

ALUMNUS QUILTS  
JOB TO START ROCK  
CANDY SHOP **P17**



THE 'HOBBIT' OF  
THE CONVENTION  
CENTRE **P12**



# npTribune

The Student Voice of  
Ngee Ann Polytechnic  
[nptribune.theurbanwire.com](http://nptribune.theurbanwire.com)

**JANUARY - MARCH 2009**



Food Court Manager Noel Quek, Subway Franchise Manager Sahlan Bin Ismail, Hungry Jack Head Chef Richard Chua, and WaffleTown USA Franchise Manager Shen Xuer head Makan Place together.

## MAKAN PLACE SWARMED ON FIRST WEEK

**Boo Jian Wen Jeremy**  
Deputy Editor

An unexpected wave of students swept through one of Singapore's largest food courts when it opened early this year, catching staff off-guard.

At peak hour, dishes overflowed from tray return stations to surrounding tables of the 1,112-seat air-conditioned Makan Place at Block 51, previously a Mechanical Engineering workshop.

Employees at the dessert stall screamed dish names, trying to match order to face, while the queue snaked longer. Some stalls ran out of change, while others ran out of rice.

Food court operator Koufu, which oversees operations at Makan Place, runs 25 food courts across the island, with three in other polytechnics, and another at the Singapore Management University.

"The crowd caught us by surprise. The tray-return stations did not have enough people, but we are increasing the number of utensils and will employ more cleaners," says Manager Noel Quek.

The food court has 26 cleaners now, compared to 22 at first.

But the lack of cleaners is not the only reason why the food court struggles to cope.

Despite numerous signs urging patrons to return their trays, the four tray-return stations see few students returning trays.

Trays were left behind on most tables, even in the enclosed area reserved for the polytechnic's staff.

"Perhaps more tray-return stations can be installed," says Mr Dickson Phuan, an Electrical Engineering Technical Service Officer. "There are many return stations in NUS and NTU—that's why their campaigns have been successful."

Trays left behind on tables aggravate peak hour congestion because cleaners are unable to clear the tables quickly enough, Mr Quek says.

Students had told him that it was difficult to find seats at peak hour.

Mr Quek says that he has been soliciting feedback from students.

"I initially thought students are concerned about price, but it seems that taste is very important too," he says, adding that price reductions ranging from 50 cents to a dollar have been made across the board.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 →**

**64 tables \$3.1 million**

COME WITH POWER SOCKETS,  
WHILE 11 ROUTERS TURN  
THE PLACE **WIRELESS**

**3.1%**

HOW MUCH MAKAN PLACE  
IS CHEAPER THAN CANTEN  
ONE BASED ON SIX DISHES  
FOUND IN THREE CANTEENS

**11**

CUBICLES  
IN BOTH  
TOILETS,  
WITH 4  
URINALS FOR  
THE GUYS

**4**

TABLES FOR  
PEOPLE WHO  
PREFER EATING  
**ALFRESCO**

THE CONSTRUCTION BUDGET

**23°C**

THE PRESET TEMPERATURE  
OF THE AIR-CONDITIONING

**2,600**

sq metres

**21 stalls**

INCLUDING SUBWAY AND WAFFLETOWN USA

**1,112 seats**

MAKES IT SINGAPORE'S LARGEST  
FOODCOURT, ACCORDING TO KOUFU

**16**

WASHBASINS

### FABRIX™ CASES

Handmade products for your devices for  
iPod•iPhone•DS Lite•Camera•Laptop

available at Loft, 16A Haji Lane Level 2 &  
[www.fabrixcases.com](http://www.fabrixcases.com)



# NEWS



The cleaner who was a champion band singer **P13**

## JALAN ANAK BUKIT SHUTTLE BUS SERVICE TO BE TERMINATED FEB. 27

The free shuttle bus service from Jalan Anak Bukit will be terminated on Feb. 27 due to low rider-ship figures, according to Student Services.

Ms Cheng Nai, the newly-appointed Director of Student Services said, "There is little competition for public transport between students and the working population at Jalan Anak Bukit. The route is also well-served by public buses. Terminating this route will help us reduce costs."

Affected students and staff can take bus services 52, 61, 75 and 184 to campus.

The other free shuttle bus routes at Clementi, Hougang, Tampines, and Woodlands will continue to run as usual.

Ms Cheng also said that ground staff from Student Services have been deployed on all routes to ensure that the buses run on time after numerous complaints about late buses were received.

The free shuttle bus service operates during peak hours on weekday mornings throughout the semester. For route maps and timings, visit [www.np.edu.sg/ss](http://www.np.edu.sg/ss).

- **SUJITH KUMAR**

### MOU SIGNED WITH WDA AND SMA

The polytechnic will be the first institute in Singapore to set up a Media Continuous Education and Training Centre, as it signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Workforce Development Agency and the Singapore Media Academy.

The centre, to be set up by 2011, marks the first time a private, public education and government sector pool their resources together in a partnership.

Courses include New Media Business Management, Media Sales and Marketing, and TV, Film and Radio Production.

- **ALFRED CHUA**

### CUC OFFICIALS VISIT

Officials from the prestigious Communication University of China toured broadcasting facilities at the School of Engineering (SoE) and the School of Film and Media Studies (FMS) on Boxing Day last year.

Before the tour, Ms Zhang Lili, Director of International Exchange & Cooperation, Mr Li Huailiang, Dean of the Media Management School, Mr Cao Sansheng, Director of the Television Research Center, and Mr Fan Zhou, Director of the School of Creative Culture had a dialogue with the polytechnic's Deputy Principal Foo See Meng, with SoE Senior Director Dr Lim Choo Min.

Staff from the School of InfoComm Technology, FMS, and the Organisational Development Office were also present.

- **BOO JIAN WEN JEREMY**

### MUSIC IN THE CITY

The Christmas spirit went up a notch in Orchard Road, thanks to 'Music in the City 2008', held at Ngee Ann City on Dec. 19 and 21. Dancesport, the Choir, the Concert Band, and Baracuda Batucada, entertained the crowd. Eugene Chuang, 18, a member of Baracuda Batucada, said "Christmas is a time for sharing and I'm happy that I can help make this place livelier."

- **MUHAMMAD SIRAJ**

### M.A.N. HAS DREAMS

With \$3,000 as seed capital from the Ngee Ann Student Enterprise Scheme, student-run nail boutique Machine Art Nails (M.A.N) launched at Geek Terminal along Market Street on Dec. 27 last year. The business partners, Niles Toh, 18, and Amanda Chan, 18, both second-year Leisure & Business Facilities Management students, say the nail art machine they imported from the United States is one of the first in Singapore.

They plan to start a booth in the Lien Ying Chow Library in January. Amanda says they hope to expand to heartland malls and even to Kuala Lumpur next year.

- **JOSHUA TAN**

### DINNER & DANCE '09

The annual Dinner & Dance '09 will be going ahead come May. It will be retro-themed, with a throwback to the '70s and the '80s. Participants can expect to meet new friends across different levels and different academic schools.

- **KENNETH CHAN**

### RADIO HEATWAVE'S NEW STUDIO OPENS

The new broadcast studio at the Atrium boasts industry-grade radio equipment and two soundproof rooms. Guest-of-honour Mr Daniel Ong, Programme Director of 987FM, officially opened the studio on Jan. 8 although Radio Heatwave has been broadcasting there since October last year.

The station has four full-time student managers and 30 part-time producer-presenters from various schools.

Mok Teck Ching, the General Manager, says, "We'd like to promote local music with a new programme called 'Localised'."

- **ALFRED CHUA**

### LECTURER COMPILES BOOK FOR LATE POET

A book of prose, poetry and photography by the late Singaporean poet and writer Mr Sng Boh Khim has been compiled by his wife, Mrs Sng-Fun Poh Yoke, a lecturer at the School of Film & Media Studies.

Mrs Sng said, 'Simply This, Simply His - Portraits of Sng Boh Khim' is a book that gives glory to God through the thoughts of my husband. I conceptualised this in his memory and to honour God for his grace, mercy and love in both our lives."

Mr Sng passed away two years ago from cancer. The book contains Mr Sng's poems written in his youth, along with his essays and short stories.

The book will be launched on Feb. 5 at the National Library at Victoria Street.

- **JOSHUA TAN**

### NATION'S DANCERS CONVERGE FOR DANZATION 2008



"Breaking Boundaries" was the rule of the day, with dancers from around the country converging at the Convention Centre in an exploration of movement, rhythm and passion.

Featuring performances by nine-year-old New Revolving Age (NRA), professional dance crews, student dance groups and enthusiasts from the street, Danzation 2008 was a sparkling success.

The production, held on Dec. 19 and

20 last year, was broken into two parts: the first being a showcase the different groups and dance styles, and the second being a dance-drama performed by NRA.

