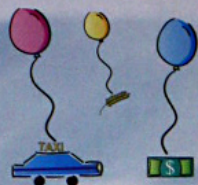


TRIBUNE

Ngee Ann Polytechnic's campus newspaper

Volume 38 - Issue 2 - January to March 2008



Show Me The Money

Can your wallet keep up with the rising costs of living?

Pg 8



Choosing A Different Path

Working on an island takes more than an adventurous soul.

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Embarking On New Frontiers Beyond Education



SEEDS OF CHANGE: Farmers are guided in rice transplantation technology as part of the agricultural extension services. (Photos courtesy of Terence Teo)

BY CALVIN YANG
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Sowing seeds for the future will be the aim of Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) latest project after a \$1.8 million investment from the Lien Foundation (LF) under the LF-NP Social, Environmental & Educational Development (SEED) Capital Programme.

The programme will serve as a platform for students to enhance their learning opportunities and at the same time, open their eyes to real life experiences and social causes.

Mrs Anna Yeow, Director of the Special Projects Office, said, "I feel that it is a very good initiative as it marries both NP's strong focus in community service with the goals of the Lien Foundation."

The three-year collaboration, which was first conceptualised in June last year, will involve both partners in a series of activities and programmes run along the three fronts of social, environmental and educational development.

"These key areas were decided upon based on the synergies between the Lien Foundation's goals and our expertise in environmental and water technology and in the production of media content," explained Mrs Yeow.

Social Development

Tapping on the strong media programme that NP offers, the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) has been roped in to produce a variety of media products that will seek to raise awareness on social issues affecting the world.

Mrs Sng Poh Yoke, a lecturer at the School of FMS, said, "In grooming media students, it has been a good opportunity in getting them out to learn the process of interviewing as well as to give them an eye-opening experience."

The projects, which are incorporated into the school curriculum, will also provide students with the chance to give back to society. For a start, students from the school have embarked on creating public awareness towards a death and hospice campaign for the Lien Foundation.

Mrs Sng, one of the lecturers spearheading the project, mentioned that through the programme, they have had guest lecturers, including a journalist with years of experience in writing about special-needs patients and a nurse who works at a hospice, speaking in place of normal lectures.

Based on these lectures and visits to the hospices, students have generated media content ranging from documentaries to web articles to radio magazines about the lives of these patients, caregivers and volunteers at the hospices.



BEFORE AND AFTER: Locals can look forward to enjoying proper bathroom facilities like the new one at Waterloo Station in Musi Banyuwasin (below) instead of bathing and washing in the Musi River (above). (Photos courtesy of Terence Teo)

Recalling a particular moment where the nurse spoke about her job and experience, Mrs Sng said, "It was a moving experience for many of the students and you could see the tears in their eyes."

Environmental Development

On the environmental front, NP, together with the Lien Foundation, will be organising the inaugural Singapore Junior Water Prize, an annual national competition which sees students from various secondary schools, Junior Colleges, Institutes of Technical Education (ITE) and Polytechnics vying for a spot at the prestigious Stockholm Junior Water Prize (SJWP) contest held in Stockholm, Sweden.

Through this competition, students will be tasked to come up with effective and creative solutions to tackle the water issues and challenges faced by Singapore and also, on a global scale.

Ms Grace Quah, Director of the Building & Environment Division, said, "By bringing the SJWP to Singapore, it will inspire our young people to develop a keener interest in issues concerning water and the environment."

As the national organiser for the SJWP, NP will be responsible for planning the contest and selecting the best entry to represent the country in the

international competition.

Supported by the Public Utilities Board, the competition will also showcase NP's expertise in environmental and water technology including the latest \$5.5 million Environmental & Water Technology Centre of Innovation which seeks to enhance the efficiency of local companies.

"With more young people undertaking research projects in water and environment issues and looking at solutions to such problems, we believe that this will lead to greater awareness and responsibility in how our water and environmental resources are used," explained Ms Quah.

Educational Development

Offering a helping hand to other Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) countries, NP will also be providing training and curriculum advice to several educational institutions around the region, including Sekayu Polytechnic in Musi Banyuwasin (MUBA), South Sumatra.

Speaking on the tie-up with Sekayu Polytechnic, Mr Hassan Ahmad, Chief Executive of Lien Aid - the regional chief of the Lien Foundation - said, "Since July 2006, Lien Aid has developed a strong relationship with the MUBA district government and it has helped to link up with NP."

"This has resulted in a commitment by NP to share its expertise with the setting up of the new Sekayu Polytechnic," he added.

As early as December this year, NP will be sending its first team of lecturers to the school with the aim of educating their counterparts with more relevant knowledge and advice in the various disciplines of study.

Besides the trip to Indonesia, NP will also be hosting students from Sekayu Polytechnic in a two-week immersion programme which will see them interacting and studying together with local students in mid 2008.

This will also enable NP students to better understand the educational situation in Indonesia and get more insight into the lives led by the students.

On the partnership, Mr Hassan added, "NP is a good working partner. We believe that the tremendous support we received from NP is due to the compatibility of our objectives with that of NP's leadership and management." ■

The Power Of Connection



BY CHANG QIAOLIN
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I still remember how I felt when I was in first-year as a freshman in such a big campus. I remember feeling a slight tinge of envy when my new classmates raised their hands in greeting to their friends they already have in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), and perhaps just an ounce more of envy when the 'cool' seniors said "hello" to my peers they already knew.

They benefitted from having friends all over campus, and they always seemed to

bump into a friend every corner the class would turn, and I was one of the few who did not have as many friends in NP as they would like to, as most of my friends had decided to go to Junior Colleges, and my one and only close friend I had in NP was in a different class.

It was not because I was shy or not sociable, it was plainly because I did not have the connections that I would have liked to have when I entered a whole new environment. Without those connections, it took me a little longer to adapt to the change than I would have taken if I had the correct connections.

Even two-and-a-half years down the road, connections still play a big part in my life. Although I don't crave for social acceptance or recognition anymore, my connections make sure that things run smoothly. When I need help for my projects, I can always turn to a senior for some tips to put me ahead of my peers.

Even big corporations, like NP, need to rely on connections to keep their competitive edge. With the recent signing of the two Memorandums of Understanding (see pg.3), NP is now more attractive to prospective students as they can have a wider range of options.

Charitable organisations also depend on their connections to be able to meet their beneficiaries' needs. Be it a collaboration with an institute to raise funds or a tie-up to go on a community service trip (see pg.S1 to S8), both parties will benefit in one way or another.

But it's not only formal connections we should have in life; informal connections are often underestimated and are usually more important than formal ones.

Just take for example the connections we forge in school. We establish informal connections with our peers and formal connections with our lecturers, and if we can get close enough, we can make informal connections with our lecturers as well.

Though our connections to the authority figures have to be amicably comfortable so that our school journey is pleasant, it is the informal connections we make that will follow through even after we graduate.

The friends we make will be the ones we will be working with when we go into the industry, and that is when the connections we made will come into play. At the same time, we will make many even more connections as we progress in our career.

But having many connections is not enough. What is more important is maintaining those connections and keeping them strong, so they will withstand the test of materialism and help us pull through difficult times.

While some may say that having connections is not as important I make it out to be, and that a person can always make it big on his or her own, I can say that no man's an island, and no matter how capable the person is, a person with connections is like a puppet without strings, which will not be able to move no matter how hard he or she tries. ■

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Ngee Ann Polytechnic's campus newspaper

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Tribune, Jan to Mar 2008

A Facelift For The Campus

BY A. B. RICHARD
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With the opening of OurSpace@72, many students have found a new location in campus to pursue their daily activities.

Lim Jian Teck, 20, a third-year student from Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering said, "I like the design of the whole room and I find that it's much more conducive than the library. Although it is not as quiet, the seats and the tables are better to work at and I like the layout of the room."

"I like this place a lot. I think it's quite comfortable and the ambience is good. It's actually quite suitable for students to do their own stuff and their school work too. I seriously can't think of any improvements they can make to this place," said Lee Jia Jun, 19, a third-year student from Business Studies.

Mr Mui Cheng Hock, Director of Estate Management, acknowledges the positive response of OurSpace@72. "We've had a very good response from students. They like the hip look. It's very different from the usual study areas around Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP)," he said.

"The only complaint that we've received is students getting lost in OurSpace@72. It's so big that students lose their way around and it's also tough for them to name specific points to meet with their friends," Mr Mui commented.

Mr Mui suggested zoning up separate sections of OurSpace@72 and giving these separate zones names in order to help students with this problem. "In fact,



KEEPING UP WITH TIMES: Students can expect facilities like OurSpace@72 to be upgraded to meet their needs. (Pictures by: Stephanie Goh)

we are looking for students to help us name these zones," he said.

Mr Mui strongly believed that there should be changes to the environment of NP to better suit the students and staff.

"We've always been trying to open up places for students. The Atrium, Convention Centre, Student Plaza, and now OurSpace@72. Regularly there will be changes in the environment to meet the needs of the students and staff here," he said.

According to Mr Mui, there will

be another installment that will open to students and staff before the start of the Chinese New Year. At Block 52, a multi-purpose hall is scheduled to be opened to serve its primary purpose of an air-conditioned examination hall which seats up to 200 students.

He said that the multi-purpose hall can be booked by any student during non-examination periods for any activity, provided that they have a programme involved, for instance a fun-fair or a Hop Night. Priority, however, would

go to examinations.

He also noted that another development is in place. Brand new lifts at the School of Engineering, School of Film & Media Studies and School of InfoComm Technology are being set up and the older lifts are set to be replaced by new high-speed ones. This is to accommodate the current increase in student intake.

"Rest assured," Mr Mui told Tribune, "that we are refreshing the campus over time." ■

Are you TOUGH enough?

Can young Singaporeans, often perceived to be softies, rough it out as volunteers and give their all in the name of charity? GRACE CHUA asks students if they have what it takes.

Money has never been an issue, and doing her own washing and cooking were never any of her daily tasks. For 19-year-old Nicole Foo, a second-year Business Studies student, life in Singapore is pretty comfortable, and like many Singaporean youths these days, she gets everything she wants.

So when it came to getting involved in an overseas community service trip, she was caught in a dilemma, as she struggled between wanting to help others and her reluctance to live in adverse conditions. However, Nicole recently made up her mind to join several students to go to Laos in March to teach young children as her passion won through.

Still, Nicole is keeping her mind open, as she understands signing up for this project is a huge step in helping her come out from her comfort zone and hopefully, she will leave Laos with an unforgettable experience. "I know the place will not be developed, but that is the whole point of them seeking help from others," she explained.

However, for some students, helping out in poor living areas never once struck them as a tough job.

Despite not having the chance to be part of a community service project, Alvin Ewe, 20, a third-year Information Technology (IT) student immediately signed up for the Guangzhou Community Service trip from 21 September to 3 October last year in Lian Nan province, to educate high school students between the age of 14 and 20 on IT knowledge. "I was ready to go once I knew I could afford the tickets to China," he explained.

He added, "I know many were worried about the weather, the beds and the food as we were on the way there. But when we got there, all the students looked so excited when we came that we didn't even think of all those factors. We became focused on spending time with the children and making them happy."

Though he admitted that the village looked quite bad with no systematic transportation and the roads were bumpy, Alvin felt that the bad living conditions should not be an issue to those who have the passion to help.

"We are here to help, and not here for a holiday. It is because of the living conditions that I now really cherish what I have in Singapore," he said.

He is not the only one who feels this way. Cheong Wei Zhen, 18, a second-year Business IT student, who was part of the two-week BA! Serve Thailand trip in March last year, said that the living conditions were not as bad as what most people think. "The problems we faced were really quite minor. Most of us really did not take long to adjust to the changes," she said.

Alvin agreed with Wei Zhen, and said that only obstacle that he faced in Guangzhou was his ability to speak

Mandarin.

Wei Zhen encouraged students who are keen to lend a helping hand not to hold back. "It is certainly a once-in-a-lifetime experience and you might not volunteer again when you leave Ngee Ann Polytechnic," she said.

Prepare Yourself:

Mr Adrian Er, a lecturer in the School of Business & Accountancy who had been on a couple of overseas community service trips, shared what students should prepare themselves for if they are intending to be part of such trips.

Culture Shock

"When we went to one of the villages, one of their cultural practices was actually to eat dog food and it was considered as a welcoming feast. Before the dish was served, many of my students were not very comfortable with the idea."

Weather

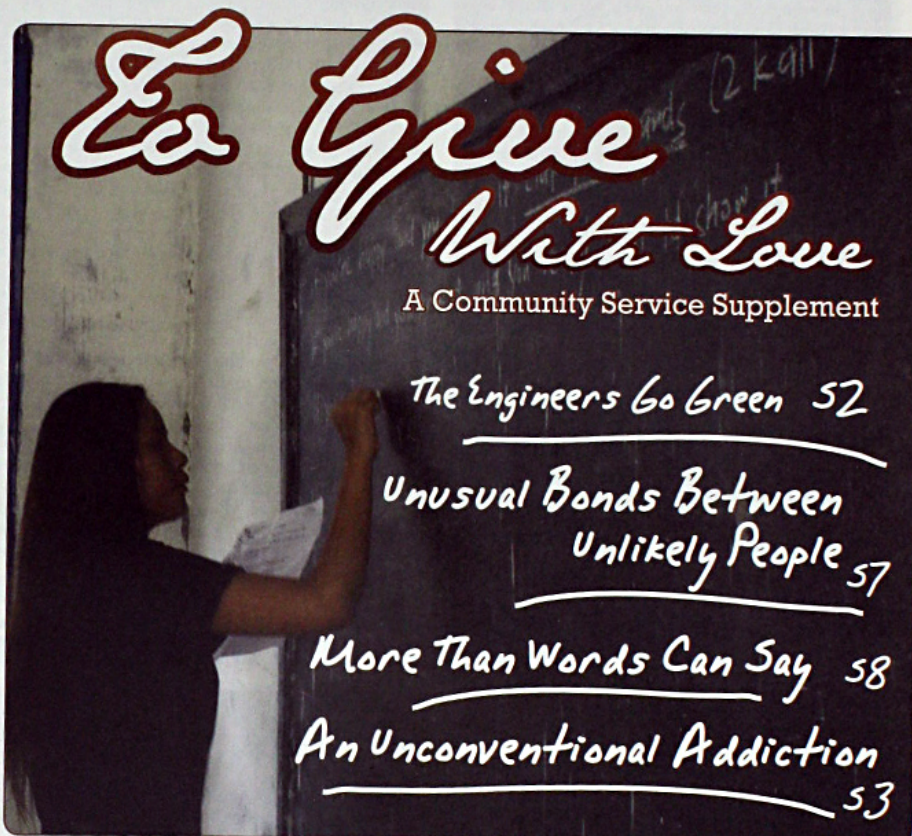
"The weather was very hot when we were in Laos in March last year. In fact, many team members were falling sick at several points of the trip due to the humidity."

Expectations

"It is best to set your expectations low, and you usually will be pleasantly surprised when you get there. The conditions are not as bad as you think."

Positivity

"One of my students worked so hard in a construction project that she burnt herself out. But I really appreciated it because she pushed herself so hard to help."



Sparking Off The Passion For Community Service an editorial

by Chang Qiaolin

In my secondary school days, in order to fulfill six hours of the Community Involvement Programme (CIP) each year, I had to spend my weekends asking for donations on the streets on Flag Days and visit various types of homes for the aged and for the disabled. All these times, I never felt the drive or passion that we were supposed to have when we served the community. I was sure I would never volunteer for community service again when I went to polytechnic.

