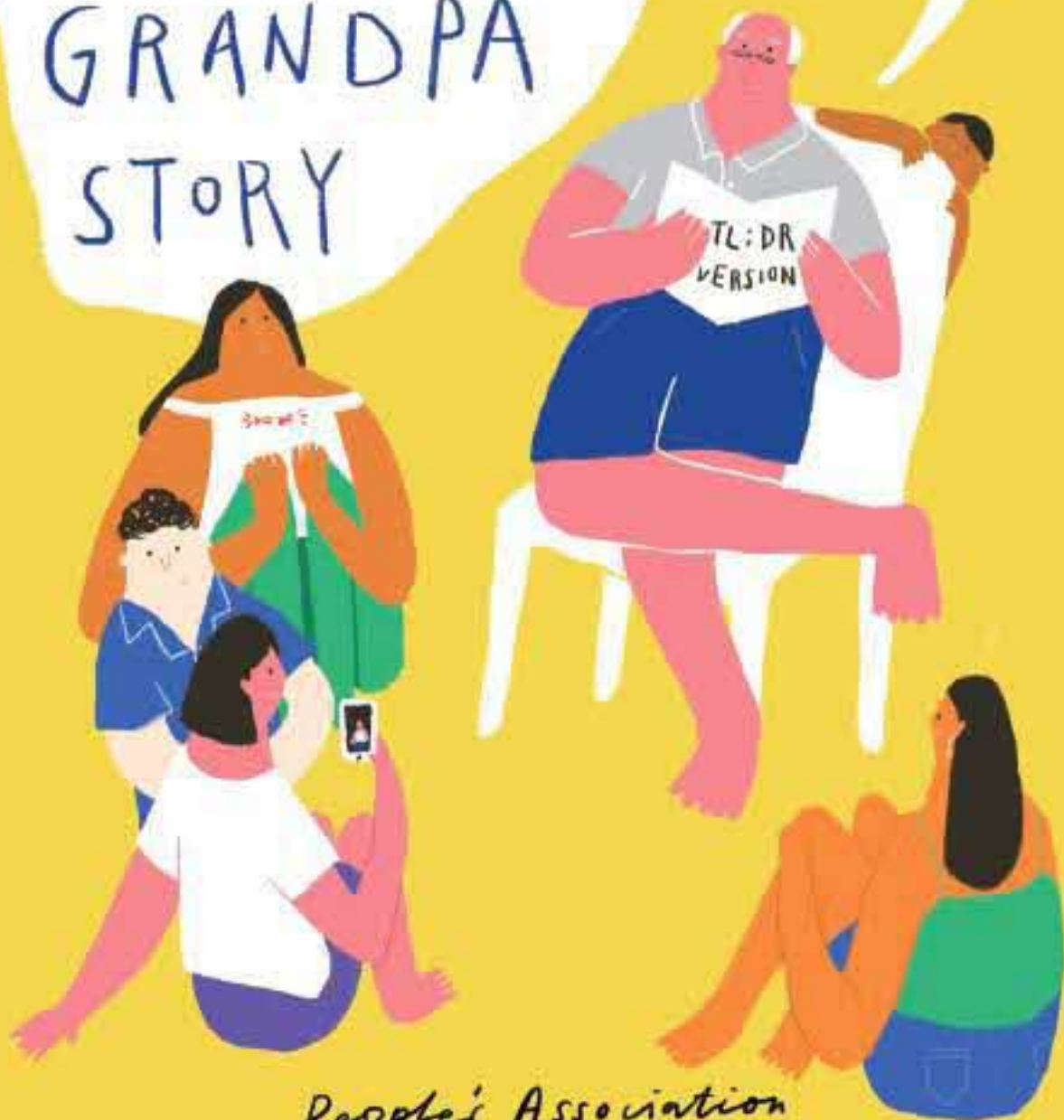


NOT JUST
ANOTHER
GRANDPA
STORY



*People's Association
60 Years of Community Building*

WITNESS AND JURY OFFICER

REALTY OF THE

NOT JUST ANOTHER GRANDPA STORY

TL;DR VERSION

*People's Association
60 Years of Community Building*



PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION

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CONTENTS

A Message from the PM vii

CREATING A SPARK THAT BINDS US

Then & Now: Screentime at the CCS 2

Art as a Force for Good 4

So You Think You Can Dance? 6

Ready for a Wheel-y Good Show? 8

What If You Could Dress Up an Entire HDB block? 10

Qn: What Do Pokémon Hunting and Xinyao Music Have in Common? 12

End-Chapter Activity: Name that Singer 14

STILL GROWING AS ONE

From Kampong to New Town 16

Ways to Be a Super-Duper Culinary Pro 18

Three Grandpas Who Rallied a Community 20

From Boys 2 Men 22

Superheroes Checklist 24

End-Chapter Activity: What Will Singapore Look Like in 30 Years? 26



UNDER ONE ROOF

A Community in Full Bloom 28

Tying the Knots of Friendship 31

Neighbourly Love 33

End-Chapter Activity: How Well Do You Know Your Neighbours? 36



IT'S ALL UP TO US

#RealTalk: You Don't Need a Lot of Time or Money to Do Voluntary Work 38

A Purr-fect Partnership 40

She IS One Special Pianist. Here's Why... 44

Fix Your Barang 46

Bridging the Gap 48

End-Chapter Activity: Seeking the Bigger Picture 50

Flip
for more
→

HERE'S TO A YEAR WISER

- Age IS Just a Number, or IS It? 52
- Spreading Happiness 54
- End-Chapter Activity:
- Try this Sudoku Puzzle 56

YOUTH POWER

- Going for Gold 58
- Fear IS No Barrier 60
- New Parent, Can Volunteer! 64
- "I Am Talented": It's Time to Unearth Your Hidden Skills 66
- End-Chapter Activity: Now, How About a Round of Bullet Bingo? 68

A CLASS OF ITS OWN

- History Gives Us Our Roots 70
- The ABCs of Learning Your 123 72
- No More Standing on Ceremony!
- It's Now About the Community 74
- End-Chapter Activity:
- Thank that Mentor 76

CARING IS SO MUCH WIN!

- How a Fire Changed a Neighbourhood 78
- When Was the Last Time You Visited Ah Ma and Ah Gong? 80
- End-Chapter Activity: What Would You Do In These Scenarios? 82

FITSP0 IRL* *IN REAL LIFE

- Smells Like Team Spirit!
- A Community that Keeps Active Together Stays Together 84
- In It for the Long Run 88
- Making Waves in the Community 91
- End-Chapter Activity:
- What Sports Type Are You? 94

#TOGETHERWECANOVERCOME

- Courage in the Face of Contagion 98
- Keep Calm and Carry On Helping Others 100
- End-Chapter Activity:
- We Are Strongest When We Rally as #SGUnited 104

COMMUNITIES 1 COVID 0

- Turning Lives Around 106
- Help IS Here, We Assure 109
- How Technology Brought Us Together 114
- Meaningful Meals 118
- Spreading the Joy of Ramadan, Circuit Breaker Style 122
- End-Chapter Activity:
- My COVID-19 Journal 124

The Story of
Our Community in 60 Icons
127

"Fear is
NO Barrier"



A MESSAGE FROM THE PM



Dear Reader,

My first memories of the People's Association (PA) go back to the early 1960s, when as a young boy I followed my father around on his constituency tours all over the island. He visited countless Community Centres (CCs), sometimes officially opening them. These were the first CCs that we built. They were very basic, with ping pong tables, a basketball court and a television set. Nothing like today's modern CCs, with their dance studios, performance spaces and air-conditioned halls.

PA was created to build community in a new nation. It got people to interact with one another, learn about one another's cultures and lifestyles, and form bonds to hold us together in good times and bad. Sixty years on, PA's mission has not changed.

In the fight against COVID-19, PA's role is vital. The CC has become a beacon of hope for the community, a place to receive assistance and assurance, as we deal with the crisis of our times. From distributing hand sanitisers and masks, to hosting virtual job interviews and helping those in urgent need, I am heartened that PA has stepped up and done well.

The pandemic has highlighted the importance of PA and the CCs. The key thing about the CCs is not their architecture or amenities, but the engagement and the activities that happen there. Residents take part in the multitude of interest groups and classes, building community in the process. There is something for every interest: if I had more time, I would perhaps join a photography group, or try something I have never done before, such as a Zumba class. That would be fun.

This collection of stories will take you on a journey through PA's history. I hope you will find something here that inspires you to become part of the PA movement, and join us in strengthening the Singapore heartbeat.

Yours sincerely,
Lee Hsien Loong
Prime Minister of Singapore and Chairman of PA



CREATING
A
SPARK
THAT
BINDS US

Then & Now: Screentime at the CCs

But you didn't know about the CCs' colourful past—and present—as an edutainment hub. Get set for some nostalgic feels as we go on a CC #throwback.

The first TV broadcast in Singapore was in 1963. Thousands gathered excitedly outside Victoria Memorial Hall, along Queen Elizabeth Walk and at CCs!

TV sets were very expensive then, so not everyone could afford to buy one. Many of them would watch their favourite shows at the CC instead. It was also where they met and bonded with their neighbours after a meal! An example of the earliest CC with a TV set was Kampong Kapor Community Centre (CC).

There were only two channels in the early days—Saluran 5 Televisyen Singapura (Channel 5—English and Malay) and Saluran 8 Televisyen Singapura (Channel 8—Chinese and Tamil). The shows were in black and white until colour TV was introduced in Singapore in 1974.

"I remember going to Jalan Besar CC as a child with my mother to watch Chinese drama serials. Members of the audience would scold the villain or try and predict what would happen in the next scene."

"I remember fondly everyone brought food to share, such as homemade cookies and kuehs. I would also play with my friends during commercial breaks. Those days were really fun!"

—Joewind Han, BBM, 43, Chairperson of Jalan Besar Community Club Management Committee (CCMC)
> Joewind started volunteering at Jalan Besar CC when she was 16 years old. Her mother, sister and husband are also grassroots volunteers.



"Whenever a goal was scored, the whole hall—regardless of background, age and race—would erupt in cheer at the same time! The 'together' atmosphere was amazing. I was not a football fan initially, but now I shout along with the others!"

"I've made so many friends through my volunteering experience. Some of the residents still recognise me and will come up to say 'hi' when they see me in the neighbourhood."

—Chandramogan "Mogan" Muthayya, 53, Chairman of Bukit Timah Indian Activity Executive Committee (IAEC) and Vice Chairman of Gateway Residents' Network
> Mogan helped to arrange chairs and put up flags for the past two editions of the World Cup screening at Bukit Timah Community Club. He intends to volunteer again in 2022.



Shobi Pereira recalls her first visit to the CC!

"I first started watching TV at the CC in 1963, when I was a child. My father would bring me to the one located opposite our house. Then, the CC had just a basketball court. A four-legged wooden cabinet with a television set inside sat at a corner of the court. A man would unlock the cabinet door every day. I would sit on my father's shoulders and watch my mum greet in Tamil on-screen and talk about the shows lined up for the evening. The experience was always magical."

—Shobi Pereira, former local producer and newscaster.
> Shobi's late mother, Mrs Rajamani Francis, was a pioneer Tamil television and radio presenter.

Art as a Force for Good

Bibi Fasihah, 29, artist and teacher

In 2018, a canopy of 1,450 colourful umbrellas greeted everyone who passed through Our Tampines Hub.

These hand-painted pieces, made for PASSionArts Festival, were the handiwork of Bibi, residents in the community both young and old, and boys from the Muhammadiyah Welfare Home.

Titled "Payong Batik 1,000" ("thousand batik-patterned umbrellas"), the installation set a Singapore Book of Records for the largest batik umbrella display. For each painted umbrella, a 5kg sack of rice (contributed by residents) was donated to a needy local family. All these were made possible by Tampines GRC's Community Arts & Culture Clubs (CACCS), and 30 community partners for Tampines' first Urban Arts Festival.



Art Heals

Bibi had difficulty focusing as a child and art was what centred her.



She hopes to be able to share this powerful form of therapy with community members such as those affected with ADHD, one of the common mental health conditions among kids.

PASSionArts Explained

The annual festival aims to bring art and culture to "Everyone, Everywhere, Everyday".

Residents in all communities and artists co-create installations that are displayed in common places, including HDB void decks, kopitiam and markets!

Everyone is welcome to join. Hit up your nearest Community Club or Centre (CC) to find out more.

"Watching young pre-schoolers grasp the concept of helping the less fortunate is very satisfying."

Did You Know?

People's Association has always played a role in promoting the arts among residents. Check with your grandparents, parents or friends if anyone remembers taking an art class in a CC. You are likely to hear a "YES" from one of them!



"Art is not only a form of expression. I use it as a platform to help others, support causes and uplift the community. I was grateful to have a platform such as PASSionArts to do this."

So You Think You Can

For these two classical Indian dancers and choreographers, People's Association (PA) took their love for the art form to the next level.

Surendran "Suren" Rachandran, 34

- Along with Vicky, Suren dances with the Manimaran Creations dance group.
- He participates in the Chingay Parade and PA Talents Indian Dance Ensemble.
- He is a mentor to younger members.

Suren's father is a long-time grassroots leader and volunteer at Ayer Rajah Community Club (ARCC).

He helped his father at events from the age of 14. "That's how I became a grassroots leader with the Indian Activity Executive Committee (IAEC) at ARCC."

He is currently the Vice-Chairman of the ARCC IAEC.

"It was through ARCC that I started performing at Chingay in 2001; in later years, I did training and choreography. I am now the artistic director for the Indian Cultural Contingent."

"Dance is universal—people of all ages and backgrounds can come together. We see this every year at Chingay: everyone from all walks of life, even those who think they can't dance. Join us!"

DANCE?

Vigneswary "Vicky" d/o Jeganathan, 38

- She performed at the 2017 APEC Summit, where former US President Barack Obama was present. Vicky also performed at the 2018 ASEAN Summit.
- "I did a unique sequence set to the tune of an erhu. It was definitely the most memorable performance I have ever done!"

"With PA Talents, you don't just dance; you get to learn something new. I've been able to pick up dances of other ethnic groups and incorporate these elements into the classes I lead in schools."

"In addition to performing, I'm also involved in costume management and training. We, seniors and juniors, all work as a team."



Want to see Vicky dance? Here is one video! You can also see her choreographed classical Indian dance pieces, as well as those of her friends, on the Manimaran Creations Facebook page.



Do you like to dance? Did you know that you can learn any of the latest dance styles at the Community Clubs and Centres? Log on to www.onepa.gov.sg to find a list of dance courses!



Ready for a Wheel-Y Good Show?



Who are they?

The Wheelies, an electric unicycle (EUC) interest group.

What do they do?

Since 2016, they have been wowing audiences at the Chingay Parade, the largest street performance and float parade in Singapore. They were also the first EUC group in the world to perform in a street parade.

Conversation Tip: Ask your Ah Gong and Ah Ma about Chingay.

Thomas Hoon, 42,
Co-founder of The Wheelies

"We were invited to perform at Chingay for the first time in 2016; about 45 of us volunteered to participate. We put in 60 hours of practice, but on the actual day, there was a thunderstorm, which posed safety issues. We cast a vote, and every single person wanted to go on with the show. I was deeply touched—and so grateful it was raining so no one could see my tears!"

Are you sure anyone can ride the EUC?

Yes, insist Thomas and long-time Wheelies members **Edmund Lim** and **Kirby Ong**. Among their 200 active members, the youngest is three years old, and their oldest ones are in their 70s.

All you need is two hours with a certified trainer to pick up the basics on safety (very important!) and techniques. The Wheelies teach at selected Community Clubs and Centres. Who knows, you may find yourself participating in the next Chingay Parade!

Rolling good times in the community

In addition to weekly excursions, The Wheelies, who hail from all parts of Singapore, have taken their EUCs on neighbourhood patrols and overseas trips. They have also performed at events like the Singapore Night Festival, Punggol North Street Parade and SHINE Festival!

Did You Know?