The dance-drama was organised around the theme of "Love, Family and Friendship". The highlight was a stunningly choreographed contemporary item about a daughter's wish to have one last dance with her dead father.

- **MUHAMMAD SIRAJ**

### COCKTAIL 2009

Multimedia Animation students from the School of Infocomm Technology will be presenting their graduation showcase at Raffles City Shopping Centre, Level 3 City Square from Feb. 6 to 8. The event, Cocktail 2009, will host student portfolios, from websites to animated clips.

Highlights include 'Taddy Meets Lowmax', an animated clip where students brought to life two characters as part of their 3D Character Animation class. Also check out 'Copycat!' a board game created by students during their Integrated Assignment class.

- **KYLE SIM**

### ECH STUDENTS HELP KIDS TRANSIT TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

More than 20 Diploma in Early Childhood Education students from the School of Humanities received leadership roles at the Bridging Programme Graduation Day on Dec. 12.

The students will take on a variety of responsibilities for this programme conducted at 11 schools island-wide this year.

Organised by the Association for Early Childhood Educators Singapore (AECEs), the Bridging Programme helps children—especially those who have not been to pre-school—make a better transition to primary school.

- **JOSHUA TAN**

### MUSIC FOR THE SOUL

Come May 8, 15 finalists from various divisions of the School of Engineering (SoE) will compete in a singing competition in an attempt to win the title of SoE Soul of Entertainment Champion and other cash prizes.

There will also be guest performances by Campus Superstar finalists Teresa Tseng, Ng Yang Ce, Choo Siew Ping and Hong Yu Yang. Admission is free.

- **KENNETH CHAN**

### CORRECTION

An article in the last issue of npTribune chronicling the history of Ngee Ann Polytechnic, 'The Polytechnic that almost never came to be', mistated 1965 May and 1965 June as 1964 May and 1964 June.

### HOTTEST AT LIBRARY

npTribune recommends four titles we think you will enjoy at the Lifestyle Library. We picked these among the Lien Ying Chow Library's Hot 20 at [www.np.edu.sg/lib/announce/top20.htm](http://www.np.edu.sg/lib/announce/top20.htm)



**FICTION**  
**For One More Day**  
by Mitch Albom

**BOOK**  
**Seven Habits of Highly Effective People**  
by Steve Covey



**MUSIC**  
**Every second counts**  
by Plain White T's

**MOVIE**  
**27 Dresses**  
directed by Anne Fletcher





# MIXED REACTIONS ON NEW FOODCOURT

→ CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

He also monitors sales figures and observes service and presentation. “If a stall is doing poorly, is it because of taste or service or both?”

Makan Place introduces variety with fast food chains Waffle Town USA and Subway Restaurants. Like Mr Quek, Subway franchise owner Mr Chimmy Young says he aims to maintain quality at low prices. He says, “The menu is the same, even though we made 15 to 20 per cent price reductions.” Mr Young adds that the franchise is looking to employ students as part-time workers.

## NOT ENOUGH HALAL-CERTIFIED FOOD

However, with all its variety, Makan Place seems to have neglected a group in the polytechnic: Muslim students.

Electrical Engineering student Muhammad Riduwan, 20, set up an online petition on Jan. 7 to request for more *halal*-certified stalls at Makan Place.

Only one of the 21 stalls sells *halal* food. Subway is not *halal* because it uses pork as an ingredient.

In three days, the petition received more than 200 signatures and 630 page views. Petitioner Syafiqah Samsubahar said: “We are not asking for all stalls to be *halal* but just decent meals. Not too much to ask for, isn’t it?”

Some Muslim students also said on the online petition that they thought the Panggang & Penyet stall selling Indonesian fare was *halal*-certified.

Riduwan hopes to get 300 signatures but that is no longer necessary. Four days after the petition was set up, the Estates Management Office emailed students saying that they “have initiated action to add two more *halal* stalls”.

LAU LIANG TONG & KYLE LESLIE SIM  
CONTRIBUTED REPORTING

- **Online:** npTribune compares prices of six common dishes in the canteens.
- **Online forum:** ‘Canteen food too expensive’.

## Food here ‘largely a hit-and-miss affair’

Kyle Leslie Sim

The most important aspect of any food establishment is obviously the food. In that department, eating at the Makan Place is largely a hit-and-miss affair.

My experience with Taiwanese food is limited to fried chicken cutlet with spice, and oyster *mee sua*, and so it was with apprehension that I tried the stall keepers’ recommendation: the oddly-named Three-Cup Chicken (\$3.50).

The dish turned out to be rather pleasant. It married loud flavours together in perfect harmony. Braised in soy sauce, sesame oil and rice wine,

the chicken was a delight.

Another stall to take note of is Panggang & Penyet, which sells Indonesian food. Try the Indonesian *Ayam Panggang*. For \$3.50, you get a large juicy chicken thigh slathered with a brownish sweet sauce that surprisingly tasted alright.

Myra Ho, 19, a second-year Early Childhood Education student who was eating at Makan Place with her friends said, “The food here is better than at Canteen One. At least everything doesn’t taste the same. The *Ayam Penyet* from the Indonesian food stall is pretty good.”

One Pot is also worth a try, if only for the novelty factor. They

serve little hot pots of chicken soup where you throw in all your food and cook it up, a steamboat concept in a food court but obviously not well thought through.

The vegetables were raw, and so even after leaving it in the hot pot for the entire duration that the solid fuel burned to cook, it came out hard and inedible. The amount of food they gave was abysmal: five thin strips of beef along with a bowl of vegetables and tofu. It left my companion feeling distinctly unsatisfied.

**From left: Ayam Panggang, Three-Cup chicken, and the single-scoop Vanilla Ice-cream from Waffle Town (\$3.30).**



# Canteen One to close, 2 stalls move to Makan Place



Ng Yan Hong

In a matter of weeks, we will be bidding goodbye to Canteen One at Block 74.

The canteen will serve its last customer in February. “Morale has been very low since we’re closing soon,” says Ms Susan Low, 54, the canteen’s supervisor for the past 17 years. “But students have been supporting us all this while, and we would really like to thank them.”

She also says that most of the canteen’s employees will be retiring when it closes.

But not all of Canteen One’s legends will be leaving. The Japanese and Yong Tau Foo stalls have shifted to Makan Place.

Ask any student or staff to list their favourite Canteen One stalls,

and the Japanese stall will surely rank as one of the top three.

Jammie Koh (pictured left), 44, has been running the stall with her husband for more than three years.

She smiled at the mention of best-selling Kaki Fuyong. “Initially, we only had oysters but decided to bring in chicken when students asked for it,” she says.

Remembering how she made fun of students, she says, “When students ask for more gravy, they just call it ‘sauce’.

But I tell them it’s ‘lor chup’ and if they don’t say it properly, I won’t give them any,” she says.

She assures students that prices at her stall will remain unchanged.

“There’s not much profit,” says Ms Koh, “But it is our responsibility to serve good food. After all, being around students make us feel younger.”



# NEWS

## Polytechnics scramble to offer clean energy courses

From this year, four polytechnics, including Ngee Ann (NP), will be offering courses in Clean Energy. **NG YAN HONG** finds out more

Starting this year, the school, along with two other polytechnics, will be launching their new clean energy courses.

Under the School of Engineering, the Diploma in Clean Energy Management (CEM) will be offering training in two key areas.

In the area of clean energy, students will explore the issues concerning the sources and supplies of energy compared to the current state of non-renewable energy sources. The course also focuses on energy conservation as well as the promotion of economic, political and environmental preservation.

With global climate changes and fluctuating oil prices, the need to find new innovative methods of energy use and

conservation is now even more pressing in the recent years.

Mr Yang Kian Gap, lecturer at the Electrical Engineering Division says, "In the next few years, the industry will need about 3,000 skilled personnel with the CEM diploma qualification."

### SOLAR TECHNOLOGY FOCUS

NP officially opened a \$1 million Solar Technology Centre on Nov. 12 last year. Over 90 solar panels have been installed on the roofs and in various parts of the centre to study the kinds of solar panels that would work best in Singapore's tropical weather.

It is also part of the Economic Development Board's \$17 million programme to promote research and testing

of clean energy applications.

Under a tie-up with the Bochum University of Applied Sciences in Germany, CEM students will get to spend one semester there to join their international team in designing and building a state-of-the-art solar car.

The university holds a prominent position among European schools, and has links with international institutions in Europe, East Asia, and Singapore.

The team's car will take part in the biennial World Solar Challenge in Australia, where teams from all over the world race their solar vehicles over the 3,000-kilometre journey from Darwin to Adelaide.

### NOT ENOUGH GRADUATES

Despite the soaring demand in the energy management industry, the number of spaces available in the course is very limited. There will only be about 120 CEM graduates per year from all the polytechnics.

"Annual intake for Singapore Polytechnic (SP) and NP will only be about 140-150 due to facility constraints," said Mr Yang.