Little did I expect to be given a chance to do so last year to go on a once-in-a-lifetime experience to the island of Nias, Indonesia, in my third year. The island had been hit badly by the tsunami in 2004, and we were to go and help in the setting up of a Farmers' Training Centre which would equip the people with useful skills and knowledge to earn a livelihood in organic farming.

It was completely different from what I had understood community service to be, and I managed to persuade my mother to let me go despite the financial constraints we were facing. It turned out to be one of the best learning experience I ever had in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP).

As expected, I was greeted by extremely different living conditions and culture when I got off the dingy propeller plane at the Nias airport, which was roughly the size of

three classrooms in NP.

I was thrown into the locals' way of life, and I spent 14 days living in a container room, bathing with cold water and lived 14 days without any toilet paper. It was tough, but I began to appreciate the simple things I have back home: a constant supply of electricity, clean water and even the mud-free cemented roads.

The construction workers that were working on the farm were barely older than me and there were even construction boys, who were only in their early teens. They had to work at such a young age because they did not have money to continue studying.

It was only then did I realise that community service did not just mean donating money to a good cause, but it also meant understanding the needs of the people you are trying to help, and understanding the life they have to live without our help.

I met a woman who witnessed and survived the disaster when we were at the coast where the tsunami hit. When she saw the coastline recede, she alerted everyone around her to run for high land, but she stayed where she was even though she knew might die, as she was too attached to her home. I felt for the people, and this time, I really wanted to do something to make a difference, no matter

how small, to the lives of the people on the island that is five times the size of Singapore, but at least 50 years behind our time.

What surprised me was how contented the people looked with their way of life, and they looked perfectly happy and at ease with the world. Not a single complaint about the long walks to the dilapidated schools, or that their television's satellite feed is not working properly due to the rain. They would make the best out of everything they had, be it the old tyres in their front yards or simply just the rainwater that falls from the sky.

Seeing how they live so happily without more than half the basic necessities that I enjoy here in Singapore made me feel guilty for making a big fuss whenever someone pulls out my laptop charger from the socket.

Clichéd as it might sound, the two weeks in the remote island of West Sumatra has changed my perspective towards community service and life. I have come to appreciate the beauty and the wrath of nature, and how we should be content with what we have instead of complaining about the trivial things in life all the time. I have finally come to realise, after 19 years of living a comfortable life, the joys of community service.

Editor: Chang Qiaolin Sub-editors: Denise Tan, Addison Thomas Wong, Adeline Yeo Designer: Stephanie Goh

Engineering Students Doing Their Part For The Environment

To most people, community service is about doing a good deed to benefit the less fortunate. But to these spunky and enthusiastic students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Engineering, community service is also about saving our environment. By JOYCE PEH.

Bag The Record, Literally

For most people, recycling may mean consciously throwing away their rubbish into the correct large, colourful recycling bins placed side-by-side at our void decks. Or it could simply be handing over used and unwanted clothing to the Salvation Army.

But that is far from what recycling means to second-year Quality Management & Engineering (QME) student, Tang Chee Hong. For the 20-year-old, recycling is going the extra mile to highlight the importance of it to the school. It means making a bold attempt to break a record to propagate the message of environmental conservation.

For his Innovation and Enterprise (I&E) project, Chee Hong and his second-year group mates Ng Jia Hui, 19, Ong Si Hui, 19, both from Civil & Environmental Engineering (CEE), Eugene Ong Sia Shou, 19, from QME, and Khong Yen Ling, 19, from Facility Management for Business, worked with Tetra Pak, a Swedish multinational food processing and packaging company to erect a nine-metre tall shopping bag made of recycled materials last July. Their main objective was to draw students' attention and at the same time promote recycling.

The team took two months from the conceptualisation of the idea to the eventual exhibition of their project. On how the group came to decide on the project, Chee Hong said, "When we were working on the project, the National Environmental Agency (NEA) was actively encouraging Singaporeans to conserve the environment by bringing their own bags. So we thought, why not do

something that would help create a deeper impression of the campaign?"

The project idea was then taken up by their lecturer, who suggested that their project could earn a record in the Singapore Book of Records. The students did exactly that, and sure enough, they set a new record for the 'Largest Bag Made of Recyclable Material' in Singapore.

Ms Foo Wei Ling, the lecturer-in-charge of the students, said, "[The project is a] classic example of students being able to innovate and display their sense of enterprise. They have put in an excellent effort to make the impossible come true within such a short period of time."

As the team's leader, Chee Hong said that he had always felt an inclination towards the conservation of the environment. His involvement in such activities started when he was in secondary school. "I joined the Environmental and Life Science Club, so we did things like planning Clean and Green Week and organising beach clean-ups." His networking with the manager of Tetra Pak during his years in Regent Secondary School also helped in the Bag The Record project.

When asked what obstacles he and his group mates had to overcome, Chee Hong said matter-of-factly, "The greatest challenge was to be able to overcome ourselves. We had a lot of people coming up to ask us why we wanted to make it such a big thing even though the project was not gradable. Ultimately, we feel that this is a learning journey, and it's the experience gained that counts." ■



BAGGING A RECORD: The bag that won SoE students a place in the Singapore Book of Records. [Photo courtesy of Tang Chee Hong]

NP's Very Own Bayer Young Environmental Envoy

Tang Chee Hong, the leader of Bag the Record, then pitched the event for the Bayer Young Environmental Envoy competition. The competition is held yearly to select four youths to represent Singapore as an envoy on a week-long trip to Germany. Selected envoys will join other youth delegates from 16 countries all over the world in an event to encourage students to do their part to save the environment.

"The competition came quite co-incidentally. I decided to give it a shot because of the great exposure the programme would put me through," said Chee Hong.

Although Chee Hong was one of the finalists in the competition, he was not eventually shortlisted to visit Germany. Nevertheless, the spirited student was awarded a certificate of appreciation for his works and commitments, in a ceremony that was graced by Dr Yacob Ibrahim, Singapore's Minister of Environment, on 30 October last year at the Fullerton Hotel. ■



NP'S STUDENT ENVIRONMENTALIST: Tang Chee Hong receives his Certificate of Appreciation accompanied by IS lecturer Mr Willie Hsu (left) and MOE Director Mr Andrew Sabaratnam. [Photo courtesy of Tang Chee Hong]



A FROGGIE AFFAIR: Team member Wong Yi Xuan getting the origami frogs into place. [Photo courtesy of Tay Rui Xiang]

Over The Hedge

Imagine manually folding origami frogs from flimsy newspaper for three whole weeks. That is exactly what five students from the School of Engineering (SoE) did for their I&E project last July.

Second-year CEE students Tay Rui Xiang, 19, Wong Yi Xuan, 19, Faris bin Abu Saleh, 19, and second-year Marine and Offshore Technology student Lynette Lui, 19, form another group of SoE students who set a new record in the Singapore Book of Records.

For them, it was for 'Most Number of Folded Frogs'. The group folded a total of 2,293 origami frogs which were pasted on a canvas to produce a composite image of a tree spanning three metres by 2.5 metres. The title of the montage, "Over The Hedge", was inspired by the movie of the same name which depicted how rapid urbanisation was leading to the destruction of nature.

Rui Xiang, leader of the team, said, "We wanted to do something that can help educate the NP community on the importance of conservation of recycling."

Pasting more than 2,000 delicate paper frogs on a canvas proved to be no easy feat. The students realised at the last minute that they were lacking frogs and "had to fold more in a short amount of time". "Some frogs even had to be sewn meticulously onto the canvas because it wouldn't stick," explained Rui Xiang, who hopes to work at the NEA in future.

"I am pleased and proud of the efforts put in by the students as well as the degree of involvement they commit to [I&E]," said a beaming Ms Foo. With two new records set last year, Ms Foo is filled with anticipation for projects that the new batch of SoE students will embark on. ■

Three different people, one common addiction

There are many things that people can be addicted to: drugs, alcohol, food, love, attention, among other things. All of these addictions are self-centred and almost always self-destructive. But there is one addiction that is quite the opposite. **Tribune** speaks to three staff from our campus about their addiction to community service.



SPECIAL FRIENDSHIP: Mr Ong has made good friends with the people he has helped. (Photo courtesy of Diana Sim)

Addict #1: Mr Ong Chong Kit, Corporate Communications Officer

As he spoke, there was an unmistakable shine in his eyes when he talked about the less fortunate whom he visits – disadvantaged people whom he has come to know over the years.

Working as a Corporate Communications Officer at Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), Mr Ong Chong Kit, 34, already has his plate full with work commitments. But that does not deter him from devoting his free time to care for the less fortunate.

It all started about five years ago, when Mr Ong heard about the radio station Class 95's then-adopted charity, the Singapore Cheshire Home.

After an interview, the home matched Mr Ong up with a disabled lady, Ms Eileen Tay, who had lost the use of her limbs. "Because she cannot use her limbs, she uses a headgear to do things like make a call or type on the computer keyboard," explained Mr Ong.

For three years, Mr Ong has made his way down to the home weekly to teach her art and computing. "After a few years now, I am quite proud to say that she has progressed a lot. Now she can surf the internet, is proficient in computer programs and even sends me emails when I am too busy to visit!" said a sprightly Mr Ong.

"She also has a wonderful spirit which is a great motivating factor," he added.

Mr Ong attributed his driving force to his attachment to the home and its residents. "It's the special friendship I've built with them that keeps me going back," he said.

Mr Ong also takes time off to tutor a Primary Five boy from the Singapore Children's Society every fortnight. He has also been financially sponsoring a Thai girl who comes from a low-income family through Worldvision for three years and counting.

An advocate for giving what you can to the community, Mr Ong tells the people around him who are interested in community service, "You should never feel that the less fortunate are automatically indebted to you. Volunteering should be done with the correct intentions, rather than expecting to get something in return." - JOYCE PEH

Addict #2: Mr Aaron Chua, School of Engineering, Building & Environment Division

The story about the little boy walking on the beach saving one starfish at a time has been told to death and some may even scoff at how clichéd it has become. The world is a better place because of people who are dedicated to making a change in the world just like the little boy, no matter how few or small.

Tribune had the privilege to meet such a person right here in NP. Mr Aaron Chua is a dedicated community worker who takes students under his wing in the hope of inspiring them to see beyond the comforts of Singapore. He believes that it is possible to change the world by impacting and reaching out to one person at a time. He told **Tribune**, "People learn much more when they are placed in an environment where there are challenges. Many a time, we need to get out of our comfort zone before we realise how blessed we are."

Mr Chua, a devoted lecturer from the School of Engineering, Building & Environment division, has been actively involved in community service, particularly in Laos, for the last three years. Each year, he rounds up groups of students and jets off to Vangvieng in Laos to help in construction work, impart Information Technology skills and teach the English language. Mr Chua has also donated computers to schools in Laos, built libraries and other community facilities.

His efforts and commitment in effective teaching won him the Academic Award in Teaching in 2006 and he oversees at least eight overseas trips a year. His effort in this area did not go unnoticed and won him the Best Community Service Award in the same year.

Passion, submission, willingness to help and a good positive attitude is Mr Chua's list of top attributes for a community worker. "I strongly believe that if you are a willing and obedient person, someone who is willing to humble himself even to do the lowly tasks, you will eat the good of the land," he said.

He added, "I'm a strong believer of students being able to learn much more when they can experience it. In education, some things can be taught while others need to be experienced." Mr Chua feels that you receive as much as you give as you will benefit and take away many lessons that will last you a lifetime. He shared his deepest satisfaction with **Tribune**, "For each student's life that is transformed, and he or she returns with a better appreciation for life back in Singapore, I would truly feel that my role is fulfilled." - CHARITY GOH

Addict #3: Mr Ben Tan, School of Business & Accountancy

Facilitating student-initiated community service projects is easier said than done for Mr Ben Tan, a lecturer at the School of Business & Accountancy (BA).

The 48-year-old is mindful "of the sense of ownership and motivation students feel that comes from building up a project from scratch on their own".

Constant practice with nurturing young minds might have something to do with his wisdom. The head of BA Community And Outreach EndeavourS (CARES) has



GETTING HIS HANDS DIRTY: Putting the final touches on his newly constructed building. (Photo courtesy of Mr Aaron Chua)



BURSTING WITH PRIDE: Mr Ben Tan and some of the TEN TONNES winners, from right to left, Jason Huang Jing Sheng, Lim Sue Hui Joanne, John Melissa Ann, and Huang Qiong Ping. (Photo courtesy of National Council for Social Services)

helped to oversee the progress of an average of eight community projects a year, comprising both student-initiated and overseas projects, for the last two-and-a-half years.

His pride in his students is palpable as he waxes lyrical about the last two student-initiated projects he oversaw. Both were smash hits. The first is Ten Tonnes, which, with the help of over 2,000 volunteers outside of NP, raised \$28,400 and collected 108 tonnes of recyclables. The second is the Keys Project, a collection of fund-raising events, which raised \$12,000 for the NP Needy Students Fund.

Mr Tan coined the name for the community outreach arm of the School of BA, BA CARES, when he was its advisor.

Mr Tan's take on community service is telling, colouring the tone of his trips. The aim of all trips he has led is "to foster relationships between [his] students and the locals there, and facilitate the waking up process of students who have led a sheltered life".

"We're not here to magically take away all their troubles. They ask me why these things happen," Mr Tan says of his students when they despair, "I'd ask them, what can they do?"

Indeed, they do whatever is needed with added fervour, he found. When Mr Tan led Serve Thailand in 2005, he and his students had a vigorous 14 days there. They furnished two schools with equipment, treated the local schools' students and adults for lice, built a small home for a family, cooked for villagers and put on a cultural show.

Volunteering his time to NP's community work is "just part and parcel of his work". The modest man noted, "Young people are energetic and amazingly creative. All you have to do is strike a spark in their bellies, give them the opportunity to do something worthwhile, the right cause, and they will set the world on fire." - MIHO IWAKI



Diversity In Giving To A Good Cause

To rebuild the tsunami-wrecked island of Nias in Indonesia, Ngee Ann Polytechnic can create a consolidated programme involving all schools. ANISAH AHMAD finds out how.



SEEDS OF HOPE: Different expertise will help the FTC go further to achieve its aims. (Photos courtesy of Chang Qiaolin)

It would be ideal to have a gamut of students of expertise working together in contributing to a community project, the Farmer's Training Centre (FTC), in Nias, Indonesia.

Not long after the island was hit by the devastating tsunami in 2004, the FTC was set up to aid in recreating a sustainable society. In order to prepare the people of Nias to stand on their own feet, Mr Lester Chew, Executive Director of the FTC, said, "Unlike relief aids that leave once the money is spent, my philosophy is neither about giving them fishes nor teaching them how to fish, but to help them to constantly think of fishing."

In a speech made by Mr Chew on 19 October last year in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), he said that it would be a great idea if students with different expertise could assist the FTC with the various aspects of the set up.

There have been projects that involved students from different courses, for instance the Sabah trip in 2006, initiated by the School of Business & Accountancy's (BA) community group, BA Community And Reachout EndeavourS (BA CARES) where four Mass Communication (MCM) students and students of various diploma programmes from the came together to finish building a kindergarten there.

However, there has never been a community service project that is organised with the intention of uniting the different expertise of NP students to help an organisation or purpose.

"It is a good idea if [the project] is well-coordinated and has clear macro inter-school objectives," said Ms Joyce Tang, Course Manager of the School of Humanities.

The FTC aims to convert into a full-fledged polytechnic in the coming five to 10 years.

The FTC currently dedicates about 70 percent of its

courses to farming and the remaining to the Niasen students who study at the FTC, covering topics like preventive health care, basic computer lessons and English Language classes.

The FTC needs external help in contributing to the many areas needed to make this set up progress at a quicker pace.