The word "Chingay" comes from its Mandarin name, 妆艺 (zhuang yi), which means the art of costume and masquerade in the Hokkien dialect. Started in 1973, the street parade compensated for the ban of firecrackers a year before, to continue to lift Singaporeans' mood during the festive Chinese New Year, so we can still celebrate the festival with a bang. People's Association Chingay is now a uniquely Singaporean annual tradition celebrated by residents from all ethnicities—Chinese, Malays, Indians, Eurasians and many others.

If you had a chance to take part in Chingay, what sort of performance would you like to put up?

What If You Could Dress Up an Entire HDB block?

Marbled Flag Art facade installation

What was it?

Some 12 storeys of Block 855 at Tampines Street 82 were awash in the brightest of swirls created by water and enamel paint on canvas, the colours representing Singapore's multiracial and multicultural environment.

When did it happen?

During the 2016 PASSionArts Festival.

Who were involved?

Hundreds of students of Junyuan Secondary School, Tampines residents and artists Fish Jaffar, Noc Vvyne Lim and Esther Ng.



"There's so much happiness when residents and students come together to paint and socialise. When they walk past the finished facade, they feel proud and say, 'Look, I did this with my neighbour.'"

Fish Jaffar, 30, Community Artist

"The project exposed our students to a different range of materials and allowed them to work on a scale beyond what's possible in the classroom; it also helped them understand how varied the community is."

David Cheong, 35, Art Coordinator at Junyuan Secondary School



"At our CACC, we are engaging more youths and equipping them with basic event management knowledge and exposure to community events. This is our way of empowering them."

—Alvin Yeo, 36, Tampines Central Community Arts & Culture Club (CACC) Chairperson



Did You Know?

PASSionArts was created to make the arts and culture more accessible to people everywhere in Singapore. The CACCs, managed by passionate volunteers, help drive PASSionArts activities. Keen on participating? Get connected with your nearest Community Clubs and Centres to find out more!



Qn: What Do Pokémon Hunting and Xinyao Music Have in Common?



Ans: Collectively, they brought thousands of Clementi residents together, creating fond memories of epic proportions.

Gotta Get Them All

Over 250 residents got together for "The Great Clementi Pokémon GO Outing" in August 2016, collecting virtual monsters and new friendships in equal measure.

(Community) Combat Power IRL*

- For a safe and fun gaming experience, the event had to involve sufficient marshals, first aid resources, food and drinks.
- The outing attracted youths and the elderly alike.
- Neighbours previously at odds were seen sharing tips on how to capture elusive beasts.
- This novel event was even featured in the news!



*in real life

"This event has inspired many youths to take notice of the community, and we are grateful for their enthusiastic support. By participating in—and for some, helping out with the logistics of—the outing, they were able to see that there are indeed many activities that can be organised in a fun and original way. We are limited only by our own imagination."

—Adelene Tan, PBM, Faber Hills Neighbourhood Committee Chairperson. Her team, along with the Clementi Community Club (CC) Youth Executive Committee and a Clementi resident, worked together to co-organise "The Great Clementi Pokémon GO Outing".

4 Fun Facts about "Here's Where I Belong", the First Nationwide Xinyao Concert to Celebrate SG50

- 300 performers of all races and ages—from primary schoolers to seniors—took to the stage.
- Students from Pei Tong Primary School used the angklung, a traditional Malay instrument, to play a xinyao song.
- Three other schools participated: Nan Hua High School, Clementi Town Secondary School and Clementi Primary School.
- The Merlion, a popular xinyao group, was formed at Clementi CC in 1982. The members regrouped and performed at this concert.



Pro Tip

Xinyao (新谣) is a unique genre of Mandarin songs written and sung by Singaporean artistes.



Put on Your Thinking Cap

What would be a fun event that you would like to put together for you and your neighbours? Hit up your Residents' Network to see how you can help make this a reality!

Watch the music video of "Here's Where I Belong" (English version). Can you recognise the different parts of Clementi Town here?



Name that Singer

Guess the names of these local celebs from the 1980s and 1990s using the clues provided.

(i) In addition to being an iconic xinyao singer-songwriter, he is a poet, former columnist for a Chinese newspaper and university lecturer.



(ii) He is known as Papa Rock and is a pioneer in the local rock scene.



(iii) A diva in the 1970s, she spent 18 years performing in Las Vegas.



(iv) She sang one of the most well-known National Day songs, "Home".



(v) He shot to fame with his 1989 album, *The Mad Chinaman*.



Answers: (i) Dr Liang Wern Fook, (ii) Datuk Ramli Sarip, (iii) Anita Sarawak, (iv) Kit Chan, (v) Dick Lee

STILL
GROWING
AS
ONE



From Kampong to New Town

Law Shun Yong, *BBM(L)*, is a familiar face in the Sembawang estate. After all, the affable 76-year-old has been a grassroots volunteer in his community for more than 50 years.



An avid basketball player, the young Shun Yong used to help organise basketball competitions in his neighbourhood. A few years later, in 1967, he joined the Sembawang Citizens' Consultative Committee (CCC) to help with things like the writing of minutes during meetings. He was 23 years old then.

In the late 1970s and 1980s, as kampong dwellers were moved to *HDB* flats in the nearby Yishun New Town, Shun Yong and other grassroots volunteers helped villagers ease the transition into *HDB* estates.



Shun Yong's checklist: ✓

- ☑ Check whether the villagers engaged in farming to decide if they qualify for compensation
- ☑ Confirm whether those who wanted to apply for a stall in the newly built hawker centres were bona fide roadside hawkers in the area
- ☑ Collect feedback from the kampong dwellers regarding the resettlement



"The 'kampong' spirit was very much alive in the early days. Everyone constantly looked out for one another and we only needed to close our doors and windows at night before going to bed."

Did You Know?

Shun Yong was also an active volunteer in his community during the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003. Read about his experience on page 98.



Goodwill Committees were the predecessors of CCCs. They were set to promote gotong-royong (an Indonesian phrase which means "helping each other in the community") and form a bridge between the government and people.

For example, they made sure policies like farmers' resettlement terms were properly communicated, and considered residents' views before housing policies were implemented.

Shun Yong's Sembawang CCC was amongst the earliest to be set up in 1965.

Today, CCCs continue to serve the same purpose, organising Kopi Talks and focus groups to communicate residents' concerns, hopes and aspirations to government agencies.

Imagine

In what new ways will CCCs and grassroots organisations engage residents 60 years from now?



Ways to Be a Super-Duper Culinary Pro



A People's Association (PA) trainer since 1973, 72-year-old Chua Hung Choo has been equipping cooking enthusiasts with invaluable skills in the kitchen. But more than anything, it's her unbeatable spirit that has made her an inspiring role model for her students (and really, anyone who's looking to win at life).



Fun Fact

From teaching vocational skills like cooking and sewing in the 1970s to encouraging women to work for their livelihoods, the Women's Executive Committees (WECs), just like other grassroots organisations, continue to organise SkillsFuture courses today to help residents upgrade their skills. WEC's evolved role today includes bringing women together to promote community bonding, empowering women and helping the less fortunate.



Girl Power

What do you think are initiatives that will allow women to shine in the community and at work?

Recipe for Happiness



1) Lead with Passion

"I've always loved cooking as a child. My mother used to show me the ropes in the kitchen. I never thought I would one day become a cooking teacher, but thanks to word-of-mouth recommendations and then my joining PA as a trainer, things unfolded naturally. I've been doing it for so long because I love it!"

2) Never stop Learning

"I first met my teacher, local legend Chef Sin Leong*, at a Community Centre course. I later went on to learn at his cooking institute. One time, I even managed to attend classes led by Mdm Chua Jim Neo, who was Mr Lee Kuan Yew's mother! She was a very meticulous teacher."

*Owner of dimsum restaurant Red Star (红星酒家), Chef Sin Leong is one of the Four Heavenly Kings (Chefs) of Singapore, famous for being creators of the Singaporean Yu Sheng (prosperity salad) in 1964.



3) Be Adaptable

"Cooking courses used to stretch over three months. To cater to busy lifestyles now, our courses are shorter—one or two months—and we do one-day workshops. While we explored more complex techniques in the past, we try to simplify processes now. Regardless, I'm just very happy and heartened that people appreciate my dishes—it can be anything from sweet and sour fish and Penang laksa to achar and cakes!"



Three Grandpas Who Rallied a Community

What do an orthodontist, a teacher and a book publisher have in common?



A dedication to serve the community, and a close friendship that has stood the test of time.

As pioneer residents of Marine Parade, Dr Loh Soo Ann, S. Puhaindran and Tan Wu Cheng played an instrumental role in promoting neighbourliness when people first started moving from kampongs to public housing estates in the late 1970s.

The three veteran grassroots volunteers are still actively serving the Marine Parade residents today.

What They Remember:

"I was involved in organising sporting activities for the residents. At that time, there weren't any Community Centres (CCs) for the estate yet. From basketball and football, to badminton and sepak takraw, sports became an effective platform that brought the residents together."

—S. Puhaindran, BBM(L), PPA, 83, Chairman of Marine Parade Citizens' Consultative Committee (CCC) (1980–2004)

"We used to throw block parties! How did we raise funds? By collecting old newspapers for the karung guni (rag and bone) man and selling event tickets."

—Tan Wu Cheng, PBM, 81, Chairman of Marine Parade Neighbourhood F Residents' Committee (1986–1990s)

What Made Them Come Forward to Volunteer Their Time?

"When People's Association (PA) conducted a door-to-door visit to solicit feedback from residents and to recruit volunteers, I said 'Yes' immediately as I'm an extrovert and I like to meet people. I've never regretted my decision; because of my grassroots work, I've made many good friends over the past 40 years."

—Tan Wu Cheng

"The PA staff who came to my house asked, 'Will you be able to help by just giving an hour of your time per week to help the less fortunate in your estate?' How could I say 'No' to a question like that? I volunteered as I felt I should give back to society."

—Dr Loh Soo Ann, JP, BBM, 76, Chairman of Marine Parade Neighbourhood F Residents' Committee (1977–1985)

Did You Know?

The idea for a Residents' Committee came from people who were concerned about keeping their own public housing block and the vicinity around it free from petty crime. Marine Parade was one of the first two public housing estates to have a Residents' Committee in each zone in the 1970s. The other was Tanjong Pagar.

Over time, the Residents' Committees played an important role in reaching out to new residents and building up the kampong spirit in each block.

Now known as Residents' Network, they continue to make new residents feel welcomed in the neighbourhood by updating them on estate happenings, and inviting them to get to know their neighbours at the next Residents' Network activity.

How well do you know your neighbours, beyond just recognising their faces and saying "Hello" to them in the lift?



From Boys 2 Men

In the early days of National Service (NS), send-off dinners were organised at Community Centres (CCs) all around Singapore.

In 1967...

NEXT!

Will I run into gangsters in NS?

Will I survive this ordeal? What is NS all about?

I hope Ma, Pa and Mei Mei will be okay while I'm gone.

Recruits, don't be scared!
You'll be fine!

"We were tasked to organise a send-off party for 100 young recruits back in 1967. I remember the mood was sombre, and it was quiet. There wasn't music or refreshments. And very few parents were present, probably because they were busy at their jobs or taking care of other children in the family."

"The boys looked curious about army life but they understood why they had to be there. I was surprised when one asked if there would be many 'bad boys' in the army. I told him not to worry and tried to put his mind at ease. In a way, the send-off party provided some support to these young men before they embarked on this new journey."

Teng Keok Eng, 76,
Former PA Staff at Whampoa Community Centre

OG Wonder Woman

Keok Eng became so intrigued after the send-off party that she volunteered herself for the People's Defence Force with the Singapore Armed Forces in 1969, and ended up staying for 15 years!

Why Do Our Boys Need to Spend Two Years in a Green Uniform?

NS became compulsory for all 18-year-old males in Singapore in 1967 after our independence from Malaysia in 1965. The conscription programme was born out of a need to build a competent military to defend our country.



Superheroes Checklist



The Living Legend

Phang Tai Heng, JP, PJG, BBM(L), 92,
Patron, Jalan Besar Community Club (CC)
Management Committee (1964–2017)



Multilingualism

During the racial riots in 1964, Tai Heng's ability to speak Malay came in handy when tension mounted between the Malays and Chinese in the neighbourhood. "I got to know the residents. You realise most people just want peace," says Tai Heng, who served as a volunteer in his Goodwill Committee.



Superb Time Management

Even while he was actively involved in grassroots work, Tai Heng was a full-time employee in an engineering firm. "Time can always be arranged," he says.



Altruism

Tai Heng helped with matters big and small, from organising programmes at the CC and cleaning the streets in the first "Keep Singapore Clean" Campaign in 1968, to solemnising marriages and starting a bursary fund for needy students by gathering resources from affluent merchants.



The New-Age Chief

Fong Yoong Kheong, PBM, 34,
Chairman, EunOS CC Management Committee
(2006–present)



Eye for Talent

AS a member of the Youth Executive Committee (YEC) in EunOS at the beginning, Yoong Kheong started the EunOS Young Community Leadership Induction Programme, a platform for students to make a difference in the community for causes close to their hearts.



Media Savvy

He takes to platforms like blogs and social media to share information. These days, he uses WhatsApp and Telegram to broadcast news and events.



Passion for Creating Impact

"When you volunteer with nonprofits, you can only work on a specific cause. Grassroots work gives you the versatility to blend your ideas and serve multiple causes."



Yoong Kheong met his wife on a cross-cultural leadership development voyage promoted by the YEC. The pair is now proud parents of a preschooler.

What Will Singapore Look Like in 30 Years?

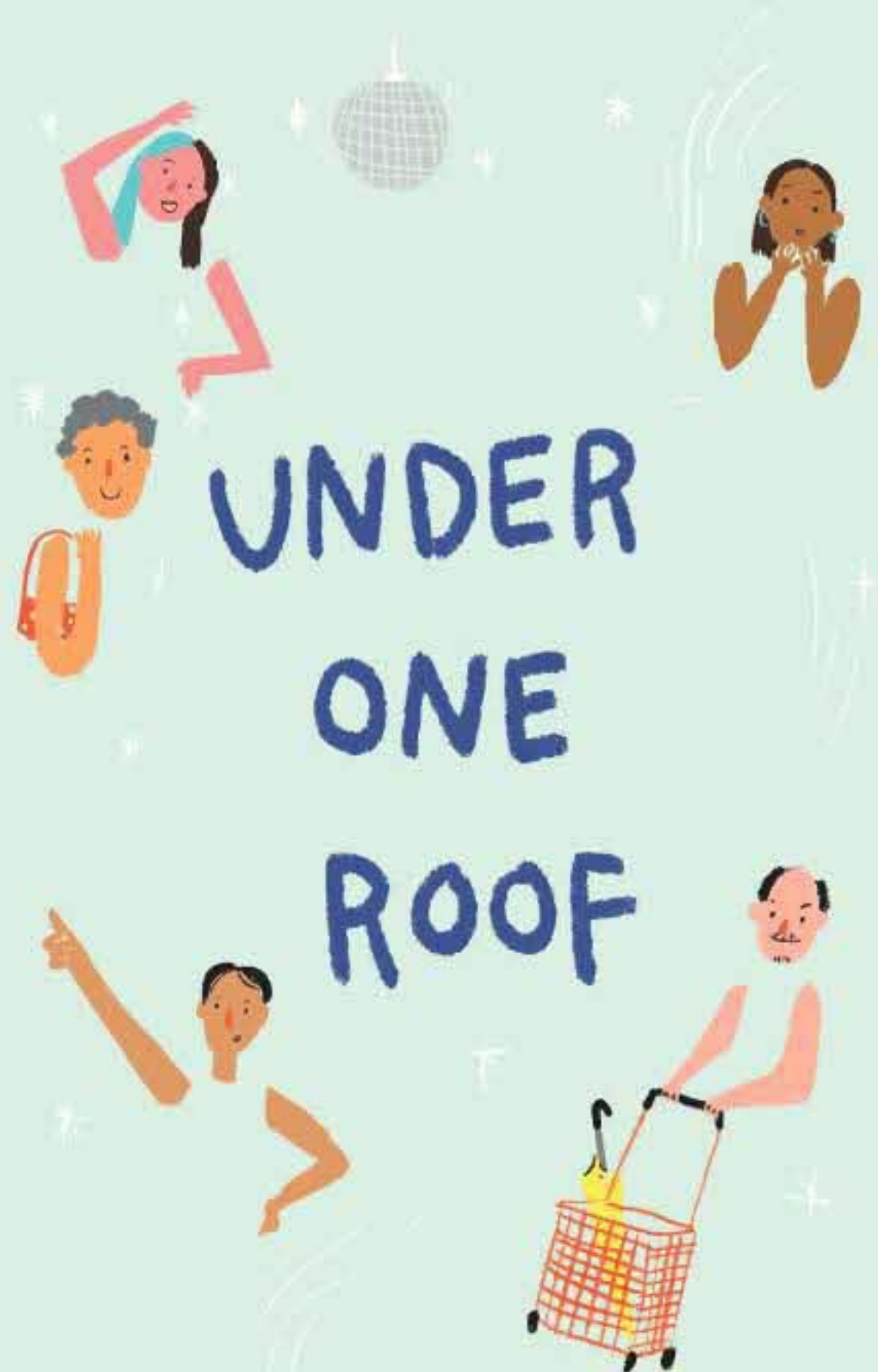
Community Clubs and Centres (CCs) are common spaces for people of all races, languages and religions to meet and interact through activities. With the evolving mobility of our society these days, People's Association (PA) has moved to reach out to residents beyond just the CCs' vicinity.