SP was the first polytechnic in Singapore to offer a diploma in clean energy. This year, they will be admitting their second batch of students.

Lecturers there mainly focus on areas like the use of clean energy as a stand-alone system and solar system design, manufacturing and processes.

### TP: FUEL CELLS IMPORTANT

Temasek Polytechnic (TP) will also commence its Diploma in Clean Energy course this year.

"Renewable Energy Corporation has made an announcement to build a \$6.5 billion Solar Plant in Singapore," explains Mr Wong Cho Loo, TP's Clean Energy course manager. In terms of technology, TP places more emphasis on Fuel Cell and Solar Technology which they believe have greater potential in Singapore.

Host to the Singapore Fuel Cell Community, TP's programme will also cover more advanced solar technologies like the dye-sensitised solar cells on top of traditional silicon solar cells.

NP students, in comparison, can look forward to using the latest equipment at the new centre to monitor the quality of solar power generated, as well as design and test solar-powered systems.



## GREEN IS IN

Green is in vogue. It is the new black for Singapore as it strives to add 7,000 green jobs to the economy



NPT / YEO KAI WEN



COURTESY OF THE CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE

Zayar Wai Lin, 20, (above) operates the shadow ring, used to measure the levels of radiation from the sun, while a class of students (below) simply have fun with the solar panel system used to monitor and log weather conditions.





Sujith Kumar

In the last year alone, Singapore has experienced a surge of interest in Clean Energy. The Economic Development Board, which set up the Clean Energy Programme Office two years ago, is tasked with developing the clean energy strategy here. It aims to increase the Republic's contribution from the clean energy industry to \$1.7 billion, and seeks to add 7,000 jobs to the economy. The green industry's main Research and Development (R&D) programme is the Agency of Science, Technology and Research's (A\*Star) Singapore Initiative in New Energy Technology (SINERGY). The initiative is concerned in developing new technologies and studying how the country can compete in the energy market. Their efforts are augmented by other research initiatives. The National University of Singapore (NUS) set up the Energy Studies Institute, a think-tank on energy issues, in Nov. 2007, and the Solar Energy Research Institute of Singapore (SERIS) in Feb. 2008. The Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is collaborating with German industrial company Bosch, in a study that seeks to find ways to reduce the cost of energy extracted from solar sources. Danish multinational Vestas Technologies, the world's largest manufacturer of wind turbines, announced in July last year that it would invest more than \$500 million over a decade to build a wind energy R&D centre. "Vestas is convinced that the future for wind energy in Asia is phenomenal. "Singapore is an excellent location for our regional office as it has good infrastructure and a highly skilled workforce for us to draw upon," said Mr Thorbjørn N. Rasmussen, President, Vestas Asia Pacific, in a press release.

Zin Mon Ryone, 20, and Aung Phyo, 19, third-year students from the Diploma in Electrical Engineering, operating the heart of the solar photovoltaic system.

Norwegian solar power giant Renewable Energy Corporation also announced plans for a \$6.3 billion solar manufacturing plant—the largest of its kind in the world—by 2010. The plant would have the potential to generate a capacity of 1.5 gigawatts, comparable to the power output of a large nuclear power plant. In addition to industry investments, new research institutes have been opened, and scholarships are being offered. The introduction of tertiary-level courses in clean energy technology is indicative of surging industry interest. Singapore Polytechnic began offering the Diploma in Clean Energy last year, while our polytechnic, Nanyang Polytechnic, and Temasek Polytechnic (TP) will launch other clean energy courses this year. SIM University offers an Executive Certificate in Clean Energy and NUS provides renewable energy education in some of its building and environment programmes. Mr Wong Choo Loo, course manager for TP's Clean Energy diploma, says, "There is a demand for people trained in this area. TP's course includes modules which support the government's plan to build a 'cleantech' park." Students whom npTribune spoke to had mixed opinions. "I think schools are just following the trend. After a while, it will just die down," says Darren Foo, 20, a full-time National Serviceman. However, Lee Pei Qi, 22, a final-year Communication Studies student at NTU, is less sceptical. "It's about time," she says. "If we do not have enough people with specialist knowledge in these fields, it will be difficult for us to work on reducing our impact on the environment." For now, institutions seem to be sharing Pei Qi's view, and the case looks set to stay through the next decade.

EDUCATION UPDATE

New O-level subject to be taught by FMS lecturers

Sujith Kumar

"Lights, camera, action!" Students taking the new Media Studies (EL) 'O'-Level Applied Subject at Kuo Chuan Presbyterian, Paya Lebar Methodist Girls', and Singapore Chinese Girls' can soon join their favourite Hollywood directors in saying these words. The School of Film and Media Studies (FMS), developed this subject in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board. It is offered for the first time this year, joining three other subjects: Creative 3D Animation, Fundamentals of Electronics, and Introduction to Enterprise Development. Only 20 students from each school will be offered the opportunity to take up this subject. FMS lecturers will teach the new Media Studies subject, which is modelled after the Media Studies syllabus in England. Students are assessed through a two-hour written paper and a narrative video project. Subject developer and former FMS lecturer Suja Thomas says, "Students will analyse an unseen media text for the written paper, and write an argumentative or expository essay. "They will also produce a minute-long narrative video, assessed for camerawork, directing, and editing." Because of the practical nature of the subject, drawing up the grading criteria was challenging. "The assessment must be designed very carefully. Group work is very tricky, because if one person drops the subject, we cannot assume that the rest will cover him or her."

Students were excited about the subject. Jolene Ng, 17, a recent Kuo Chuan graduate, says, "It's great that they're offering this. I would have jumped at the chance because I really want to be in the media."



Ms Suja Thomas, subject developer for the new Media Studies subject.

Ms Malini Kaseenathan, a journalist at The Straits Times, says, "Students will probably learn that the media isn't about glamour and fame, and will get a better idea about the industry." The School of Humanities is planning to offer Media Studies in Chinese. At least two Special Assistance Plan schools—Chung Cheng High and CHIJ St Nicholas Girls'—will offer the subject from next year. The polytechnic also plans to offer Applied Subjects in Biotechnology, Design Studies, Environmental Science & Technology, and Travel & Tourism. The Ministry also announced that an 'A'-level equivalent of Media Studies may be offered in the future.

# NEWS

## Interdisciplinary module talks about love

Ng Yan Hong

We've all been there—the uncomfortable blushing, the sudden dizziness, and the wide grin that stretches across your face whenever you think of that adorable face. Sounds familiar?

The adrenaline rush of falling in love is wonderful, but nobody can deny that teenage love can mess with one's head.

A recently added module, "Understanding Relationships: Love & Sexuality", is offered to second-year students as an Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) subject.

It aims to aid students in gaining an in-depth understanding of the fundamentals of human socialising and love relations for effective living.

According to The Straits Times, the module is a bid by the government to get young Singaporeans hitched.

Ray Choon, a second-year Mass Communication student says, "It was a struggle to decide which module to take, but I didn't want the mundane stuff. I thought maybe with this module, I

would be able to understand more about relationships."

The 18-year-old student is taking the module as part of his curriculum this semester.

"We learn about how to deal with break-ups, how the opposite genders attract and most importantly, the difference between infatuation and love, which commonly confuses teenagers like us nowadays," he says.

### INFATUATION, NOT LOVE?

Dr Pat Love, a Marriage and Dating Specialist, said at the 'Keys to a Smart and Happy Love Life' conference on Oct. 10 last year that the leading cause of breakups among young people is the withdrawal of interest and energy.

"Love only begins after infatuation ends, which usually lasts from three to six months," Dr Love said, "Rushing into relationships by mere attraction can lead to unfaithfulness and severe emotional setbacks."

Lee Weixuan, a third-year Information Technology student, agrees. "My most significant relationship was with this girl who cheated on me," said the 19-year-old. "She seemed like my dream girl."

Weixuan only found out half a year later that she had a boyfriend all along, and it was only through her best friend that he knew.

"I never expected it. I don't dare to commit to another relationship now," he says.

What is even more ironic is that as the percentage of

marriages in Singapore increases, so does the divorce rate.

According to the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, younger persons aged 20-24 registered the highest divorce rates in 2003.

Their divorce rate also had the largest increase over the last decade. 3.8 percent of couples that were married in 2002 divorced in less than five years, compared to 2.6 percent in 1987.

Dr Love says, "Breakups are more than often than not due to personality differences. Many men and women are incapable of understanding each other."

Without proper respect and understanding, relationships become fragile with both parties being equally vulnerable.