Last September, 17 students and two interns from MCM went over to the FTC and assisted in designing promotional pamphlets and banners for the centre, modified teaching materials for the its teachers and students and produced a corporate video of the FTC and video training manuals of farming practices. Stories and articles were also written by the students for various local publications.

A unified community service effort ought to be encouraged and taken into serious consideration when planning for the next NP-wide project.

For instance, Horticulture & Landscape Management students can offer help in the basic methods of landscaping and agriculture at the FTC.

They can also educate farmers and students on basic rules of thumb, methods and simple instructions to abide by for successful and healthy crops.

Ms Tang added, "Perhaps students studying for the new Diploma in Business and Social Enterprise (BZSE) can help the farmers [and the centre] look at marketability of their products."

Mr Aaron Chua, Building & Engineering (BE) Division Overseas Trips Coordinator of the School of Engineering, said, "I believe that BE would be able to contribute in the area of construction and water projects [such as] building of a library, storerooms and water tanks [and] laying water pipes."

However, schools are not aware of what the other schools

are doing or organising most of the time, and this might be a likely loophole in arranging a united effort.

One of the many ways to begin this initiative might be through circulating information among the many different schools to keep all parties in the loop.

Ms Tang felt that it "would be a good unifying platform but considerations about sufficient resources and the necessary expertise have to be made".

Some factors to consider would be the size of the team going over at any one time and the opportunities for the students to learn and gain experiences.

Mr Chua noted, "When the location can't cater to a big group, there might be more 'watchers' than 'doers' [and] for effective service learning to take place, the team should be kept small."

To overcome this issue, he suggested that the project be broken up into phases for different groups to go one after another and resume the task of, for example, building a library.

Ms Tang also brought up some possible issues of "time schedules for pre/post trip activities and the ownership of programme".

Irregular and vast differences in schedules can affect the aspect of teamwork and it may be difficult to get together regularly.

Despite all these ideas for a united effort, Mr Chew said, "I do not think that in one visit, much can be done. Therefore there must be continuity in the programmes."

Said Mr Chew on why he chose NP out of the many schools here, "NP has a very diverse and wide spectrum in their education programmes."

He added, "[The] FTC's vision is [to equip] and [train] leaders. It is my very dream that FTC networks with NP because of the quality of the system which NP has." ■

New Diplomas Give Prospective Students Brighter Futures

The new 2008/2009 academic year sees three new diplomas being offered as Ngee Ann Polytechnic continues to understand and meet industry demands.

Diploma in Business & Social Enterprise



FROM THE HEART: BZSE graduates will be qualified to help the unfortunate find employment. [Photo courtesy of School of HMS]

BY JASMINE GOH
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Candice (not her real name) is a hardworking and cheerful server at Barista Café. She goes about her usual chores everyday, looks you in the eye and smiles radiantly as she takes your order. She is also an ex-mental patient.

Barista Café is one of many businesses that have sprung up to help people like Candice with rebuilding their lives. It is a joint effort of the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and Dignity Links Limited, a social enterprise company.

For young people with a burning desire to help the less fortunate, the School of Humanities (HMS) will be offering a new diploma in Business & Social Enterprise (BZSE), which aims to train students for a more practical method to serve the unfortunate.

"Our focus is on meeting social needs," said Mrs Choo Cheh Hoon, Director of HMS. "There is a huge need in Singapore and worldwide for social enterprises [which have to be set up] to provide these people with jobs."

"You can also be directly involved in assisting ex-convicts, drug offenders, struggling single mums or even the disabled in reducing their dependence on welfare handouts," said Mrs Choo.

Social enterprises largely differ from charity companies. The new batch of social workers will possess adequate business knowledge and ensure that the enterprise is profitable, so as to help the employees improve and self-sustain the business.

For example, Barista Café provides job training for ex-mental patients to prepare them and boost their chances of integrating into the Food & Beverage workforce. It also provides job placement assistance and counselling services for its employees.

According to the HMS website, there are currently over 500 non-profit organisations in Singapore alone, which opens tremendous room for social enterprises to flourish "within the community and service sector".

"BZSE graduates will be able to develop effective business models and help social enterprises reach out to the marginalised and disadvantaged," stated the Ngee Ann Polytechnic press release.

BZSE graduates can become social enterprise managers, human resource executives and marketing communication officers in non-profit organisations or companies seeking to improve their social awareness.

Helping the unfortunate to support themselves may provide them with a new sense of confidence and purpose in living. "They will be able to [create and sustain] Businesses with a Heart," she said. ■

Diploma in Enterprise Information Technology Systems



DIGITAL AGE PIONEERS: Grooming students to be leaders of a booming InfoComm industry. [Photo courtesy of School of ICT]

BY CALVIN YANG
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Students from the School of InfoComm Technology (ICT) will soon be finding themselves pioneering the Intelligent Nation 2015 (iN2015), an initiative by the InfoComm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA), to transform the island city into a global hub, powered by InfoComm Technology.

This Master Plan, which will replace the current "Connected Singapore" scheme, is set to energise the economic growth of the nation and provide 80,000 more jobs to fuel this booming industry.

Responding to the call for graduates who are InfoComm-savvy and business-minded, the School of ICT will be launching a new diploma in Enterprise IT Systems (EIT) in the April 2008 semester to meet the demands of this \$45.4 billion industry.

"The demand for graduates who can combine both technical expertise and business insight to design, manage and integrate processes for enterprises has been on the rise."

"The new EIT course will help groom students who can develop innovative solutions to help companies become more competitive," Mr Chang Bin Haw, a full-time lecturer at the School of ICT, explained.

In the first two years of study, the new diploma course will not only equip students with strong fundamentals, but also train them to be conversant in IT processes and business services.

They will then spend their third year specialising in either Banking & Finance or Healthcare, both of which are, according to Mr Chang, "hot areas" in the employment market.

The School of Business & Accountancy and the School of Health Sciences have been roped in to coach students in the relevant specialisations.

However, Mr Chang, who is also Course Manager for the diploma, said, "The school could also offer other specialisations which are in demand to shorten the learning curve and better prepare students to work in new industries."

The intake has been kept to a maximum of 60 students. Ms Lau Yi Meng, Subject Cluster Manager for the diploma, explained, "We have to consider factors such as the number of students taking the 'O' Levels and the demand for such students in the industry."

But with 2015 approaching and the digital age fast arriving, this course could be the next big thing set to hit our campus. ■

Diploma in International Supply Chain Management



OPENING NEW DOORS: A host of careers await ISCM graduates. [Photo courtesy of Corporate Communications Department]

BY TIMOTHY SIM
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With the new Diploma in International Supply Chain Management (ISCM), students can now join the logistics industry that is brimming with job prospects.

According to the School of Engineering (SoE), the ISCM course is meant to meet the dire need for supply chain management professionals, who deal with the movement of goods from the point-of-origin to point-of-consumption in the form of logistics.

Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) is the first school to offer such a diploma in Singapore, and 40 students will make the pioneer batch in the upcoming semester in April.

Mr Ng Thiam Chye, a senior lecturer in SoE, said, "The supply chain and logistics businesses are key pillars of trade. A new generation of supply chain management professionals is needed to promote Singapore as a global supply chain nerve centre and premier integrated logistics hub."

He added that ISCM will boost the industry's talent pool and help the local and multinational companies in Singapore meet their global supply chain needs.

Lisa Yong, 20, a 2006/2007 graduate from the Logistics Management (LMGT) from SoE, noted that ISCM professionals are in demand.

"The supply chain sector is where most of the company's costs are incurred. With an effective supply chain, it is only then that the company can save up on unnecessary expenses. The existence of ISCM will be awesome because most of the people doing logistics these days will retire soon," she said.

To drive home the importance of ISCM, the World Bank ranked Singapore as the best logistics hub in November 2007. The survey polled 800 operators in the international freight sector and compiled the Logistics Performance Index to gauge each country's effectiveness.

With that, the ISCM will span the entire spectrum of supply chain management, including trade, legal, security, transportation and custom brokerage issues from an international perspective.

"Graduates will enjoy excellent career opportunities as supply chain specialists who can function effectively in an international business arena."

"They will be able to pursue careers in areas such as purchasing management, freight and shipping business, airline and airport services, import and export business, transportation management, risk and crisis management, maritime industry, and logistics operations," Mr Ng said. ■

EDvance Returns In 2008

BY YE HUIQI
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With a brand new look and a novel theme of travel and transit, EDvance was back for the third time in campus to set students on track for university studies.

The campus-wide education fair which was held on 10 January, drew an estimated turnout of over 2800 participants for respective university presentations and counselling sessions that were scheduled for the event, according to Terence Tan, 24, a third-year Mass Communication (MCM) student and chairperson of the EDvance 2008 team.

As stated on the EDvance 2008 website, the event is a joint collaboration by Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Students Services and a group of MCM students from the School of Film & Media Studies who are taking the Conventions & Exhibitions module as an elective in their third year of study.

EDvance 2008 aimed to provide a one-stop platform for students to gather information and make informed choices about further education.

Other than the four local universities, educational representatives from the overseas universities such as the Canadian Education Centre Network and the United States Education Information Centre also conducted seminars focusing on their academic programmes as well as the admission criteria.

The programme gave greater insight into university education through sharing sessions with NP graduates who are

currently pursuing their studies at the participating universities. Personal counselling sessions with the educational representatives were also arranged for students to address their concerns about higher education.

Germaine Tay, 18, a second-year Accounting student, said that it was good to have all the universities come together so as to get a rough impression what it takes to enter the respective schools.

We wanted to create an experience where students can draw similarity to an important juncture in their life.

Terence Tan, 24
Third-year MCM student
Chairperson of EDvance 2008

Not only did the attendees earn Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) points for their participation at EDvance 2008, they also walked away with complimentary goodie bags containing food and refreshments as well as other giveaways from external sponsors such as Gloria Jean's and Swensen's.



CHOOSING THE RIGHT PATH: Students gather around the booths at NP Convention Centre to gain more information about university education at EDvance2008. (Picture by: Tok Xia Jie)

Ms Annie Poon, Students Services Administrator (Further Studies), said that the partnership with external sponsors was a win-win situation for both parties, because the students benefited from a learning experience, and at the same time, the corporate partners also garnered publicity.

Due to limited resources, the students from the EDvance team learnt how to think out of the box to source for plans that are suitable for the budget, Ms Poon stated. "They also took care of other logistics such as the planning of the actual programme as well as setting up of booths."

Directional signs were set up across

campus as part of the EDvance 2008 team's effort to generate interest and publicity for the education fair.

"This year, the event took a coordinated and synchronized theme about moving forward," said Terence Tan. He added that the collaterals such as the maps in the posters as well as the directional signs carried off the theme of travel and transit very well.

"We wanted to create an experience where students can draw similarity to an important juncture in their life, where they make important decisions about their future which explains the essence of this educational event," he reasoned. ■

First Step! Bazaar Goes Green

BY PEARLYN HOON
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The School of Business & Accountancy (BA) went green in their fourth annual bazaar "First Step!" for a unique social entrepreneurship experience.

Promotional billboards and educational placards about environmental topics like climate change and global warming were on display while the stall holders were encouraged to use cardboard and other recycled materials for their booths' décor to strengthen and add as much as they could to the bazaar's theme. There was even a group that substituted the use of plastic bowls with coconut husks.

More than 80 stalls of student and Bukit Batok resident vendors congregated at Bukit Batok interchange on 13 January for "First Step!", where it was games and shopping galore. About 1,000 people turned up, with guest of honour, Jurong Group Representation Constituency's Minister of Parliament Dr Ong Chit Chung gracing the event as well.

"It's like a platform for students to learn practical things that are beyond the reach of what textbooks can give," said Lee Xin Yi, 19, leader of the team spearheading the event for their third-year Entrepreneurship in Practice module. "It's an opportunity for them to be their own boss and to practise their entrepreneurship skills."



GOING THE GREEN MILE: Guest of honour Dr Ong graced the event and supported the "Green" theme of the bazaar. (Picture by: Pearlyn Hoon)

"And because there's always a bazaar in school, having it there wasn't fun anymore, so we stepped out and approached Bukit Batok Community Centre," she said.

The BA bazaar is an entrepreneurship project handed down to one team each year to take the lead. The group sought sponsorships from Non-Governmental Organisations like the Singapore Environment Council and Animal Concerns Research & Education Society, as well as Singapore Press Holdings and Crocodile to fund their project.

Xin Yi and her team of five decided to spice up the business-driven event by making the theme "green" for the

first time, and one rule they implemented was banning the issue of plastic bags after a purchase.

"It's the same business model," she said, comparing the current structure and approach of the project with the last. "[It's] just that we improved it by adding themes like the green theme, which is really popular."

"We wanted to showcase an entrepreneurial spirit, to nurture and educate the youth and residents of Bukit Batok on environmental responsibilities, issues, and measures to be taken in helping the environment, and emphasise the importance of being social entrepreneurs,"

she added. The most basic measure applied to stall holders was that all waste material had to be classified into plastic, cans and papers for recycling at the end of the day.

Other activities included special performances by the Business Studies students and an environmental art competition, where participants showed off their creative flair using recycled materials like buttons, newspapers and cans to decorate recycled bags. Recycled goodie bags were also distributed to the public. The goodie bags, called "shopping survival kits", contained November issues of *FIRST* magazine and the local edition of *Seventeen* magazine, a Crocodile catalog with discount vouchers, and a bottle of NEWater.

Goh Jun Kiat, 20, a third-year Business Studies student and a stall-holder in the bazaar collaborated with Methodist Girls' School's (MGS) FernOrigin team, to be part of the eco-friendly cause by selling staghorn ridley ferns. Staghorn ridley ferns are extinct in the wild in Singapore but are being brought back to life through tissue culture. FernOrigin, comprising five MGS students, is attempting to revive other plants in a similar manner.

"The proceeds from my stall will go entirely to the MGS student venture, which will in turn go into the culturing of more plants," he said. "And I'd rather use this platform now and see how it's like in the real world."

The result was what Xin Yi intended – an interactive business affair with a dose of environmental awareness. ■

SoE Offers First Full-Time Degree Course

BY ELAINE WEE
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With the latest two-year degree tie-up with Newcastle University, Daniel Lim, a second-year Marine and Offshore Technology (MOT) student, will be able to graduate with a Bachelor of Engineering in Naval Architecture with Honours by 2010.

The new course will commence in September with a pioneer batch of 60 selected students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Diploma in MOT and Singapore Polytechnic's Diploma in Marine Engineering. Most of the modules will be delivered by Newcastle University at both polytechnics.

NP will set up a new project lab on its campus, at an estimated cost of \$120,000, to support the degree programme. By June, a centre will be constructed at Block 35 to represent the Newcastle University Singapore office.

"The towing tank is a high-quality facility for teaching, learning and project work by students of a degree course related to Naval Architecture. Without a towing tank, a degree programme in Naval Architecture will have limitations for undertaking meaningful and relevant projects in the field."

"Our existing towing tank is located in Block 71 and is the only tow tank in Singapore. However, the block has been earmarked for future development for other purposes. As such, we have plans to construct a replacement tank in Block 39. The tank will be equipped with the carriage, load cell and state-of-the-art data acquisition system," revealed Mr. Cheah Choo Lek, Deputy Director of the Mechanical Engineering division.

Daniel, 18, had intended to head overseas to further his studies before hearing of this collaboration. "With this degree tie-up, I'm now spoilt for choice. On one hand, I could save a whole lot of cash by taking up a degree course in NP. On the other hand, I could still head to overseas universities to gain more experience," he explained.

