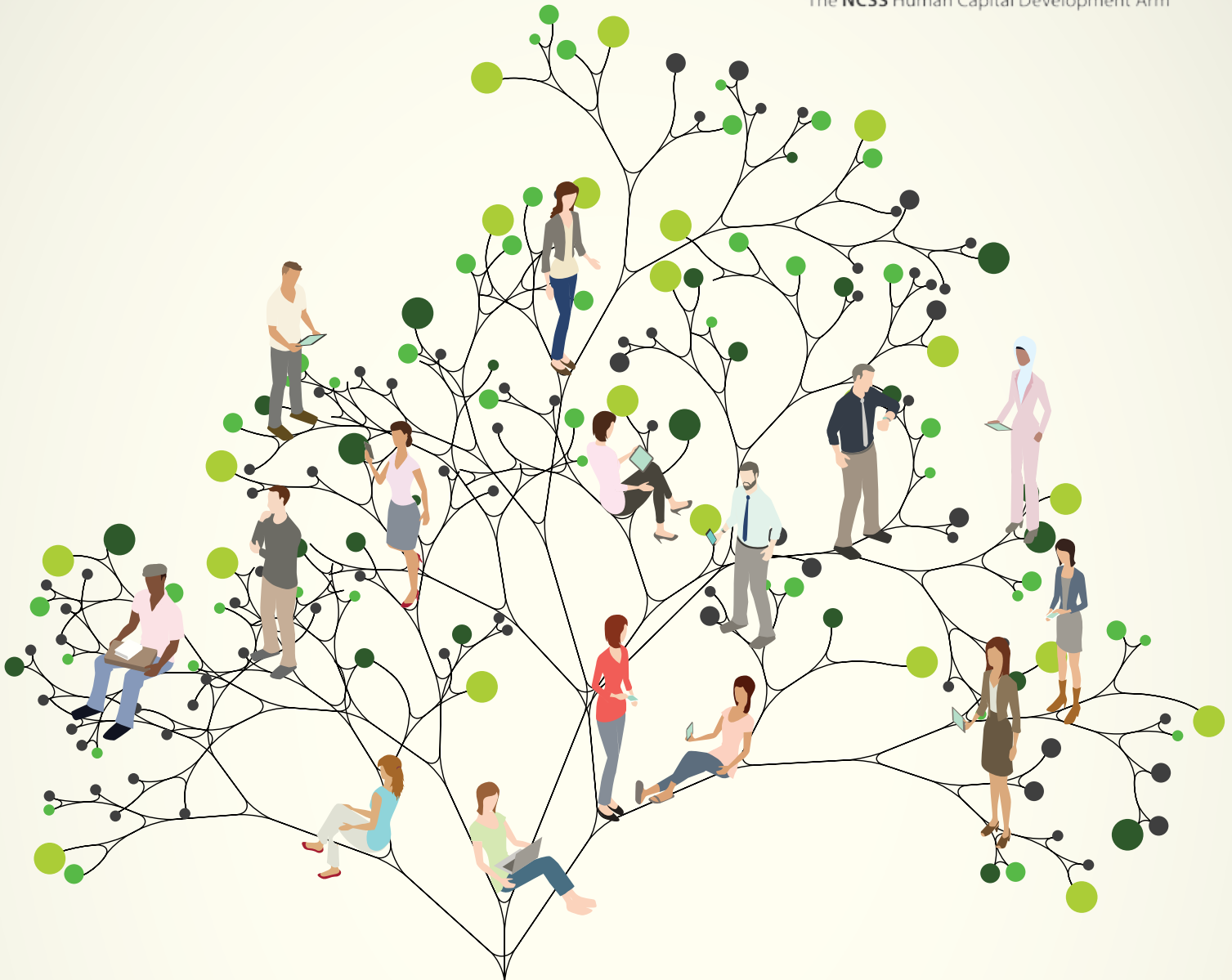


BE INSPIRED BY THE TRUE  
STORIES OF 15 SOCIAL  
SERVICE PROFESSIONALS



The NCSS Human Capital Development Arm



Nurturing  
Careers  
Inspiring  
Lives



Nurturing  
Careers  
Inspiring Lives



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# Foreword

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*The scale and scope of social services in Singapore has evolved significantly since the early days of focusing on disaster relief. The organisations and professionals in the sector continue to develop and become more skilled in meeting the social challenges arising from changing demographics and growing complexity of needs. Today, the social service sector employs around 16,000 professionals serving different groups of people in need, including those who require intermediate and long-term care. To support the growing demand of social services, the sector's manpower is projected to grow at an average of close to 5% annually.*

---

A career in Social Service is deeply meaningful and the people who work in the sector impact the lives of the disadvantaged groups that they serve. To create awareness of the wide range of roles and pathways in the sector, the Social Service Institute has been reaching out to potential candidates, students and the general public, through the media, talks in schools and career fairs. Students from secondary schools to tertiary institutions also get the opportunity to intern with social service organisations, where they get a first-hand understanding of the sector.

Mid-career professionals wishing to join us from other sectors can tap on the Professional Conversion Programme for Social Workers, a 'place-and-train' scheme to equip themselves with the competencies to become qualified social workers.

There is strong support for the development of aspiring and in-service professionals. For example, the VWO-

Charities Capability Fund has been providing grants for sector scholarships and sponsorships, and other professional development initiatives. The National Social Work Competency Framework was launched last year to articulate the knowledge, skills and behavioural attributes for social workers at different job levels, and provide greater clarity on possible career pathways. A more recent introduction is the SkillsFuture Study Awards for the Social Service Sector, which aims to nurture lifelong learners to develop specialist skills or deepen other professional competencies to perform better and deliver a greater impact to society.

The sector also needs strong, forward-thinking leaders at all levels. Social service and non-profit leaders can sharpen their leadership skills at every stage of their career through programmes such as ACE Capstone Leadership for Non-Profits and Leadership Milestone Programmes. Board members are strongly encouraged to participate in the suite of programmes under the Develop Board Volunteers Initiative to enhance their board effectiveness.

The skills required in the social service sector are evolving. New entrants to the sector and serving professionals must continue to strive towards skills mastery and higher levels of professionalism, and continue to grow and learn throughout their careers. I hope you will enjoy reading the personal experiences shared by the 15 individuals featured in this book - they exemplify a deep sense of commitment in learning, and may they serve as a source of inspiration for us.

**Mr Tan Chuan-Jin**

*Minister for Social and Family Development*

# Acknowledgements

We express our sincere gratitude to the interviewees for taking the time and effort to share their stories, and the organisations for their support for this project.

## Mr Alvin Koh

Social Work Associate,  
Methodist Welfare Services (Tampines Family Service Centre)

## Mr Paul Long

Executive Director,  
Family Life Society

## Ms Cecilia Sim

Social Work Assistant,  
The Singapore Association for the Deaf

## Ms Prathibah Pillai D/O Pillai Parappa Karan

Teacher,  
Grace Orchard School

## Mr Christopher Lo

Board Member,  
Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore

## Mr Quek Hong Choon

Director,  
SPD

## Ms Evelyn Ng

Senior Care Associate,  
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Singapore Muslim Women's Association (PPIS)

## Ms Gina Chan

Social Worker,  
CROSSROAD Youth Centre (Care Corner Singapore Ltd)

## Ms Schutz Lee

Treasurer,  
Society for WINGS (Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully)

## Mr Jerome Yuen

Executive Director,  
Club Rainbow (Singapore)

## Ms Suzanne Low

Social Worker,  
AWWA School

## Mr Lam Wai Mun

Counsellor,  
Fei Yue Family Service Centre (Champions Way)

## Mr Willy Ho

Senior Programme Executive,  
Methodist Welfare Services (Wesley Seniors Activity Centre)

## Ms Lau Yun Yi

Teacher Assistant,  
AWWA School



About  
The  
Social  
Service  
Institute



# About Social Service Institute

**15,367**

training places filled from



**714** training programmes delivered by SSI in its second year as the appointed Continuing Education & Training centre for social services.