In the future, what other common spaces do you think people can meet and mingle? Visualise and draw your future neighbourhood here.



"To the young and to the not-so-old,
I say, look at that horizon,
follow that rainbow, go ride it."

—Lee Kuan Yew, Founding Chairman of PA



A Community in Full Bloom

The award-winning community garden nestled in the heart of Bukit Batok Central is a “tree-mendous” sight to behold!

SO MUCH WIN!!

Cosy Garden has clinched the National Parks Board Community-in-Bloom award for the past eight years, from 2010 to 2019. Together, the three themed gardens that make up Cosy Garden in Bukit Batok Central Zone 2 Residents' Committee have won 20 awards between them since 2010!!



Garden Leader Lee May La, 64, and her team of about 30 fellow gardening enthusiasts of all ages and races, have grown the garden into a beautiful haven for the young and old. Today, the gardeners are a close-knit bunch, with some even going on overseas courses together to spruce up their gardening know-how.

“We try to accept as many invitations as we can to conduct classes, talks and workshops for children of all ages. Many schools and other community gardens have also approached us for help in starting their own garden, and we will invite them to our garden so that they can observe what we do. We are certain there is something for everyone in our gardens—for the youngest children, we have interesting animals; whilst budding community gardeners can see how we landscape our gardens and use enzymes to keep our plants healthy without turning to pesticides and other chemicals.”

Sowing the Seeds Early and Far

One of the things that May La and her fellow gardeners hope to achieve is to reach out to more young children as well as help more community gardens flourish.

“I’m really happy with how the gardens have turned out today. Back in 2011, people tended to their own individual plots within the space, and there were the expected worries about prized plants being displaced when the idea to turn the plots into a shared community garden was first mooted. I went around with a few others to speak to residents who were anxious, convincing them of the value in working together.”

“I am glad to say that the kampong spirit prevailed—and here we are today, proud caretakers of these three gardens which collectively house more than 300 varieties of plants!”

—May La



Chan Chun Sing
Deputy Chairman of
People's Association

What are some of the best memories you have about the neighbourhood you grew up in?

Home for many years was a three-room flat at Circuit Road in Macpherson. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the area was frequently referred to as "chia tow" (车头) in Hokkien, as a number of public buses plying the city-suburb route eastwards terminated there. I enjoyed the opportunity to snooze without worry on the bus rides home from school, as the bus drivers or conductors would be the ones waking me up when we reached the terminal!



Green IS In!

Get set to work those green thumbs and play your part in greening up our island by starting your own mini garden in your backyard together with the help of your neighbours!

What plants would you fill your community garden with and why? Here are some easy-to-grow plants you could start your journey with!



Tying the Knots of Friendship



April Lau, 42, is a new citizen. She became a Singaporean in 2015.

In 2018, she started the Happy Upcycle Project with 80 other volunteers of all races and ages. Their youngest active member is only six!

Read more about her environmentally friendly upcycling project:



1) T-shirts are tied into tote bags

2) Tote bags are packed with food, which are distributed to the elderly during festive occasions



"I came up with the idea of turning unwanted T-shirts into tote bags—a project that helps reduce waste, and brings people together to make a positive difference to the community."

That's the Spirit!

"I love Singapore and I believe in giving back to this country I now call home. The very action of volunteering has been key in my own settling-in process. So now, I make it a point to reach out to other new citizens to encourage them to participate in such programmes."

Now a leader of Sengkang West Integration and Naturalisation Champion (INC), April introduced training workshops as a useful platform for new immigrants to learn and practise social norms through their interactions with local Singaporean participants.

"My favourite part of this whole experience is in seeing my volunteers grow and transform—from being afraid to knock on doors to being friendly and confident around their neighbours. It feels to me like they drew strength from their bonds with each other, and I feel very heartened and encouraged."

April and her group welcomes everybody to join them. Join the future runs and try your hand at turning banners into stationery bags, or baby clothes into lunch pouches!

"Just come with an open heart and mind, ready to build friendships with your fellow neighbours."

How would you explain what People's Association (PA)'s work is all about to a foreigner?

I would take the foreigner to attend a block party, a community carnival and a dialogue organised by grassroots volunteers. PA's work is about community building, bridging people and government, and is by the people, for the people.

Desmond Tan
Former Chief Executive Director of PA
(2017-2020)

Hmm
maybe I
should try
volunteering

IT'S AS EASY
AS A-B-C

Neighbourly Love.

Fifty-year-old Swarna Kalyana Sundaram has made Singapore her home since 2002—she became a citizen in 2017 and took part in a Community Sharing Session (CSS) at Braddell Heights Community Club (CC). The full-time wealth manager is also a long-time volunteer at grassroots activities.



"Rather than money, which perhaps isn't as lacking in this country, I think time is what people need most."

Wish we had
more time...

Wherever I live, I try to give back...

"In my former neighbourhood of Serangoon, I conducted financial literacy workshops for women and children with the Women's Executive Committee (WEC). With the Tanjong Rhu Neighbourhood Committee, I've helped coordinate an e-waste collection drive. In early 2020, with the Mountbatten CC Indian Activity Executive Committee (where I am a member), we distributed groceries to underprivileged families. When beneficiaries expressed their heartfelt thanks, I realised how much I've taken for granted, and that I should probably do more of this."

Don't take things for granted!

Nobody asks if you're a new citizen or an "old" citizen during grassroots activities...

"Here, we're all just neighbours. People's Association (PA) provides that platform for everyone to come together without any differentiation."

The returns are plentiful...

"Through various activities such as the e-waste collection, I managed to befriend neighbours in my block I wouldn't have otherwise met."



Did You Know?

Back in 1966, PA played a huge role in the National Identity Registration exercise. In fact, many seniors today can recall which CCs they collected their NRICs from, and what their feelings were at that time.

April (see page 31 for her story) received her pink NRIC as a new citizen at Anchorvale Community Club. Like all new citizens, she went through the Singapore Citizenship Journey programme—jointly managed by PA, the National Integration Council and the Immigration & Checkpoints Authority of Singapore—to help new citizens get an immersive experience of their new home. PA coordinates the Singapore Experiential Tour and CSS to boost their knowledge of Singapore's history, values and key institutional policies.

Today, new citizens still collect their pink NRICs at a CC. Many like Swarna and April, who find voluntary work meaningful, go on to serve as Integration and Naturalisation Champions.

With greater diversity in our community, we will see more people like Swarna and April amongst us, similar to how Singapore has progressed with immigrants as our forefathers.

Get social!

Ever heard of Block, Floor or Estate Parties? Find out when the next one in your neighbourhood is happening. You may find yourself making new friends over a scrumptious makan session!



How Well Do You Know Your Neighbours?

Take this quiz to find out!

Q1: How many faces do you recognise in your estate?

- (A) 15 or more
- (B) 7 to 14
- (C) 0 to 6

Q2: How many of them do you know by name?

- (A) 6 or more
- (B) 1 to 5
- (C) 0

Q3: Do you say hello first when you bump into them?

- (A) Always
- (B) Depends on my mood
- (C) I tend to avoid eye contact

Q4: How many elderly residents are there living on your floor/ street?

- (A) I know the exact number ___
- (B) There are ___ of them, I think.
- (C) Not a clue

Q5: When was the last time you spoke with someone living in your estate?

- (A) Like just 20 minutes ago!
- (B) Yesterday
- (C) I can't quite remember...

Mostly As: You are an absolute social butterfly and a ray of sunshine to the people living around you. Now inspire your neighbours to be as friendly as you are!

Mostly Bs: Not bad. Now challenge yourself to meet new faces and strike up a friendly conversation each time you see your neighbours.

Mostly Cs: You have yet to uncover the beauty of your community. Look up from your phone, try saying hello to your neighbours and feel the warmth when your friendliness is reciprocated!

IT'S
ALL
UP
TO
US



#RealTalk: You Don't Need a Lot of Time or Money to Do Voluntary Work

"What you need is the heart to make a difference," says Wee Wei Ling, PBM, Executive Director of Pan Pacific Hotels Group, Chairman of Project We Care.

What is Project We Care?

- Community-giving programme
- Helmed jointly by People's Association (PA) and private corporations
- 450,000 lives touched
- 300 companies from 30 industries on board
- 10,000 volunteers have participated

"At Project We Care, we believe in *Chu Qian Chu Li* (出钱出力). Companies contribute where they can, and we harness the strength of each organisation."



Giving is Not About Money

SPECTacular Workshop is an end-to-end eye care experience for low-income families spearheaded by companies and tertiary organisations from optical fields.

"It was truly life changing. When we were giving out eyewear at Ulu Pandan Community Club, a beneficiary held my hand to thank me. She said she could now see her grandchildren clearly and cross the road without help. This really meant a lot to me."

Should I consider volunteering?

Teamwork

"When PA first asked me to head Project We Care in 2012, I was reluctant—I wasn't in the 'charity space' and where could I find the time? But PA formed a secretariat made up of a capable team of staff, which has supported us in the ground work and identified areas of need."

Taking the Lead

"As a Singaporean, I need to help my home. The responsibility is even greater for large corporations. If we don't do it first and set an example, who else is going to follow?"

Tapping on Strengths

In Project We Care, PA susses out the unmet needs of beneficiaries and then connects them with corporations that are most suitable for providing the right resources—for instance, providing home-cleaning services or teaching basic fix-it skills to improve confidence and self-reliance. This way, all corporations—big or small—can be inspired to ramp up their Corporate Social Responsibility efforts in their own unique way!

Did You Know?

You can contribute to a good cause by tapping your PASSION Card at PASSION Cares readers located at selected community events.



Think

How can you connect different groups in your network to co-create solutions and make a difference?

A Purr-fect Partnership

What happened at Boon Lay HDB Block 191?



Cat defecation and urination along the corridors, uncleared cat food at the void deck, surge in roaming street cats



OH NO!
What should we do?

Jimmy Ng, Chairman of Boon Lay Citizens' Consultative Committee (CCC), and his grassroots leaders initiated a door-to-door visit to every household.

Working closely with the Cat Welfare Society, they educated residents of the affected block on cat sterilisation, responsible cat ownership and the feeding of community cats. Boon Lay CCC was also the central contact point for residents, Cat Welfare Society and relevant government agencies.



Jimmy and his team enlisted the help of some 10 community cat feeders to speak to cat owners and look out for irresponsible cat feeders. The public areas became cleaner and the number of complaints reduced drastically. WIN!



Things You Need to Know Before You Feed the Cats in Your 'Hood



"It's never an easy job. We face verbal abuse from cat owners and cat feeders at times. What keeps me going is when issues get resolved, residents are happy, and feedback providers that I work with—such as People's Association (PA)—become friends."

Michelle Siau,
Senior Mediator,
Cat Welfare Society



"I am grateful for PA's support. I hope there can be more platforms that allow us to educate the young on love and care for animals. My wish is for our community to have love and care all around, where people and animals live in harmony."

Chua Mui Mui,
Boon Lay Resident,
Community Cat Feeder for
More Than 10 Years



"I continue to do this day after day, year after year, because I treat these cats just like how I treat people and other beings, even if taking care of them takes a financial toll on me. I wish for better understanding and care between people, between us and animals, so that this society and community of ours is a better place to be in."

Mdm Zaitun,
Boon Lay Resident,
Community Cat Feeder for
More Than 20 Years

Did you know?

Many Community Centres supported the 1978 "Use Your Hands" clean campaign that encouraged youths to clean up the community spaces.



For example, the Hong Lim Green grassroots organisations organised a year-long "Operation Chantek"* to encourage its community leaders and residents to carry out general clean-up in their estate. By doing so, the constituency played a key role in educating residents to keep common spaces neat and clean.

*"Chantek" is an old Malay spelling, meaning "beautiful"



Desmond Tan
Former Chief Executive
Director of PA
(2017-2020)

PA has played an active role in supporting public campaigns since the 1960s. Of those, which was your most memorable campaign and why?

I remember so many campaigns! "Stop at Two", "Courtesy", "Speak Good Mandarin", "Speak Good English", "Do Not Litter", "Be a Good Neighbour", etc. I'm sure PA was involved in helping to promote them over the years. More recently, PA helped to spread the joy of parenthood through the Embracing PARENTHOOD Movement, which I thought was quite cool.

YOU CAN PLAY A PART TOO!

How would you encourage others to be more caring towards the animals in our community?

How would you encourage pet owners to be more responsible?



She Is One Special Pianist. Here's Why...

She cannot see the scores.

Born visually impaired, 24-year-old **Siti Sakinah** started learning the piano when she was only six. She masters the music pieces through hearing, sheet memorisation and vigorous practice with the help of her piano teacher. Sakinah pushes herself to practise many hours outside of her regular lessons.



She is a part of Singapore's largest inclusive orchestra, **The Purple Symphony**.

The Purple Symphony, which was started by Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC) in 2015, comprises musicians with and without special needs. Prior to joining the orchestra, Sakinah had never performed with others.

She has performed in front of the **Who's Who in Singapore**.

Sakinah was a featured soloist in The Purple Symphony's 2019 concert. Together with 100 other musicians, she performed for more than 1,200 people, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat.

"I hope that through our efforts and achievements with The Purple Symphony, we have demonstrated that we are capable even though we have disabilities. We are no less abled than everyone else."

—Siti Sakinah

She is a recipient of The Purple Symphony Training Award Programme.

The award supports Sakinah's journey as a musician. She was able to pick up advanced piano techniques to go for exams and have her piano tuned regularly. Her musicality also improved by attending an actual concert and performing with fellow musicians.

She related through **Community Learning**.

Through the frequent rehearsal sessions, Sakinah and the other musicians have become close friends. With lots in common, they talk about musicianship and the exciting moments before performances. The group often hangs out after rehearsals for waffles and ice cream—Sakinah and her friends' favourite!

"The Purple Symphony has taught me to believe in the limitless potential of every individual, regardless of their starting point in life."

—Cheang Hui Xin, 25, Assistant Manager (Partnerships & Programmes) of Central Singapore CDC. Hui Xin is a former volunteer cellist who was involved in the formation of The Purple Symphony.

Watch Sakinah and her fellow musicians jamming it out:



Fix Your Barang

Repair Kopitiam is a community-driven repair meet-up project that teaches people how to repair their damaged household items.

Volunteer-coaches at the public repair sessions guide residents in fixing simple items.



The Aim?

To discourage the buy-and-throw-away culture in Singapore!

Since it started in 2014, Repair Kopitiam has:

- Conducted more than 130 workshops in collaboration with Ang Mo Kio, Jurong and Tampines GRC grassroots organisations (More to come!).
- Trained more than 600 volunteer repair coaches.
- Taught people from all walks of life, from housewives and retirees to young professionals and students, to repair more than 3,000 of their household items!

Did You Know?