Students who are Singapore citizens can apply for the Ministry of Education (MOE) tuition grant of \$15,360 per year



AN EXTRA OPTION: The new collaboration provides local students with a more convenient alternative to obtain their degree in this field. (Photo courtesy of Mr Cheah Choo Lek)

and pay a subsidised tuition fee of \$7,100 per year. Singapore Permanent Residents and foreign students who wish to take up the tuition grant will pay a subsidised fee of \$7,810 and \$10,650 per year respectively. Subsidised students who are not Singapore citizens have to fulfill a three-year service obligation to work in Singapore upon completion of the Polytechnic-Foreign Specialised Institution (Poly-FSI) degree programme.

The affordable fees will allow more students to be able to pursue their passion in a shorter amount of time.

"I wanted to further my education after getting my diploma. However, due to financial problems, I had planned to work before pursuing my degree. Now with this new course, I would be able to obtain my degree in two years, without having to work first," said Lim Siok Khim, 19, a third-year student from MOT.

On 22 November last year, NP and Newcastle University signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to launch the Bachelor of Engineering in Naval Architecture with Honours in the presence of Mr Gan Kim Yong, the Minister of State, MoE and Minister of Manpower.

"Together, we will produce top-quality graduates who will, in time, make their own mark to propel the marine and offshore industry to greater heights," said Mr Chia

Mia Chiang, Principal of NP.

Professor Ella Ritchie, Newcastle University's Pro-Vice-Chancellor, also expressed optimism about the tie-up.

"Our collaboration over the programme in Naval Architecture should give both NP and Newcastle a new international focus and create a partnership based on mutual learning and respect," she said.

This is the first full-time degree course in Naval Architecture to be offered in Singapore, and also the second degree programme approved by the MOE's Poly-FSI initiative. This initiative offers degree tie-ups to create a more diverse tertiary education landscape and to help polytechnic students get their degrees more easily.

The first such degree tie-up was in 2006, which involved a collaboration between NP, Wheelock College and the Regional Training and Resource Centre in Early Childhood Care and Education for Asia to offer the Bachelor of Science in Early Childhood Educational Studies and Leadership.

Previously, NP had announced its collaboration with SPRING Singapore to initiate an MOT Centre of Innovation (COI) on campus in October last year. The COI, costing \$5.5 million, will be set up to help maritime companies develop new and innovative products, services and processes.

NP Offers 'O' Level Subjects

BY ANISAH AHMAD
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As part of the Ministry of Education's (MOE) initiative in promoting hands-on learning, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) – with Temasek (TP) and Singapore Polytechnic (SP) – will be offering examinable Applied Subjects for the GCE 'O' Level examinations.

In January, Express and Normal (Academic) Secondary Three students from eight secondary schools around Singapore were given the privilege to opt for an additional Applied Subject as one of their electives, apart from Design & Technology and Food & Nutrition.

NP is partnering Hong Kah Secondary School, St. Andrew's Secondary School and Tanglin Secondary School to offer Fundamentals of Electronics over a two-year course of study just like any other 'O' Level subject, under the Electronic and Computer Engineering Division (School of Engineering).

Said Ms Nancy Tan, Senior Manager of the Special Projects Office, "We hope to bring out the best, to optimize their learning capabilities by introducing different learning styles."

"Polytechnic education is getting more popular and in this way, [secondary school students] can get a preview of NP's applied and practice-oriented system."

She shared that apart from conventional classroom teaching, there will be project-based learning involving formal lectures, instructor-led tutorials, hands-on experiments, project construction and presentations.

"It's partly the appreciation of polytechnic education," she added.

A rigorous curriculum comprising 120 hours of instruction time has been planned for this pilot run, and a dedicated lecturer will "follow them through and monitor their progress", while they enjoy the various facilities in NP, such as laboratories equipped with electronic test and measurement instruments and printed circuit board fabrication facilities.

A teacher from the respective partnering schools will be present to facilitate and "this [will be] a great platform to share the differing pedagogies adopted by different lecturers", Ms Tan added.

To encourage web-based learning and alternative mediums, these students will have access to NP's Mobile e-Learning (MeL) portal to reach the lecturers and have group discussions.

Despite funding from MOE and NP, students will be required to pay a small additional fee if taking these Applied Subjects.

Ms Tan said, "We want [students] to be exposed to other options in their secondary school years to make a more informed choice upon graduation."

TP is partnering Dunman Secondary School, Pasir Ris Secondary School and Temasek Secondary School while SP is partnering Fairfield Methodist Secondary School and Outram Secondary School.

These new Applied Subjects will be reflected in the students' GCE 'O' Level Examination Certificates and be recognised for admission into junior colleges and polytechnics.

MOU Helps To Form Student Chapter

BY STEPHANIE GOH
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The School of Business & Accountancy (BA) will now benefit from a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the School BA and the Singapore Human Resource Institute (SHRI) through a Student Chapter set to promote human resource management to students.

On 21 January, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) and SHRI signed a MOU, with SHRI giving NP business students who are involved in the Student Chapter access to their vast resources on human resource (HR) management.

Though the signing of MOUs with SHRI is not an uncommon occurrence, with Temasek Polytechnic as another institute which has collaborated with SHRI, NP is the "first polytechnic that is forming a Student Chapter under the MOU", according to Ms Jocelyn Soh, a lecturer of BA and the person-in-charge

of this project. She further explained that the aim of setting up the SHRI Student Chapter was to form "an active student group to look into organising activities to enhance the skills of students who are interested in the HR field".

SHRI has opened its doors to NP and will now allow students to "have access to SHRI's HR community portal, their resources online, their library, their publication, their e-letters," said Ms Soh. These benefits are just the tip of the iceberg with committee members of the SHRI Student Chapter being able to get more job opportunities through the SHRI website as well as receiving invitations to dialogues and seminars conducted by SHRI on HR management.

In addition, office bearers in the SHRI Student Chapters will be able to get 50 percent off a SHRI membership, should they wish to join the institution in the future.

However, there are certain responsibilities that come with running this student chapter. Office bearers in the committee will be taking charge of ensuring the development

of HR in NP.

Ms Soh said, "Students will look into organising activities that's going to benefit students who are interested in HR management such as talks and seminars." She added that the Student Chapter would also be inviting industrial players for talks to help students interested in HR keep up with industrial trends and changes.

She said that ultimately, the aim of the student chapter is to "really to enhance their knowledge, their understanding, better prepare these people for the field later on when they graduate".

In regards to this collaboration between SHRI and NP, Ms Soh felt that both institutions will benefit. SHRI, being the choice organisation to pair up with due to its specialisation in HR management and training, was looking to be a big brother to various institutions.

"It [was] a win-win situation because for NP as an educational institution we want to map up with credible institutions in that to give more value to our students," she said.

A Human Touch To A Business Edge

BY SELENE YAP
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Third-year Business Studies (BS) students can look forward to a more flexible learning experience with the introduction of two new options, Marketing Communication and Psychology, to meet the ever-changing demands of the industry.

With the launch of the new options in the 2008/2009 academic year, students taking the Diploma in BS under the School of Business & Accountancy will be able to enjoy a wider selection of third-year options.

With the introduction of the Marketing Communication option, students can pursue careers in the media, advertising and public relations fields and simultaneously apply their knowledge in building business brand value through effective communication tools.

Catherine Lee, 19, a third-year BS student, believed that having Psychology as an option would raise the profile of the BS diploma. According to the BS website, the understanding of human behaviour and developing analytical skills will be useful for students who are looking to apply their knowledge in areas such as advertising.

Students can combine the Psychology option with the Entrepreneurship, Human Resource Management, Marketing or Service Management option.

Students who pick Marketing Communication can proceed to complete a two-year Degree in Advertising & Integrated Marketing Communication (AIMC) offered under the polytechnic Foreign Specialised Institution (FSI) programme, endorsed by the Ministry of Education.

Each option consists of five modules that provide students with an in-depth knowledge of the subject of their interest.

Ms Doreen Yeo, Academic Manager for BS, said, "As Marketing Communication students will explore different aspects of



MIXING MEDIA & BUSINESS: Vanessa and her team worked together with FMS students to create their media clip "High Beat". [Photo courtesy of Vanessa Chng]

graphic communication such as advertising and design, [BS has] an alliance with the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) to tap on the expertise of FMS lecturers." Three classes of BS students under the Marketing Communication option will be served by FMS lecturers for four modules, namely Media in Society, Graphic Communication, Advertising and Public Relations. She added that the Psychology option will see new lecturers with experience in the relevant industry.

According to Ms Yeo, the school evaluates its courses every three years to review the academic requirements needed to meet the industry standards. The decision to include the new options was based on feedback given by students, graduates and employers.

Ms Yeo said that while new options are introduced as a result of course evaluation, the school may decide to remove or update certain modules based on their popularity and relevance.

Held in conjunction with the launch of two new options, a marketing media clip competition, which will help introduce their school to the public and fellow students, was organised last December. It saw 23 teams of two to five students each

submitting video entries ranging from songs to skits.

This is the first time that the school is using such publicity methods to introduce its new options to both prospective and current students. Ms Tan Lai Wan, Assistant Academic Manager for BS, said, "The competition is a good learning experience for students to produce an advertising clip to market the new options."

The top five teams from the school of BA collaborated with FMS students to create a video clip using their own resources.

Vanessa Chng, 19, a third-year BS student and competition participant, agreed, "Without the collaboration with FMS students, the quality of our project wouldn't have been as good. We didn't expect the media clip to turn out so well."

Besides being judged on their relevance, creativity and video quality, the entries of the five finalists in the media clip competition was posted on the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) website for public voting. Visitors at the NP Open House also voted for their favourite clip.

Ms Tan added that the school will continue adopting similar practices in the future to raise awareness of new options.

The UWtimate Experience

BY RACHEL TAN
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Just because you do not own a credit card does not mean you cannot enjoy the privileges that come with it.

That is the idea behind the UWtimate Download, a unique privilege programme coming to your mobile phone.

Just by downloading a wallpaper from e-zine **theurbanwire.com**, students and staff of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) and their friends and family can enjoy discounts and benefits at about 50 participating merchants islandwide.

These include Spectacle Hut, Kai, Olio, Miss Clarity Cafe and Fabulous Tan.

Noting that mobile phones are an extension of youths' lives, School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) lecturer Mr Robin Yee came up with this idea to gain the "mindshare, heart share and phone share of the youth market".

The lecturer-in-charge of TriMedia Publishing, the student editorial consultancy which produces **theurbanwire.com**, **Tribune** and **hype** magazine, also likes that this alternative is "environmentally friendly" as no cards have to be made.

Mr Yee added he wanted good privileges not to be exclusive to certain phone plans, brands or even just Singaporeans, but to be passed on from phone to phone, using the power of social networking and viral marketing.

"However, it's best that users of the UWtimate Download join UrbanWire's community to receive updates and notifications via email," added Aw Cheng Wei, 19, a Publicity, Advertising and Promotion (PAP) Specialist of TriMedia Publishing, which is his graduating 20-week Industry Based Project (IBP).

Cheng Wei and his fellow third-year Mass Communication (MCM) TriMedia mates went to popular youth hangouts such as Bugis Village, Far East Plaza and Suntec City in search of the right partners.

Shawna Bradberry, 20, another PAP, said, "It was pretty taxing at first, I had to get used to pitching to strangers and holding their attention and most importantly, to get them to say yes." Many of the more than 100 merchants they had approached turned them down as they already had existing privilege programmes and feared creating competition for themselves.

UWtimate Download was conceived to celebrate UrbanWire's sixth birthday and to reward its readers who give the online entertainment and lifestyle e-zine an average of two million hits a month.

Adeline Yeo, 19, an editor of UrbanWire, said, "UWtimate Download is the perfect birthday gift for our readers."

While the discounts are in place, the launch party will only be held on 15 February at Home Club at The Riverwalk. 20 people **Tribune** surveyed said that they will use this privilege programme. Chian Yu-Chern, 19, a third-year Banking & Financial Services student, said, "I would definitely download the wallpaper and use the privileges, as the stores which are participating are places I know and shop at."

Robots Come Alive In SRG

BY EUNICE KOW
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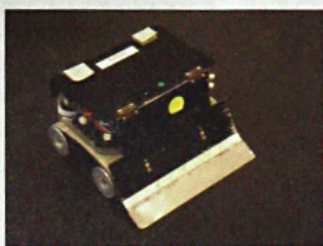
Robots created by the Mechatronics Engineering (MTE) students beat those from over five other schools during the Singapore Robotic Games (SRG), which was held from 8 to 11 January, to clinch first place for the Sumo-Robot Competition category.

The sumo-robot Robot Radical, the grand winner for SRG, came in first in both the Autonomous and RC Sumo-Robot Competition.

The competition is similar to what goes on in a sumo wrestling competition. The first robot to push the other out of the ring wins.

Tey Cher Fu, 20, a third-year MTE student and part of the team who built Robot Radical for their final-year project (FYP), said that they knew Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) had high chances of winning as they had four robots including Robot Radical which made it to the finals. Out of these four, three won prizes.

Besides Robot Radical that came in first for both Sumo-Robot competitions,



POWER-PACKED MINI MACHINE: Robot Radical beat tougher and bigger competitors to the top spot. [Photo courtesy of Mr Cheah Choo Lek]

Robot Zeta came in second and Robot X was fourth.

The most common trait in all the robots were that although they were not as bulky or huge as others they were quick enough to defeat the others before they had the chance to retaliate.

Felix Ng, 21, a third-year MTE student, one of the creators of Robot Juicy Bug, which made it to the finals of the competition, said, "All of us in the team spent an entire year to create our robots and we had to keep testing the robots every time we made a change so that it [would be] perfect when they went out

to compete."

These robots will be put on display at the Alpha Centre located at the first level of Block 8, for the future students to use as reference for their FYPs.

According to Mr Lim Beng Soon, senior lecturer for the Electronics and Computer Engineering Division, the robots, along with four students will be sent to the United States of America for the RoboGames which will be held in June this year.

Mr Lim added that allowing the students to participate in the SRG was to let them have a taste of what it would be like to send their creations for competitions and to make them better prepared for the RoboGames.

The RoboGames is a global competition which previous NP students have won consistently since it began in 2004. Mr Lim and the other lecturers from the Alpha Centre hope that this batch of students they are sending over will do NP proud once again.

NP's other teams also won prizes in other categories of the SRG. Robot Cube Box came in third for the Robot Colony Competition and Robot Min5 won the special award for the Micromouse Open Competition.

Xciting Crowds At Open House 2008

BY GRACE CHUA
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When he heard that a whole line-up of celebrities would be performing, 16-year-old Nicholas Chua, from St. Patrick's School was rather impressed. He was eager to find out what Paul Twohill had in store for him.

"I think Paul Twohill is pretty cool and I think his latest song on the radio was quite a good one," he exclaimed in excitement. Indeed, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) has made a name for itself by having a list of celebrity students.

The Open House, which took place from 17 to 19 January turned out to be a successful event, attracting many visitors and prospective students.

The three-day event, which was held around campus, was jam-packed with exciting activities for students to participate in, as well as performances to hype the whole experience up.

The Open House also offered facility tours around NP and counselling sessions to give future students a better insight of campus life and what Singapore's second oldest polytechnic has to offer.

Student ambassador Matthew Zachary Liu, 18, who was involved as a facilitator and the emcee for one of the programme lined up, said, "I think this year's Open House is quite exciting with quite a couple of surprises thrown in and a lot of hot acts that students can look forward to."

The first day kicked off with a meet-up cum performance session with NP's celebrities such as Singapore Idol's finalists, Daphne Khoo and Paul Twohill, and Campus Superstar's male runner-up Renfred Ng. Performing songs from their newly released singles and favourite artists, the three campus stars wowed audiences with their charisma and talent.