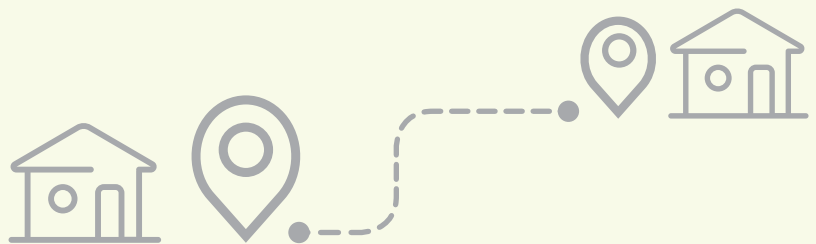
classrooms equipped with high-tech interactive projectors and lecture capture systems.

Embarked on

**EDUCATION  
INNOVATION  
2020**

to spearhead learning with latest technologies and pedagogies to develop future-ready workforce.

With the relocation of SSI to Central Plaza in September 2016, SSI aims to offer a one-stop human capital solution, developing the capacity and capability of the social service workforce.



An online portal developed to build a community of knowledge-empowered social service professionals.

**180**

social service professionals trained through Video Conference Facilitation.



**20,000**

accounts in Gatherhere, where social service professionals take ownership in curating their own learning, connecting with like-minded professionals and co-creating ideas and solutions with partners and the community.

# Our Programmes

## Board Members Programmes

### DEVELOP BOARD VOLUNTEERS INITIATIVE (DBVI)

is the first-of-its-kind in the non-profit sector for developing board members in Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs). It is a structured system which provides a holistic learning roadmap for non-profit board members. A suite of programmes include **NonProfit Directors Programme, Governance Month** and **Board Members Network**.



A total of  
**1,130**  
training places have been  
achieved from 2015 to 2016.

### BOARD MEMBERS NETWORK SESSION

is a platform for board members to co-create new knowledge on effective Board practices with other board members through sharing in discussions and learning from the experts.

**170** training places from board members have been attained through the four network sessions held between 2015 and 2016.

Together with the Singapore Institute of Directors, SSI launched the



### NONPROFIT DIRECTORS PROGRAMME (NPDP)

a development programme that aims to equip board members with strategic insights to effectively lead their organisations in the changing social landscape. The seven modules are hosted at different venue in collaboration with an NPO partner to provide learners an in-depth understanding of ground realities relevant to case studies.

More than  
**560** training places have been achieved through this programme.

Close to

**400**

board members have joined the **Governance Month** since 2015. Facilitated by board practice practitioners, the 10 short-module programme are designed to sharpen board members' capabilities with the know-how on governing their non-profit organisations.



# Our Programmes

## Leadership Training Programmes

A total of **120** leaders in the sector benefited from the Leadership Milestone Programme in 2016.



**ACE Capstone Leadership Programme for Non-Profits** addresses the strategic aspects of leadership, beyond the management and functional competencies for the non-profit landscape.

**25** non-profit and social service leaders graduated from the first intake of the programme.

SSI developed a suite of **LEADERSHIP MILESTONE PROGRAMME** to groom future-ready non-profit leaders with the depth of professional expertise and breadth of exposure in leadership practices, so as to upscale leadership capabilities within the sector.

Lead Self, Lead People and Lead Managers are part of this suite which are thoughtfully designed to meet the competency requirements tailored to the leadership roles (individual contributors, first-time managers or supervisors and directors or equivalent) that he or she plays in the non-profit organisation.

## Competency-based Programmes

**30** social workers from community and medical settings were inducted into

### ‘THE STARTING POINT: AN ON-BOARDING PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL WORKERS’

a 5-day programme designed based on the National Social Work Competency Framework.

**400** graduates from SSI Diploma in Social Service (DSS) and SSI Higher Diploma in Social Service (HDSS) completed their programmes from 2009 to 2016.



Launch of WSQ Advanced Certificate in Social Service and WSQ Diploma in Social Service in October 2015 to provide opportunity for those keen to pursue a career in social work, and

**70** learners were accepted in the first intake in February 2016.

**50** HDSS graduates have successfully enrolled into the UniSIM Bachelor of Social Work programme from 2012 to 2016.



**32** new entrants from DSS and HDSS joined the sector from April 2015 to March 2016.

*Our*  
*Stories*



“In helping others be a better person, to not forget the development of the self too. Which similarly aligns to what I am determined to achieve in my journey towards social work.”

**Mr Alvin Koh**

*Social Work Associate,  
Methodist Welfare Services  
(Tampines Family Service Centre)*



# Determination and Perseverance

---

*The only thing that is constant  
is change.*

*- Heraclitus*

---

Indeed, this quote by the Greek philosopher is a daily motivation for Mr Alvin Koh, social work associate at the Methodist Welfare Services (Tampines Family Service Centre), to keep him going. In fact, change is absolutely critical in the social service sector, especially on the part of their clients. If the client is unable to change, or not willing to help himself or herself, then the work Mr Koh and his colleagues are doing would be in vain.

Committed to building resilient family units of society, the Methodist Welfare Services (Tampines Family Service Centre) offer a wide range of services, from counselling to managing family conflict, and from resolving abuse and family violence to crafting personal development programmes.

Some of the tough issues Mr Koh faced at work included a client with schizophrenia who threatened to kill himself and harm others. In another case, a man was distraught after incurring a huge debt due to gambling, and was contemplating suicide. Thankfully, with his ability to quickly think on his feet, and with the support of his peers, they were able to resolve those issues.

Mr Koh is currently developing himself further by gamely taking on the Bachelor of Social Work at UniSIM, after graduating from the SSI Higher Diploma in Social Service (now known as WSQ Diploma in Social Service). His journey started much earlier, when he decided to enrol in the ITE NITEC in Community Care & Social Services, and thereafter the SSI Diploma in Social Service (now known as WSQ Advanced Certificate in Social Service). Through these years of study, he realised that social work is not easy at all since it deals primarily with people. To him, social work is also about managing the self, and the ability to persevere in the face of all odds. It is all too evident the enthusiasm in his voice as he relates his ongoing efforts to be a social worker, a success story that ought to be shared with others.





---

**“I’m very determined. If I decide  
what something is worth doing, then  
I’ll put my heart and soul to it.”**

**- Lee Kuan Yew**

**(16 September 1923 – 23 March 2015)**


---



His typical day at the centre starts from 9.00 A.M. to 6.00 P.M. although he has to do one night shift per week from 12.00 P.M. to 9.00 P.M. Besides doing case work and facilitating counselling sessions, Mr Koh is also cracking his head to create programmes to help his clients enhance their self-esteem and develop their skills. Out of work, he loves swimming and running, and is now catching Pokemon in the latest fad that swept the world.

A fictional inspirational figure that he always admired is the character of Frodo in the Lord of the Rings. Although the latter is small in stature and seemingly insignificant at the beginning of the epic fantasy saga, he would be the one tasked with the enormous responsibility to save the world.

On the other hand, when asked about the inspirational figures in his life, Mr Koh confidently listed the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, one of the founding leaders of Singapore, and Alex Ferguson, former manager of Manchester United. To him, they were visionaries, intent on developing individuals to be greater, to be beyond themselves. Therefore it is no surprise that Mr Koh is similarly driven and focused to develop himself further as an individual. This is the advice he would give to the new colleagues who just joined the sector: In helping others be a better person, to not forget the development of the self too. Which similarly aligns to what he is determined to achieve in his journey towards social work.



**“Having been at the receiving end, my mother taught my sisters and I to be kind and pay it forward when we are grown up and be able to contribute to society.”**

**Ms Cecilia Sim**

*Social Work Assistant,  
The Singapore Association for the Deaf*

# Pay it Forward

---

*Having been a stay-home mum since the birth of her first child 17 years ago, Ms Cecilia Sim was planning to re-join the workforce and upgrade her skills when she stumbled upon an advertisement of SSI Diploma in Social Service (now known as WSQ Advanced Certificate in Social Service) course preview. She decided to give it a shot.*

---

To her pleasant surprise, she was selected for it. Ms Sim and her family were recipients of social welfare and assistance when she was much younger. Having been at the receiving end, her mother taught her and her sisters to be kind and pay it forward when they are grown up and able to contribute to society.