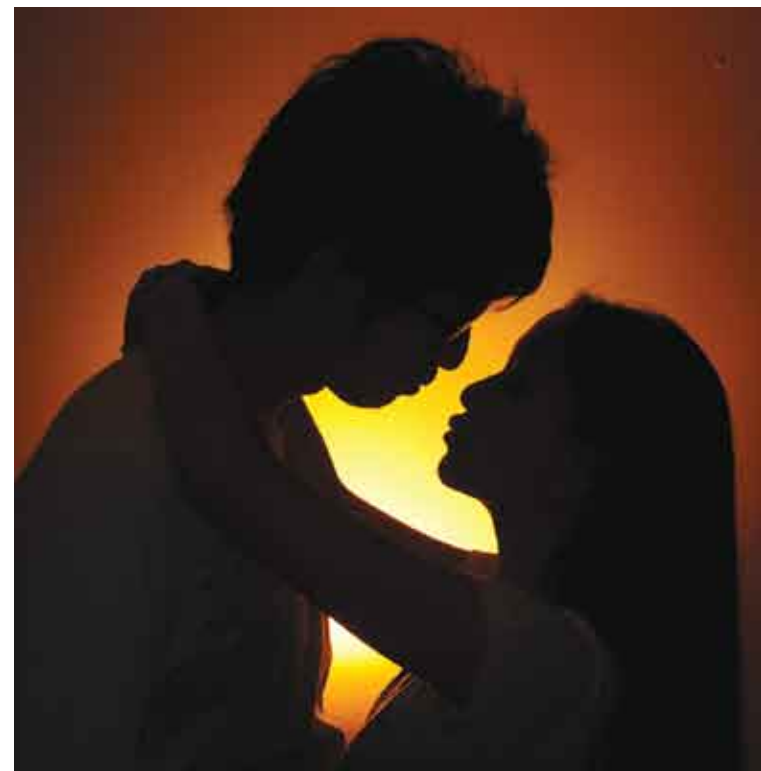
### WEEK ONE: SPEED DATING

Classified under 'Life Skills', the School of IS hopes that with this module, youths dabbling in love relationships will have a clearer understanding of the essentials needed to make a relationship work.

"The tutor uses different techniques like videos, slides, and in-class activities," Ray says, "Once, we were given a sheet of plain paper and crayons and we were instructed to draw images that reflected our childhood."

Marcus Lim, 20, an Accountancy student who also took the IS module two semesters ago, says, "We had a speed dating activity in class on Week One, something I thought to be embarrassing, but it turned out pretty insightful."

Many youths in relationships



Youths tend to mistake infatuation for love, says Dr Pat Love, a Marriage and Dating Specialist, who cautions against rushing into relationships.

use the 'status factor' and are not genuinely in love, Ray says, especially with social networking sites like Facebook springing into popularity.

"What I find lacking in youth relationships is communication," he says, "Maybe we speed up the whole dating process and get together too quickly without knowing each other well."

One tip he has gained from the

module is that we should continue with our daily routine whether we fall in or out of love.

"This is most important because we may lose ourselves for the one we love or have loved and that should be prevented," he says.



## Over 50 volunteers now read at childrens' home

Muhammad Siraj

A group of students from the Muslim Students Society have decided to give back to society by going to the Jamiyah Children's Home to read to the children there.

They are led by Far'ain Jaafar, 20, a third-year Early Childhood Education (ECH) student who is also the assistant honorary general secretary of the Society.

It all started when the society had gone to visit the home to break fast with the orphans during the month of Ramadan.

Far'ain felt that there was more she could do for the orphans than just that and decided to start a reading programme for them. "It's one way of being human," she says, "it's about giving back to society."

The society then went on looking for volunteers of all races and religions for the programme. "Response was overwhelming," says Far'ain. There are now over 50 volunteers, with most being ECH students.

The volunteers had to go through a storytelling training session where they were taught by Ms Suriati Abdullah, an ECH lecturer, to express themselves through acting

and other methods to make the stories come alive.

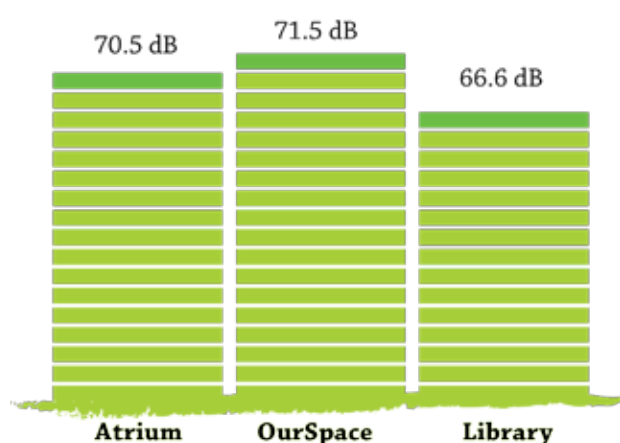
Some of the difficulties that the Society had faced was to create an English-speaking environment as the children were too used in conversing in Malay.

"Sometimes when we talk to them in English, they reply in Malay," says Far'ain in amusement. However, through the storytelling exercise, this has become less of a problem.

Far'ain once had to re-read the Dr Seuss story, "Ten apples up on top", a few times because the children loved it so much. "They kept wanting me to read it, and they would count the number of apples together on every page together," she says.



# Noise at study areas exceed WHO standards



**NOISE LEVELS** The World Health Organisation recommends a maximum of 35 decibels (dB) for studying and learning, yet our study areas far exceed that.

**Kenneth Chan**

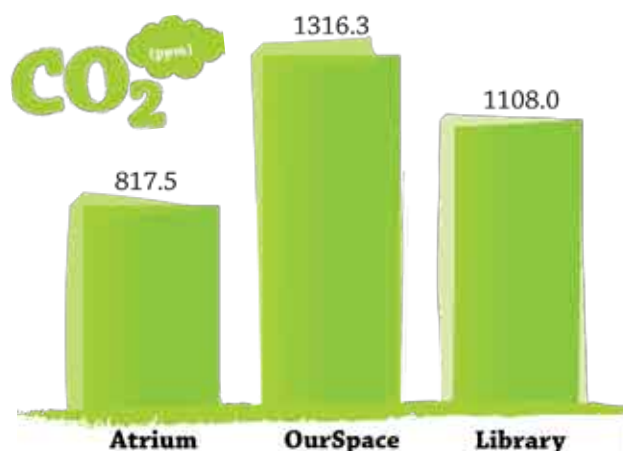
To prepare for common tests and exams, second-year Marine & Offshore Technology student, Jace Koh, 18, spends most of his studying time at level 5 of the Library.

However, that is not the case for many students who are genuinely looking for a quiet place to study like Jace.

He says, "Inconsiderate students talk loudly and even after librarians stop them, the din starts all over again."

A check on popular study areas, such as the Atrium, the Lifestyle Library, and OurSpace@72, found that the noise levels at these areas exceeded recommended levels.

For effective studying and learning, the World Health Organisation advises classrooms and study areas to keep noise levels to a maximum of 35 decibels.



**CARBON DIOXIDE LEVELS** The Singapore National Environment Agency (NEA) says anything above 1000ppm of CO<sub>2</sub> indoors indicates poor ventilation.

npTribune used a carbon dioxide meter and a decibel meter to take four readings in each location at mid-afternoon, then averaged the results for the findings (see charts above).

During the time of the check, the readings recorded for noise levels at between 66.6 - 71.5 decibels, just 30 decibels shy of the noise generated by an airplane taking off.

Even at the Lifestyle Library, an area enclosed and unaffected by commotion from nearby traffic, noise generated by students and their laptops averaged 66.6 decibels.

Carbon dioxide readings at OurSpace@72 and the Lifestyle Library exceeded 1000ppm, indicating poor ventilation. According to the NEA, even moderate levels of carbon dioxide can "create feelings of stuffiness and discomfort".

**LIN ZICHENG RECORDED READINGS WITH ASSISTANCE FROM MR OSNI BIN OSMAN, SoE LABORATORY MANAGER.**

## Teaching & Learning Centre explores virtual campus with Project Wonderland

**Ong Chong Ern**

Imagine talking to friends online in a virtual world.

Project Wonderland, created by Sun Microsystems and developed in collaboration with universities in the United States, is a programme that can make virtual classrooms a reality.

Students will get a chance to use it this June when Version One is released.

"It gives me goosebumps just thinking about all the potential of this software," says Mr Ng Kay Peng, 43, a systems analyst at the Teaching and Learning Centre (TLC).

"By crafting a workable virtual classroom, students need not go school everyday."

One feature enables students to talk through microphones and even ask their lecturers' avatars questions in a virtual classroom.

The open-source software allows for creation of conference rooms, halls, and classrooms. Students can create their own avatars and roam the landscape, chatting to lecturers, and view slideshows and videos on virtual blackboards.

"It sounds radical," said Tan Chun Hui, 17, an Information Technology student, "but we'll have to see if it's practical. It probably also does no wonders for our social skills."



Lecturers will be able speak to students online in a virtual environment via avatars.