In 2018, Singapore generated almost eight million tonnes of waste—that's equivalent to the weight of 530,000 double-decker buses!

When we reduce waste, we are helping to extend the lifespan of Semakau Landfill beyond 2035, when Singapore's ONLY landfill is expected to run out of space.

Fun Facts

Guess what is the most common household item brought down for repair?

Answer: Fans!



What are some of the vintage appliances "brought to life"?

Answer: Singer sewing machines, cassette tape players and vinyl record players.

Veerappan Swaminathan, 35, founder of Repair Kopitiam

"We see many acts of kindness at our workshops: we had a gentleman who supplied us with tools for free, while others who don't have anything in need of repair will bring us food or drinks. Once, we repaired an airfryer for a lady. The following week, she brought us hash browns made with it!"



"We are grateful to the Residents' Committees for covering our venue costs, providing us with tables, chairs and storage space, and publicising our workshops. It really helps us reduce our overhead costs and we can focus on organising workshops at more locations."

Bai Jialong, 24, mechanical engineering student and volunteer repair coach with Repair Kopitiam

"Volunteering at Repair Kopitiam is both my hobby and my passion. It's coming together with like-minded people to share skills and build connections. I have also learnt a lot from the experienced repair coaches—things that I don't get to learn in school."

The number of groups pursuing various interests or social causes are on the rise. Through social media, more people are connecting with such groups and participating in related activities. Keep an eye out next time you are in your 'hood. You may just spot a session of Repair Kopitiam!

Bridging the Gap



ASHVIN RICHARD

Silver Homes, a programme to spruce up the homes of senior residents living in rental flats, lets youth volunteers and collaborators including schools, non-profit organisations and individuals bridge the generation gap between young and old. How do they do it?

Fun Facts

Started by the Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC) in 2014, the Silver Homes programme connects volunteers with partners to create safe and healthy living environments for seniors. In 2019, over 5,000 volunteers have made homes brighter for some 1,700 residents in 900 homes through undertaking tasks such as spring cleaning, fumigation and refurbishments.

“As seniors get older, they may become less mobile. They can’t squat or reach the window panes outside. Maintaining the flat isn’t easy,” shares Richard. “This collaboration with People’s Association has been very helpful, and I hope it will continue to run successfully.”

Think

What are other opportunities for youths to uncover and meet the community’s needs?

Diversity in Teams



“Language is a big consideration when it comes to forming teams. Diversity is key, and we try to include volunteers who can speak different dialects.”

—Ashvin Sivakumar, 19, ex-student leader from Raffles Institution

Know the Neighbours

எப்படி இருக்கிறீர்கள்?
 您好! Apa Khabar?
 Li Ho Bo?
 How are you?

“It takes a lot of trust to let strangers into their homes. It’s very helpful when neighbours talk to and keep a lookout for the less-visible and vulnerable ones.”

—Richard Chua, 60, Cluster Director of PEACE-Connect Cluster Operator

Take a Genuine Interest



“During our pre-assessment visits, my organising team and I tried our best to interact with the vulnerable seniors to better understand their needs and wants.”

—Matthew Sim, 19, former volunteer from Nanyang Junior College

Be Open-Minded



“People may think that aged folks have a chip on their shoulder. But there are many types of seniors, including many who are happy and optimistic and are great to work with.”

—Benjamin Cheong, 31, Manager (Partnership and Programme) of Central Singapore CDC

Seeking the Bigger Picture

What do you care deeply about? Is there something happening in society today that makes you happy or sad, motivated or disappointed? What can you do about it? Find a quiet spot, process these thoughts, and put your pen to paper. Here are some questions to help you get started.

- Q1 What kind of person do I want to become?
- Q2 What is the one thing happening in society today that bothers me?
- Q3 What do I think can be done to solve the problem?
- Q4 What can I do for a start?
- Q5 What do I hope to achieve at the end of 12 months?

"Everything is created to serve, even inanimate objects. A chair isn't created to serve itself. Your eyes don't serve themselves. They serve you, so you can see. I've always felt a sense of responsibility to the world. I've got so much to do, but of course, I have to start with Singapore, with my community. For me, service is part of my faith."

—Siti Noor Mastura, a youth advocate for interfaith work and Straits Times Singaporean of the Year 2018

HERE'S TO A YEAR WISER



Age Is Just a Number, or Is It?



"When I was a youth, the thought of growing old never crossed my mind as I was always surrounded by young people," Ling Bee Sian, PBM, 76, muses.

A professional nurse by training, Bee Sian has had an illustrious career. For more than 40 years, she contributed her skills through stints in various government hospitals, ministries and organisations.

Today, she continues to look after the well-being of others through her volunteer work as chairperson of People's Association (PA) Active Ageing Council. She is also a mentor to younger volunteers like Katherine Cham and Jax Ang, both of whom work closely with her to serve the needs of the elderly living in Tiong Bahru.



Feeling *paiseh* about having to step inside a Residents' Committee (RC) centre? Don't worry, you can also sign up as a volunteer online and even indicate your areas of interest!



Did You Know?

With Singapore's ageing population, more seniors will be living alone in future.

By 2030,

- 1 in 4 Singaporeans will be aged 65 and above.
- An estimated 83,000 elderly persons will be living alone.

Seniors in 2030 and beyond may be wealthier and more educated compared to the generation from 20 years ago, but their basic needs are expected to remain the same. They will still want to stay physically and socially active, and age purposefully. Some may wish to contribute back to the community by volunteering, working and learning.

How would you help your grandparents and parents age purposefully?
What would you want to do to find meaning as you age?

3 Reasons why you should help Singapore's seniors

1. You get to improve your communication skills

"It doesn't matter if you don't speak a dialect. The seniors are happy even if you can only speak a simple phrase to them. It's your presence and sincerity that makes them feel appreciated.

—Katherine Cham, 46, PA volunteer since 2015 and mother of two



2. You get to give, and receive

"People often ask me, 'Why do you volunteer?' My reply to them would be, 'Why not?' The application process is not complicated—all you need to do is just step into your nearest RC centre! Start by doing something as simple as carrying chairs. You may surprise yourself at the strong sense of achievement. My only regret is not joining earlier!"

—Jax Ang, 38, PA volunteer since 2018 and father of a toddler

3. You get to make a difference in someone else's life

"An elderly person may become socially withdrawn when he or she is diagnosed with a chronic or critical illness. If a regular attendee suddenly stops coming for our activities, we will initiate a home visit, accompanied by at least one of the elderly person's friends. It's important to never leave them alone.

—Ling Bee Sian, PBM, Chairperson of PA Active Ageing Council, 76



Spreading Happiness



Sprightly 61-year-old Hasnah Bte Masnod, PBM, is one awesome multitasking makcik.

This homemaker founded Senam Ria (which means "Happy Exercise" in Malay), an interest group that meets every Saturday morning at Chua Chu Kang Community Club (CC), conducts swimming lessons every Friday evening, AND teaches Chair Aerobics at Fei Yue Seniors Activity Centre (Teck Whye) every Friday.

Hasnah first felt moved to do something when she learned from the news then that many among the Malay community in Singapore are obese, and have high blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Thus in 1998, at the age of 38, she embarked on her mission to keep fit and founded Senam Ria along the way to encourage others to join her.

Since then, Senam Ria has grown in number. Today, the interest group has more than 100 members, with some travelling from areas as far as Boon Lay, Jurong and Woodlands.

"I am a firm believer that one should never sit at home doing nothing, especially as they get older. From learning qigong and tai chi to swimming and chair aerobics, I have never stopped taking up new sports to keep myself active. I also encourage the seniors around me to learn how to use platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook to stay in touch with current affairs."

—Hasnah Bte Masnod, PBM, 61



P.S. Follow her on Facebook @ hasnahria mawi and watch her exercise!



"I have been exercising together with Madam Hasnah since day one. We have become close friends who exchange exercise tips as well as recipes for cooking and home remedies! I can maintain a healthy weight now because of my active lifestyle, and don't suffer from aches and pains."

—Tusiah Bte Rosdi, 65, former Chua Chu Kang resident



Lifelong Learner

When Tay Meng Huat saw a group of volunteers fixing wheelchairs for the elderly at Teck Ghee CC near his home in 2019, he was overcome with nostalgia. After all, the 70-year-old retiree used to be a bicycle repairman in his younger days. He immediately approached the organiser and requested to join the volunteer group.

After attending eight hours of professional training on wheelchair servicing and accumulating 40 hours of practicum as part of the training programme, Meng Huat is now officially a part of the senior volunteer group that goes around Singapore servicing wheelchairs for other seniors.

However, this was hardly his first foray out of his comfort zone to learn new things. In 2015, he enrolled himself in People's Association Senior Academy, attending lessons mostly at Teck Ghee CC. Since then, he has been a regular at various classes, particularly the Seniors for Smart Nation courses which teaches basic IT literacy skills on how to use social media apps.

In the future, he hopes to set up an interest group in his neighbourhood to encourage a repair culture instead of throwing things away; and bring together people from different ages, backgrounds and abilities using what he has learnt.

"I've made many new friends and reconnected with old neighbours throughout my learning journey. Whenever I finish a course, I am always excited to pass on my newfound knowledge to other seniors in my neighbourhood. Although I may sometimes forget what I learnt in class due to my age, I know I can depend on my fellow classmates to come together to paint a 'full picture'."

—Tay Meng Huat, 70

What new skills have you picked up recently that are outside of your comfort zone?

How can you use your skills to impact people in need in your community?

Try this Sudoku Puzzle

Experts have found that engaging in puzzles can help the brain stay sharp. Try this medium-level Sudoku game together with Ah Ma and Ah Gong today! You can even spruce things up by colouring the flowers in the border frame together.

		2				8		
	5	9				1	6	7
			4			3		
		4		5		2	6	9
			6	3	7		5	4
8		6				4		
			3					
			2			9		1

YOUTH POWER



Going for Gold

"Simple actions like swiping and tapping may be intuitive to us, but seniors have to learn these controls from scratch. Seeing seniors leave the sessions with wide smiles on their faces, excited at finally understanding how to use their phones, is inspiring and their enjoyment infectious."

—Ian Hermanus, 18



If you see a long queue at Bishan Community Club (CC), chances are it's to register for a spot in Project Gold, a weekly smartphone literacy clinic for seniors held every Saturday.

Project Gold was started in July 2019 by three 18-year-old students from Raffles Institution, Ian Hermanus, Shabbir and Christian, with the guidance of Bishan CC Youth Executive Committee (YEC).

The clinic is very popular among the seniors of Bishan. Sessions are conducted in both English and Mandarin, with volunteers ready to explain in other dialects and to help with queries.

Other Cool Stuff About People's Association (PA)'s Networks for the Young and Old

PA Youths

- Children above the age of 12 can take part in many programmes by the PA's Youth Movement and be part of the largest and most vibrant youth network in Singapore.

- Youths can also participate in the Service-Learning Champion scheme in schools, and the Youth Chapters in the Residents' Committees (RCs) and Neighbourhood Committees.



Bridging the Gap

The young volunteers of Project Gold have built heart-warming relationships with their senior students, thanks to the foresight of the Bishan CC YEC when they identified this as a service opportunity. The bond extends beyond Project Gold—seniors now know who in PA they can turn to if they need help with other issues, or if they would like to give feedback about anything.

PA Seniors

- The largest network of senior citizens in Singapore is managed by the PA Senior Citizens' Executive Committees.

- Seniors can exercise and dance their way into their silver years, or pick up a new skill or language in the spirit of life-long learning.

- For those who want to delve deeper into certain popular skills such as IT or wellness, they can pursue a basic or advanced certificate at the PA Senior Academy.

What's Next?

- Bring Project Gold to the RCs throughout Bishan, for seniors who may not be able to travel a longer distance from home.
- Partner with the Agency of Integrated Care to let more seniors know about the clinic, with the help of Silver Generation Ambassadors.
- Rope in more volunteers from other schools.
- Run more sessions at the CC.

"The students are very warm and patient. It's like my own grandson teaching me. I can now use WhatsApp and WeChat to chat with my friends and family, and I also love using photo-editing apps to add fun effects to my photos!"

—Mdm Tan SL, in her 80s



Seniors and youths have more in common than you think!

In memory of Mdm Lim Ah Yook (1943-Sep 2020).
She started work in People's Association from 1962,
and continued to do so for close to 58 years till 2020.



Fear Is No Barrier



For these two alumni of the National Community Leadership Institute (NACLI), the key to being a successful youth leader in any era is to throw fear out the window.

Queen Bee

Lim Ah Yook, 77

- Graduate of NACLI's inaugural three-year Diploma in Community and Youth Work in 1967
- Head (Production), Singapore Chingay & Events Network

The gangly lady looked and moved decades younger than her actual age. Her gregarious straight-talking personality was instantly infectious, and her tough-as-nails character was widely admired.

As the Organising Secretary, equivalent to the present-day Constituency Director, of Beach Road Community Centre (CC)* in 1963, Ah Yook singlehandedly convinced gangsters to give up their #occupytheCC aspiration. When the racial riots happened, she organised Goodwill Committees to get Chinese and Malay leaders to make peace. And after being posted to Bras Basah CC* a few years later, she turned it into a hub of community life by organising art classes, sports events and chess competitions.

"The rigorous three-year training in NACLI gave me the necessary skills to do my job. Our training was wide—I learned unarmed combat for self-defence, handyman skills to repair objects in the CC on my own, public speaking to engage with residents, and book-keeping for the running of the CC. We also learnt topics such as socialism and communism**. And we all learnt how to handle a rifle. Through the experience, I gained the courage to face problems head-on and to effectively network in the community with all kinds of personalities."

Interesting Facts of the 1960s:

It was an uphill task managing Beach Road CC* as that area was teeming with gangsters. Negotiations had to be done with the heads of the different gangs to get them to agree to keep the CC a safe and gang-free place for people to come together.

Residents visiting Bras Basah CC* were mostly Hainanese. The men usually gathered to play Chinese chess. The women enjoyed tremendously the Hainanese operas organised by the CC.

*Over the decades, Beach Road and Bras Basah CCs have both become defunct.

**Other topics included Social and Political Theories, and Solutions to Poverty in Developing Countries. The programme was designed to help them become all-rounded People's Association (PA) community development officers with the breadth and depth of thinking that makes them aware and sensitive to the nuances and cultural contexts of our communities.





The Boy Next Door
Leong Mun Kit, 20
- Assistant Treasurer,
Nee Soon East Youth Network



When there was a call at his school, Singapore Polytechnic, for students to join PA's Community Leadership Programme (CLP), Mun Kit wasted no time in signing up. The CLP is designed to expose student leaders to grassroots work and the diverse range of volunteering opportunities—an area he is particularly interested in.

Upon being selected in 2018, Mun Kit attended a four-day training camp at NACLI where he was given an intensive course on the intricacies of leadership skills. He was then attached to the Nee Soon East Youth Network where he immediately got into the thick of planning and executing community initiatives and events of all kinds.

"We were schooled primarily in empathy and servant-leadership skills. I remember particularly an activity whereby we were asked to draw portraits of one another. We were all surprised to discover how differently others view us. This reminded us that in grassroots work, we have to work with people of all backgrounds and personalities. We have to hear where they are coming from and learn to empathise with their perspective."

"One advice that I received from the older grassroots leaders is that the work that we do in grassroots has to be intended for others and is not for benefiting ourselves. They've also encouraged me to dare to voice out for things that are important, and to always believe in myself."

Fun Fact

The PA Youth Movement Service-Learning Champion (SLC) Scheme is an avenue for secondary school students to develop leadership qualities, acquire life skills and propose solutions to meet community needs through hands-on experiences.

Think

What sort of knowledge and skills do you need to be an effective leader who can build and bridge our diverse communities?



Chan Chun Sing
Deputy Chairman of PA

What are some of the lessons you learnt as a youth?

Coming from a low-income single-parent family, I experienced very early on that self-determination determines our fate. There is absolutely nothing that we can expect to be natural or a given. How do we prioritise our needs and wants, and make the best of finite resources that we have to address our challenges and grasp the opportunities?