STAR-STUDED SHOWCASE: Hong Kong hot sensation duo, Soler was a charmer with the female audiences.
(Picture by: Grace Chua)

Hong Kong's hot sensation rock duo, Soler, by Y.E.S 93.3FM, was also one of the highlights, performing several of their hit songs.

The entertainment did not stop there, with S-Pop HURRAY! mini concert featuring the likes of Project Superstars and Campus Superstars on the second day.

Visitors were even given a chance to show off their dance moves at the Dance Morphism hip-hop competition, organised by NP's hip-hop group, New Revolving Age (NRA).

Several other activities were Build the Strongest Bridge, Steam-powered Can Boat Race, Electrifying Connections and D.A.R.T Challenge which allowed participating students to get hands-on experience with several projects organised mainly by the School of Engineering.

The third day rounded up the Open House with a bang, by engaging the crowd with the non-stop exciting acts at the Atrium.

The DJ Wannabe Competition, organised by NP's campus radio station,

Radio Heatwave, invited finalists to host a 'live' show on stage.

The excitement continued with a visit by Zouk's resident DJ Brandon mixing a short demo at the Atrium. NP's well-known cheerleading team, Magnum Force, was also at the scene, with Barracuda, showing off their stunts.

Local bands such as Caracal, Great Spy Experiment, West Grand Boulevard and Plainsunset and several more were also there to spice up the whole event.

Mr Ong Chong Kit, Corporate Communications Officer, said "As always, NP always tries to add buzz and vibrancy to the Open House. This year, we have managed to tie up with many organisations to make this event both informative and fun."

Mr Ong added that the events definitely showed students what NP has to offer if they intend to join the NP family.

"I think the events from the several Co-Curricular Activity groups have given students an idea about what they can do when they come to NP. For the other performances, they managed to add star quality and appeal to the whole event," he said.

With the newly furnished Student Lounge, OurSpace@72, located at the second floor of the Business block, students also had the opportunity to get a feel of the newest hang-out in NP.

Loh Yuhong, 16, from Dunearn Secondary School, expressed interest in Business Studies, and commented, "I like NP because of its reputation and I think the people here are really friendly and sociable."

Hisyam Nasir, 16, from Fairfield Methodist Secondary School, was impressed with the performances and the facilities. After leaving the first day of the Open House, he was all psyched about being part of the campus. "I am all ready to sign up for NP Business Studies." ■

Going Through Tests To Reach The Top

BY YEH WEI XUAN
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While the throngs of people at the Open House 2008 may have bothered some, a group of students were more than happy with the massive turnout.

Nearly 30 students in three different teams vying to manage the Cheers outlet at the student plaza for the next academic year were tasked to market a product in their individual teams at the Atrium.

Instead of being judged on their sales figures, these teams will be judged entirely on their professionalism, resourcefulness, creativity and teamwork.

Ms Jasmine Lee, a lecturer at the School of Business and Accountancy who is in charge of this scheme, explained, "This is to prevent students from being over zealous in their activities, which might offend some visitors to our Open House."

This retail challenge forms 40 percent of the judging criteria.

The other 40 percent goes to a proposal proposition on activities to promote visitorship and increase sales for the Cheers@NP store during the recent Open House. The remaining 20 percent goes to a post-mortem presentation, where students

will have to elaborate on what they have learnt during the retail challenge.

This judging criterion will then determine which two teams out of the three will get to manage the Cheers@NP store for the next academic year.

Although not all the participants would get an opportunity to manage the outlet, it was apparent that the retail challenge itself was already an invaluable experience for them.

"I'd decided to give this a try because I thought it was interesting - I've never tried this kind of thing before. This challenge teaches us how we can present and promote our products in as creative a way as possible," said Bay Wan Ting, 17, a first-year Business Studies student.

Despite the scheme being largely enterprise-focused, Ms Lee shared that most of the students who joined were not business students, but instead students from the Schools of Engineering and Life Sciences & Chemical Technology.

First-year Real Estate Business student Leu Eng Chaing, 19, said, "I joined because I wanted to prove that not only business students can do business. Also, I get to learn things from this scheme that I don't get to learn in my course."

Since the Cheers@NP store's opening in October 2006, 26 students have had the



TOUGH COMPETITION: Students from the challenging teams promoting their products during Open House 2008. (Picture by: Yeh Wei Xuan)

opportunity to learn about the workings of a convenience store under the Cheers-NP student entrepreneurship scheme.

Apart from having to manage the store, these students also get to put their entrepreneurship skills to test by organising publicity campaigns to boost sales as well as setting up kiosks selling food items around the school.

These students also had to undergo a month-long paid training stint at various Cheers outlets around the island during their holidays.

Royston Lau, 19, a second-year Molecular

Biotechnology student, who is the team leader of E-wave, the current team managing the Cheers@NP store, said, "We don't just take on the role of retail assistants. We are given managerial tasks and we learn how to do stock-taking, accounting and such."

The two winning teams, which were announced on 24 January, impressed the judges with their design and decoration of the booth and the mascot respectively during the retail challenge. The two teams will be taking turns to manage the Cheers@NP store over the next two semesters in the new academic year. ■

Money No Enough

The cost of living is going up and up, JASMINE GOH finds out how young people are feeling the pinch.

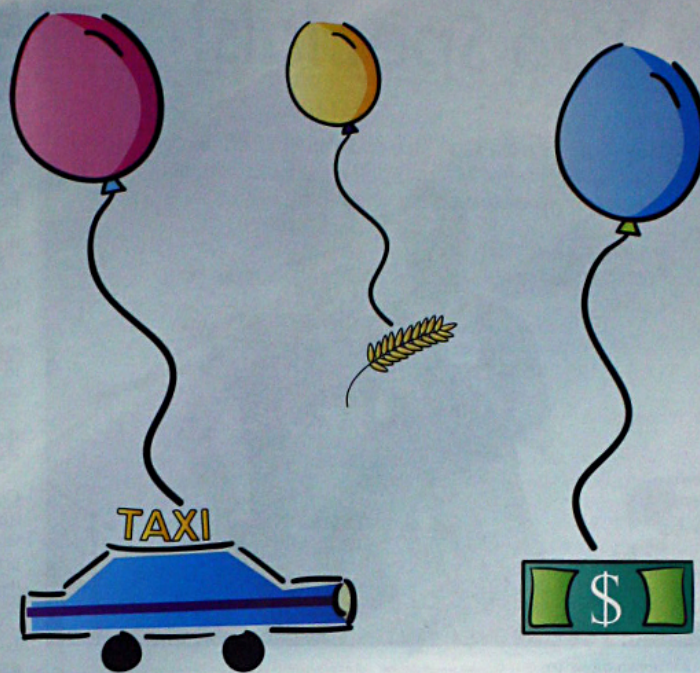


Illustration by Stephanie Goh

During the days when Britney Spears was still hot, the cheapest adult bus fare was 60 cents. Almost a decade later, it is now a minimum of 67 cents, even for journey covering three stops. Even if you live near your school and will need to shell out only 67 cents per trip, your bus fare will amount to \$40.20 per month, as compared to \$36 from before.

While this seven-cent difference may seem small to you, it is the biggest contributor of your rising public transport costs. On top of this, the price of everything from movie tickets to Delifrance tuna croissant sandwiches have risen considerably, the latter by a whole 17 percent from \$5.05 to \$5.90.

Here's the good news - if your money seems to be running out faster than before, this time it may not be due to poor money management, but the trickle-down effects of global inflation.

"Now that inflation is happening, it is increasingly frustrating me," said Lynn Tham, 18, a second-year Business Studies student. She is also your everyday young adult who indulges in chill-out nights, shopping, a nice meal now and then and cabbage around. "Everything has become more expensive."

When Comfort DelGro implemented a fare hike on 17 December last year, cabbage entered the list of semi-luxuries. The flag-down rate for its taxis has increased by 30 cents to \$2.80, while peak hour surcharges has been raised to 35 percent of the metered fare. If you hail a cab within the Central Business District (CBD) area (yes, the tip to the end of Orchard Road counts) from 6 pm to 12 am, you will have to pay another \$3.00, on top of everything else.

To the horror of cab addicts, other taxi operators have followed suit within a month. "Before the price hike, I would travel by cab at least once a day," said Lynn. She can spend up to \$400 a month on cab fares alone.

"But now, if I continue to cab like I used to, I can blow as much as \$50 a day just on transport. This whole inflation business is changing my lifestyle," she added.

Lynn is not alone in her complaints. Many young people who are dependent on their parents' incomes feel the pinch too.

According to the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), inflation means "a general increase in the price level in the economy". Due to globalisation and the demand for commodities in growing superpowers such as China and India, the cost of almost everything in the world has inevitably rose, and may continue to rise.

The government has been worrying for quite some time now, with consumer prices rising as much as 4.2 percent overall in 2007 compared to 2006.

This is most evident in the price of basic commodities. For example, the cost of petrol is hovering between \$2.00 and \$1.90 per litre, as compared to just \$1.20 a few years ago. Wheat has also risen above \$15 for a bushel among many other hikes, causing food prices to rise all over the world.

Lau Tien Chen, 23, who has just entered the workforce last year as an Information Technology Coordinator, is sharing the burden of the increased cost of living with his parents. Before he joined the workforce, he was more willing to spend his money on drinks or on travelling, where he splurged \$800 on a three-day-three-night trip to Bangkok.

However, now that he is earning his own keep he is able to comprehend the importance of financial restraint.

"It has affected my family, in terms of daily transportation and necessities," said Tien Chen. "The cost of rice for example has increased by a few dollars, which will affect our family budget."

"Sometimes, I would help my father cover the cost of diesel, as his work involves a lot of driving," said Tien Chen. "It used to be less than \$80 for a full tank, but the price has risen 10 percent to \$88. This difference can pay for two lunches."

Nowadays, Tien Chen has been saving up more to ensure that he has enough just for basic needs such as transportation and food. He hardly frequents restaurants and would prefer to hang out at friends' places overnight instead of staying out, so as to avoid the costly ride back home. The situation is not expected to get better.

"Young people spend, and they already have lesser spending power or no income to begin with," said Vernon Tan, 26, who had just graduated from university last year and is now an auditor at Ernst & Young. "Thus, inflation would have an impact on them."

Aside from Tien Chen, students like Lynn are also feeling the effects of a tighter budget. Despite receiving pocket money and working part-time, she still finds inflation a problem as both her and her parents' incomes have stagnated.

"As much as [people around] say the economy is getting better, the wages are not rising as fast as how the prices of things are rising," said Lynn, who is getting five dollars an hour for a retail position. "It feels as though you have to work the same amount or even more for the same wage that can now buy you fewer things."

This is why salaried workers and those with assets carrying nominal value, such as fixed deposits in banks, are hardest hit when inflation occurs, said Mr Paul Ng, a lecturer at the School of Business & Accountancy.

What causes inflation?

"In a market economy like Singapore, prices are determined by the interaction of supply and demand in the market place," explained the online Economic Explorer Series by MAS. As such, inflation occurs due to two reasons:

Supply-Side Factors

This refers to "price shocks" that may affect the supply potential of the economy. There are basically three types of shocks. Firstly, there are those that temporarily affect both general prices and inflation, for example when bad weather conditions result in the poor harvest of wheat. Secondly, there are shocks that permanently change prices but has only a fleeting effect on inflation, such as when the Singapore government increased the Goods Service Tax (GST) for five to seven percent last year. Lastly, when a permanent supply shock occurs and increases both price and the rate of inflation, it will bring about "technological advancements that will [increase] the economy's productive capacity".

Demand-side Factors

These factors occur when the demand for goods is higher than supply due to more money being available. An example is the current globalisation trend that has raised the world's spending power. A small, open economy like ours is easily affected by overseas exports. When export orders are up, manufacturers will have to compete to hire and ultimately raise wages. With higher salaries, the people will have more money to spend and raise the demand for goods. As such, the prices will continue to soar and we may be caught in an endless cycle of inflation.

To learn more about inflation, visit http://www.mas.gov.sg/eco_research/eco_education/Economic_Explorer_Series.html

"With everything else increasing except salaries, it is going to put a very big strain on the lifestyle of people generally," added Lynn.

For students, said Mr Ng, financial discipline can be achieved by cutting down spending on 'wants' and buying what is necessary. "[Youths can cope with inflation by] adjusting spending and investment patterns," said Mr Ng. "Spend less, so as not to add to any demand-pull inflationary pressures. If you earn a fixed income you'll find it more painful, in the face of inflation, to spend, anyway."

"Search wisely for the best prices for the value you are trying to get, and if you have substantial savings, move more savings out of the bank and invest in inflation-proof assets such as real property or shares," he advised. ■

Bringing The Lesson Outside

For the HLM students...

BY STEPHANIE GOH
stephanie.tribune@gmail.com

Horticulture & Landscape Management (HLM) students will now have an edge over the rest of their polytechnic counterparts with the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT) adopting Clementi Woods Park as their new "outdoor classroom".

The idea was proposed by Mr Ng Lang, Chief Executive Officer of National Parks Board (NParks), over lunch with Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) principal, Mr Chia Mia Chiang. According to Mr Ng, this concept was initiated by NParks as the organisation wanted to find ways of "working more closely with NP" as well as "to inject the more hands-on skill in the [HLM] course".

The outdoor classroom and learning park concept is currently exclusive to NP. Dr Hedy Goh, Deputy Director of LSCT said, "The 'adopt-a-park' idea is not new but the 'learning park' concept is new. It's the first in Singapore because of the integration of a park setting into our curriculum."

Now, HLM students will get to work in the park weekly for their modules, such as Planting and Maintenance, throughout the three years of their diploma. She added, "We have about four to five groups, every week coming down, and each time it's about three to four hours of practical time."

On top of that, the adoption of the park has also meant an introduction of the usage of Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs) during practical work.

Dr Goh said that the Global Positioning System (GPS)-enabled PDAs will aid in the students' task to "build contents (information to be input into software) into a courseware for the use in the park itself". This courseware will also benefit future groups of students that will be working on the park.

Mr Ng also felt that the use of the PDAs was a "very good project" and that there was already discussion on "how maybe

we can be using that in NParks as well for training".

The adoption of the park has been beneficial to students in HLM, particularly in practical work, which would otherwise be done on campus in shade houses. As Nursharina Roslan, 18, a second-year HLM student, said, "It's quite helpful as it's more hands-on. We learn how to plant and how to use the correct tools."

The students have already had a chance to work on the park since April last year as they have been preparing for the official launch of the adoption of the park.

The launch, held on 19 December last year, was an event that involved three different schools. A competition was organised, and it involved teams from different schools competing within their faculties to come up with the best ideas to revamp the park.

According to Dr Goh, in this competition, the HLM students were tasked to remodel the park, while the Business & Accountancy students and Building & Environment students were required to conduct a market analysis survey and come up with solutions to the park's drainage problems respectively.

NParks would then take the winning teams' ideas into consideration. The winning concept came from team of five from HLM called Elite. According to team member, Kelvin Lee, 19, a third-year HLM student, "The theme consisted of the three 'En-' words which are 'Enchanting, Engaging and Enriching'."

"One main thing for our park is that we cater to all ages. For 'Enchanting', we are catering to the young. For 'Enriching', it's for people of all ages to do some planting or gardening. And lastly for 'Engaging', it involves the skate park with the stage there for events."

Mr Ng shared, "I thought a lot of the ideas [from the exhibition] were very refreshing, some are quite different from ours as these are from the younger people. Hopefully we can be adopting or adapting some of these ideas for our own use."