*"By crafting a virtual classroom, students need not go school everyday."*

**- Ng Kay Peng, system analyst at the Teaching and Learning Centre**

### NEW SERVICE

## New portal for further studies options launched

**Sujith Kumar**

Students keen to stretch their diplomas can now find out how with the Further Studies Portal launched last December.

It combines the further studies databases already existing within individual schools into a searchable portal.

The portal at [www.np.edu.sg/ss/further-studies](http://www.np.edu.sg/ss/further-studies) allows students to see a sampling of degrees they are eligible for after graduation.

They can also check how much credit they would receive from local and international universities, primarily Australia and the United Kingdom.

Typically, students can expect to get a year off with module exemptions on a three-year degree course, depending on their grades.

Students can also find out about the other fields of study they qualify for. Ms Seow-Chng Cheng Nai, the newly appointed Director of Student Services (SS), explains, "For example, engineering students may not want to pursue an engineering degree. Now, because the system is consolidated, they can see what other degrees they can do with their diplomas."

An npTribune check revealed that Pharmacy Science graduates may study Arts and Psychology degrees, and Information Technology students may choose to study Business.

"We're looking at searching from the other perspective, whereby students can click on the specific course which they would like to study at a certain university, and then see what diplomas can be used for entry," says Ms Seow-Chng.

The tool, which took six months to develop, is a joint effort by SS and the Computer Centre.

### OTHER SS INITIATIVES



#### CYBER COUNSELLING

Realising that students may not feel comfortable with face-to-face appointments, SS has engaged the Internet. Students can now make appointments to speak to professional counsellors online. Appointments can also be made with academic counsellors.

#### INTERNSHIP PORTAL

The department is creating a portal that presents multi-disciplinary industry projects and internships that are available for student selection. The portal would also benefit companies that want students from other disciplines. For example, film studios can hire interns from the polytechnic for their accounts departments.



## EDITORIAL

# HOW WE KILLED CREATIVITY

OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM STRANGLES creativity and squanders talent. We want innovation and we want it badly. But every child here has been told at least once by a teacher or parent, ‘Don’t ask stupid questions’. Questions, even dumb ones, are a sign of a critical mind. By labelling questions, we box up imagination. Any spark of innovation is extinguished in a vice of self-censorship. A top engineering student has been overheard complaining how his lecturer reprimanded him in class for suggesting a different answer to a calculation. The student’s answer was correct, and he confirmed it with books from the library. He vowed never to suggest answers to that lecturer in future classes.

Creative ideas stem from the freedom to think, but our society clearly does not offer that liberty given our conformist and non-confrontational culture. No Singaporean has won a Nobel Prize. On the other hand, Finland, with just half a million more people, has four Nobel laureates. The difference between Singapore and Finland is that Finnish children grow up in an environment where their parents and educators do not impose the right answers. British education reformist Sir Ken Robinson said in a 2006 talk: “If you’re not prepared to be wrong, you’ll never come up with anything original.”

## FORUM

# No proselytising on campus please

I was doing my project work with a friend at the Convention Centre study area when two people approached us.

One of them was in his late twenties while the other was a teenager.

They asked my friend about his religion and continued preaching even after my friend said that he is a freethinker.

They left only after handing him a brochure about bible studies on

campus on Saturdays.

I visited the polytechnic’s website, and was shocked to find out that these co-curricular activities state evangelism as the main goal on their web pages.

I wonder about the need for such organisations in our polytechnic. We live in a secular nation and we are constantly reminded about religious tolerance. Religious conversion is a sensitive

and controversial issue.

Take the case of the Maria Hertogh riots in the 1950s which started because of religious differences.

Let’s not jeopardise the religious harmony we have. Whether we worship in temples, mosques, or churches, one of the things that we ask for most is peace.

**Vinoth Kumar R.**

*Third-year Mass Communication student*

### Editor’s note

*We emailed this letter to various religious groups on campus for comment. Only the Catholic Youth Apostolate replied to the Forum by press time.*

# ‘Religion is a personal choice’

I refer to Vinoth Kumar’s letter, “No proselytising on campus please”.

While I do not speak for other religious organisations in the polytechnic, I wish to clarify that the Catholic Youth Apostolate (CYA) is a club for fellowship for Catholic students.

Our main function is not to proselytise but to minister to the needs of our members. Most of our activities are social activities organised for our members. Our sole attempt to recruit members among

Catholic youths during my tenure as chairman was at the previous CCA fiesta.

The Roman Catholic Church officially believes in evangelism: “Spreading knowledge”. That is in contrast to the popular misconception that evangelism means conversion and proselytisation.

There is a difference between spreading knowledge and trying to convert people. The CYA’s stand is that religion is a personal choice. We are against the idea of coercing people

into conversion. We can talk to people as much as they allow us, but it is strictly against our policy to force people into religion.

Catholicism definitely does not believe in undermining religious harmony. Catholic priests, for example, are required to study other faiths as well as their own. This helps to prevent a culture of misunderstanding of other religions.

**Petrina Anita Anthony**

*Chairman, Catholic Youth Apostolate*

# Why used trays don’t get returned

I refer to the article in the last issue, “Tray-return campaign stagnant; students blame ‘peer influence’”.

The diffusion of responsibility theory explains why the campaign is stagnant.

The campaign seems to suggest that the responsibility of returning used trays belongs to the crowd, and not the individual.

Through inaction, it becomes habitual for people to leave their

trays unreturned.

People naturally desire to conform and not stand out, so people new to the canteen learn from existing canteen users. They too, will leave trays unreturned.

Instead of focusing on unreturned trays, the campaign should actively encourage tray-return.

In order to make the campaign successful, the Environment Rangers Society can deploy their

volunteers to politely remind canteen users to return their own trays.

It will take time and much commitment to change a habit that has been ingrained into society.

But once successful, people will continue returning trays without being prompted.

**Tay Wen Jie**

*Second-year Accountancy student*

*Letters to the Forum may be edited for brevity and accuracy.*

## npTribune

### EDITOR

Lee Xian Jie

### DEPUTY EDITOR

Boo Jian Wen Jeremy

### ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Brian Cheong  
Wella Ong

### PHOTO EDITOR

Yeo Kai Wen

### PHOTOGRAPHERS

Justin Tan  
Sam Wu

### DESIGNERS

Teo Yin Yin  
Jessinta Cheng

### STAFF REPORTERS

Chrystal Chua  
Kenneth Cheong  
Daryll Nanayakara  
Kristie Michelle Chiew  
Nur’atiquah Bte Ali  
Muhammad Siraj  
Ong Chong Ern  
Lau Liang Tong  
Kyle Leslie Sim  
Teo Hong Jun  
Ng Yan Hong  
Sujith Kumar  
Candice Lee  
Nadia Shah

### REPORTERS

Eunice Ng  
Joshua Tan  
Lin Zicheng  
Alfred Chua  
Kenneth Chan

### ADVERTISING SALES

Jananitha S.R.  
Tammy Chua  
Cris Huang  
Ashley Ng

### ADVISORS

Koh Joh Ting  
Clement Tay  
Robin Yee

### PUBLISHED BY

Ngee Ann Polytechnic  
TriMedia Publishing,  
School of Film & Media  
Studies, Blk 52, #07-01,  
535 Clementi Road,  
Singapore 599489

### PRINTED BY

Oxford Graphic Printers



 Have your say on our website: [nptribune.theurbanwire.com](http://nptribune.theurbanwire.com)

# VIEWS

## I MISS MY FRIENDS



Kristie Michelle Chiew

Don't we sometimes miss the sound of that good ol' national anthem blaring in the background as we pretend to be focused and sing? Don't we sometimes also miss those sports days, where we would all sit in the bleachers and cheer ourselves hoarse, even though we know it's going to be that same runner who's been winning for the past three years? We deny it fervently—all of us—thinking that it's simply 'cool' to be a part of the polytechnic crowd. *Oh hey! I can wear my own clothes to school! How cool is that?*

Sooner rather than later, all of us miss the monotony of uniformed life. "I miss it, especially when I have problems deciding what else to wear to school," says Tan Yi Lei, 17, a second-year Biomedical Science student, "School uniforms save us all the hassle." An average student in the polytechnic spends about 30 hours in school. That averages out to eight hours a day, not including extra time spent on projects. "There is very little student bonding," says Linnet Wong, 20, third-year Molecular Biotechnology student, "we're mostly in cliques here." Linnet has

made friends in school, but they remain to be in-school project partners. Some people say best friends are made in your tertiary education years. Many disagree. Stacey Cheok, 17, a second-year Business Year student, says the most frequently dialled number in her Samsung smart phone is her best friend from her secondary school. It might also be thanks to clique culture. Gwyn Lau, a third-year Film, Sound & Video student says, "Maybe it's the project competition because we are segregated into groups." Out of 50 students I surveyed, 80 percent

**80%**  
of 50 students surveyed think school is just for work and not to expand their social circle



NP ILLUSTRATION / GOH WEI CHION

said that they feel that school is simply a place for work and not to expand their social circle. Six in 10 spend only five hours a week on average on out of school activities with their classmates. This compared to the 30 hours a week is a measly one-sixth of their time. Another 28 percent wanted more activities like class visits to companies that would help them mix as a class. However, Shawn Tan, 19, a third-year Biomedical Science student, thinks that whether or not the students bond, isn't up to the school. "There isn't any chance for student bonding here, and I don't think the school can do anything about it." "Making friends is an individual thing. All the camps and stuff seem to end up being meaningless," said Shawn.