When I first received the invitation to attend the Embracing Parenthood celebration in 2018, I thought, "Aha! Perhaps this is the opportunity to meet more neighbours with young children." I enjoyed the event tremendously. The volunteers were so warm in their welcome right from the start, calling me up the day before to ask if I would be coming and personally bringing all of us attendees to our seats.

On the day, the gift packs were personally presented to each individual pair of new parents, after our names were called. It made us feel like the entire community was behind us in this whole parenthood journey. The experience made such a positive impact on me that I decided to join these volunteer members of the Residents' Network (RN) at Thomson Garden estate, to serve in my community.

The camaraderie amongst everyone in the estate is really something precious—neighbours are ever ready to keep an eye out for each other. My door is always open to them and it is the same for many of us who live here. Seeing all these makes me want to continue to do my part to welcome other new parents in my estate.

I find great joy in volunteering in my RN. Many in the RN have young children like me, and we involve the entire family when we do our volunteer work. This way, we don't see volunteering as taking us away from our families—and this is something I hope other new parents will be able to do too if they are considering volunteering in their RNS.

The fact that my children have this lovely estate to grow up in gives me great purpose in continuing to volunteer.

I can say with certainty that I have absolutely no regrets choosing to be a volunteer in my RN. Seeing everyone draw even closer as neighbours and friends through the memorable events we have planned is irreplaceable to me.

Lisa Gwee, 35

Mother of two young children
Executive Member of Thomson Garden RN

New Parent, Can Volunteer!



The Embracing PARENTHOOD Movement is a community-led initiative organised by People's Association, Family Life Champions and Grassroots Organisations, in partnership with the Ministry of Social and Family Development and the National Population and Talent Division, sponsored by NTUC Social Enterprises and the Singapore Tote Board, to celebrate the birth of newborn babies, embrace the joy of parenthood and build strong communities of support for young families.

Join us in celebrating our parenting journey together. Follow us on Facebook for other family programme updates by scanning the QR code!



Did You Know?

Parenthood in Singapore has been celebrated for decades and continues to be so. Baby shows were a big thing in the past, much like how the Embracing PARENTHOOD Movement is today, and many citizens would have memories of being part of these shows. The earliest baby shows were conducted in Community Centres (CCs), with some of the memorable ones such as "Healthy Babies, Healthy Nation" and "Baby Show Photo Competition" organised at 43 CCs in 1979.

"I Am Talented": It's Time to Unearth Your Hidden Skills

Three things to know about I Am Talented (IAT), a youth development programme run in collaboration with the Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC).

#1 It helps young folks become future-ready

"What is unique about the workshops in IAT is that it focuses on what is practicable in the industry. We partner with industry leaders like Nikon for photography and Republic Polytechnic for mobile game-building. During the sessions, the trainers also share their industry experiences," says Qamar Firdaus Saini, Team Leader, Partnerships & Programmes, Central Singapore CDC.

#2 Everyone is welcome

"At the start, it was about giving underprivileged youths a chance to try out something they wouldn't be able to in school. But with Central Singapore CDC, we managed to bring students of different backgrounds and tracks together to learn new things," says Co-founder and "professional problem solver" Laurence Putra Franslay. The group hopes to one day bring IAT to all of Singapore.

#3 You get to demonstrate new-found skills

"At the Finale Showcase, the smiles that come from the participants' sense of accomplishment are priceless. It's more than just learning a skill—they realise if they put their heart and soul into learning, they will definitely see the fruits of their labour," says David Hoe, Co-founder and Director.

Did You Know?

IAT allows youths to explore interests in non-traditional or emerging career pathways. To date, workshop topics have run the gamut from coding and 3D modelling to fashion design, dance and even public speaking.



Desmond Tan
Former Chief Executive
Director of People's
Association (2017-2020)

Do you know of any youth lingo? Tell us one that relates best to you and why so!

Recently learnt the word "lit" from my son who is in full-time National Service. I thought he was describing me as being legit, but later I found out he was saying that I was always "hyped up". I hope he didn't mean I was drunk. Can't be, 'cause I don't drink, haha!

Dream

When youths in Singapore were asked what they were concerned about, many said "playing an active role in society" and "helping the less fortunate" were very important life goals.

Do you share the same concerns? What might your life goals be?

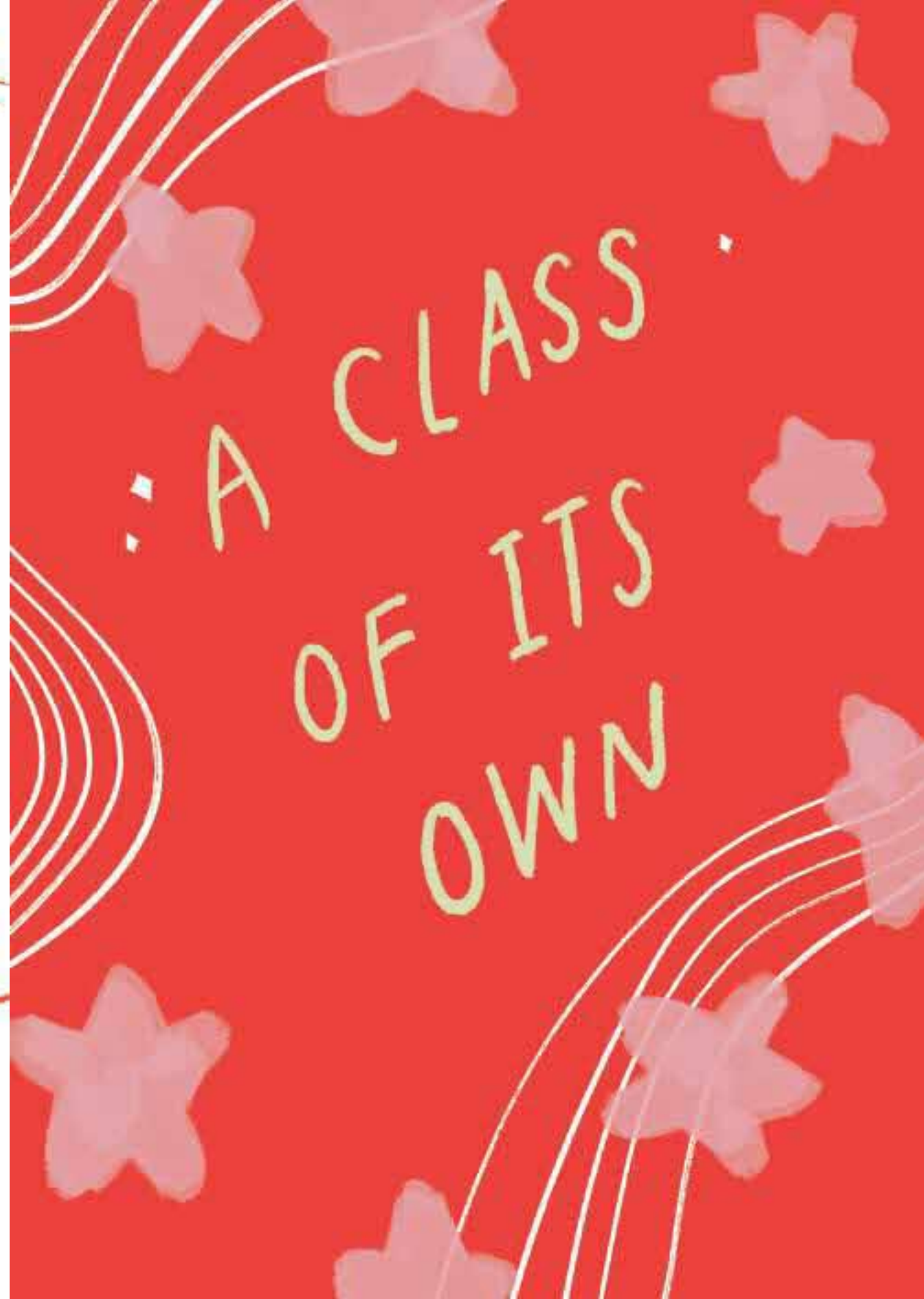
You've Heard of Bullet Journals. Now, How About a Round of Bullet Bingo?

Organise an activity or event that brings the community together to do good	Donate blood	Offer someone a helping hand or listening ear	Sign up for a dialect or language class
Participate in or form an interest group at your local Community Club or Centre	Get involved in animal shelters or environmental groups in school or in the community	Find out something new about another local culture	Volunteer for a cause you believe in
Teach something you are good at to others	Greet and thank your bus/taxi/private-hire car driver	Pick up a new sport	Buy a meal for someone in need
Invite someone of a different race or religion to your home for a festival celebration	Sign up for a class with your mom or dad	Face your fears and do something that scares you	Learn and remember the first name of two neighbours from different households
Clean up after your meal in a public space	Spend 24 hours without internet connection	Read a non-fiction book (that's not a part of your school's reading list)	Join a befriending programme to help a group you least think of helping

Each time you achieve something on the list, strike it off. If you can complete a row (diagonally, horizontally, or vertically), give yourself a pat on the back!

Some of these may be stuff you have already done. Perhaps they could be things you may not be able to do, or ought to do a couple of times more. If so, you can create a different bullet bingo sheet and start your own movement too. While you're at it, don't forget to keep us posted with the hashtag

#PAbulletbingo!



Dear Singaporeans,

My father first introduced me to the world of collecting. I was amazed by the historical value behind the discarded items that were being sold at the flea markets we visited.

There's nothing like a vintage F&N glass to remind me of childhood—I even have one from 1958—or discovering porcelain ware from the 1940s that were made specifically for Japanese soldiers during the Second World War.

Pre-war street signs like the ones of Nagapa Lane (off Selegie Road) are equally precious. Not many people know of these streets that no longer exist here in Singapore.

My collection of heritage items became known to the public when I loaned them out for Joo Chiat Heritage Nite organised by Siglap South Community Centre (CC) in 2012.

Since then, I have rented out items and created sets like old kopitiams, provision stores and barber shops for events all over Singapore, many of them at CCs. SG50 was a particularly busy year—we were at almost 30 anniversary events. Perhaps we might have seen each other.

While I love collecting things of historical value, what I enjoy more is sharing them with the community. In just 55 years, so many things have changed in Singapore, from the streets to the culture.

We have developed at such a fast pace that youths may not be able to appreciate what it took for us to get here. The important history that we keep in these antiques reminds us of what life was like in the past, and we should never lose them.

Yours sincerely,
David Wee,
Heritage Items Collector



History Gives Us Our Roots

Cultural Day Out

Do you know where you can take a stab at playing traditional Chinese instruments, participating in a tea ceremony and practising Chinese calligraphy? See the answer below!



Imagine

Fast forward to your retirement years. What is one piece of advice you would give to your younger self?

David is a former staff of Mountbatten Constituency Office, whose exposure to community work during his stint in People's Association (PA) eventually led him on to start Wee's Collection, collaborating with more community partners to sustain a passionate hobby.

What is uniquely Singaporean about you?



Chan Chun Sing
Deputy Chairman of PA

I regularly visit markets and food centres, where I can feel the community heartbeat. I am always amazed at how residents of different races and religions can gather at the same place—it's a great example of a uniquely multicultural society. It did not happen by chance—it is the hard work of generations of our people, pioneers and leaders.

(Ans: At Kreta Ayer Community Gallery, a joint project by Kreta Ayer CC and the National Heritage Board)

The ABCs of Learning Your 123

"A good mix of outdoor and classroom time ensured a holistic education and that children stayed healthy."

Koh Ah Moy, 67

She spent 25 years as a People's Association (PA) Kindergarten teacher—"I really love kids!" she gushes—and recounts how the centres have made a deep impact on the lives of local families.



Affordability Lowers Barriers To Education

In its early years, parents of each child only needed to pay a nominal \$3 a month. And in 1998, the monthly fee was just about \$40 for a daily half-day programme.

Children had lessons in English, mother tongue, mathematics, art, dance and music; and Ah Moy was trained to teach all subjects—even helping some children from disadvantaged families with their school fees on some occasions.

Balance is key

Ah Moy speaks fondly of the vast spaces available in the kampongs (such as at Thong Hoe Village where she first taught) and at the Community Centres (CCs) where children could run unbridled.



What was your childhood ambition and why?

Chan Chun Sing
Deputy Chairman of PA

I had ambitions to become a librarian—to get paid for doing what I enjoy, which is to read! And why not at one of the few air-conditioned places back in the 1970s at the old National Library on Stamford Road? But I quickly realised that in life, we may not always get to choose what we want. It is really about how we make the best use of our varying circumstances, at different stages of our lives.

Pupils also learnt the value of teamwork by putting together choreographed dances (and once, even a magic show) for the graduation concert at the end of each year.

Care Continues Outside the Classroom

During school holidays, Ah Moy and her colleagues made it a point to visit pupils and their families at home. "It was important for us to understand the background of these children, and to keep everyone coming to school," says Ah Moy.

Education is a Game Changer

Once reserved for the rich, the setup of PA Kindergarten made preschool education affordable and easily accessible for the masses. It was also responsible for instilling in parents the importance of preschool education, which was challenging during the 1960s and 1970s when it was not common for children to have preschool education. While PA Kindergartens have since ceased operations, CCs continue to be a place where preschoolers and school-going children enjoy enrichment classes.



In operation from 1964 to 1999, PA Kindergarten made preschool affordable and convenient for some 300,000 children in Singapore.



No More Standing It's Now About the

Since 1995, People's Association (PA) has worked together with the Ministry of Education to give out more than 2.2 million Edusave awards.

These are for Singaporean students who have performed well academically, or displayed exemplary character or leadership skills.

A Peek at the Ceremonies Through the Years



In the 1990s and early 2000s, children received their awards on stage in a mass ceremony, usually held in a school hall. They could only come with their parents due to space restrictions. There was also little interaction between attendees.



Today, the ceremonies are held at more cosy venues such as Community Clubs, Centres, Multi-Purpose Halls and Residents' Committee centres. There are small personal touches that differentiate the ceremonies of the different constituencies.

Attendees and their family members can also get to know their neighbours better, since the events are more intimate.

on Ceremony! Community

From Grateful Recipient to Dedicated Leader

Jagathishwaran s/o Rajo, PBM, 33, received his very first Edusave Merit Bursary Award when he was 13. The award money went towards purchasing school supplies for the next school year—something he was really appreciative of.



Years later, Jagathishwaran decided to pay it forward by first serving in the Indian Activity Executive Committee, and then the Youth Executive Committee.

He is currently secretary of the Zhenghua Citizens' Consultative Committee and is also the Chairman of the Communications Workgroup.

From WhatsApp to Facebook to Telegram, Jaga is always on the lookout for creative ways to engage his residents.

"I make it a point to get to know the students on a personal level so that it opens the doors for volunteerism to begin. They would then want to step forward to volunteer at the Education Merit Bursary award ceremonies and eventually, other community events too."

Rising up to Pay It Forward

Many recipients return as volunteers, eager to pave the way to make the ceremonies special for the students who come after them.

Thank that Mentor

It could be a teacher, a sports instructor, a senior in school, or someone who played an important role in your formative years. Whether we adored or resented them back then, what is undeniable is that we have learnt from this person, be it knowledge from books, on life or about ourselves.

Is there someone who has left an indelible impression on you till this day? Write a thank you letter to him/her and mail it out. Don't be surprised if you receive a reply in the (virtual) mailbox!

Need some help? Here are a few open-ended lines to help you frame that note.

Dear...

I am thankful to have met you in [insert year(s)] while I was at [insert school/organisation name]...

I remembered you once said/told me this...

You have impacted my life because...

I have learnt the following because of you...

Today, I can apply what I have learnt from you by...

I look forward to hearing from you. You can reach me at...

CARING
IS SO
MUCH
WIN!



OH NO!



How a Fire Changed a Neighbourhood



On 11 October 2016, two styrofoam boxes caught fire at the wet market in Block 493, Jurong West Street 41 during the wee hours of the morning. The blaze destroyed the market and the livelihoods of dozens of stallholders. Here's how the community came together to build a temporary market and raised \$600,000 for it.