LEARNING FROM THE EXPERTS: New batches of TRM students can look forward to more on-site learning programmes in April. (Photo courtesy of Mr Andy Oh)

...and the TRM students

BY ELAINE WEE
elaine.tribune@gmail.com

Along with the brand new year, second-year students from Tourism & Resort Management (TRM) got to experience their first on-site learning programme at the InterContinental Hotel Singapore on 7 January.

The curriculum included a case study of the InterContinental Hotel for the students to analyse, followed by a dialogue session with Ms Evelyn Tay, Director of Sales in Travel of the hotel, who provided real input and information for the case study.

Before the actual programme started, the students also got to enjoy a buffet lunch in the hotel to enhance their business and dining etiquette.

"By having the on-site learning program in the hotel, it will place the [School of Business & Accountancy] in a strategic position among important stakeholders. These companies could be tapped on to provide speakers for seminars, to host students during site visits or for further collaborations," said Mr Andy Oh, a lecturer from TRM.

"The environment and atmosphere is different from school, and the students were dressed in business attire. The change of bringing students closer to the real working environment had motivated their learning behaviour," he added.

Angeline Chua, 18, was one of those who attended the programme. She was surprised to find out that her batch was chosen for the on-site learning curriculum and expressed optimism about the new programme.

"I feel that it's a very fresh approach. It's an unconventional way of teaching and I think students learn better this way. Moreover, the guest speakers from the hotel provided very good examples that we may not even find in our lecture notes!"

"I think it might give us a competitive advantage over other students in related fields of study," said Angeline.

Chen Weizhi, another student who attended the programme, found the lectures "enjoyable and impressive".

"It was a very different experience from

a normal lesson. We were all nicely dressed in business attire and were then introduced to two guests speakers from the hotel to tell us more about the travel and hotel industry. It was really engaging as they answered every question we posed to them," the 22-year-old recalled.

"This programme will definitely benefit me as I'm getting answers and information directly from the people who are currently in the hotel and travel industry. We got to know exactly how they operate and make decisions."

"They also provided us with up-to-date information, which I think is really important as the tourism industry changes with time. We were exposed to some of their predictions and forecasts within the hotel and travel industry as well," added Weizhi.

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Angeline Chua, 18
Second-year student
Tourism & Resort Management

Mr Oh also disclosed a plan to extend on-site learning to students of all levels in TRM. The programme will also be held at the InterContinental Hotel and is expected to commence in April.

"It will cover topics ranging Conventions & Events Management to Industry Project, depending on the level of students. For example, second-year students taking the Convention and Events Management module will study in greater detail how a hotel conducts its meeting businesses."

They will also visit convention venues near the hotel. Speakers from the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions & Exhibitions (MICE) industry and the hotel will be invited to give lectures on relevant topics," he revealed.



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM: HLM students will be able to be closer to Mother Nature during class time. (Picture by: Stephanie Goh)

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Second-year student
Tourism & Resort Management

Mr Oh also disclosed a plan to extend on-site learning to students of all levels in TRM. The programme will also be held at the InterContinental Hotel and is expected to commence in April.

"It will cover topics ranging Conventions & Events Management to Industry Project, depending on the level of students. For example, second-year students taking the Convention and Events Management module will study in greater detail how a hotel conducts its meeting businesses."

They will also visit convention venues near the hotel. Speakers from the Meetings, Incentives, Conventions & Exhibitions (MICE) industry and the hotel will be invited to give lectures on relevant topics," he revealed.



OUTDOOR CLASSROOM: HLM students will be able to be closer to Mother Nature during class time. (Picture by Stephanie Goh)

Wanted: A Friendlier Campus

Reserving a canteen seat meant for the disabled? That simple act in a crowded canteen can cause a disabled student to go hungry. YE HUIQI reports on how two disabled students struggle to eat, visit the library and shuffle between classes on this campus.

It is lunchtime at Canteen One. Oh Boon Keng, 17, a first-year Psychology & Community Services student navigates gingerly in his motorised wheelchair, trying to find a table. Along with him is his 60-year-old mother who helps buy food for him.

They have to wait for an empty table, despite clear signs on at least two tables in the canteen that they are meant for the disabled.

"I would love to be more independent but my hands are too weak to hold a plate. I need support for my hands," said the student who suffers from Duchene Muscular Dystrophy, a hereditary condition where muscles weaken progressively, starting from the legs and the pelvis.

Boon Keng is not the only physically-challenged student on campus struggling to eat a proper meal during lunchtime.

Haridharan s/o Jatanathan, 19, a second-year Accounting student, moves around on crutches, as his legs are weakened by Cerebral Palsy. He also finds it difficult to even join the queue. "Because it's very crowded, I might fall," he said.

Haridharan said, "The tables reserved for the disabled are often occupied during lunchtime. Sometimes, I walk past the tables with my packet of food, only to find people pretending not to see me."

He would rather go hungry than try to find a table at the crowded canteen.

When told of this situation, Mr Mui Cheng Hock, Director of Estate Management (EM), said the EM Office has been proactive in addressing the concerns of disabled students. He added that able-bodied students should have the social grace and be more sensitive to the needs of the disabled. "Everyone has a duty to care for the disabled," he stressed.

Apart from going hungry during lunch, visiting the library is yet another herculean feat for Haridharan. He needs help from the librarian or his mother to get his books from the fourth and fifth levels of the library, as he is unable to climb the long flights of staircases leading there. There are no lifts serving these floors.

The tables reserved for the disabled are often occupied during lunchtime. Sometimes, I walk past the tables with my packet of food, only to find people pretending not to see me.

Haridharan s/o Jatanathan, 19
Second-year student
Accounting

Boon Keng, similarly, needs the help of the librarians to operate the elevator at Block 1, which connects to the library via a long passageway in that block. Since the elevator only goes up to the third level of the library, the fourth and the fifth levels are inaccessible to him.

Also, these students are often unable to board the elevators at Blocks 72 and 56 during rush hours.

"During peak hours, everyone squeezes into the lift and nobody bothers to step out," said Haridharan. As a result, he has to queue earlier for the lift.

Moving around on campus can also be potentially dangerous for these disabled students.

For example, Boon Keng travels by the side of the road to get to Block 53 for his lessons, because the kerbs at the



CONSIDERATION COUNTS: Boon Keng and Haridharan hope for greater independence that can be made possible by creating a friendlier campus in NP. (Picture by: See Yuh Jia Yoo)

footpaths are impossible for his wheelchair to navigate.

Haridharan has also tripped over the huge gaps in the metal drain covers, near the study area at Block 27.

The lack of railings at the staircases is also a hassle for Haridharan, specifically those at Blk 72 where the Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) rooms are located. He has to hold on to his friends, to ensure that he gets down the stairs safely.

Rainy days are a huge strain on both students as well. Haridharan is often left with no choice but to get wet in areas where there are no shelters, as he is unable to carry an umbrella with his hands.

As a result of their physical limitations, Haridharan and Boon Keng have to rely heavily on their caregivers on a day-to-day basis.

To be fair, NP has done its part by extending various initiatives to help physically-challenged students. This includes the buggy system which helps to ferry disabled students around campus. However, Boon Keng cannot board it.

The School of Humanities (HMS) has also "engaged a group of Mechanical Engineering students to help develop a new buggy that is accessible to the wheelchair-users", said Mr Glen Ng, who is Boon Keng's Advisor.

Special thought has also been made to schedule most of Boon Keng's classes "at Block 56, which is equipped with handicap toilets and lifts to support his movements", Mr Ng said.

According to The Straits Times last December, the building law in Singapore requires new and existing infrastructure to be of easy access to the disabled. Building owners can tap into government funds to build ramps and such, but fewer than 10 buildings in Singapore have applied for the fund since it was launched last April.

One such effort that the EM has implemented to raise accessibility is the building of the ramp located near the unloading bay at Canteen 1, at Boon Keng's request. In addition, a ramp has also been built at the NP bus stop.

Meanwhile, Mr Mui continues to welcome feedback on improving the campus landscape for disabled students. "We need to know exactly which are the areas that need improvement and we will do what we can to work on that," he said.

Mrs Chandra Gopalan, a lecturer from the School of Business & Accountancy, called for a special mentor for



EASIER ACCESS: Boon Keng using the ramp at Canteen One that was built at his request. (Picture by: A. B. Richard)

these disabled students to look after their welfare.

The ex-tutor for Haridharan said, "The mentor should undergo proper training so as to better understand and address the physical and emotional needs that these students might have during their course of study."

She also said students should be aware of the ways in which they can help for the less physically-mobile.

The ignorance and insensitivity of the able-bodied can sometimes make the disabled feel isolated, according to Bryan Chan, 17, who is Boon Keng's classmate.

"We need to know more about the emotional aspect of the disabled, their thoughts and feelings so as to create a sense of belonging [among them]," he said. ■

An Internship With A Difference

Two students who chose to work in a tsunami-wrecked Indonesian island for their internship programme tell CHANG QIAOLIN how the experience has opened their eyes.



Fishing on a speedboat in the middle of the sea

THE SIMPLE LIFE: With no toys to play with, the kids find joy in basic things.
(Photos courtesy of Ferina Natasya)

While their peers pored over Excel sheets and made photocopies for their bosses, Ferina Natasya, 20, and Dian Diayana, 19, braved bumpy road rides and muddy forest trails to get their jobs done.

"I love to work outdoors. I also wanted to know what it is like to be working out of my own comfort zone," said Ferina.

The two third-year Mass Communication (MCM) students are on an unusual internship programme in Nias, an island off West Sumatra, Indonesia.

They have chosen the road less travelled for their Overseas Industrial Attachment Programme (OIAP), instead of opting for the usual IAP options most of their friends chose.

Their OIAP started on 25 September last year when they flew over with 17 other MCM students who went there for a community service trip and will end in early February.

The main objective of their OIAP was to produce a coffee table book about the island, which would give people a better idea of the culture and way of life, and also show how the tsunami of 2004 had affected the island and its people.

The two girls had to travel all around the island, which is five times the size of Singapore, to interview people and take photos of traditional festivals and celebrations.

"There were things we don't get to see in Singapore, like beautiful beaches, sunsets and sunrises. We also snorkelled, dived, swam and fished in the sea. I enjoyed it all," Ferina reminisced.

Dian added, "The people I interviewed and the stories I heard gave me much insight about the island, their culture and how they viewed life. The shots I got had so much beauty in them. Those were pictures I could never get in Singapore."

But it was not all beautiful scenery and inspiring stories for the two girls.

"One of the segments in the [coffee table book] is about death, so we had to interview a woman who saw her husband die in front of her while he was trying to save their daughter. It was heart wrenching," Ferina said.

"I learnt that the locals here are stronger than we think. Notwithstanding disasters, deaths and loss of loved ones, they still have a strong faith in God and live life to the fullest," Dian said.

"I love how the life is much more simple than in Singapore. I love how the people here, being in a life where they value family and friendship, are so much friendlier," she added.

The two girls have had to adjust to the lack of technology on the island.

Indeed, limited internet access is only available at a café 10 minutes away by car from where they stay. Telephone reception is only available on certain areas of the farm.

"Our electricity supply gets cut off frequently because the main generator has to rest, so we have a few electricity-free hours every other day, and it made me realise that technology is really a choice and I can actually live without it," Ferina said.

"However, it does affect us to a certain extent, because we also help out in the Farmers' Training Centre (FTC), by designing the website and training materials, and we need our laptops for that," she added.

"But our free time is spent together with the staff of the FTC and the kids living in the orphanage on the farm. I help them with their homework and play board games with them.

"I also give some of the contractor boys, who have no money to continue schooling, English lessons every Monday and Friday night," said Ferina.

"We even had birthday celebrations for some of the kids, and their faces just light up when we get together for a simple dinner," she added.

Ferina has grown so attached to the children at the orphanage that she will be adopting one of the boys, and will be sponsoring him monthly when she returns from her internship.

She hinted, however, that she might be staying on the island after she graduates from Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

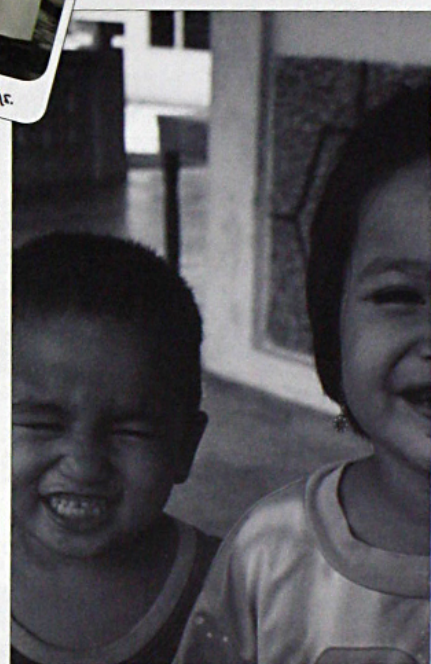
"It's a new job opening for me, and I would rather take two to three years off school to head a project here (in Nias), rather than take a degree like my parents want me to. There will be a mobile library service for the children in Nias and I'm thrilled to be part of [the project]," she said.

However, she told **Tribune** that nothing has been confirmed.

"My boss and I are still working out the details, but if it doesn't work out, at least I know that I've played a part in the drawing up of the proposal for this project," Ferina added.

"I've learnt so much about myself, about respect and professionalism. I can now appreciate the beauty of the difference in culture," Dian said.

"It's all about what you want and what you want to achieve in life. At the end of the day, I will go to bed knowing I love doing what I'm doing and would love to wake up and be excited about my work," Ferina concluded. ■



A DECADE OF COMMUNITY SERVICE – And Still Going Strong

A student from the Class of '95 has been volunteering and helping others ever since his days in Ngee Ann Polytechnic. He tells CHERYL HOON what keeps him giving.

Many young people and young parents stop volunteering in community service because of rising work and family demands.

However, one particular Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) alumnus has bucked the trend. Dr Ken Ong who graduated in 1995 with a diploma in Electronic & Computer Engineering, has proved that while juggling work and community service is tough, it is not mission impossible.

According to the 32-year-old full-time research engineer at the Singapore Science Park, it is all about empowerment and time management. "You take some here, and you give some there. There is nothing such as the best of both worlds," he said.

Dr Ong has been volunteering for more than 10 years ever since his student days in NP. What kept his passion going was simple: joy on the faces of the people he helped, knowing that he had made a positive difference in the lives of others.

After his polytechnic education, Dr Ong furthered his studies in United Kingdom's University of Edinburgh and graduated with a Bachelor of Engineering (B.Eng.). Subsequently, he achieved a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Digital Communications from the School of Engineering and Electronics.

During his busy school days, Dr Ong still managed to take time out for community service. The PhD holder contributed mainly at a representation level such as at international community service-related conferences.

Dr Ong noted that Co-Curricular Points were not awarded during his days, unlike how they are doled out now.

"There will definitely be some students who do community service for the points, but hopefully, it is not many of them. Youths must see the meaning and bigger picture of doing their part for the community, and have a good mentor and role model," he said.

His active efforts in volunteerism have been recognised too. Appointed chairperson of the National Youth Achievement Award (NYAA) Gold Award Holders' Alumni (GAHA) in 2003, Dr Ong has taken an extra step by inspiring many youths to take up community service.

As chairperson, he has organised and led many youths in community service projects both overseas



10 YEARS OF SERVICE: (Clockwise from left) Dr Ong's ASEAN Youth Community Project to Cambodia team posing for a picture during their rest and recreation (R&R) time; Dr Ong posing with his sushi at a post-ASEAN Youth Community Project to Cambodia gathering; Dr Ong briefing some of his members in the dilapidated Wat Koh High School in Cambodia; (Photo courtesy of Samuel Lee and Cheryl Hoon)

and locally.