# FALL out BOY

10 february 2009  
SINGAPORE indoor STADIUM

tickets @ SISTIC : 6348 5555  
[www.sistic.com.sg](http://www.sistic.com.sg)



decaydance

FRIENDS OR ENEMIES.COM

CLANDESTINE INDUSTRIES







Midas Promotions  
[www.midaspromotions.com](http://www.midaspromotions.com)



[falloutboyrock.com](http://falloutboyrock.com)



# VIEWS



## The whispering, gentle thief

I found him in the pages of a yellowing book. Now he wants to take Mum away

**Jeremy Boo**  
Deputy Editor

I am pretty fortunate, I thought early last year. This family has our moments but we have no dramatic episodes of abuse or infidelity.

Less than three months later, my mother lay dying in bed, her fingers curling into vice-like claws of pain as her muscles wither.

Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) is a whispering, gentle thief. It first took her by her left hand.

It was so subtle, so unsuspecting that Mother did not think much about her weaker arm until she could no longer button her shirt.

Doctors did not understand. They took X-rays and sent electricity into her arms. "Come back in two months," they said.

All this while, her motor neurons—cells that aid communication between muscles, spinal cord, and brain—were degenerating. Her muscles twitched in spasmodic death.

The weakness spread to her other arm. Her speech started to slur. "We don't know what's happening," the doctors repeated.

My mother lashed out in a hoarse voice one day, "It's difficult to swallow."

I called my father after he brought her to a private neurologist. "How did it go?"

"Everything's alright," he replied.

I went home to a house that bubbled with tension that day. No one knew what happened. But my elder sister and I knew nothing was alright.

I went through my father's old medical textbooks. That night, I found out:

ALS affects one in every 100,000 people. Sufferers die because their lungs eventually collapse, sending their bodies spiralling into oxygen deficit.

There is no cure.

A writer and lover of words, I felt betrayed by these frigid and utilitarian words. They fluttered and fell on me; paper cuts that blossomed into droplets of tears.

"God, please take away my remaining years and give it to mummy," I prayed.

**God,  
please take away  
my remaining  
years and give it  
to mummy.**

I still think the same. It is the most meaningful thing I can ever do.

The next morning, I walked to Mother to say goodbye before leaving for school. She saw the emotion in my eyes and broke down.

I have seen her cry many times. But this was different.

She was sobbing. It was filled with wrecking breaths of desperation and fear.

I hugged her but it did not help.

There was nothing I could do except to slip out silently, her voice ringing in my ears, without saying goodbye.

Dad says that I have to be cheerful around her.

I hate it. I don't want to lie to my mum. But I have to.

I sank deeper into work.

Even though she never said it, I know how much pride she will feel when she is able to say: "That's my son" if she sees me receive awards on stage on Graduation Day.

The only chance I have of realising that dream is to work very hard to get individual module awards, given to the top student of each module.

Ten-hour workdays stretched to 14, then 16. Soon, I was clocking 20 hours a day. The UrbanWire, the online lifestyle and entertainment publication that I am editor of, recorded more than 3.6 million hits last July.

I started to stay over in school, only to sequester myself in my room when I got home. The UrbanWire underwent an editorial and design revamp.

Meanwhile, Mother got worse. She lost a tooth after she tripped.

Her speech broke down into sounds I struggle to connect in a forlorn join-the-dots puzzle. It dawned on me that Mother might not say her last words.

Hope that my father placed in my hands started to turn cold.

I did not know what to do. I still don't.

It is strange how I never want to leave when I am by my mother, but I do not want to return when I am not at her side.

"Who's that?" she asked, while climbing from the first floor to the second. I was walking down from the third floor.

"Me, Jeremy," I replied.

"Going where?" She sounded concerned, even though she struggled to form those words.

"School." "School start already? When?" "Monday."

She nodded, slowly, almost plaintively. "Buh."

"Hmm?"

"Bye bye."



GUEST ILLUSTRATION / ALICIA ROTH

I followed her to her room. "Will you be back late?"

I hesitated. I wanted to stay late to finish more work.

"No, not tonight," I replied.

I broke my promise. I worked till midnight. That very night, my mother struggled for breath for the first time.

*I remember a counselling session. She was drawing a white yacht. She named it Angel.*

*"I'll bring my whole family out on this yacht. I'm the one navigating. We are heading to the open sea," she said. "It's called Angel because it can be a real angel."*

*The counsellor asked, "Is there anyone in your life that is like this angel to you?"*

"No."

She has always loved the sea. In the past, she would hop onto any bus that brought her to the sea whenever she felt overwhelmed. There, she feels free, her problems forgotten.

Nov. 30 last year, they got her a wheelchair. I was leaving the house when I saw it by the door. I let that image float away before shutting the door behind me.

I was beside her that evening when she suddenly said, "I don't think I can recover."

It was startling because she always had hope. "I want to play catching with Daddy when I recover," she once said.

"Why?" I moved closer, fighting back tears.

"Don't come near. Can't breathe," she said in gasps.

She was wearing an old blue

pyjama top that might have belonged to me when I was younger.

It nearly fell open when I helped her sit up. I quickly held it down. Privacy and propriety means a lot to her.

My father came promptly to help.

He is the hero in this story. He tirelessly fends for us, while always being there for Mum.

Mum told me that before they got married, my dad used to drink so much that he would retch. He never did that after marriage.

He was not drunk that day, but I smelt alcohol on his breath. He was hiccupping.

He has always been the impregnable fortress, never crying or showing weakness. That day, I saw him as human as myself.

There was emptiness in his eyes. And a sadness that he was not willing to reveal.

As we helped Mum up, I could feel her bones.

"Mummy, I got my thunder thighs from you!" I used to whine jokingly.

Her thighs are now chillingly thin.

Her finger joints, they have swollen into knobs.

My mother is dying.

In that instant, I realised, in the lines around her mouth, in her obsessive nature, in her perfectionistic demands and expectations, in all her loneliness, hurt and brokenness, how alike we both are.

Mummy, I love you. Very much.



# IRON RICE BOWLS? NOT QUITE

Jobs in 'recession-proof' industries may not be as smooth-sailing and lucrative as you may think. A teacher, an IT professional, a healthcare worker and a full-time National Serviceman weigh in

## Chrystal Chua

As shadows of the recession loom over the future of the next batch of graduating students, questions are raised as to whether job-hunting will prove difficult in the coming months.

'Iron rice bowl' careers are those perceived to have high job stability as well as constant demand for professionals.

These include those in the healthcare industry, education, and the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), and more recently the Information Technology (IT) industry.

Siti Amira, 19, a second year Nursing student, says, "I am relieved to be in healthcare because it is a borderless industry, and I know that even if I can't get a job in Singapore, there is a need for healthcare workers in other countries".

A secondary school teacher of six years who spoke on condition of anonymity says he has seen cases of professionals switching to teaching.

"When times are tough, you have no choice but to find work to sustain yourself or your family. The only peeve I have is that some of these new teachers carry the

mentality that they are just here to wait out the recession, and then do a half-hearted job," he says.

He adds, "They don't realise that they have the power to influence and change students' lives".

Online articles, such as one from *studyplaces.com*, have pointed to the IT industry as being "typically recession-proof" and having the most potential for growth.

Even so, Mr Yeo Joon Hong, 49, a senior systems analyst with City Developments Limited, shares his doubts.

"I don't think that everyone within the industry is holding on to a recession-proof job.

"For those who work as software developers, these times spell trouble because there is little demand for new software," he said.

There is certain truth in the IT industry's stability for people who specialise in technical or system support, as Mr Yeo adds, "It's a skills-based job, so as long as you keep retraining yourself to keep up with technology, you would do pretty well".

However, 'recession-proof' jobs are far from smooth sailing.

Healthcare professionals spend many hours on their feet, occasionally working night shifts.

The Institute of Mental



Health also notes that teachers form a significant percentage of patients due to their high-stress work environment.

Even full-time national servicemen are not spared.

Shaun Tan, 21, an SAF trainee pilot on a 10-year bond with the air force after the completion of his training programme says, "Even as pilots, we have to do more than flying planes. We are also assigned paperwork, and to balance everything is extremely hectic".

## PASSION MORE IMPORTANT

So when the doldrums of recession kick in, does one keep running with the career you have planned your education around or do you sprint towards a more stable one?