HENRY RONNIE

The Man Who Had to Beat Time

Henry Ho, BBM(L), 61, Chairman of Jurong Central Citizens' Consultative Committee who led in the building of the temporary market

"Many people said we would need months to do this, but with strong support from the community, we were able to have the temporary market up and running within six weeks."

"People from all walks of life came forward to help. We received donations from businessmen, temples, clan associations and members of the public. Even students from the nearby schools organised their own fundraising efforts. It was very heartening to see everyone come together."

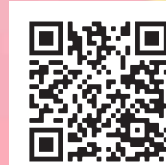
The Resident Who Threw a Lifeline

Ronnie Oh, 60, Jurong resident

When Ronnie heard from the news that a temporary market was to be built, his first instinct was to help. Although he did not come from a construction background, he was familiar with the setting-up and dismantling of tentage structures in a safe and speedy manner. Ronnie emailed Henry and offered to contribute a structure for the temporary market at no cost.

Like Ronnie, you can contribute to the community beyond monetary donations. How would you use your skills and talent to make a difference in the lives of others?

Watch how Ronnie and his team put up the temporary market structure within two weeks!



Did You Know?

On 25 May 1961—a hot afternoon on the public holiday of Hari Raya Haji—the Bukit Ho Swee Fire razed 11,727 homes and some 600,000sqm of land. People's Association staff from Delta Community Centre (CC)* at Zion Road, along with the Red Cross and other social welfare groups, worked day and night on relief work to assist the fire victims, eventually rehoming them in the Alexandra, Queenstown and Kallang areas.

*The now defunct Delta CC, dating as far back as the 1950s, was one of the earliest CCs to be built in Singapore. Back in the early days, CCs served as a venue for children from the kampong to gather and play.

When Was the Last Time You Visited Ah Ma and Ah Gong?

By connecting with the elderly in the community, you may well save a life in the process. This was exactly what a group of People's Association (PA) staff, 27-year-old Charles Low and his colleagues Loh Weiqi and Ng Poh Sun at Fengshan Constituency Office, did.

"Just let me die," muttered Mdm Chan, staring pensively out the open window of her 10th storey flat.

Constituency Management Executive Charles and Residents' Committee (RC) Manager Poh Sun looked helplessly from outside her front door. What began as an invitation to a seniors luncheon was turning out to become a potential crisis.

And they had reason to worry. Mdm Chan, a silver-haired senior living alone, has been suffering from mild dementia and depression after the death of her husband. Her only child was away in the UK.

"She thought her husband died three months ago, but it actually happened a year ago. And the only food that's left at home is half a loaf of white bread that's close to expiry," Charles recalls.

With no time to waste, Poh Sun and Charles had to think on their feet. Poh Sun continued to engage Mdm Chan in conversation while Charles called his supervisor Weiqi, the Deputy Constituency Director for advice. She contacted the police who sought permission from Mdm Chan's child to break the lock.



The ordeal lasted almost three hours. Mdm Chan was eventually sent to the hospital due to symptoms of dementia and her suicidal tendency.

When she was discharged after a week, Mdm Chan came home refreshed, and is now attending a senior day care centre near her home. "She sometimes comes to the RC centre to chat. Her outlook seems more positive now," says Poh Sun.

While the fact that Fengshan constituency is heavily populated with the elderly has been recognised by the team, there is now a greater sense of urgency in identifying the silent vulnerable who may appear problem-free to neighbours or even the youths in their own family.

For Charles, the incident has made him mindful of the needs of seniors in the area.

He says, "I try to look out for all elderly people who drop by the Community Club now and find out if they are socially engaged. I don't think what we do is above and beyond our job scope. Caring for people is what we should do."

Reflect

How well do you know the elderly residents living in your estate? IS there anything you can do to brighten up their day the next time you see them?



What Would You Do In These Scenarios?

How would you show care and compassion when faced with the following scenarios? Write down your thoughts or discuss with a friend.

A classmate or colleague outside of my clique looks sad and seems quieter than usual. I would...

I have finally saved up enough to get a new pair of sneakers, but I just saw a call for donations to help provide laptops for children from underprivileged families for their learning needs. I would...

A neighbour in my block is struggling with heavy bags of groceries. I would...

The food deliveryman I bumped into at the lift lobby looks like he is unwell. I would...

The neighbourhood stray kitty seems listless; she may be injured. I would...

FITSPPO IRL*

* IN REAL LIFE



Smells Like Team Spirit!
A Community that Keeps Active
Together Stays Together



Community Centres (CCs) used to be a social space for people to connect and pursue similar interests, such as basketball, sepak takraw and badminton.

Over time, to better meet the increasingly diverse needs of Singaporeans, People's Association (PA) evolved to offer more niche facilities for different groups. Called Specialist CCs, *imPact@Hong Lim Green* is one such facility that features a full-fledged gym with fitness and aerial yoga facilities, a classroom and an outdoor event space.



Fun Fact

Previously known as Telok Ayer Hong Lim Green CC, the one-stop fitness and social space at *imPact@Hong Lim Green* was launched in 2019 to better engage working professionals and empower them to give back to the community while staying healthy and socially connected. The space was built in consultation with working professionals and aims to connect working professionals through its tri-focal programming approach of Sports and Fitness, Professional Development, and Corporate Social Responsibility.

"I love the friendships I've found in and out of the gym!!"
—Faye Kwan, a regular member of *imPact@Hong Lim Green*



"This is what our community is about: we lift each other up! We not only lift weights, we lift lives too—not just within our circle of friends here, but for the wider community in Singapore."
—Faye



"*imPact@Hong Lim Green* is also home to other communities of young people who are connected through common professional and wellness interests. We provide the common space for mentees and mentors to have meaningful and engaging discussions. Many of them continue to give back and help others in the community."
—Michelle Ow, member of the People and Organisational Development Exchange (PODEX)

While Specialist CCs like *impAct@Hong Lim Green* provide services beyond just facilities, some things remain unchanged.



"The desire to create communities through sports has been there since day one. When we first started the Community Sports Club (CSC), we encouraged people to take up more community sports like qigong and tai chi."
—Patrick Teo, *BBM(L)*, former CSC Council Chairman



Michelle: "Over the years, the community sports scene has evolved for sure!"



Patrick: "What remains the same is the belief that these spaces and activities have the power to bring communities together."



Faye: "What do you hope to see in future Specialist CCs?"



"We also organised large-scale community events like the One Community Walk, which saw 70,000 people coming together at 70 locations across Singapore to walk shoulder to shoulder."

—Patrick



Boutique gyms used to be only accessible to more affluent Singaporeans, but *impAct@Hong Lim Green* has now made it possible for everyone to stay healthy through a series of customised fitness programmes. Did you know that the new *impAct@Hong Lim Green* gym offers 24 classes daily, which range from functional fitness to dance fitness and even aerial yoga classes?

In It for the Long Run

Runninghour is an inclusive running club that provides support for runners with special needs. The group has more than 400 members, consisting of "buddy runners" who might be physically, visually or intellectually challenged, as well as able-bodied fitness enthusiasts who volunteer as running guides.

Did You Know?

The Purple Parade is a unifying national platform that seeks to advocate inclusion and celebrates the abilities of the special needs community. It is a ground-up initiative by a group of volunteers and supported by the Central Singapore Community Development Council! First held in 2013, the parade represents a community of like-minded individuals and organisations such as voluntary welfare organisations, schools, social enterprises, government agencies and corporations. They are united by a common belief that people with special needs have abilities and can contribute to society.

A Letter from a Mother

Dear Huijuan,

I am so glad to have met you and all the amazing guides at *Runninghour*. Being a part of this family has made me so happy.

I remember you were so worried about **Leann** during her first two running sessions. You couldn't help but shout out to her to be careful when you saw her body tilting heavily to the right as she ran. That's my girl—she never lets anything hold her back.

We also really look forward to the dance-fitness classes at #impAct@Hong Lim Green. I knew it wasn't easy for *Runninghour* to find a free community space and trainer for people with special needs, so it was great that PA understood the importance of being inclusive and said yes to us.

Here, everyone treats Leann as a normal person, and I am encouraged to be a running guide for someone else.

I can't believe my girl is turning 24 in 2020. Sometimes, I wonder how life would have been like if Leann hadn't contracted bacterial meningitis when she was seven months old. Would I have continued being a beautician? What would Leann be doing now?

Leann's two older brothers would always tell me not to care about what others say or think. All of you at *Runninghour* have shown me how to do it. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Samantha Gan

(Leann Eng's mother)

Runninghour participant-turned-guide



People's Association believes in being inclusive. Like #impAct@Hong Lim Green, many of its CCs offer programmes tailored for those with special needs.

3 Questions with Huijuan Cher, 50, Volunteer at Runninghour

①

Why did you decide to be a volunteer and running guide?

I am an active person by nature and got to know about Runninghour through a friend. I was a little sceptical and concerned initially about how I was going to interact with people with special needs. I started off just walking with the group. To my surprise, I had a lot of fun!

②

What does being a volunteer mean to you?

I am someone who believes in giving back without any expectations. There are many things you can do to give a hand to someone else—it's simply about keeping your eyes open and seeing where help is needed.

③

How would you encourage someone to give back?

Volunteering doesn't have to take up a lot of your time. Every little effort goes a long way towards adding value to someone else's life.



Time
to start
running?
😊

Making Waves in the Community

At six PASSion WaVe Specialist Community Clubs (CCs), on top of the usual stuff, you can also do water-based activities such as:

- Kayaking
- Sailing
- Dragon boating
- Stand-up paddling

Meet the Managers

- Nur Nabihah Binte Salim, 30, Manager, PASSion WaVe @ Jurong Lake Gardens
- Jolene Ong, 26, Manager, PASSion WaVe @ Pasir Ris

These two ladies—and good friends IRL—are responsible for the smooth-running of day-to-day operations. They ensure the equipment, rooms and bookings for the classes are set up correctly and on time, and curate lifestyle programmes to cater to the interests of the residents in their vicinity.

Let's dive right in and hear why PASSion WaVe floats their boat!

Jolene

Hey Nabihah, just curious, how did you get started with PASSion WaVe?

Nabihah

I was 15 when I started leisure kayaking with friends at Pasir Ris—where you are working now! Then, PASSion WaVe was known as Water-Venture. We would rent our kayaks there as it was affordable.

A few years later, I obtained my kayak coaching certification and became a People's Association (PA) Trainer. I would conduct classes over the weekends while juggling my IT day job on weekdays.

AS a trainer, I really enjoyed interacting with residents of different backgrounds and age groups. So, when I knew there was a full-time role available at PASSion WaVe, I applied immediately!



Common PASSion

“At WWF, our motto is “together possible” and we value collaboration. While we bring the conservation expertise and the science behind the issues, PASSion WaVe has the right network, facilities and expertise when it comes to engaging people. The objectives of Project Blue WaVe also align with our outreach goals.”

—Chitra Venkatesh, Head of Education and Outreach, WWF-Singapore

Find out more about Project Blue WaVe!



N

What about you? What made you want to join PASSion WaVe?

J

I am passionate about giving back to the community and was attracted to what PASSion WaVe was doing in this area. For example, under our Project Blue WaVe partnership with conservation organisation World Wide Fund for Nature Singapore (WWF-Singapore), we have co-organised various events such as nature walks, beach clean-ups and workshops—all with the common intent to drive home the message of environmental conservation. Not to mention our regular reservoir “Kayak N Klean” sessions too.

N

Speaking of Project Blue WaVe, did you know it’s actually a spin-off from the annual coastal clean-up event that PA has been organising since 2007? The first coastal clean up by Sea Sports Clubs started in 1996!

J

Oh! I didn’t know it went so far back!

N

Yep. In fact, the inspiration behind this movement was “peanut”, a turtle which was deformed by an old six-pack can plastic ring that someone discarded irresponsibly.

J

Ah, no wonder Project Blue WaVe’s mascot is a hawksbill turtle named Bobby! That makes sense now. It’s awesome that we have gone beyond conducting water sports and lifestyle activities to come together to do good for the environment.

3 Common Myths About PASSion WaVe Debunked

Myth #1: I can only sign up for courses related to water sports.



Fact: There are other land activities such as rock climbing and stargazing!

Myth #2: I need to have a membership to participate.



Fact: The classes are open to everyone, including non-members and non-locals.

Myth #3: The outlets are not inclusive.



Fact: PASSion WaVe outlets offer programmes tailored for those with special needs, the disabled and seniors.



What Sports Type Are You?

Take 30 seconds to dash through five quick questions in our sports quiz and let us take a stab at suggesting which type of sports matches your physical and mental abilities.

Q1: Pain Tolerance: Do you scream when you stub a toe?

- (A) I scream a lot!
- (B) I yelp a bit
- (C) I can put up with a lot of pain
- (D) I laugh in the face of pain

Q2: Aggressiveness: If you were a curry, how spicy would you be?

- (A) Very mild - Japanese curry would be pushing it for me
- (B) Quite mild - Sliced chilli in soya sauce
- (C) Getting quite hot - Chicken rice chilli sauce
- (D) Scorching - Bring on the curries and mala steamboat!

Q3: Body Awareness: Two left feet or perfect poise?

- (A) I trip over my own feet
- (B) I am a bit clumsy
- (C) Steady, lah!
- (D) I can be a model

Q4: Communication: Are you the silent type, or a chatterbox?

- (A) I am as quiet as a mouse
- (B) I choose my words carefully
- (C) I am a bit of a chatterbox
- (D) I never stop talking

Q5: Trust: Are you a lone wolf, or do you like to work with the pack?

- (A) I howl at the moon by myself
- (B) I'm happy working alone or in a team
- (C) I prefer working with others
- (D) I thrive in a pack

Mostly As: Before you dismiss yourself as the "non-sporty" type, consider mind sports, which require a lot of attention and critical thinking skills. Examples would include chess, or even the new kid on the block—e-sports. #ICYMI, the world's first global governing body for e-sports is headquartered in Singapore. E-sports also took a step into the sporting mainstream with its debut at the 2019 Southeast Asian Games. Time to invest in a good ergonomic chair and participate in PA Youth Movement's PULSE!'s e-Sports challenges and games if you haven't!

Mostly Bs: Since jostling with a bunch of people is not quite your thing, taking to the waters may calm you down. Whether it's kayaking, sailing, windsurfing or rafting, water sports afford you the time and space to clear your mind, and the flexibility to either go solo or bring someone with you. Besides, what could be a better place to do water sports than in your own waterfront backyard—the sunny island of Singapore? For starters, check out PASSION WaVe's offerings! (For more on PASSION WaVe, go to pages 91-93).

Mostly Cs: You are happy as long as you keep moving, and you are pretty good at whatever sport you choose to do. That said, you prefer to exercise with others and have fun while you are at it. Why not start your own sports interest group? FYI, popular interest groups formed by youths and for youths at the CCs include beach volleyball, archery, cheerleading, and even yo-yo!

Mostly Ds: Team sports will keep you busy—physically and socially! From dragon-boat racing and hockey, to football and basketball, you will be spoilt for choice. Don't worry if no one in your current social circle enjoys the same sporting activities as you do; there are plenty of interest groups that you can join to meet like-minded active folks. Check out community apps like Meetup and SGCares, or approach your nearest CC to find out more.



#TOGETHER
WE CAN
OVERCOME



Courage in the Face of Contagion

Find out what these two gentlemen did when SARS and dengue hit their community, and why so.



Law Shun Yong, *BBM(L)*, 76,
Honorary Chairman, Sembawang
Citizens' Consultative Committee
Grassroots Volunteer for
more than 50 years

"Volunteers of the Residents' Committee helped to conduct daily temperature checks at Marsiling Market during SARS in 2003. We would also buy food and groceries and deliver them to residents on home quarantine."

"It's about commitment. As a volunteer, I knew I had to set aside my fears for the well-being of the residents. We also helped to allay their fears in turn by ensuring we had a dedicated phone number they could reach us at for help and information."

"It was very heartening to see everyone come together in a time of crisis. Many residents would ask us to take care of ourselves; others came forward to thank us in person after their home quarantine period. It was these little gestures of appreciation that kept me going."

"To me, social responsibility is the most important value. Often, it starts with small, simple steps."