Through the course she obtained the fundamental knowledge about the landscape of the social service sector. Among the practical skills she picked up, she learned how to work with volunteers and design programmes to benefit her clients. Notably, the course allowed her to be more aware in perceiving her clients,

to be non-judgmental towards them. As compared to before, she is now able to put herself in their shoes, and able to fluently communicate with them through active listening. All in all, she highly recommends the course to people who have the calling to care for others.

After finishing her course at SSI, Ms Sim landed a job with The Singapore Association for the Deaf as a social work assistant. It was a trial of fire in the beginning of her “career switch”. Her work, with which she has had no experience, primarily requires her to interact with Deaf individuals. After undergoing a mandatory course in sign language, Ms Sim gradually got over her inability and frustration in communicating with her Deaf colleagues and some of her Deaf clients.

One of the things she always hear others talking about the Deaf individuals is that they are all deaf and mute. For the record, she would like to state that it is a myth. The reason they may appear mute is because their hearing loss prevents them from learning the spoken language. Even though most of them may not be able to articulate or express themselves well, they do have functional vocal cords. As a matter of fact, there are Deaf individuals who can speak very clearly and well.





---

**Notably, the course allowed her to be more aware in perceiving her clients, to be non-judgmental towards them.**


**As compared to before, she is now able to put herself in their shoes, and able to fluently communicate with them through active listening.**

---



Ms Sim's usual day at work involves fielding phone and email enquiries, attending to client registration when they come for case management at the centre, and so on. After work, she returns to the most central thing in her life – her family. And she has quite a handful with 4 children, aged 5, 10, 13 and 17. They are very close-knit, and communicate frequently through family activities, for instance, watching YouTube videos together, and discussing their lives and school work etc.

When asked about the one thing that her peers don't know about her, Ms Sim replied shyly that she loves to work on cross-stitching. The intricate weaving of the stitches is her forte, and she has completed many of them, buoyed by the sense of accomplishment whenever she puts the finishing stitch to a design. Now in her life, she has another thing she can be proud of – as a successful individual of a career switch, from a stay-home mum to an advocate of social work.



“It is what you want  
to be remembered  
for at the end of life  
that should set the  
pace of your life.”

**Mr Christopher Lo**

*Board Member,  
Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore*

# A Call to Service

---

*And, when you want something, all the universe conspires in helping you to achieve it.*

*- The Alchemist, Paulo Coelho*

---

Like Ms Cecilia Sim and Mr Paul Long featured in the book, Mr Christopher Lo similarly stepped into the social service sector through a mid career switch, after dedicating 24 years to the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF). But it started most unusually back in 2005 when (then) Major Lo received a call from out of the blue – asking him whether he would attend a board meeting at the Spastic Children’s Association of Singapore (now re-branded as Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore, or simply CPAS). He was the Ministry of Defence representative co-opted to the CPAS board. That touchpoint sparked a decade-long relationship with CPAS until the present, with Mr Lo serving as a co-opted member until about 3 years ago, when he became a full board member after he retired from the SAF.

Mr Lo summarises his takeaways from the inaugural NonProfit Directors programme succinctly into the 3Cs. Foremost, he believes that people volunteer as board members in this sector because they want to give back. The programme presents the educational platform to enable them to “do good better”, to influence change. First, it created awareness within him for the strategic Choices the board needs to make with the know-what for the roles and responsibilities the board assumes. Second, the structured Content imparts the know-how to perform the duties of a board member well. Third, the sharing of the Context from actual case studies by fellow non-profit leaders provides the know-why on the circumstances and considerations non-profit boards use to manage any situational dilemmas that they face.

Alongside with Mdm Rahayu Mohamad of PPIS, Ms Schutz Lee from Society for WINGS, and others from the inaugural programme, he encourages anyone who aspires to be a board member in this sector to sign up for the course. Mr Lo believes that the knowledge gained and the networks forged from the programme better equips volunteer board members to make their contributions more effective, and not just efficient.



Mr Lo defines success as giving one's time and oneself in doing the little things well to make the positive difference in service to others. He views making the positive difference as inspiring others by building courage, regaining faith, and creating hope, so that they themselves believe in their own possibilities.

Mr Lo attributes his firm belief from four essential reads: Robin Sharma's *The Monk Who Sold His Ferrari*, Paulo Coelho's *The Alchemist*, Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie* and Eugene O'Kelly's *Chasing Daylight*.

These books, reinforced by his near-death experiences serving in Afghanistan and the post-traumatic stress disorder he endured after, taught him that life remains unpredictable, and most importantly, that our time on earth is limited. He therefore chooses to pursue a life of significance anchored on meaningful causes over material wealth, that is best carried out by giving his time and energy to people and causes that matter most.

Mr Lo says, "It is what you want to be remembered for at the end of life that should set the pace of your life."

In answering that call 11 years ago, we have to thank Mr Lo for not hanging up through sheer serendipity. By responding to the call, he set into motion the most purposeful, and relentless, "national service" duty of his life.

---

**“Duty, Honor, Country:  
Those three hallowed words reverently dictate  
what you ought to be, what you can be,  
what you will be.**

**They are your rallying points:  
to build courage when courage seems to fail;  
to regain faith when there seems to be little  
cause for faith; to create hope when hope  
becomes forlorn.”**

**- Sylvanus Thayer Award Speech Address  
(1962), General Douglas MacArthur**

---





# Love for the Elderly

---

*Answer the following question:*

*True or False - The elderly do things that don't make sense.*

---

If your answer is “True”, Ms Evelyn Ng would tell you that the reason the elderly may do things that don't make sense is simply due to the way they were brought up. So, to help them, she would then educate them, especially about the new developments in society, and how things work now.

When she was a 16-year-old, she initially applied to be a volunteer at the SPCA. However she was too young then, and was rejected. Undeterred, Ms Ng went online to explore more options, and stumbled upon a nursing home, and she successfully went on to be a volunteer there. It was no surprise then that she decided to study for the ITE NITEC in Community Care & Social Services, which further cemented her passion for helping the elderly. “I came across this introduction in the brochure for the NITEC course – ‘helping elderly and counselling’. These were what drew me into the course.” She is pursuing a WSQ Diploma in Social Service at the moment to deepen her competencies in social service.



**“After graduation, I aim to continue my studies at UniSIM, inching closer towards the motivating finale to be a registered social worker to carry on my passion of life: helping the elderly.”**

**Ms Evelyn Ng**

*Senior Care Associate,  
TOUCH Community Services  
(TOUCH Home Care)*



---

**“I’m an extrovert, and I talk a lot, and I have a short fuse. I also tend to offer my opinions right from the get-go. My teachers taught me to understand people more and not have assumptions. They guide me along, and even now they are the ones advising me if I encounter any problems.”**

---

Ms Evelyn’s typical day as a senior care associate from TOUCH Community Services (TOUCH Home Care) comprises home visits to the elderly, up to a daily maximum of 8 visits. Depending on their needs, she may assist them in their showers, or engage in physiotherapy maintenance and so on. Over time, she builds a strong rapport with her clients, and becomes close to them. In addition, through these lively interactions, she is now equipped with an impressive vocabulary of dialects and different languages, to facilitate communication with the elderly.

She fondly remembers one of them who became more like a father figure to her: “I had a client who was diagnosed with amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) after a car accident. His leg movement was hampered, and then it spread to other parts of his body, rendering him bed-bound. He lived with his two sons, one of them with intellectual disability. Initially I was to assist him in showering. After a period of time, we bonded together,

and I visited them regularly, often assisting them to cover miscellaneous tasks like paying the bills, or shopping for groceries. Eventually his heart started failing, and he was admitted into ICU. I constantly visited him and we talked a lot, even up to the last stage of his life.”

She also keeps in close contact with 2 of her former lecturers, Ms Linda Foong and Mr Godfrey Lau, whom she credits her inspiration and success. “I’m an extrovert, and I talk a lot, and I have a short fuse. I also tend to offer my opinions right from the get-go. My teachers taught me to understand people more and not have assumptions. They guide me along, and even now they are the ones advising me if I encounter any problems.”