Mr Lee says, "The most important thing is to have passion for what you do. There is no point getting a 'recession-proof' job for stability and ending up hating it".

Mr Chong Ching Liang, lecturer at the School of Interdisciplinary Studies says, "If you are visionary, you will find that the recession subjects you to the highest risk but potentially the highest returns because most people are afraid to venture into new markets.

"It all depends on how much you are willing to risk."

# Save on fares by biking to school, say some

## Nur'atqah Bte Ali

Having private transport might burn a hole in your pockets, but this might not be the case especially with the increase in bus and train fares.

Muhammad Azhar, 19, a third-year Aerospace Technology student, attained a Class 2B license last year and has been riding an Aprilia RS 125 ever since. The bike cost him about \$4,500.

Previously, Azhar had to take a feeder bus from his Woodlands home to the bus interchange, before transferring to SMRT bus service 187 to Bukit Panjang where he transfers again to bus service 184. A typical journey took him 80 minutes, and cost about \$6 both ways.

Azhar's travelling time has been shaved by 20 minutes and he spends close to \$3 a day on petrol. He spends an additional \$0.50 on Electronic Road Pricing fees each Wednesday.

"Public transport is just not worth the time and trouble," he reasons. Coursemate and fellow biker Lina

Gautama, 20, agrees. She says that she hardly got to sit when she took the bus and train to school. Now the motorcyclist, who has been riding for two years, saves about \$30 every month on transport even though she previously used the \$97 student hybrid concession pass.

Both student riders say that they will still opt for their motorcycles even if tertiary students' concessionary fares are lowered.

According to the The New Paper, deaths among motorcyclists made up about half of 214 road fatalities in 2007. In the first half of 2008, more than half of motorcyclists and pillion riders that were killed in accidents were 30 years old and below.

"My parents were very worried for me at first. I know it's unsafe but it also depends on how we keep ourselves safe on the road."

**Muhammad Azhar, 19, and Lina Gautama, 20, ride their own bikes to campus.**

**\$30**

The amount  
Lina Gautama  
saves each  
month by  
biking to  
school





# NPEOPLE THE UNNOTICED



## THE 'HOBBIT' WITH A HEART OF GOLD

**Jananitha Sri Rengarajoo**  
Guest Writer

Pathmavalli D/O S R, 60, bends to mop the remaining water on the toilet seats. She then props herself up and inspects her 'battleground'.

Satisfied, she smiles, picks up her equipment and readies to leave. Then some girls burst into the toilet, giggling, but all of this is cut short.

"Go out! Use the toilet upstairs!" she screams and waves the mop in the air. The students walk out,

with a look of fear mixed with anger drawn across their faces.

It is just another day for the infamous fierce cleaner of the Convention Centre. Students like Prashant Ashoka, 21, a final-year Mass Communication student, refer to Pathmavalli as the "hobbit who terrifies us".

Some may think she is plain mean as she raps on their cubicle doors incessantly, but she says she just wants to make sure that people do not smoke in cubicles.

When it comes to Pathmavalli, there is more than just what

meets the eye. She does not look her age, and her journey has hardly been etched on her skin. Yet Pathmavalli says she has no secret to her youthful looks. "I don't do anything. Maybe it's in the genes," she says, as she eats her noodles in the canteen.

Her voice sounds naturally loud and coarse, so students think that she shouts all the time.

She leaves this reporter to grab hot tea and hurries back.

Pathmavalli has worked for a total of 15 years; first as a carpark supervisor, then a cashier and as a

security guard. I can't stay in one job for too long. It gets boring."

Then she came to the polytechnic to be a cleaner. "This is my fourth year. Not easy you know, not easy."

Pathmavalli has withstood bullying from the students, and she recollects the time a student slammed the door on her finger. "My nail came out. It was so painful. But I cannot scold them."

"The students don't understand that when the floor gets wet, it gets slippery. If they fall, I am afraid they may get into a coma. I fell a few times myself," she

says, showing this reporter the bruises on her arms. Pathmavalli also broke her kneecap on the job.

She says she has to shout because some students do not bother even if she tells them nicely. "But it's only out of concern," she says.

"You can always enjoy later. Smoke in the toilet *la*, have sex in the toilet *la*. Later on how? Young people don't understand. Studying is very important."

As she sips on her tea, Pathmavalli leans forward to look at a group of students sitting at the next table, laughing together.



# NPEOPLE

## BEHIND THE SCENES

### They called me 'Crab'

Boo Jian Wen Jeremy

The cleaner flits silently through the crowd, invisible. He does not speak much but his deformed, fused fingers tell its own tale of hardship and loneliness.

It was a story that started when Mr Muhammad Yusof bin Subalil, 42, was born. "My mother told me that it's because my father used to catch birds," he says. "We don't know what it is."

Refusing to enrol him into schools for people with disabilities, his mother begged the principal of the now-defunct Permaisura Primary School to take him in. Yusof had to first learn how to write with his fused fingers. Later, a teacher taught him how to draw.

He was called names. "Because of my hands, some called me Crab," he says. "But I know they were only joking. They don't know what it's like to be a disabled."

He started working after graduating from primary school, and took on cleaning jobs first at a hospital, then at petrol kiosks, hotels, and factories, before meeting his current manager, Mr Bobby Tan, six years ago.

"I didn't know if he could cope at first," says Bobby, 36. "But even though Yusof is disabled, he does everything a person without disabilities can."

Yusof operates high-pressure water jets, and scales scaffolding to wash building exteriors, among other regular cleaning duties.

As Yusof talks more about Bobby, it becomes clear

that he shares more than a superior-subordinate relationship with the latter: a tight friendship. "I ask him for help if I've got problems. And he'll tell me about his," says Yusof.

His friendship with Bobby seems to be cherished relief in a lonesome life. Yusof's father died in 1990. His mother died 10 years after. He now lives with his sister in Jurong East.

"I work because I don't want to think too much. I don't want to think about Hari Raya or about my loneliness," he says.

Yusof wakes every morning at 6.30 am. He goes home either at 6 pm or 11 pm, depending on whether he works overtime. Money is a constant worry, Yusof says. He earns \$900 a month. If he works overtime, he earns \$300 more.

The only time he smiles during the interview is when he recalls being a band singer when he was 25. His band ended up being the champions in a 1998 heavy metal band competition, Clash of the Bands.

"We didn't want to compete but I asked my band members to try," Yusof says. "I won the Best Vocalist award even though I was disabled."

He adds as an afterthought, "Don't think that you can't do it just because you're disabled. You can still do what others can."



NPT / YEO KAI WEN



Pathmavalli is the sole cleaner in charge of all the toilets at the Convention Centre. She works weekdays from 6 am to 4 pm. "By starting early, I can rest early and spend time with my husband," she says. Before cleaning the toilets in the mornings, she goes to her storeroom where she keeps a portrait of Lord Ganesha for spiritual protection. Then she puts some holy ash on the portrait and on her forehead to keep her safe through the day.

PHOTO ESSAY BY YEO KAI WEN





Connect the dots

REALLY SUPER

Really Super Verbal Party

ZOUK

SAT 28 FEB

\$10 TICKETS

Get verbal and spread the news!  
\$10 tickets to Zouk on Sat 28 Feb 2009!  
Super Mambo Jambo grooves!

**Get connected at a Really Super Verbal Party!**

For more information, connect to <http://reallysuperverbalparty.blogspot.com>



Send your interesting photographs to [nptribune@gmail.com](mailto:nptribune@gmail.com)**NPEOPLE****HOW TO**

# 5 TIPS FOR GOOD MACRO PHOTOGRAPHY

Yeo Kai Wen, the npTribune Photo Editor, shares some ways to take photos of insects up close

**1. USE A TRIPOD**

Besides subject movement, camera shake might affect your photos. Macro lenses magnify, and up the chances of a shaky shot.

**2. CONSIDER A FLASH UNIT**

Bouncing off light from an external flash unit with a soft box can freeze action and bring out the compound eyes of insects.

**3. TRACK DEPTH-OF-FIELD**

Focus on the most important part of your subject. Keep your focus sharp by not moving your camera too much after metering a subject.

**4. GIVE SUBJECTS SPACE**

Insects are scared of us, so being familiar with your camera dials means you don't need to fiddle too much to get settings right.

**5. PLAY WITH LIGHT**

Makeshift reflectors, and D-I-Y softboxes can help to light up your subject with natural light. Don't be afraid to experiment.

Joel Tang, second-year Accountancy student:

While on a field trip with Mr Peter Yeo, our Exploring Photography lecturer, I noticed an ant feasting on bird droppings. The class gathered around for photographs.



Jerry Gay, second-year Business IT student:

On the same trip, I spotted this spider (extreme right) with two missing legs making a cocoon of an ant not much larger than itself.



Want to pamper  
your nails without  
bursting your wallet?