Jack Wong, 40, Treasurer Of
Sembawang Residents' Network
- Grassroots Volunteer for
more than five years



"When my neighbourhood was identified as a dengue red cluster in 2019, we spent two months conducting house-to-house visits to allay the fears of the residents."

"It is precisely during times of crisis that we should step out and contribute. Everyone should have a ready heart and desire to serve. Don't wait for others to make things happen."

"My volunteering experience has been nothing short of meaningful; it has taught me how to bring joy to others. It's also very heartening when you see people coming together for a common purpose."

#ICYMI

In 2013, Singapore was badly hit by the haze. The daily lives of Singaporeans were affected. To help the low-income and vulnerable groups such as seniors and residents who live alone or have mobility issues, People's Association rallied grassroots leaders to prepare and distribute WeCare PACKs to families. Packing was completed within two days and a total of 30,000 packs were distributed within a week. Each pack contained an N95 mask, and basic food and medical supplies sponsored by local businesses and community partners.

Did You Know?

Community Emergency and Engagement (C2E) Committees and Community Emergency Response Teams (CERTs) help to build trust and emergency preparedness amongst residents. Comprising grassroots and volunteers, their role is to prepare citizens during peacetime and offer care during crises.

Keep Calm and Carry on Helping Others

Crisis situations can strike anytime. Much like how Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) swept across the nation in 2003, Singapore was hit by COVID-19 in early 2020.



Springing Into Action

Volunteers of all ages from Nee Soon Central Zone 6 quickly came together to split into shifts for the distribution of surgical masks for residents in their neighbourhood, working tirelessly from morning to night.



"A resident was unable to collect her masks, and I decided to give up my own. I wanted to allay her anxiety during such a trying period for everyone. Our objective is to be a steady source of reliable comfort during such times of crisis, and I think my team has done this really well," says Steven Yap, 54, Vice-Chairman of Nee Soon Central Zone 6 Residents' Committee and Vice-Chairman of the Community Emergency and Engagement Committee for Nee Soon Central.

"During the COVID-19 period, the topics residents talked about inevitably included questionable news that they had received on WhatsApp or seen on Facebook. I'd clarify these doubts for them, reminding everyone of the importance of getting news from reputable and official sources!" says Steven.

Gratitude in a Pack

Integration and Naturalisation Champions (INC) from Radin Mas, together with volunteers from six Immigration Associations, came together to pack and distribute 500 "Gratitude Packs" (心意包包) for the everyday heroes of Covid-19.

Who were involved?



Italian Association of Singapore



Jiangsu Association



University of Philippines Alumni Association of Singapore



Singapore Pakistani Association



Thai Chamber of Commerce



The Annamalai University Alumni Association (Singapore)



Recipients of the packs

Cleaners and security guards



Packs included: sanitisers, anti-bacterial wipes, tissues and medicated balm

"To be able to help out in the community gives me a unique sense of satisfaction. It is truly rewarding and fulfilling. Through this initiative, we are not just giving the frontline workers things, but also sharing love, care and support with them."

—Min Khine, volunteer from Kumudra Myanmar Arts & Cultural Association Singapore



"I am truly amazed at how so many people came forward to assist in this initiative. We have new citizens, PRs, Immigration Associations and new immigrants of different nationalities, all coming together for a common cause. We are truly 'Stronger Together'."

—Fabian Ng, BBM, Radin Mas Integration and Naturalisation Committee Leader



When we look back at the COVID-19 crisis a decade from now, what do you think history would reveal about us as a people?

The COVID-19 crisis has tested our spirit as a people and our resolve as a nation. As we look back at this episode in our history, I believe we will be remembered for the depth of kindness, the sense of togetherness and the spirit of resilience embodied by ordinary Singaporeans. I am hopeful that the values we have displayed as a community will transcend generations and transform Singapore for the better.

Lim Hock Yu
Chief Executive Director of
People's Association (PA)



Sew Lovely

To make reusable masks accessible to vulnerable residents and frontline workers, PA Women's Integration Network Council* gathered 43 Women's Executive Committees who led hundreds of volunteers around the island for a massive mask-making endeavour.

The Masks Sewn With Love initiative was a hit with talented makers who produced some 100,000 handmade cloth masks for recipients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19, such as children, the elderly, those staying in shelters and homes, public service frontliners, cleaners and domestic workers.

Other than sewing, residents also contributed fabric and parts. Completed masks can be dropped off postage-free at SingPost where they will be consolidated and distributed. The fuss-free process to volunteer and contribute attracted many Singaporeans to come on board this initiative.

Head on to the MASKS Sewn With Love Facebook group (with over 6,300 members!) to find out how you can chip in.



*The WIN Council was set up in 1995 to inspire more women to participate in grassroots activities and take up leadership roles in the community.

We Are Strongest When We Rally As #SGUNITED

Singapore's strong response to crises such as SARS and COVID-19 saw the people's social and psychological resilience put to the test. In fact, the SARS epidemic in 2003 had made Singapore much better prepared to deal with the novel coronavirus when it hit us in 2020.

Although fears of COVID-19 sparked some anti-social behaviours initially, most Singaporeans responded calmly and responsibly. There were also countless heart-warming examples of how Singaporeans displayed quiet strength and resolve to fight this crisis together.

Which #SGUnited acts left the deepest impression on you? What did you do—or on hindsight, hope you had done—in joining your local community to overcome this global pandemic? What lessons have you learnt?

#SGUNITED



#MASK UP



COMMUNITIES

COVID

1:0

#WORK FROM HOME



TURNING LIVES AROUND

Two men who rode through the turbulence of COVID-19 crisis via People's Association (PA)'s network, and a youth volunteer weighs in on why giving means so much to him.

The Day that Saved Patrick's Life

"When I lost my job due to the COVID-19 pandemic, it felt like I'd lost myself. I could no longer afford a place to stay and I had problems getting each meal. I thought of ending my life.

But my life serendipitously turned around the day I stepped into Nee Soon East Community Club (CC) looking for a place to charge my phone. The CC staff saw that I was not myself and asked if I was okay. I shared my predicament with them and their graciousness moved me to tears. Instead of pushing me away, they stayed to listen. Instead of merely listening, they took action, extended kindness and didn't stop there.

They reached out to their connections at the Social Service Office in Yishun and found me temporary lodging with a church in Woodlands. They even went beyond and got me a job as a stall assistant at Yishun Park Hawker Centre. Mr Noorman Mubarak, my employer at the nasi lemak stall, is known to help the community and hire residents in need. I'm grateful that Noorman took a chance on me and expressed his appreciation for my job ethics and hard work.

It's been a few months since I started working with Mr Noorman and things couldn't be more different now. I am proud of what I have made of myself and have been working hard to learn new skills like how to cook and season food. I look forward to brighter days ahead."

—Patrick Foo, 41, Nee Soon East resident



Darkness Turns to Light

Ryan Chng, 23, was once a drug addict who spent time in prison. Today, he has found new purpose in life.

Ryan signed up with voluntary welfare organisation HUG Community Services to fight emotional emptiness after his release from jail. The opportunity to volunteer with Toa Payoh West Community Club at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, helping with mask collection etc., gave him insight into how one can light up the lives of people going through their darkest moments, and spread happiness.

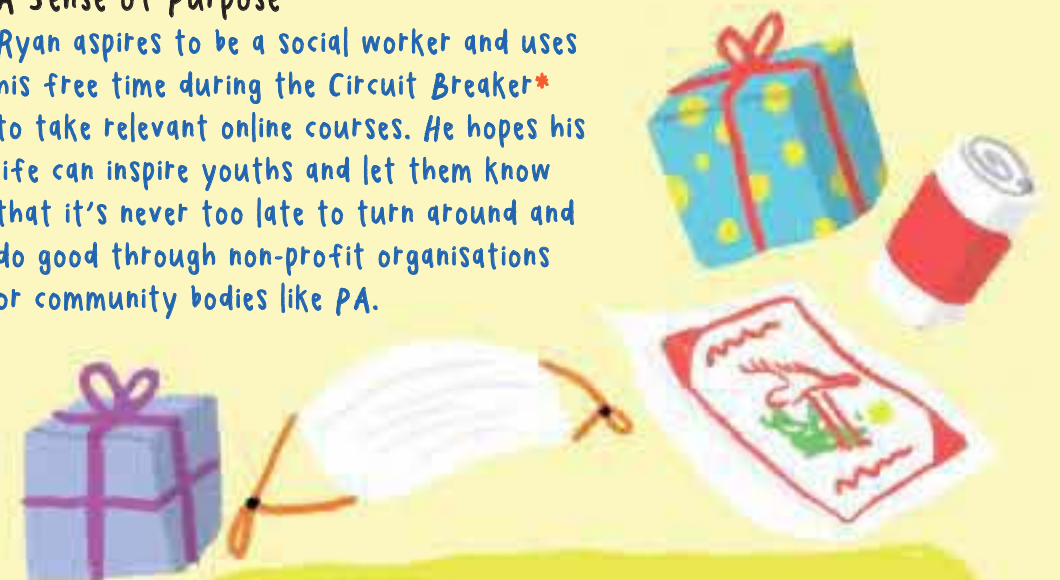
In return, the volunteering experience brought him a sense of purpose.

"I got tired of running away from the police and seeing my mum cry. That's when I decided to change. When someone smiles or gives thanks—or even handmade gifts and food—in my work as a volunteer, I get a sense of bliss. I no longer feel that something is lacking in my life."



A Sense of Purpose

Ryan aspires to be a social worker and uses his free time during the Circuit Breaker* to take relevant online courses. He hopes his life can inspire youths and let them know that it's never too late to turn around and do good through non-profit organisations or community bodies like PA.



*The "Circuit Breaker" was a period of stay-at-home order by the government that lasted from 7 April to 1 June 2020. The measures were imposed to stem the spread of COVID-19 in Singapore.

Did You Know?



The COVID-19 situation has impacted all Singaporeans. Through the Unity, Resilience, Solidarity and Fortitude Budgets, close to S\$100 billion was set aside to help businesses, save jobs and support workers; and strengthen social and economic resilience. The Temporary Relief Fund (TRF) was the first COVID-19 financial assistance to support middle- and lower-income Singaporeans who have suffered job or income losses and needed immediate financial help with their basic living expenses. It was rolled out in April 2020, before more comprehensive support schemes came along in May 2020.

Around 227,500 applications for the TRF were submitted through the CCs in just the month of April 2020 alone, on top of what was received at the Social Service Offices and online portal. Besides deployed staff, around 7,500 grassroots volunteers also stepped forward to manage the crowds during the Circuit Breaker and assist with applications.

A Lesson in Empathy

“Every day, we would hear at least 30 to 40 unique stories from residents who walked in. It made me better appreciate what I have and allowed me to empathise with the hardship others were going through. Though I’ve volunteered with the Youth Network (YN) for two years, we never had to interact with so many residents daily. This was a rare, eye-opening opportunity,” says Zane Oh, 20, Assistant Secretary of the Kampong Chai Chee YN. Along with six other YN members, Zane personally processed over 50 TRF applications each day at the CC for residents.



Think

How have you grown as a person during the COVID-19 pandemic?

HELP IS HERE, WE ASSURE



What Happened when Singaporean Evacuees from Wuhan Returned Home?

Expectation:

14 days of “imprisonment”



Reality:

- Cheery posters on the wall
- Toys and books for the kids
- Valentine’s Day surprise for couples
- 14 days of warmth and care from the staff at National Community Leadership Institute (NACLI), whose training facilities were turned to quarantine purposes for the first time.



“We thought about how we were to cope, quarantined in a place for 14 days. We were worried about our health, and our children’s health. So we were touched by the thoughtfulness of the NACLI staff as they provided much assurance, and helped us manage. They were polite and patient.”

—Joshua Koh, 47

In return, Joshua, his wife and three sons paid it forward by distributing hand sanitisers to the public at Sengkang Central Community Club (CC), and helping to pack care packs in NACLI for its next batch of people under quarantine.



In March 2020, Temasek Foundation partnered with People’s Association (PA), mobilising its networks, grassroots leaders, volunteers and staff to provide each Singaporean household a 500ml bottle of zero-alcohol sanitiser. PA also sought to go green by encouraging everyone to bring their own bottles—and sure enough, a vast majority turned up with their own reusable bottles for the exercise.



A strong sense of *gotong royong* spirit was present when more than 18,560 grassroots leaders, agencies and citizen volunteers stepped forward to help in the week-long nationwide hand sanitiser collection exercise, from 23 to 29 March 2020.

PA gave out a total of 496,414 bottles at the CCs during the exercise. Grassroots leaders and volunteers also delivered the sanitisers to frail or immobile residents and those on Stay-Home Notice (SHN).

Eyes Wide Open

"I have been staying in Queenstown for 33 years now. I want my neighbourhood to be a safe and happy one, that's why I did what I did."

—Randy Tan, 33. Randy is a Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)* volunteer and Safe Distancing Ambassador (SDA) who patrols his neighbourhood from as early as 7am.



*What is CERT?

They are an organised group of volunteers trained to respond to community emergencies and help in recovery efforts.



In the spirit of national unity, PA mobilised the Community Emergency and Engagement (CEE) Committees, and CERT grassroots leaders and volunteers as SDAs. They help ensure that members of the public comply with safe distancing measures, such as standing one metre apart from others and wearing a mask. SDAs were also tasked to take temperatures to check for a fever and scan NRICs for potential contact tracing. From April to June 2020, more than 7,000 SDAs stepped up to the challenge, risking their own safety to ensure the well-being of their fellow Singaporeans.



Call Agents Who Went the Extra Mile

The PA Call Centre was set up to help and facilitate requests from Persons Under Quarantine (PUQ) and SHN and those put on five-day medical leave.

We would do anything for the ones we love. But would we be willing to do it for a stranger?

Who: Jacquleen Tung, 32, PA Staff

What she did: Sensing a caller's distress and helplessness amidst frustration and agitation as she was extremely worried about her sister's risk of infection, Jacquleen listened attentively and turned caller Irene's worries around. Going above and beyond, Jacquleen then shared her personal mobile number with Irene, did follow-up calls to check on both Irene and her sister's well-being, and even helped Irene with her Temporary Relief Fund (TRF) application.



"I was very surprised and touched by Jacquleen's actions, and for her helpfulness, and told her that I have never met a public officer like her who could really empathise with my situation. Speaking to her gave me the assurance I needed, and helped ease my worries."

—Irene



"By listening, one not only shows concern, but also gains an insight into the callers' issues."

—Jacquleen Tung

Who: Jasmine Koh, 62, PA Staff

What she did: When Jasmine learnt that a security officer on SHN had no next-of-kin to assist him, she personally bought food and groceries from her own pocket for him for 10 consecutive days, arranged for his medical appointment to top up his medication supplies and even advised him on his TRF application post-quarantine.



“Before helping out in SHN duties, I had experienced being in quarantine (my son was a confirmed COVID-19 patient). During that period, my supervisor Adam Tan, personally delivered my laptop on his birthday! He knew I felt bad about leaving work undone and was bored, and doing some work would distract me from worrying.”

“Hence I was emotionally connected when I heard of Mr Adnan’s case; he had lost his job due to COVID-19. I immediately reached out to lend a helping hand. I see it as a pay-it-forward.”

—Jasmine Koh



Did You Know?

From February to June 2020, PA and grassroots leaders have provided community support such as delivering food rations, meals and essential items, and facilitating non-emergency medical assistance to over 3,500 affected persons. PA also worked with agencies such as hospitals, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of National Development, Ministry of Social and Family Development, Immigration & Checkpoints Authority, Housing Development Board, Singapore Tourism Board and etc., to facilitate their compassionate requests—which included visiting loved ones at the hospital and attending the wakes and funerals of their family members—so that they were supported during this difficult period. The PA call centre addressed more than 6,000 COVID-19-related queries during the surge of infections in the first three months of the COVID-19 pandemic outbreak.

What was PA’s role in Singapore’s fight against COVID-19?