After graduation, Ms Ng aims to continue her studies at UniSIM, inching closer towards the motivating finale to be a registered social worker to carry on her passion of life: helping the elderly.



# Heart Work, *not* Hard Work

---

*“At the end of the day, always keep in sight the purpose why you join the social service sector in the first place. This sector requires a lot of ‘heart’ work. Once you lose heart, it becomes hard work, and no longer heart work. See more of it as a vocation and calling, rather than just work.”*

---

Indeed, Ms Gina Chan, a social worker at CROSSROAD Youth Centre (under Care Corner Singapore Ltd), continuously keeps her own advice in mind, the same advice she would also impart to new colleagues who just entered the social service industry.

An adrenalin junkie who looks forward to skydiving as her next goal, Ms Chan’s day is spent doing more down-to-earth stuff. In the mornings, she catches up on her administrative work, case recordings or researching on resources on how to work more effectively with youths.

In the afternoon, the youths then stream in for counselling, or she may head out to conduct home visits or attend school conferences. While teachers in the mainstream school may heave a sigh of relief during the school holidays, that period is the busiest for her. CROSSROAD Youth Centre organises a wide variety of programmes to keep their youths engaged, like outdoor based activities to bring in experiential learning so that they learn more about themselves and their values.

“There isn’t  
a person you  
wouldn’t love if  
you could read  
their story.”

**Ms Gina Chan**

*Social Worker,  
CROSSROAD Youth Centre  
(Care Corner Singapore Ltd)*





---

**“Everyone has a story. Our work is about discovering that story. To understand that story more, understand them as a person and love them as a person. And not see them as clients but as individuals, precious and valuable individuals whom other people love.”**

---

Despite her hectic schedule, Ms Chan recently completed the Leadership Milestone Programme – Lead Self. “The course challenged me to think about my strengths and weaknesses, and the challenges I faced at work. In terms of working style. I learned to be bolder in decision making, and to take on a leadership role in the team. True to its name ‘Lead Self’, I learned to manage myself better as an individual.” The programme also allowed her peers to provide feedback in terms of areas of improvement, and revealed the blind spots in her work.





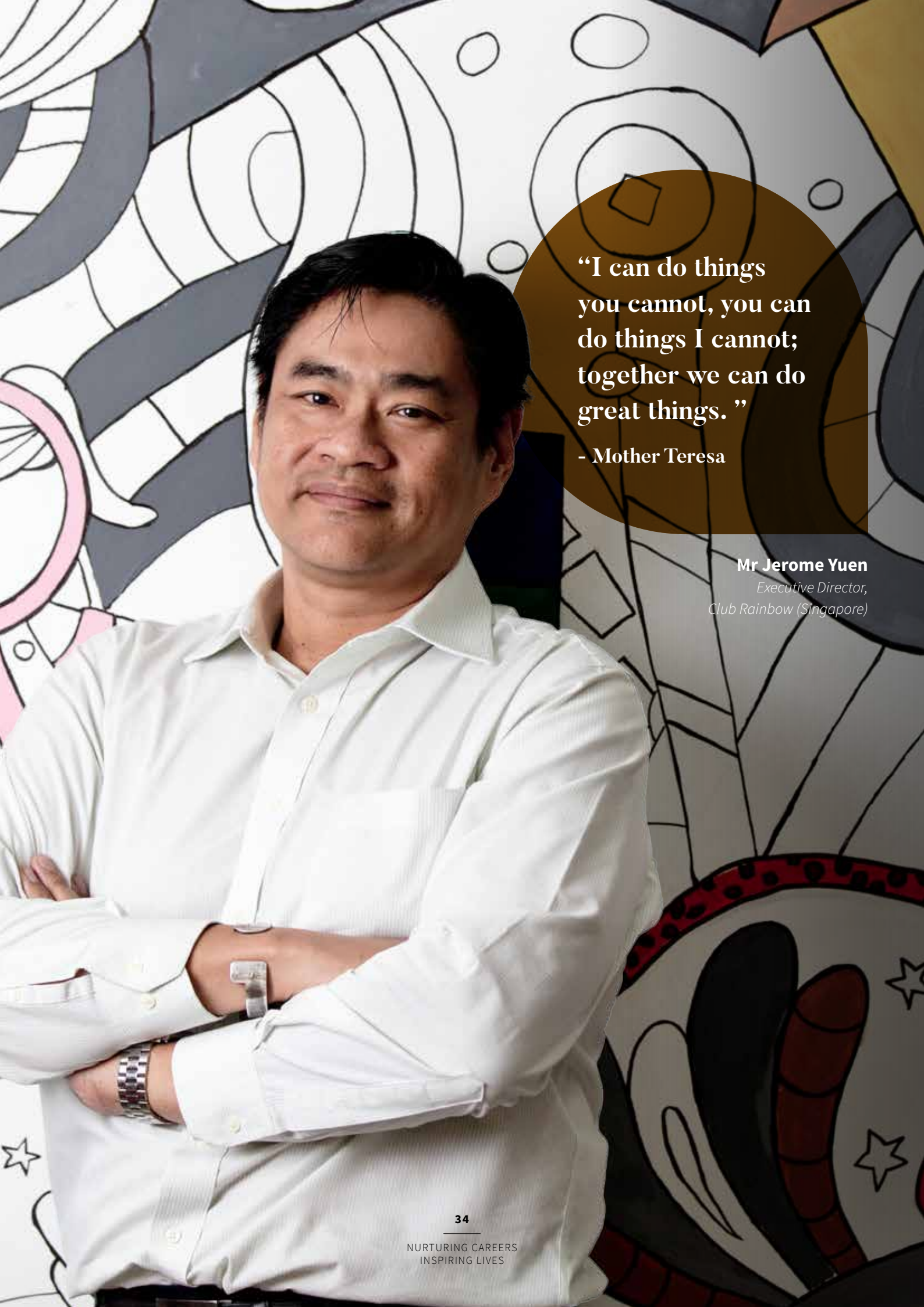
Like many of the ambassadors featured in this publication, Ms Chan was clear of her calling towards social work. During her early schooling days, she already knew that she would be doing social work, so she enrolled in NUS to obtain her degree.

Nonetheless, it was not always a smooth sailing process in her career. In one of her more memorable cases, she was challenged by a school of her own capability as a social worker because of her decision to stand by her youth client. The latter was having difficulties in managing relationships at school, had no interest in academics and wanted to drop out to take up barista skills. After many heart-to-heart talks, Ms Chan was thoroughly convinced by his conviction and decided to support

him for what he truly believed in. Conflicts between her and the school ensued, but the school eventually gave in. After he dropped out, he took up a barista course, and is now gainfully and happily occupied in a supervisory role at a café. And after all these years, they are still in touch with each other.

Ms Chan would like to share this quote she came across: There isn't a person you wouldn't love if you could read their story.

"Everyone has a story. Our work is about discovering that story. To understand that story more, understand them as a person and love them as a person. And not see them as clients but as individuals, precious and valuable individuals whom other people love."



“I can do things  
you cannot, you can  
do things I cannot;  
together we can do  
great things.”

- Mother Teresa

**Mr Jerome Yuen**

*Executive Director,  
Club Rainbow (Singapore)*



# A Brilliant Rainbow for the Kids

---

*On the first of October 2016, Club Rainbow (Singapore) organised the inaugural Project Runway show at the \*SCAPE The Ground Theatre to a rousing runaway success. This is however not the usual fashion show one would see, because the conceptualisation of the 3 collections – the Rainbow, Friendship and Upcycled themes – are the impressive work of the chronically-ill children that Club Rainbow (Singapore) serves.*

---

According to Mr Jerome Yuen, Club Rainbow (Singapore) Executive Director, some parents of the children were in tears at the end of the show, because they were so touched by the painstaking effort and inspiring accomplishment of their children. From the design of the various pieces, to the meticulous sewing process, to the modelling on the runway,

the children realised their fashion dreams, all thanks to Club Rainbow (Singapore). And there is more to come: “When I took over, we reviewed the programmes for the children, and one idea was to look at their interests, from the ukulele to photography and so on. The Project Runway is the result of such a review, and we have a showcase of visual and performing arts coming right up.”