Mr Si Thu Hein, a 26-year-old Myanmar delegate in an Association of SouthEast Asia Nation (ASEAN) Youth Community Project to Cambodia, said that Dr Ong inspired him greatly during the trip.

"Ken and the other leaders were constantly there to encourage us. He set a very good example for both the leaders and the participants. Furthermore, I could tell that he was very meticulous in planning for the trip. Ken really earned my respect," he said.

Another youth who participated in the same project, Ms Adeline Tan, 20, a first-year Singapore Management University (SMU) student, added that Dr Ong's professionalism and sincerity was what made her look up to him.

"He has a very serious attitude towards helping others. Although he is very knowledgeable, he is humble. Ken is very sincere in helping the poor and spreading his love and knowledge for community service," she explained.

The ASEAN Youth Community Project is not the only project Dr Ong has organised. Other

projects include "Kampong Lor Buang Kok", a partnership with NP which helped the people living in a kampong stricken by floods, and "More than Words", a project that increases youth-elderly interactions through the teaching of dialects.

Despite the heavy workload and responsibility, Dr Ong enjoyed his role as chairperson of NYAA GAHA. The organisation provides a platform for 15 Gold Award holders to continue contributing to the community.

It also works closely with other organisations to spearhead youth initiatives and encourage a spirit for the community among young Singaporeans. Dr Ong has since handed over his position last October to deputy chairman, Mr Terence Chia, after four years of service as "the new team [of leaders] is ready".

On how community service has benefited him, Dr Ong turned contemplative, and said, "Community service has allowed me to see a bigger world and interact with people from different walks of life. Life is not just about 'me'. It is also about not taking things for granted." ■

Online Portal Set To Encourage Active Community Service

No need to keep a lookout for posters on the walls of the campus if you want to help out in community service trips, as SELENE YAP brings to you a one-stop portal which will answer all your questions.

When the new academic year begins, students can look out for a new community service online portal that will provide more opportunities for an all-rounded learning experience.

Established by the Student Development and Alumni Relations (SDAR) department to provide Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) with a more effective channel in publicising community service activities to the students, the website will be constantly updated with information about the latest community activities.

SDAR aims to centralise all community service information into a single portal and allow students to register immediately to take part in a community service project through an online application form. This was launched earlier in January.

According to Mr Alfred Chan, Student Development Manager (Community Services), the website was initiated to help facilitate existing channels of communication for the six community service clubs in NP, namely, British Petroleum-NP Mentoring, Environmental Rangers Society (ERS), Hi! (Hearing Impaired) Club, Leo Club, NP Boys Brigade Primers and Rotaract Club.

Currently, these six clubs face challenges in recruiting participants for their community service activities, as they can only publicise through booths set up at the Atrium. Even so, outreach has been difficult as only curious passers-by are exposed to the clubs' activities.

Poor response may be due to many students being

unaware that these projects are open to all students in NP, and not solely to club members.

Another publicity avenue explored was the use of posters at prominent spots around the campus. While this channel was effective, the clubs were loath to carry on with it as such print publicity wastes large amounts of resources and defeats the purpose of promoting community service.

Mr Chan explained that even with the revamped communication channel to achieve a wider reach of students through electronic circulation of online newsletters, the hierarchal email system in NP meant that the clubs are heavily dependent on lecturers of individual schools to disseminate the newsletters.

This new platform will pull all six community service clubs together and allow students to engage in a variety of community service activities according to the purpose and directions of these clubs.

Mr Chan stressed, "The school encourages experiential development through meaningful community work where students develop themselves socially."

He added, "We don't want students to engage in laborious tasks just to earn Co-Curricular Activity (CCA) points, as that demeans everything."

Come August during the second phase of the website launch, SDAR plans to open the portal to individual schools and academic societies hosting their own community service projects as a platform for advertisement and recruitment activities.

Another function of the website is to advocate community service initiatives among students. Through the suggestion scheme, students can propose their own community service idea online. SDAR will then discuss with students on the feasibility of their proposed ideas.

Ong Hui Min, 18, a second-year Accountancy student and treasurer of the ERS, agreed that getting students to contribute ideas will allow for a wider variety of community service events to be organised.

She added that exposing students to the community service clubs will also "help promote the clubs and generate community service interest among students".

Given the chance of hosting a project of their choice, students will find more meaning in the community service work they engage in.

Mr Chan hopes that this will encourage students to think of projects that have a developmental and sustainable value.

He assured that suggestions, whether large or small, would receive a response and that every idea will be considered.

Besides managing their own projects, students with approved suggestions will also receive assistance from relevant community service clubs in terms of advice and management of project logistics.

The launch of the community service online portal was a trial run in conjunction with the NP Open House this year. Students can access the online portal through the NP website at www.npcds.org. ■

A New Lease Of Life

A. B. RICHARD discovers a unique collaboration which fostered special bonds.



AN UNUSUAL BOND: The collaboration makes a difference to both the lives of villagers and the volunteers. (Photo courtesy of Jeremy Boo)



For 10 days from 24 September to 3 October 2007, three ex-offenders and 10 students worked together in a village in Chiangmai to implement seven projects in the hope of helping the villagers eke out a better living through ecotourism.

The collaboration between three ex-offenders from Kaki Bukit Centre (KBC) and 10 Ngee Ann second-year students from the School of Engineering, School of Film & Media Studies, School of Business & Accountancy and School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology was initiated by module leader for Interdisciplinary Studies, Ms Sharon Quah. It achieved even more: better self-confidence among the ex-prisoners and the idea for a new school club dedicated to this purpose among the students.

"This collaboration creates a platform for ex-offenders when we come out to society. We got the opportunity to create a network, which is very positive.

Throughout this event it helped to build our self-confidence," said Mr Augustine Goh, an ex-offender from KBC.

"10 days is a very long time. And for these 10 days we had

to be very bonded because the team's morale and dynamics were very crucial to the success of our project. So when I first met them I needed to have an adjustment period because they were older than us by many years. Some of them were already in their late thirties, so we needed to adjust not only to their background but also to our age difference, and it was the same for them," said Jeremy Boo, 19, a second-year student from Mass Communication.

He added, "However, the most impactful thing about our partnership was that [the ex-offenders] really helped to bond the group together with their friendship and team spirit. They are extremely thoughtful. They always think of every member and that inspired each of us to behave in a similar manner and that caused the entire group to bond really fast."

Jeremy continued, "We based our service trip on the needs of the villagers. We wanted to introduce ecotourism into the village to help break the poverty cycle, and we had to try to do that without disrupting their way of life too much. We conducted interviews and needs assessments

and we spent the day planning activities and projects based on their needs."

According to Jeremy, the team set up an information board in the village for tourists and visitors to promote tourism in the village. They also created a Thai-English translation booklet to help teach students English. They also had a litter-picking competition in order to create a cleaner village.

Months after the trip, the team is still in contact. "We keep in touch and there are plans on furthering this group into a school club but everything is still very tentative and we are still embarking on community service-based projects on the service learning templates and with partnership with the prisons," revealed Jeremy.

He added, "There is the perception that ex-offenders are 'bad' people. Sadly, people don't see them as individuals. The community service trip had taught me to see them as people, to recognise their strengths and their weaknesses. I don't judge them according to their social label, but as people, and that's one of the most important lessons I learned from this trip."

A Walk Of Nature And Joy

BY ENG YUWEN
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Citibank and the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) invited Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) to join in their efforts to conduct the Y Nature Walk to bring fauna and flora to the less fortunate.

The NP Chapter of the Red Cross Humanitarian Network (RCHN) was present to aid in the activities and alongside them were NP students Lee Wan Xin and Maimunah Bte Nokman.

As seasoned volunteers, these students are no strangers to working together with like-minded individuals for the benefit of society. They have found their place in society to repay in small measures.

A quarter-yearly programme planned by YMCA, Y Nature Walk brings their beneficiaries to nature reserves and parks around Singapore – a rare treat for the intellectually disabled.

RCHN NP Chapter was at the third Y Nature Walk on 17 November last year to lend their support in ensuring the safety of all participants. The event marked the second time RCHN NP Chapter volunteered with YMCA.

Their collaboration started when YMCA contacted their former executive committee member to seek partnership. "If there is any activity that YMCA thinks that our help will be needed, they will send us a first aid requisition," said Ng Xian Hui, 19, Honourary Secretary and Treasurer of RCHN NP Chapter.

They decided to respond when YMCA was in need of first aid support because they understood that most of the activities involved the disabled, which is a big motivation for RCHN NP to volunteer with YMCA.

"Before the Y Nature Walk, I never had any contact with people with mental disabilities. During the event, I realised that these people are very contented with their life. What they need is only the attention of society," Xian Hui, the second year Accounting student, said.

"I really enjoy being a volunteer. I look forward to every event. If you are interested, no matter how busy you are

you will still make time for your commitments," he added.

Even after two years and five months of volunteering, Wan Xin, 19, a second-year Multimedia Animation student, is showing no signs of losing her stamina, and has gained more than the satisfaction of knowing she has contributed to society.

"I learn about simplicity, I learn to look at life as it is not as complicated as we always make it to be. The intellectually disabled are simple people. A sincere high five or pat on the shoulder given to them can make their day and they appreciate it," she said.

Despite her heavy school workload, Wan Xin finds time to help out at the Y Nature Walk. Not her first time involved in the planning of this programme, she is familiar with the needs of the event.

"It is not difficult to sustain long-term commitment to volunteerism," Wan Xin insisted. She rationalises that if one were to spend less time on peripheral things like watching television and surfing the internet, it is easier to set aside time to commit to volunteering, and that the proper time management is the key.

Her fervour and commitment stems from her belief in repaying society.

"I believe that I should give back to the society. There is also a need to create more awareness on the intellectually disabled in our society," Wan Xin said.

She added, "I have learnt to be humble, have compassion and to appreciate the people around me more. I have also learnt to be thankful of what I have."

Maimunah, 18, a second-year Mobile Business Solutions student, has also been committed to helping out at YMCA for almost a year.

Debrief sessions after each event help her to take a step back and reflect on the lessons she has learnt. "I have become more positive in life," Maimunah said.

Other than shaping her outlook of life, she also had a chance to hone her leadership skills when she was put in charge of planning the activities for the most recent Y Nature Walk.

Maimunah concurs with Wan Xin on the importance of time management.



WALKING WITH A HEART: Maimunah and Wan Xin helping out at the Y Nature Walk. (Photo courtesy of YMCA)

"It is definitely not easy to juggle schoolwork and volunteering, but at times sacrifices have to be made," she said.

However, the satisfaction she gets when she contributes towards the society keeps her motivated in sustaining her volunteerism effort despite her busy schedule.

"Volunteering with YMCA may be exhausting, but at the end of the day, you feel satisfied when you see the smiling faces of both the volunteers and the beneficiaries," Maimunah said.

Serving the community has given her new perspectives. "There is something challenging every time," she said.

"I have learnt how to be more sensitive to the beneficiaries. At the same time, I have also learned more about their needs and wants," she added.

Both Wan Xin and Maimunah said that they will definitely continue volunteering even after they graduate. As Maimunah aptly put it, "It's the simple pleasures in life that you derive from volunteering."

Spreading Love Around

TIMOTHY SIM and XU LITING show how Passion Synergy masters the art of love.



THE ART OF LOVE: Passion Synergy in one of their more recent projects which aimed to raise awareness about Cerebral Palsy. (Photo courtesy of Eugenie Yien)

Launched in September 2006, Passion Synergy brings together seven of the school's community service clubs to serve the society with a genuine heart.

Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) outreach taskforce brings together members from the current community service clubs – Business & Accountancy (BA) Community And Outreach EndeavourS (CARES), Boys Brigade Primers, British Petroleum-NP Mentoring, Environmental Rangers Society, Hi! (Hearing Impaired) Club, Leo Club and Rotaract Club – for a common love for people.

Eugenie Yien, 18, a second-year Nursing student and the welfare officer of the platform, said, "Passion Synergy basically helps to announce the clubs' activities and collates volunteers for the clubs and their activities."

Through activities such as bonding camps, Huang Weitai, a third-year Biomedical Science student, advisor of Environmental Rangers Society and student director of Passion Synergy, aims to provide leadership training to the voluntary task force members so that they can better facilitate their respective service clubs.

"We first invite a guest with experience in community service to give our members an introduction on how to initiate and organise activities for the community. Then we put what we've learnt through a real exercise where the members have to produce a proposal for an event in groups," Weitai explained. "The best proposal is then selected to be carried out by the winning group and anyone else who wishes to join them, giving the members an actual taste of being a leader."

"A lot of the members (in the task force) will go on to be committee members in their respective clubs," he said. "Through these training sessions, we hope that they will become more capable leaders in their clubs."

For Weitai, the motive for engaging in community service should purely be a love for people. Having participated in various projects such as the Singapore Computer Society (SCS) Great Singapore Duck Race 2007, the 19-year-old has encountered many students who volunteered for community service projects for other reasons.

"There are some people who are in the clubs just to get Co-Curricular Activity points," he lamented. "It is very easy to spot [such people] because once the incentive is taken away, they stop putting in as much effort in the projects. I will shoo them out of the club once I discover that their motivation is wrong."

"We do conduct activities like community service talks to try and get more people passionate about helping the society, but they are not very effective," Weitai revealed.

"It's a little too late to start cultivating the love for community service in students at the polytechnic level, which is why we are hoping to promote this passion for helping people to [students] in secondary and primary schools," he said.

Their current project, The Art of Love, was the winning proposal in their training camp activity. Passion Synergy gathered 50 students from Ngee Ann Primary School to help create awareness among the public about patients with cerebral palsy. On 14 November last year, the volunteers got students from the Spastic Children's Association to make hand prints on ceramic tiles which would be pieced together to form a mural.

"We got together 350 children to participate in this event, and we are currently trying to get this attempt registered in the Singapore Book of Records for the largest number of artwork done by these children," Weitai shared. "With this activity, we hope to raise awareness of the disease through the media and help boost up the self-esteem of the children."

"We are currently in the process of putting up the wall mural at the Cerebral Palsy Centre and on 15 January, we had the official opening ceremony to unveil the artwork," he continued. "Besides media attention, this event goes a long way in helping to get more donations and assistance for the Association."

Through The Art of Love and other projects that Passion Synergy will be embarking on, Weitai and his members hope to touch the lives of others with their genuine love for people. Weitai reflected, "It's not just about doing community service, it's about having the passion to take time out from your own life to help others; that is the right attitude that we should have."

The platform was also featured in Channel NewsAsia in November 2007 in a joint effort with NP's school of Health Sciences, Heartware Network, the Heart foundation and the Tiong Bahru GRC. ■

Learning A Different Type Of Language

BY YEH WEI XUAN
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Finding it difficult to make friends in school, engineering student Raymond Chong decided to start a club to widen his social circle.

Raymond, who was then 19, was not like any other student. He was hearing-impaired, and felt that the deaf had trouble making friends in school.

Keeping in mind the purpose of creating an avenue for the hearing-impaired and able people to interact, Raymond started the Hearing Impaired Club, or Hi! Club for short. That was eleven years ago.

Now, Raymond's legacy is a 150-member strong club which has collaborations with several external organisations such as Xtomic, a group funded by the Singapore Association for the Deaf.

The club's most recent tie-up with Xtomic was a song-signing performance which took place on 1 December 2007. The performance was in aid of the Children's Charities Association, which aims to raise funds to help less fortunate children.

On top of that, the community-driven club also conducts weekly activities like sign language lessons and performances, where they invite members of other clubs in the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) to watch.