The COVID-19 crisis was a test of our unity and resilience as a people. When PA was called upon to distribute millions of masks, hand sanitisers and TraceTogether tokens to residents at a moment’s notice, our network of grassroots leaders, community volunteers and corporate partners readily stepped forward to help, despite their own fears about contracting COVID-19. We have been able to successfully mount such nation-wide responses, because of the relationships and trust that we have built up over the years with our people. This is the strength of the PA.

Lim Hock Yu
Chief Executive Director
of People’s Association



Recall

Did someone extend kindness to you during the pandemic?
How can you pay it forward now?

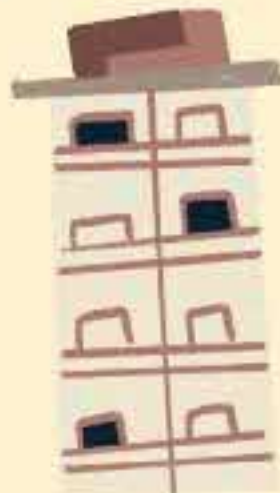


How Technology Brought Us Together

When Singapore implemented Circuit Breaker safe distancing measures in April 2020 to minimise the spread of COVID-19, Community Clubs and Centres (CCs), Residents' Committee and Neighbourhood Committee (NC) centres were temporarily closed.

During this stay-home period, many vulnerable residents did not know how and where to seek further help; social face-to-face engagements planned for residents had to be put on hold. That, however, did not deter Mae and Sameen, who each found new ways to reach out to their community.

Here are their stories.



You've Got a "kaki" in Me

Mae Tan, 28, a resident in Gek Poh Ville, had returned from overseas when the government requested Singaporeans to return home. She was diagnosed with COVID-19 and was hospitalised in March 2020.

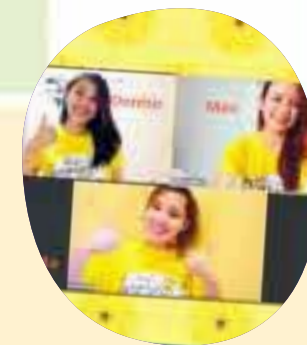
"The healthcare heroes who treated me and risked their own safety on the frontline inspired me. I wanted to pay their kindness forward and do what I can to help Singapore."

—Mae Tan

Mae didn't want others, especially the seniors, to risk contracting the virus due to not having access to masks or the lack of hygiene awareness. She did not want them to experience the same pain that she did.



Together with her friends **Denise Tay**, 26, and **Michelle Lau**, 27, the trio founded #Kampungkakis in April 2020 ("kampung" means village, and "kakis" mean buddies in Malay). Mae had met Michelle, Chairperson of Hong Kah North Zone 7 Residents' Network (RN), at a reusable mask distribution exercise. Little did they expect this chance encounter would lead to the launch of a successful neighbourhood buddy initiative.



#Kampungkakis' aim was simple: to leverage technology for matching identified vulnerable residents—such as the elderly, isolated individuals or low-income families—with volunteer kakis during the COVID-19 crisis. Each pair is matched based on proximity and needs.

#KAMPUNG
KAKIS



What Did Volunteer Kakis Do?

Keeping to safe distancing guidelines, volunteer kakis checked in on their neighbour-in-need via phone calls. They helped in any way they could, such as by offering financial guidance, buying groceries or lending IT equipment for home-based learning.

To raise awareness about #KampungKakis, posters in Singapore's four official languages were put up on the community notice boards. #KampungKakis also tapped into

the RNS' social media platforms to increase publicity. In addition, a hotline was set up at Gek Poh Ville CC to assist residents.



With the support from Gek Poh Ville Community Club Management Committee, Hong Kah's RNS and various social service organisations, #KampungKakis was a winning concept. Within two months, more than 600 resident volunteer kakis and 10 partner agencies came onboard.

"I'm a strict vegetarian, and certain cooking ingredients I use are not available in my neighbourhood. I am very thankful to my kaki Shi'ai for helping me to buy groceries online during the circuit breaker. She also brought my son and I to the Botanic Gardens during Phase 2. We enjoyed the outing and were glad to take a breather after staying home for so long."

—Madam Chua, 95, #KampungKakis beneficiary and mother to a mentally challenged son in his 60s

Zooming in on Engagement

When COVID-19 hit our shores, Mrs Sameen Khan, PBM, 38, Chairperson of River Valley NC, had to postpone the year's planned engagement activities for the residents.

Unfazed, Sameen and her NC team members came up with an alternative way to remain connected with residents during the stay-home period—they organised virtual gatherings using online video conferencing tools, such as Zoom!



So, what did the residents do at these gatherings?

They participated in family games, played music and sang together, conducted or attended urban gardening classes, and many more.

River Valley NC also updated their Facebook page regularly with light-hearted and interactive posts to help residents unwind, such as brain teasers and community-related quizzes. They also organised online storytelling sessions to keep the young ones engaged.

Everyone loved it!



Imagine

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has accelerated the use of technology, playing a crucial role in keeping our society functional. How would you have used technology to engage residents if you were given a chance to?

Meaningful Meals



For most of us, it's hard to imagine not knowing where—and when—our next meal will come from. However, this was the stark reality faced by some low-income families in Singapore during the COVID-19 crisis.

Find out how the Community Development Councils (CDCs) stepped up to ensure no one, especially school-going children, went hungry, through the CDC Student Meals Scheme.



Kamisah's Story

When COVID-19 hit, **Kamisah** and her husband had to halt their plans on setting up a small towing company.

Saddled with the sudden responsibility of having to look after her children at home during the Circuit Breaker period, **Kamisah** could not look for a part-time job. To make matters worse, her husband, a delivery rider, had to settle for fewer delivery jobs due to a faulty bike.

Buffeted by the stress of their diminishing family income and the fear of being incapable of supporting their children's needs, **Kamisah** and her husband were immensely relieved when they knew their children were amongst the 12,000 students eligible for the CDC Student Meals Scheme.

The scheme was truly a financial lifeline for the families.



"COVID-19 disrupted the lives of many, and had a far-reaching impact on businesses—including ours. However, we recognised that our reach and experience as a platform company could be used during these challenging times to help our community, especially those who may have been harder hit than others. The CDC Student Meals Scheme is one of the many initiatives we had in place that extended help to the less fortunate while supporting our F&B businesses at the same time. We believe that as we stand united as a community, we can overcome this situation."

—**Yee Wee Tang**, Managing Director, Grab Singapore

3 Things You Should Know about the CDC Student Meals Scheme

1. Launched in April 2020, the scheme is a partnership between Singapore's five CDCs, **Lee Huay Leng** from Singapore Press Holdings, philanthropist **Dr Tahir**, and **Yee Wee Tang** from Grab Singapore.



2. It was targeted at primary and secondary school students living in rental flats, and was aimed at helping low-income families defray the additional cost of buying meals while their children were on Home-Based Learning (HBL) during the Circuit Breaker period. Some 12,000 eligible students were given e-vouchers to buy meals from over 7,000 participating food merchants.



3. For the first time, the CDCs fully leveraged on technology to reach out to beneficiaries, and to issue and redeem vouchers. This is also aligned with the CDCs' efforts to encourage more people to utilise technology and to better serve residents' needs.



Let's Help Each Other

Local businesses also took a hit during the COVID-19 crisis. Prices of imported goods rose, while customer numbers dipped.

"There is a lot of uncertainty for everyone. There are fewer customers now because more people stay home," says **Ma Kheng Luan**, who runs a chicken rice stall in **Bukit Batok**.

To help Singaporean households with daily expenses while supporting local merchants and hawkers, the mayors from Singapore's five CDCs also launched the CDC Vouchers Scheme in June 2020. Some 400,000 lower-income Singaporean households were each given \$50 worth of vouchers to be spent at participating local businesses such as hawker stalls and mom-and-pop shops.



"The vouchers not only help residents, but the hawkers as well. We hope this initiative can revive neighbourhood businesses while relieving the economic situation for some of our residents in need."

—**Chin Chee Young**, Member of the **Bukit Gombak Traders' Association**



"It is beneficial to both sides—it helps the people who need it most, and helps our business because more people come to our stalls"

—**Sekar Jayaprakash**, hawker in **Bukit Batok**



Spreading the Joy of Ramadan, Circuit Breaker Style

Many Singaporeans would remember the special Ramadan in 2020, where things appeared to be different, but were actually kept "same, same" through the spirit of coming together to help the less fortunate.



Working Together through Tough and Easy Times

The SGUnited Buka Puasa Initiative was held over the fasting month of Ramadan, from 24 April to 23 May 2020, to provide meals to needy families and frontline healthcare professionals. Each day, as many as 7,000 bento sets were donated by five network partners across 20 Community Club (CC) locations. During that time, more than 200 volunteers gave their time daily to help with the meal distribution.

"We decided to get our friends and family members to come and fill in for all the dates. I gathered all my kompong teammates and we helped out with the distribution."

—**Muhammad Nazar**, Volunteer with Radin Mas CC Malay Activity Executive Committee (MAEC)



"In this initiative, we had people from all races and religions providing meals to Muslims who were fasting. This opened up many possibilities for the future. Nobody's contribution is insignificant; we can come together and do our part. When everybody does this collectively, it becomes a big effort."



—**Muhammed Iskandar**, Volunteer at Radin Mas CC

"My constituency director called me and said, 'Kak Nekmah, there's some unconsumed food from an event here which would go to waste if no one collects them. Can you distribute them?' I agreed and it made me very happy because I felt worried about the elderly who were fasting and living alone. How would they be able to get their meals? The rest of us have food for our pre-dawn meals and for breaking fast, but there are those who don't even have anything to eat. If the healthy ones don't help the disadvantaged, who would? This is their time of need. Maybe one day, it could be ours."

—**Mdm Nekmah Mahadi**, Assistant Treasurer, Bunga Merah Residents' Committee

No Visiting? No Problem!

Besides Hari Raya Puasa, the Circuit Breaker period also affected Good Friday and Vesak Day celebrations in 2020. Gatherings during the Circuit Breaker period were prohibited. Places of worship were also temporarily closed.

Muslims were unable to visit their families and catch up with relatives during Hari Raya, but many families here were determined to usher in the special day—and did it, in their own special way!

They used online video conferencing tools such as Zoom to mark the occasion virtually. Dressed in their best outfits, festive greetings were exchanged and food and laughter were shared in cyberspace.

It might have been a different kind of Ramadan with muted festivities, but everyone took heart that they were facing this together and understood that sacrifices were necessary to keep their loved ones safe.

Think

What does "giving" mean to you? When was the last time you did a "giving" act?



My COVID-19 Journal

Has the pandemic affected you and your community? Reflecting on your experience over these uncertain months can help unknot tangled thoughts as you, your loved ones and fellow Singaporeans move out of this crisis stronger.

Feel free to doodle your thoughts here as well.

What was your greatest challenge during the pandemic?

How did you overcome it?

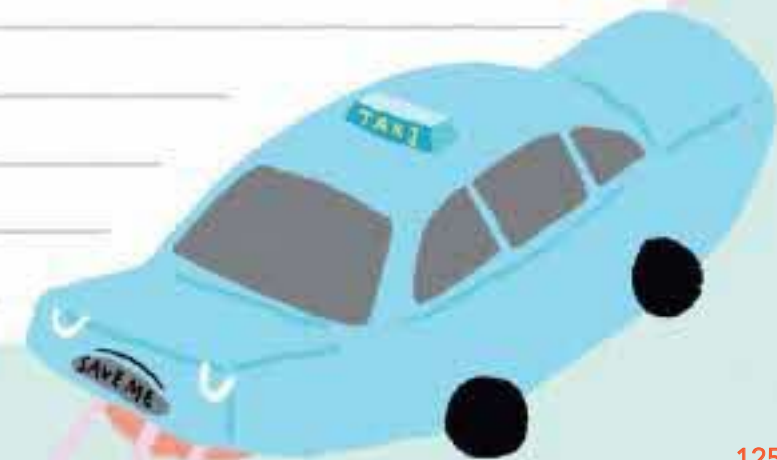
What have you learned positively about yourself during this time?

What surprised you about yourself?



Looking around you, which group do you think was most affected by COVID-19?

- The elderly, because they could not see their family and friends.
- Taxi drivers, because their earnings dropped drastically during the Circuit Breaker.
- People working in restaurants, hotels and airlines, because many have lost their jobs.
- Others (Who and why?).



What are the ways you can contribute to help affected groups?

If there's one thing you could say to frontline employees like healthcare professionals, cleaners and safe distancing ambassadors, what would it be?

How do you envision a post-COVID Singapore to look like? What would be your role?

#SGUnited



Lastly, if you have been staying resilient and capitalising on opportunities in the midst of this global pandemic, stepping up to serve the vulnerable or learning new skills and adapting to ways to support yourselves and your families, we applaud you and dedicate this chapter to you.

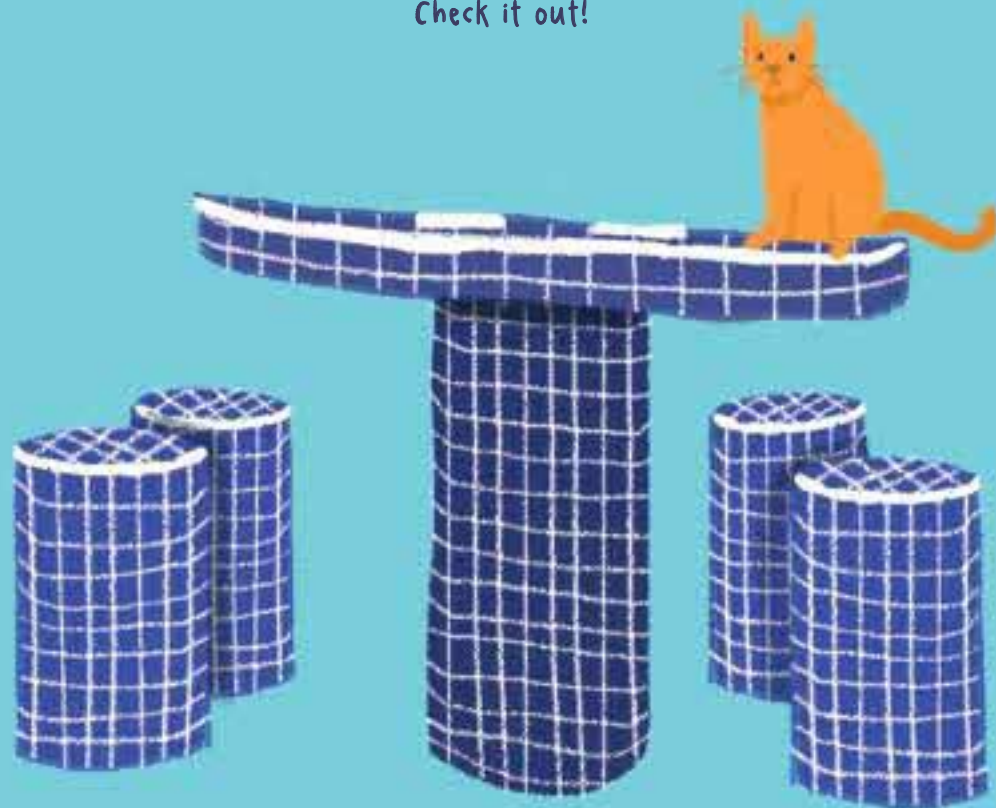
The Story of Our Community in 60 Icons



The Stories of Our Community are stories of our people who have contributed to building the harmonious, multiracial and multicultural community we have in Singapore today.

Together with our grassroots movement and network of partners, People's Association builds and bridges communities to foster racial harmony, forge social cohesion, and strengthen national resilience through initiatives and channels that bring people together and the government and people closer. Some of these ideas are depicted in the icons found on the back cover.

Check it out!



HOW DID PEOPLE AMIDST US, DESPITE RISK OF CONTAGION,
REACH OUT AND ENGAGE RESIDENTS? (SEE PAGES 98-123)

WHY DID A YOUNG LADY DECIDE TO EXTEND HER
UP-CYCLING HOBBY TO THE COMMUNITY? (SEE PAGE 31)

WHAT MADE THREE YOUNG MEN HELP A GROUP OF STRANGERS
THREE TIMES THEIR AGES? (SEE PAGE 58)



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