The less fortunate children are certainly the focus of Mr Yuen’s life now, something which was the catalyst for his mid career change after he was in the commercial sector for about 25 years. It was a very hectic lifestyle, and he recounted that he even spent 42 weeks in a year out of the country. But then he decided enough was enough. Because he was already actively volunteering at Club Rainbow (Singapore) back then, he decided he wanted to take on a job to do something for Singaporeans, especially for the children.

What actually started it all though was this saying by the recently canonised St. Teresa of Calcutta: I can do things you cannot, you can do things I cannot; together we can do great things.



---

**“You know it’s funny – When you get past 50, the first thing you say is ‘Health is wealth’. Who cares about how much money you’ve if you’re in hospital all the time? But I think health and family ranks the top for me. All the time I’ve outside work is basically spent with my loved ones.”**

---




Inspired by the quote, Mr Yuen started his volunteering stint, for the church, for Club Rainbow (Singapore) and other charities.

With a very tight schedule these days of running Club Rainbow (Singapore), chairing internal meetings and informal chats with the department heads, dealing with emergencies arising from the chronically-ill children, liaising with service providers and the community at large, Mr Yuen still managed to complete the ACE Capstone Leadership Programme for Non-Profits course not long ago. To him, this is a course you can learn something in a short time, on how to run a charity, and therefore very applicable to executive directors and senior management individuals. One best takeaway of the programme is the fund-raising module, from which a Donor Life Cycle initiative was developed, and to be launched very soon.

Although his form belies his age, Mr Yuen relates something which is crucial at this point in time: “You know it’s funny – When you get past 50, the first thing you say is ‘Health is wealth’. Who cares about how much money you’ve if you’re in hospital all the time? But I think health and family ranks the top for me. All the time I’ve outside work is basically spent with my loved ones.”

One unusual thing that hardly anyone knows of Mr Yuen is that he used to sew sequins on wedding dresses just to earn pocket money during his younger days, while he was in junior college and serving in the army. Fast forward to this day, his passion is proudly sewn and visible on his heart, to continue his journey to create more dazzling rainbows for the children in his care.



“After graduating with an engineering degree, I found that tinkering with machines was not really my cup of tea, and that I wanted to help people instead.”

**Mr Lam Wai Mun**

*Counsellor,  
Fei Yue Family Service Centre (Champions Way)*

# Super Focused, Super Wisdom

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*With feedback from his colleagues that they see him as someone who is so super focused at work, and able to sit at the desk all day long to do his work, Mr Lam Wai Mun still finds himself lacking in some aspects. So, if he could have a super power, he would love the idea of being imbued with super wisdom. Why so?*

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“A lot of times, when we [Mr Lam and his colleagues] share about our work, we find that we can be easily discouraged when we realise that we’re unable to help our clients, being not able to give them more.”

Therefore, the ability of super wisdom would allow him to take heart in the fact that if he ever falls short of his goal or aim of helping his client, he would have the wisdom to see that this is actually all part of a person’s journey.

So that he can pat himself on the shoulder regarding the effort he put in, and to learn from his mistake or failure.

As a newly-minted counsellor at Fei Yue Family Service Centre (Champions Way), Mr Lam is another leading ambassador of a successful mid career switch. After graduating with an engineering degree, he found that tinkering with machines was not really his cup of tea, and that he wanted to help people instead. Even though his family advised otherwise, he decided to take the plunge to engage in more meaningful work, beginning with his first job at TOUCH Community Services.

The FSC On-Boarding Training Programme is particularly beneficial to him because it trains him in the code of social work practice. The code provides the system of excellent service to the clients, to ensure that he and his peers meet the needs of the people they serve. Now, he is able to see the big picture, of how he can help his clients in a more holistic way, rather than just addressing their presenting concerns.

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**Indeed, social service is not an easy vocation. Often there are no tangible rewards. In fact, the people they serve might not even understand their good intentions. Therefore, it is extremely heartwarming when they express their gratitude at the end of the day.**

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Indeed, social service is not an easy vocation. Often there are no tangible rewards. In fact, the people they serve might not even understand their good intentions. Therefore, it is extremely heartwarming when they express their gratitude at the end of the day. In addition, help is not just only about what one can do for them, but also of the rapport struck up with the clients.

Mr Lam shares an anecdote: “I have a particular client who is wheelchair-bound due to a stroke about five years ago. When he first came to us, he was asking for financial assistance. We directed him to the right agency to attend to that issue, but I also kept in touch with him to provide emotional support, because he is living alone with his domestic helper. Over time,

he started asking, ‘How are you doing at work? Are you OK? Do you feel tired? Did you sleep well?’ It is very therapeutic, because he is concerned for me as a person, and not just because I’m his counsellor. This affirms my decision to go into social service.”

After working with so many families and individuals, the newlywed Mr Lam realises that he is still a work-in-progress, even though he is building better relationships with the people around him, including his wife who is also in the social service sector. That being said, Mr Lam is determined to continue being super focused on his duties, to bring value to himself and the people around him – and hopefully gaining super wisdom along the way.



“I like to learn more about them, and to work with them. I find that every kid is special and unique in their own ways.”

**Ms Lau Yun Yi**  
*Teacher Assistant,  
AWWA School*

# Dedication and Love

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*For the petite teacher assistant Ms Lau Yun Yi, her favourite movie is none other than Taare Zameen Par (Like Stars On Earth). Featuring Darsheel Safary in the lead role of an autistic 8-year-old student, the 2007 Indian movie explores the story of a teacher (played by Aamir Khan) who helps the said student achieve his dreams.*

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That is also what Ms Lau aims to do in her work at AWWA School. No one is more suitable than her because of her best attribute of quality – love for the kids. “I like to learn more about them, and to work with them. I find that every kid is special and unique in their own ways.”

Besides a love for the kids, it is also important that a teacher assistant be patient. This is because the students, with their autistic conditions ranging from low to high, often challenge them. In this situation, she has this strategy: “I stay calm, and explain to the student what the appropriate behaviour is. In addition, if they hurt other students or anyone, they have to apologise.”

Her course, WSQ Diploma in Social Service, also came in handy in facilitating a better understanding of her charges. In one module, they were taught the family life cycle concept. Through the use of this concept, Ms Lau is now able to put herself in her student’s shoes, to be aware of their point of view in how they communicate with teachers, family or peers, and understand where they come from in terms of their behaviour. To her, the course is definitely relevant to those who want to understand more about social service, and make a difference.



That being said, if she could have super-power for a day, she would like the ability of mind-reading, to be able to delve into her students' minds. This is because some of them throw tantrums, or cry, or are angered for no rhyme or reason, and yet they are not fully able to express themselves as to what is going on, or they just refuse to say. With mind-reading, she would be in a better position to know how the particular behaviour arose, and thus provide the necessary support to help them alleviate the emotion.