President of the club, Tan Wan Sin, 18, a second-year Biomedical Engineering student, explained, "During such lessons, we teach them basic words that can help them converse with the hearing-impaired. The seniors pass



SIGNING THEIR WORDS: A performance by one of the teams in their recent annual camp. (Photo courtesy of Hi! Club)

down all their knowledge to the juniors. All our own instructors are our own members – each time they complete a stage, they're given a certificate. Members of a higher stage are expected to help teach the juniors."

The club, which is the only one of its kind across all the polytechnics in Singapore, also organises a camp every semester for its members, which acts as a refresher course and sums up what they have learnt throughout the semester.

Said Wan Sin, "The most significant part of the camp is that participants have to sign and talk at the same time to ensure that the hearing-impaired students in the club are not left out."

"The main objective of the camp is to raise awareness

about the deaf, and to ensure that the deaf are not being left out."

Koh Swee Teng, 19, a second-year Business Studies student, certainly learnt just that.

"I've met people who are hearing-impaired and sometimes they get mistaken for being retarded. Knowing sign language, we'll be able to help clarify that as well as clear any unnecessary misunderstanding."

Swee Teng, who is also the club's Cultural Arts Head, has been in the club since her first year in the polytechnic, initially joined the club out of interest and curiosity.

"It became more enjoyable as time passed and I made more friends and learnt sign language itself, and leadership skills."

Unlike Swee Teng and most of the club members, Tan Guo Wen, 23, a third-year Electronic & Computer Engineering student, did not join the club for the purpose of learning sign language.

Guo Wen, who is hearing-impaired, said, "When my friend first asked me to join (the club), I didn't want to. But through the process, I have learnt about leadership, planning and how to work with different people."

Despite joining the club with barely any expectations, Wan Sin, Swee Teng and Guo Wen have all grown to appreciate the beauty of sign language, as well as the benefits that it can bring to the hearing-impaired in the community.

Swee Teng concluded, "Sign language is like a foreign language – it allows you to communicate with more people." ■



“白日梦” 编织出来的 12万字小说

报道/黄惠梅

摄影/梁伟杰 (联合学生摄影队)

不要认为做白日梦不切实际，只会一事无成；只要实际的行动，白日梦也能让你圆梦！

来自义安理工学院中文系的武琦(20岁)，就因为平日搭交通工具时常常做白日梦，而从中获得灵感，完成了她的处女作：一本12万字的小小说《仲夏HOUSE》。

《仲夏HOUSE》的故事以新加坡为背景，融合了校园生活、情爱初萌、豪门恩怨、兄妹疑云等诸多元素。书中主人公的生活，他们爱情、友情和亲情的纠

葛，反映了现代年轻人的价值观。

故事内容除了大部分是武琦“做白日梦”时所得来的灵感，其中也包含了她的亲生经历。一些发生在她周围和她朋友的故事也都成了这部小说的素材。故事的开头走的是搞笑路线，结尾以感人的情节收场。武琦在这篇小说里注入了很多不同的情绪，因为她说：“现实生活中也会体验到很多不同的情绪。”

武琦希望通过俏皮，好玩的文字，让读者们轻松地阅读。特别的是，武琦在文中放了很多网络表情符号

(Emoticons)，让读者读起来很有画面感，有一种在看漫画的感觉，不会觉得阅读是一件很闷的事。故事虽然引用了蛮多成语，但文字措辞上却不会让阅读太艰涩。武琦认为中学生阅读这本小说，能有助于提高他们的华文程度；毕竟学习语言，阅读是最好的方法。

从构思到写作，武琦用了一年的时间，终于完成了她人生的第一本书。她很感谢在义安理工学院中文系任教的陈颖老师，“因为上陈老师的课得到了启发，动力和鼓励”。武琦也邀请陈老师为她写书序。陈老师非常支持武琦：“写长篇小说并不容易，需要注意很多细节和故事的结构。武琦做到了，我很开心。”陈老师以“轻松，清晰，亲切”来形容这篇小说。

武琦在创作这本小说时先写了开端(opening)，然后仔细地设计人物，再设计情节，之后把人物“丢”进情节中，以人物的个性揣摩他们的反映，再发展故事。她并没有在一开始就设定故事的结局。

问武琦将来是否想成为作家？她说她很喜欢和大家分享她的故事，至于对未来的创作，她自己并没有长期的计划，因为她认为计划永远赶不上变化。如果这本书的反应不错，她会有更大的动力继续写下去。

《仲夏HOUSE》由新网出版社出版，现已在大众书局与Kinokuniya售卖，每本售价9.90元。希望大家能踊跃支持这名年轻的作家！

年轻人亲自“冲球”，因为撞球室近在咫尺

撰稿：金鑫



年轻人打撞球已成为了一种风潮，在每间理工学院的附近都有许多撞球店。位于武吉知马购物中心的MAMBO BILLIARDS就看准这个时机，推出了学生优惠价（每小时\$5.80）。这家撞球店与义安理工学院只有两个巴士站的距离。除此之外，MAMBO BILLIARDS也在南洋理工学院附近增设了一家相同的撞球店。由于收费低廉，地点方便，吸引了大量的学生光顾。受访的负责人也指出，在周日时，几乎所有的顾客都是工院生，有时候店里的球桌还不够用呢！由此可见，爱打撞球的年轻人还真不少！

“托”了撞球热的福，许多撞球店是一家接着一家开。金文泰地铁站附近也有一家撞球店，SNOOKERIUM。这里除了吸引义安理工学院的学生外，也有不少新加坡理工学院的学生前来“捧场”。由于交通方便，所以学生们一放学就可以“冲”到这里来。另外，SNOOKERIUM也在淡滨尼设有同样的分店。有了这一家撞球店，淡马锡理工学院的学生就不怕没地方打撞球了！

为了满足撞球爱好者的需求，新加坡理工院校内也设有撞球室。这间撞球室的设施完善，让学生在课余时间能够打一打撞球，轻松一下。此外，咖啡厅

的老板也对这一波的撞球热“虎视眈眈”。最近，在共和理工学院里的咖啡厅就出现了撞球桌。虽然场地不大，但还是吸引了不少学生。即无需花钱搭车，又可以在休息时间打球，何乐而不为呢？

这一股撞球“风”席卷新加坡后，激发了年轻人对撞球的认识和兴趣。许多业者为了配合近来的“撞球风”，纷纷举办了大大小小的撞球比赛。这些比赛的选手大部分来自理工学院，而且水准也有上升的趋势。总之，撞球是一项即有趣又平民化的运动，无论男女都适合，大家有空也不妨去“撞一撞”吧！

Determination Displayed At the SR Nathan Cup

BY ALICIA TAN
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The men's soccer team was determined to erase the memory of last year's dismal results at the SR Nathan Soccer Challenge Cup as they charged full steam ahead to put up a gripping performance during the preliminary games for the 2008-2009 season.

Part of the Inter-Varsity Polytechnic (IVP) games, the SR Nathan Soccer Challenge Cup sees all the nine schools taking part with National Technological University (NTU) being the covenor for the this season.

The opening game which commenced on 21 December last year saw Sulaiman Abdul, 17, a first-year Product Design & Innovation student, score an impressive hat-trick against Temasek Polytechnic, leading the team to a 4-1 victory. Sulaiman said that "he was surprised but very pleased with his game and hope to keep it up for the matches ahead".

Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) soccer team has won two out of their four games played, with impressive home victories over Temasek Polytechnic (TP) and Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) at 4-1 and 4-0 respectively.

However, the team stumbled to a 1-0 defeat against National University of Singapore (NUS) on 9 January, despite putting up a very tough fight. This was much to the surprise of many who expected

the NP side to score during the second half. Subsequently they lost 2-0 to the resilient Institute of Technical Education (ITE) team, which comprised of a collaborative squad across all the ITEs, with most of their players in the national age group squad.

Mr Stephen Ng, the coach of NP men's soccer team said he was "proud of the support and encouragement the teammates had for one another".

The team, which has five national team players, has trained together since last October and made many sacrifices during the festive period as the preliminary rounds began around then.

NP, at press time, was the frontrunner in the competition, but having played all the games and their compatriots still a few games behind, the team's fate no longer lies in their own hands.

Also present at the games was Mr Chia Mia Chiang, the principal of NP, who came to lend his support to the soccer team. Mr Chia encouraged the team during a sombre debrief of the NUS game, telling them that "what's most important is that they give their best" and he applauded them for "putting in 150% of dedication, even though the result was not in our favour".

Mr Edmund Oh, Manager of the Student Development & Alumni Relations Office, and overall in-charge of NP's soccer team, also echoed the thoughts of the principal, saying that although the team is "slightly demoralised, all may not be lost yet".

Captain Abdul Aziz Dolgani, 22, a third-year Mechanical Engineering student,



A TEAM EFFORT: A committed and united squad ready gearing for the game. (Picture by: Tok Jia Jie)

felt that the team has a "good mix of experienced and skilled players who have proven that they can produce a fearsome strike force and fears no opponent in every match". However, all they can do now is wait and see how the other teams fare.

Azhar Abdul Rahim 19, a second-year Aerospace Technology student and one of the NP soccer players who also plays for the Geylang United team, felt that his team did not perform up to the mark but he knows that they "have the potential to go far", so they just have to move forward and not think about their previous results.

Unfortunately, ITE played their best for

their first game and defeated the home team 2-0. Despite the loss, there was no regret in NP's football team. President of the Football Club, Jeremy Chua, 19, a second-year Tourism and Resort Management student, said, "Our team was committed and we played our hearts out. Though we are disappointed by the loss, we are all happy that we fought till the end."

To date, none of the semi-finalists can be confirmed yet until all the teams play out their preliminary games. For further information on the fixtures and latest results, visit <http://www.rp.sg/osg/ivp/sports/soccer.htm>



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Roughing It Out On The Battlegrounds

NRA Hip Hop alumni put Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) on the map by bagging the fourth prize in the Australia's Battlegrounds International Championship.

BY CHERYL HOON
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New Revolving Age (NRA) Hip Hop alumni took the stage with their spectacular dance moves on 9 December 2007 in hopes of bagging the coveted gold title in the 4th Annual Battlegrounds International Championship held in Melbourne, Australia.

Presented by Groove TV (Australia), Battlegrounds is an international hip-hop dance competition with teams hailing from Japan, New Zealand, Singapore, Philippines and Australia.

This time round, the event returned to its roots where 34 competing dance crews gathered at the Melbourne Convention Centre. Going by the name 'Rough Addicts', the seven NRA Hip Hop alumni girls – Chan Jian Jin, Goh Chien Yen, Joyce Tan, Lim Shi Min, Rebecca Tay, Seah Li Ling and Tan Xin Xian – formed the only group representing Singapore.

They did the school and the nation

proud by clinching the fourth place and the special award for Best Costume.

Designed by NRA's dance instructor, the outfit consisted of baggy khaki-coloured pants, paired carefully with long-sleeved white shirts and black vests. A flaming red jacket and a loosely knotted white tie topped with a newsboy cap finished the look.

In order to qualify for Battlegrounds, Rough Addicts had to emerge champions out of approximately 30 teams in the Suntec Dance 2007 competition in September last year. The team had been training intensively since July.

"During the last month before Battlegrounds, most of us were working and those studying had exams. It was really tiring as we had to juggle dance, work and studies. We're glad we all pulled through," Rough Addicts member and Multimedia Computing graduate, Rebecca Lim, 20, said.

The price of winning did not come cheap. In total, Rough Addicts spent more than \$1,500 on their costumes.

If not for the support that NP gave, the amount would have been higher. The



AWARD-WINNING GETUPS: Rough Addicts posing for a picture in their costumes during the Battlegrounds dance competition in Melbourne. (Photo courtesy of 2007 Groove Melbourne Battlegrounds)

school had generously allowed the dancers free access to the studios and also provided subsidies for the costumes.

When asked about the lessons learnt through the competition, Rebecca firmly answered, "Humility."

"It did not feel like a competition to us

but felt more like a gathering of dancers from all over the world. Everyone was so friendly and sincere regardless of which country you are from. As we conversed with the dancers there, we could tell they were all very down to earth. They had no airs," she reminisced.

Dancing Their Way To Stardom



ONE-TWO STEP: NP's representatives for the Inter-Tertiary Team Match event, just before they take to the floor. (Picture by: Robert Ong of SGDF)

BY MIHO IWAKI
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It was a day-long dance party as DanceSport athletes from four tertiary institutes danced it out at the seventh Singapore DanceSport Federation (SGDF) Singapore Nationals DanceSport Championships and the second Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Tertiary Dance Sport Championships.

The event was held at NP's Convention Centre on 29 December 2007. There were 12 NP finalists in the Tertiary Championships, out of the 36 available final positions. In the SGDF (Open) Championships held concurrently, another 11 NP finalists added to NP's sizable showing in the 36 available final positions.

Desmond Tan, 19, second-year Business Studies (BS) student and Michelle Lim,

18, second-year Multimedia & Animation student shone that evening as they swirled their way into first place in both the Tertiary Latin Grade C (comprising the three dances Cha-Cha-Cha, Rumba and Jive) and the open category SGDF Grade B (dancing the Samba, Cha-Cha-Cha, Rumba and Jive). The couple was also the first runner-up in the SGDF Grade C category.

Michelle said, "It was our first time competing in Grade B, and we were practising very hard for it. Finally, all our hard work has paid off!"

"Winning (Grade B) was really unexpected; everyone on the dance floor was so strong!" Desmond added.

Other DanceSport athletes who made NP proud were S.Mahendren, 19, second-year Film, Sound & Video student and Clarissa Koh, 18, second-year Early Childhood Education student. The second

duo was named runner-up in the Tertiary Latin Grade E, Cha-Cha-Cha.

Darren Boon, 18, second-year Mechatronic Engineering student and Cheryl Tan, 19, third-year BS student, took the first runner-up position in the Tertiary Latin Grade E, Samba.

Pamela Lee, 19, third-year BS student and president of both the NP DanceSport Club and NP's organising committee, said, "It isn't easy to groom young couples within a short period of time. I'm proud to say that a handful of our young couples made it to the finals too."

Four institutions, namely NP, Singapore Polytechnic (SP), Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and new entrant Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) were competing in the event.

National coaches Mr Shawn Tay and Mrs Gladys Tay were present and scouting for young talents to join the feeder squad for the national team. The role of a feeder squad is to groom young athletes with the potential to compete on the international stage.

When pressed, Mr Tay disclosed that five individuals from NP have caught their attention, and that they will be watching the gifted set. Mr Tay declined to name them, and said that they "want to wait and see how well they develop".

However, he relented and gave **Tribune** a teaser, divulging that one of them "had a very good personality on the floor".

The competition reached a friendly peak at the Inter-tertiary Team Match, the last event for the evening. Held for the third time, this event had a team of five couples from each tertiary institute take the floor with an entertaining opening number, followed by a Friendship Rumba.

Competing couples switched partners for a partner from a different institute, driving home the theme of the dance, friendship.

What followed was a lovely display of gracious manners as the gentlemen asked the ladies for a Rumba, thus reminding the audience of the sport's ballroom origins.

A dance-off in the Cha-Cha-Cha, Rumba, Jive, Samba and a Grade D event comprising two dances by couples from each institute yielded the final winners

It isn't easy to groom young couples within a short period of time. I'm proud to say that a handful of our young couples made it to the finals too.

Pamela Lee, 19
President
NP DanceSport Club

of the Inter-tertiary Team Match. SP was named champion. Close behind was the first runner-up, NP, followed by second runner-up NYP and NTU in fourth place.

The audience went wild; cheering long after the last dance had ended, closing the evening on a high note. An after-event dance party capped off the daylong championships.

Pamela said, "I believe this event has achieved its objectives in promoting DanceSport to the community. The crowd was bigger than we expected, and we ran out of chairs for them on the dance floor!"