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**“Doing what you like is freedom, liking what you do is happiness.”**

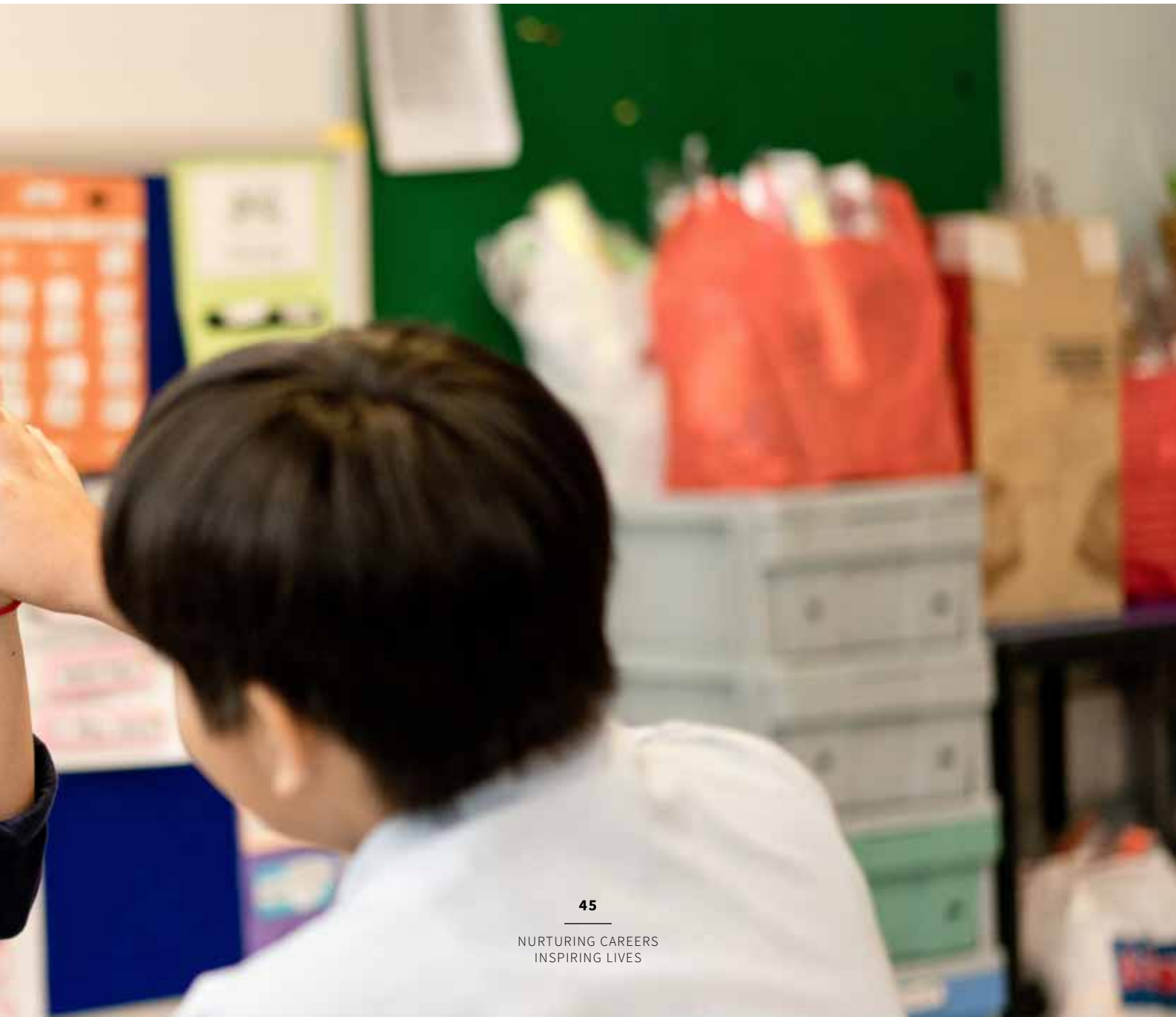
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Outside of her work at AWWA School, Ms Lau is an adventurer and lover of nature. She loves to travel to nature places, and is currently contemplating a refresher course in diving in the near future, given that her open-water diving course was a long 4 years ago, and she haven't really had the chance to dive more. To her, it can be pretty boring living in the city and looking at high-rise buildings all day long. So why not look under water, and be close to nature?

In the meantime, there is one quote that inspires Ms Lau on a daily basis, a phrase by Frank Tyger (24 December 1929 – 2 May 2011), American editorial cartoonist, columnist for Trenton Times (now known as Times of Trenton), New Jersey.

“Doing what you like is freedom, liking what you do is happiness.”

To her, you can do what you like, but whatever you do, it must bring you happiness, which is why Ms Lau eagerly looks forward to each day with the kids.



# The Ace-Pilot Leader

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*If Mr Paul Long had aced that eye sight test, he could have been flying the plane over the jubilant crowd at the National Day celebrations, honoured to be achieving his childhood dream.*

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But as fate has it, he failed that test, and is now the Executive Director for the Family Life Society, contributing in another way to society.

Even then, he took a roundabout way to the social service sector. He studied marketing and e-commerce in his earlier days, and worked at 2 Japanese MNCs, and one local SME. One day, a friend emailed him a job opening for a leadership role in a social service organisation, and he decided to take the plunge to try something new. Some people might balk at a mid career switch, but he has shown that it is entirely possible!

One of the misconceptions he heard about social service sector was the low salary, as compared to the private sector. Besides that, people purportedly work more in this industry because of manpower constraints. But Mr Long is now happy to dispel that misconception, with NCSS actively encouraging all social service professionals to level up their skill sets, and motivating them correspondingly with a deserved remuneration boost.

And that is what Mr Long is also doing, the latest under his belt the ACE Capstone Leadership Programme for Non-Profits course to enhance leadership development and be better equipped to lead his organisation. One of the components he studied in a strategic planning module is the Theory of Change, and he has since used it to apply and test the programmes that Family Life Society is running, so that he and the board could assess their programmes' impact, and whether the activities supporting them are sound and appropriate.

“I would definitely recommend it to all leaders in social service organisations. It is highly relevant, and there is so much practical knowledge to gain from the interaction.”

**Mr Paul Long**

*Executive Director,  
Family Life Society*



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**“In order to be an effective leader, one must be able to empathise with the staff and volunteers they work daily with, and see things from their perspective.”**

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As a result of the course, Mr Long finds that he is now more confident in executing daily tasks and projects. The personal coaching component is also useful, allowing him to manage his own development as a person, which had an indirect but positive impact on his organisation. Another benefit of the course is the sheer amount of valuable knowledge shared by the network of leaders who attended the course, something that he could bring back to the Society to bring it forward. “I would definitely recommend it to all leaders in social service organisations. It is highly relevant, and there is so much practical knowledge to gain from the interaction.”

One of his key strengths in his line of work is his ability to put people at ease, in terms of people management. To him, in order to be an effective leader, one must be able to empathise with the staff and volunteers they work

daily with, and see things from their perspective.

One of the greatest challenges Mr Long came across in his work is trying to manage so many things at one time, but he is getting the hang of it as time goes by. He is now able to prioritise what needs attention, what is important and urgent for him to settle, while also delegating more to others.

After a long day at work, the sight of his two boys rushing to hug and kiss him the moment he opens the door is sufficient to warm his heart. The love and support from his wife is definitely another crucial factor for his success, and happiness, in life. And that is why he is more than capable as an ace-pilot leader to steer Family Life Society, the perfect representation of what the Society envisions for each and every one in society.

**“You may be able to pretend to be someone else, but you can never hide your own personality and character.”**

**Ms Prathibah Pillai D/O Pillai Parappa Karan**

*Teacher,  
Grace Orchard School*



# Championing for the Voice

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*For this composed teacher from Grace Orchard School, you would be surprised to hear that her favourite movie is the action-packed Face/Off, directed by John Woo, and starring Nicolas Cage and John Travolta.*

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This is what drives her as a teacher and transition planning co-ordinator. The voices of students with special needs are often lost, and she is advocating for the best practices so that their true characters and their choices for the future are heard. Grace Orchard School takes in students diagnosed with mild intellectual disability and mild autism spectrum disorders. Ms Prathibah specifically focuses on the 17- to 18-year-olds who are transitioning to work, or further education, after graduation. There

are a number of reasons to why their voices are often lost in their transition process – expectations from the family, expectations from the school etc. She aims to provide them with the skills to fully exercise autonomy, so that they can learn to speak up for themselves and lead an improved quality of life.

All that Ms Prathibah has in her repository to carry out her work is the result of the intense and valuable training from the Bachelor of Education (Special Education). Among many things, the course helps her to develop programmes for both students and staff. It greatly enhances her public relations skills, allowing her to competently facilitate meetings and discussions. Most of all, it paves the way for her to work in tight collaboration with many people and teams in the school, including the students and their parents, teachers, the allied health professionals (AHPs) and job coaches. Therefore, she highly recommends the course to anyone who wishes to embark on a teaching career in the special education sector.





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**This is what drives her as a teacher and transition planning co-ordinator. The voices of students with special needs are often lost, and she is advocating for best practices so that their true characters and their choices for their future are heard.**

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But Ms Prathibah is not stopping her education just yet. She has been offered a doctorate place in Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia, where she completed her Master of Education (Special Education) with an MOE overseas scholarship award received in 2013. Her principal is very supportive of her intention.

What is very apparent in Ms Prathibah is her passion in helping people. In her previous job, she worked at a bank, providing on-the-job training to frontliners in customer service. Then she heard about students with special needs transitioning from school to work, and thought that she could use her skills as an on-the-job trainer to help them to manage the transition to work, and the rest is history.

When not teaching or liaising with parents and her fellow colleagues,

Ms Prathibah is happily roller-blading away at East Coast Park, something that her peers in the school do not know. As to why she likes it, this is what she says: "It's that adrenalin rush, that I'm going to fall."

Essentially, this is an apt analogy to how her students feel when they are being given a task. When she roller-blades, she has to be fully focused, to get over her fear of falling or deciding how best to negotiate the road bumps. Therefore, she is able to place herself in her students' shoes whenever they are being given a task. Do they feel scared? Or motivated? Or do they succumb to their fear and back off? With this, she is better equipped to help them manage their expectations and fears. And she would definitely be in a better position to champion for their voices when she obtains her PhD in a few years' time!



“Interaction with people is by no means an easy feat, since each and every one is unique and different in character and values.”

**Mr Quek Hong Choon**  
*Director,  
SPD*

# Leading with Clarity

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*If you like to read non-fiction books, Mr Quek Hong Choon, Director, Organisational Development, SPD, is of the view that Man's Search For Meaning, by Viktor Frankl, is a good read.*

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Mr Quek's interest and passion has always been in people, in interpersonal interaction. Before he joined the social service sector, he was a prison officer for 14 years. He felt the need to explore other areas, and social service turned out to be a natural choice for him for a career switch. His first stop was Dyslexia Association of Singapore (DAS). Then he heard about the Sun Ray initiative, offered by the National Council of Social Service. The scheme provides successful applicants rotation among the various social service

organisations so that they can gain a more diversified work portfolio. So he is now currently serving his secondment in SPD.

Interaction with people is by no means an easy feat, since each and every one is unique and different in character and values. That is why continuous learning is a must, and Mr Quek recently completed the Leadership Milestone Programme – Lead Managers, a programme for those at the director level, and who are leading teams and have the potential to lead organisations.

“The impact of the course is through the exchange of ideas of fellow course learners, and that is a very useful component whereby we explore ideas for collaborations, exchange views, and we bring it back to our organisation for implementation, and to try out ideas that other organisations are embarking on.”

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Since attending the course, Mr Quek now finds that he is more self-reflective, and mindful and aware of particular areas where he may need to pay more attention to, such as the ways in which he deals with certain people and issues. In the past, he was more task-oriented and eager to get things done. The course, and his ongoing work, has now taught him to be more patient. In the face of numerous tasks and projects, Mr Quek is now able to time and pace himself. In addition, he is also able to moderate his previous expectations of pushing things through to quickly reap the outcome and results.

At the same time, Mr Quek is playing another crucial role in his personal life – as a father to his two boys. After his typical day of administrative and strategic planning work, he relaxes by listening to music or playing the ukulele.

When asked about something that no one knows about, Mr Quek shyly replies that there is one person who knows everything – his wife! However, his peers would be interested to know that he is actually a trained crisis negotiator, by virtue of his work as a prison officer. You can be sure that he would still be tapping on those skills to lead his organisation forward with utmost clarity.



“It’s not about the knowledge but the sharing that the other participants bring in, hearing the stories in terms of the experiences of other organisations and how they overcome the challenges.”

**Mdm Rahayu Mohamad**

*President,  
Singapore Muslim Women’s Association (PPIS)*

# Reflection and Meaning

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*Mdm Rahayu Mohamad,  
President, Singapore Muslim  
Women's Association (PPIS),  
has a dream she would like to  
fulfil one day.*

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If she is given 5 million to be used in any way she wants, she would like to set up a foundation for girls. To her, it is really important that they are educated and equipped with skills and the confidence to thrive in this world.

She believes young girls should be given a head-start in their training to be the next generation of leaders and change makers in their local and global community. They need to learn how they can draw on their values, personal qualities and skills to become effective leaders. This is because a woman is herself a circle of influence, especially in imparting robust values to the people around her.

In the private sphere, if girls are duly educated in their personal growth from young, they would be able to later set a good family foundation by bringing up children who contribute meaningfully to the growth of the community.

Indeed, Mdm Rahayu's firm belief in a worthwhile existence emerged way back from her childhood and family life. Since young, she volunteered with her family in the community, and saw first-hand the impact it brought to the people around her. Subsequently, she continued actively participating in voluntary efforts in school right up to her marriage, where she took a short break to build up her own family, before she returned to the sector. In fact her daughter is now proudly continuing in her footsteps in active volunteering in the community, and also coincidentally studying in the same faculty (law), and in the same university she graduated (International Islamic University Malaysia).

In completing the Governance Month programme, Mdm Rahayu understands how vital it is to ensure that the Code of Governance is carried out smoothly in day-to-day PPIS functions, from ethical decision-making to fraud detection and management, and learning about financial oversight to the legal essentials and so on. It is through all this understanding and implementation effort that PPIS is able to receive a Good Governance award.



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**“In playing the leadership role vis-à-vis my board members and management, there is a need for close interaction in terms of sharing the alignment of goals and direction of where we’re going.”**

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Yet it is not just about knowing how to govern, but also of a people factor. For instance, the training in the NonProfit Directors Programme allows Mdm Rahayu to be able to get the board members to understand what they need to do to continue to be sustainable and relevant in the work they are doing for both PPIS and the community.

This is what she says: “In playing the leadership role vis-à-vis my board members and management, there is a need for close interaction in terms of sharing the alignment of goals and direction of where we’re going.”

Thus, she has been talking to her friends and peers in the community, especially those sitting on a board, that the NonProfit Directors Programme is very useful and informative course that they should participate in.

“It’s not about the knowledge but the sharing that the other participants bring in, hearing the stories in terms of the experiences of other organisations and how they overcome the challenges.”

Out of her busy schedule in overseeing PPIS, Mdm Rahayu really likes to spend time alone, with a cup of coffee, and her own thoughts. Soul searching and reflection is something she firmly believes in, because one always needs to step back and do a reality check.

To her, it is from this reality check that you would be able to know whether all the things you are doing: Is it for yourself? Or is it for the community? And this is where this wonder woman gets her strength from, from creating meaningful value for herself, her family, PPIS and the whole community.





# Just Do it

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*To Ms Schutz Lee, treasurer for the Society for WINGS (Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully), "Just Do It" fully symbolises her motto in life.*

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In fact, her personality is the embodiment of the quote itself. If she believes she can do it, then onward it is. While others may list out the pros and cons before embarking on a particular endeavour, Ms Lee is action-oriented, preferring to put her foot down, and get things done.

Having always been interested in both economic and social issues, Ms Lee took up economics in the university, and later landed her first job as a Business Times reporter. Meanwhile, on the aspect of the social causes, she got to know Ms Kanwaljit Soin,

the founding president of WINGS, and was soon roped in as a board member. Because of her strong financial skills, she became the treasurer, to manage the financial matters of the organisation. At the same time, she is also able to engage her keen interest in social causes, because WINGS proactively looks at providing support for women in their 40s and above.

As part of the lifelong process to enhance her capacity as a board member, Ms Lee recently attended the NonProfit Directors programme. Based on up-to-date rules and regulations of running non-profits and other social service organisations, she benefitted tremendously from the programme. The skills she picks up provide her the ways to deal with the various situations she, and the Society, encounter on a regular basis. In fact she had already enthusiastically recommended the course to her peers in other women's organisations.



“My role as a WINGS board member allows me to work with different groups of people. I’ve interacted with women who come here for exercises or classes, women whom I’d not have met if I were in a desk-bound job.”

**Ms Schutz Lee**

*Treasurer,*

*Society for WINGS*

*(Women’s Initiative for Ageing Successfully)*



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## When she is not cracking her head on how to help those in need, Ms Lee is sharply attuned to the modern trends of relaxation.

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On the biggest change Ms Lee has seen in herself since she joined Society for WINGS: “My role as a WINGS board member allows me to work with different groups of people. I’ve interacted with women who come here for exercises or classes, women whom I’d not have met if I were in a desk-bound job. All of them have different experiences to share, and this greatly contributes to my knowledge. I’m now able to connect more, and better, to others, and also to a wider group of people.”

When she is not cracking her head on how to help those in need, Ms Lee is sharply attuned to the modern trends of relaxation. She loves Netflix and shares Spotify music with her children. Since she tends to fall asleep easily while reading, she decides to switch over to audio books, and it has been a suspenseful journey so far, with some memorable titles such as *Gone Girl* and *The Girl on the Train*.

On an inspirational figure whom she looks up to, Ms Lee considers her mother as her role model. Her parents divorced when she and her sister were young. Because of that, her mother had to juggle her job as well as take care of them. Now, as a mother herself, Ms Lee can relate more to the difficulties of bringing up children. To her, a single mother would face even more problems and struggles.

At this point in time, there are still many economic and social troubles that hinder the progress of a society, besides those that a single mother faces. Much as she values her work at WINGS, Ms Lee hopes to be more involved in other causes. For instance, with the economic downturn running its cycle now, poverty concerns are peaking, together with the rising gap of income inequality. Even though there are many organisations around to address these issues, she wants to be more involved to help these people.

If such an opportunity arises, she would definitely be ready to take on the challenge, and *just do it*.





# The Best Decision Made

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*Once upon a time to many Singaporeans (and perhaps now still applicable to some others), the definition of success means the 5Cs: Car, Cash, Condominium, Country Club membership and Credit Card.*


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To Ms Suzanne Low, a social worker at AWWA School (a school for children from 7- to 18-year-olds with special needs), the definition refers simply to the achievement of each and every small step towards the goal. “Every small step we take forward, I think it’s success. Be it for myself or for my clients.”

Before she enrolled in NUS, Ms Low had no idea what social work was about. All she knew was that she had no interest in a desk-bound job; she wanted to be running about and also

wanted to be doing humanitarian work. After a lot of praying and thinking, she stumbled on a course about social work so she researched more about it. The more she read, the more she found the sector attractive. Social work comprises a wide field of disciplines, from working with kids to youths, from the elderly to persons with disabilities. It was just right up her alley, and as she puts it, “the best decision I ever made”.

She currently holds about 100 cases, with 20 of them being of a high-intensity nature and requiring more frequent follow-ups. One striking case she handled revolved around a student who made a mess out of everything when his mother is preparing him for school. The mother became frustrated due to the tight time schedule in getting him to school, and then heading to school, so she tied him to a chair. Through regular follow-ups, Ms Low worked with the mother in better managing the child and how to keep him occupied while she is preparing him for school.



“Every small step  
we take forward, I  
think it’s success. Be  
it for myself or for my  
clients.”

**Ms Suzanne Low**

*Social Worker,  
AWWA School*



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**“It is easy to feel stuck in the system after working for a while. This course is like a mini-retreat, allowing you to think through what you’ve been doing, to remove your fears and go back recharged and refreshed.”**

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For a new social worker who just stepped into the sector, managing cases can be a little daunting. Ms Low found herself trying to make sense of her work and applying what has been learnt in school to work. Thankfully, there is a 5-day course, The Starting Point: An On-Boarding Programme for Social Workers, which is ideal for social work practitioners who have been in the line between 6 months and 2 years of service. “It is easy to feel stuck in the system after working for a while. This course is like a mini-retreat, allowing you to think through what you’ve been doing, to remove your fears and go back recharged and refreshed.”



Among the benefits of the course, Ms Low points out that it is especially enlightening when policy makers from the various ministries come down to share and explain the rationale behind the work procedures and policies. It sheds a light on the reason she is doing the things she do, and she is now more confident in her work. During the course, the facilitators made them reflect regularly, on what they are doing at work, what they have learned, and things they ought to do differently. So to her, it is like learning what they need to unlearn during these past two years of working.

Like Mr Paul Long whom you read about earlier, Ms Low's childhood aspiration was also to become a pilot. The thought of flying everywhere in the world, for free, and being able to interact with people from diverse cultures inspired her. But she had more than one dream apparently! She wanted also to be a teacher, a soldier, or even an astronaut, at different points in life.

In spite of that, Ms Low is now more than happy to stick to this decision for the next five years (or even longer) – and hopes to remain as an energetic and enthusiastic social worker to help, interact and work alongside those in need.



“I would say my best attribute is my pair of listening ears. Through active listening, I get to truly understand them, their lives and dreams, and that is how we build the relationship and rapport.”

**Mr Willy Ho**

*Senior Programme Executive,  
Methodist Welfare Services  
(Wesley Seniors Activity Centre)*

# Listening Ear, Happy Smiles

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*When the Wesley Seniors Activity Centre – a community outreach partnership between Methodist Welfare Services and Wesley Methodist Church – was established in 2010, the elderly living around the area were mostly not acquainted among themselves.*

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A few years later, the Person-Centred Approach Communities of Practice (PCA CoP) toolkit was launched, with the staff adopting a PCA philosophy of care. Subsequently, the elders were able to develop more positive relationships with each other, with a discernible shift in their outlook and transforming into an empowered bunch of seniors.

The PCA CoP was formed in February 2013 by SSI and comprises 14 practitioners from various social service organisations in the eldercare sector. The aim is to impart, teach and

educate organisations and individuals to deliver and provide services and programmes that consider the needs for the elderly in a respectful manner.

The toolkit that had such an impact at the Methodist Welfare Services (Wesley Seniors Activity Centre) was the result of the initiative, and is definitely valuable as a guideline to implement holistic services and programmes for the seniors.

As a senior programme executive, Mr Willy Ho has his hands full with the elderly who come to the drop-in centre. In the mornings, the seniors attend an exercise programme, after which they proceed to morning tea. Mr Ho makes use of this opportunity to interact with them, whether listening or guiding them in resolving any issues. The centre also conducts a variety of activities to keep them engaged both in mind and motor skills, such as drama classes, iPad sessions, calligraphy lessons and outings to places of interest. In addition, the centre initiated a soup programme to address the issue of nutritional deficiency, because the elderly tend to neglect the importance of a nutritional diet.



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**One of the biggest misconceptions Mr Ho heard from the students is that they feel that the elderly are unable to do a lot of things. But after volunteering at the centre, they are pleasantly surprised that the elderly are more able, nimble and active than they thought.**

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“I would say my best attribute is my pair of listening ears. Through active listening, I get to truly understand them, their lives and dreams, and that is how we build the relationship and rapport.”

Along the way, there definitely were situations with difficult clients. In those situations, Mr Ho tapped on his listening ear to provide the diplomatic edge to cool them down, and later explained the rationale behind his actions, thus successfully managing their challenging behaviours.

Thankfully, there are also volunteers helping out at the centre, for instance



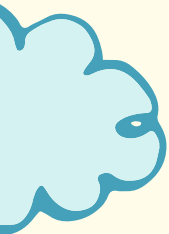


students from Hwa Chong High School and the NUS College of Alice & Peter Tan. One of the biggest misconceptions Mr Ho heard from the students is that they feel that the elderly are unable to do a lot of things. But after volunteering at the centre, they are pleasantly surprised that the elderly are more able, nimble and active than they thought.

Unknown to many friends and colleagues, Mr Ho's childhood aspiration was to manage a funfair. This was due to the joyous times he spent at many funfairs when he was young, playing the games at the various stalls, and winning little prize tokens. His dream was somewhat

realised by the weekly bingo game at the centre, allowing him also to partake in the joy of the seniors.

Like the other ambassadors featured here, Mr Ho is also a successful personification of a fruitful mid career change. He was previously in the commercial sector for many years, before moving on to the government sector, and finally settling down in the social service sector where he is now happily working with the elderly and the community, putting to good use his inherent talent of active listening.







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