Show us YOUR beautifully painted/decorated nails and stand a chance to win up to \$50 Polished Divas vouchers\*!

Send a photo of your nails to [contest.tribune@gmail.com](mailto:contest.tribune@gmail.com) together with your name, I/C number and contact number.

Contest closes on 27 Feb 2009!

\*Terms & Conditions apply

Manicure • Pedicure • Nail Extensions • Nail Repair • Nail Art • Manicure Parties • Gift Cards

BUCK  
1279 VICTORIA STREET  
BUCK VILLAGE (ABOVE REEFERACE)  
SINGAPORE 188076

HOLLAND  
75 PALM JELAPU MALL  
CLUBSIDE GARDENS  
SINGAPORE 220344

Appointment 6379 7648 Email: [enquiries@polisheddivas.com.sg](mailto:enquiries@polisheddivas.com.sg)  
[WWW.POLISHED-DIVAS.COM.SG](http://WWW.POLISHED-DIVAS.COM.SG)



Polished Divas  
nail lounge





# New Menu Items!

Simply write the dish number and hand it to the counter to order!

032 Pan Fried Guo Tia with Ginger  
036 Homemade Mini Ngo Hiang  
046 Fish Burger  
047 Beef Burger  
054 Grilled Unagi Rice Set  
055 Fish Tempura Rice Set  
063 Korean Bulgoghi Beef Ramen  
064 Fried Seafood Ramen  
075 Thai Pineapple Rice  
076 Curry Vegetable Rice

083 Nonya Lotong  
084 Chicken Satay with Rice Set  
085 Mutton Satay with Rice Set  
091 Beef Mui Fun  
092 XO Seafood Fried Rice  
095 Seafood Beehoon Goreng  
098 Seafood Beehoon Soup  
105 Fried Dried Beef Horfun  
106 Beef Ball Kway Teoh Soup  
107 Mee Siam Special

## FREE DESSERT

with purchase of any

## Japanese Meal + Drink

### Terms & Conditions

Offer valid till 28th Feb 2009. None exchangeable of complimentary items. Valid for one-time use only. Present this coupon when ordering. Members are entitled to additional 20% discount.

## FREE SOUP OF THE DAY

with purchase of any

## Western Meal + Drink

### Terms & Conditions

Offer valid till 28th Feb 2009. None exchangeable of complimentary items. Valid for one-time use only. Present this coupon when ordering. Members are entitled to additional 20% discount.

Members are  
entitled to  
additional  
20% discount  
when using  
coupons!

Visit Pines Cafe today!  
535 Clementi Road  
Blk 75 Ngee Ann Polytechnic Alumni  
Tel: 6468 4060 Fax: 6468 1581  
Email: pines\_na\_alumni@singnet.com.sg



\*Buffet Lunch/Dinner  
\*Hi Tea  
\*Seminars/Conferences

In-House Birthday Party, Poolside Party, BBQ Party, etc.  
Please contact us for your catering needs.  
Enjoy special discount for in-house catering.  
**YOUR COMPLETE CATERING SOLUTIONS.**



**Discover...**  
new horizons on your journey of knowledge



Hi, I am **Anna Chen** from Singapore. I graduated with a **Bachelor of Psychology** in 2006. Now I am a candidate for JCU's **Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)** and working as a counselor at the same time.

Hi, I am **Amanda** and am currently a **Psychology honours** student.



Hi I am **Shelley** from China. I am now pursuing the **Bachelor of Business** Double Majors in International Business and Marketing.



Hi, my name is **Katarina Waldbert**. I am from Sweden and currently I am pursuing the **Bachelor of Business**.

Hi, my name is **Francesca Fiorendi**. I am Italian, and I am taking the **Bachelor of Business**.



Hello, my name is **Aysen Korucu**. I am actually from Turkey but I grew up in Germany and I am taking the **Bachelor of Business**.

### Programs Available:

- **Bachelor of Business** (International Business)
  - **Bachelor of Business** (Hospitality Management)
  - **Bachelor of Business** (Tourism Management)
  - **Bachelor of Business** (Marketing)
  - **Bachelor of Business** (Management & Entrepreneurship)
- ~ Double Major options for Bachelor of Business available

### • Bachelor of Information Technology

- **Bachelor of Arts (Psychology)**
- **Bachelor of Psychology (4-year sequence)\***
- **Bachelor of Psychology (Honours)\***

\* The above Psychology courses are accredited by the Australian Psychology Accreditation Council (APAC)

**Applications  
are now open  
for all intakes  
(full-time &  
part-time)**

For more details, please call our friendly Education Officers

**JCU Singapore Campus**  
600 Upper Thomson Road  
Singapore 574421  
Main: (65) 6576 6833  
Fax: (65) 6455 2833  
Email: [enquiries@jcu.edu.sg](mailto:enquiries@jcu.edu.sg)  
Hotline: (65) 8222 6833

For more information, please visit  
[www.jcu.edu.sg](http://www.jcu.edu.sg)







Tell us about alumnus everyone should know about: nptribune@gmail.com

NPEOPLE

# THE CANDY MAN WITH A STICKY JOB

Former Citibank employee Jamie Lim quits his job as he takes the plunge—all to open a little rock candy shop at The Central

**Kyle Leslie Sim**

Amid the economic gloom, the last thing you would expect anyone to do in times like these is to quit their day job to open a candy shop.

Try telling that to Mr Jamie Lim, 30, who along with his wife Kristin, 29, are the proud owners of the Australian rock candy franchise Sticky.

A former student here, Jamie graduated in 1997 with a Diploma in Electrical Engineering. It was here that he made his first foray into entrepreneurship selling computers he put together for “a couple thousand a month”.

He went on to the University of Portsmouth in England where he studied Computer Science.

Upon graduation, he worked at Canon as an IT specialist, followed by a stint at The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation before finally ending up at Citibank.

“Working at these big companies gave me the experience I needed to start my own business. I learned from them and from the mistakes I made,” says Jamie.

“Sticky is a huge investment”, says Jamie, “we put in \$200,000 for the franchise, rental and renovation of the store.”

Jamie and Kristin are confident that their venture will succeed.

The transition of jobs might seem odd to many, but Jamie and Kristin are taking it in their stride.

Kristin says that they came to know of Sticky while looking for wedding gifts. They requested for samples, and loved it so much they felt that Sticky had immense potential to succeed in Asia.

To secure the franchise, the couple filled out a 20-page questionnaire and upon approval, they underwent a two-month training programme in Australia to become certified confectioners.

The final test of which was where they had to do an Obi Wan Kenobi and make an entire batch of rock candy from scratch, completely blindfolded.

Life, according to Jamie who is also a huge fan of poker, is a gamble—not a surprising sentiment given the huge risk he has taken by venturing into candy making.

“As with any gamble, there is risk involved. However, if it is a calculated gamble, and if you have weighed all the options and probabilities, then the chances of getting burnt are significantly lower.”

But Jamie is not fazed by the challenges ahead despite the piles of paperwork and hard work.

“I’m all-in on this hand, but I’ve got the ace in the hole”.

Just don’t tell him he has to sell 22,471 bags of candies to breakeven.

**Sticky is located at the basement level of The Central. Spend more than \$15 on candies at Sticky in February and get a free candy surprise. Flash your student or staff card to enjoy this offer.**



NPT / YEO KAI WEN

# FOR YOUTHS



theurbanwire.com  
current ●●● connected

PEOPLE • FILM + TV • MUSIC • GADGETS + GAMING • EVENTS • FOOD • FASHION • SPORTS • NIGHTLIFE • BOOKS



# NPEOPLE

## Top CET Academy grad pockets second diploma

Lau Liang Tong

Three years ago, Mr Tan Hooi Soon, sole breadwinner of a family of five, chose Ngee Ann's Continuing Education & Training Academy (CET) as the point of embarkment for his second diploma, putting his family's relationship in jeopardy as he juggled his own belief in life-long learning, work and family.

Three years later, now 48, he sits firmly on his job as Senior Technical Officer at Public Utilities Board (PUB) with a 10 percent pay increase, his family is still as tight-knitted and he will receive PUB's award for most outstanding academic performance for his Diploma in Water Technology, having scored 23 distinctions.

It started with a thought to increase his contribution to PUB, and since they sponsor worker upgrades, Mr Tan seized the opportunity.

"I graduated from my diploma in Informatics (IT) with distinctions in 2000, but the working environment changes and improves drastically everyday. So I decided to take my second diploma".

He took two years to convince his wife in support his decision. "I needed her approval because the weight of the family would fall on her shoulders if I took up the course. She had to be ready".

Fortunately, his wife agreed.

While Mr Tan has gained knowledge from his years of working experiences, there are limitations, as he does not have a solid foundation in terms of theological practices. Thus, he decided to enrol in the course.

His will to learn is spurred not by a desire to climb the corporate ladder, but rather, to contribute to the company and to inspire as well as motivate his children.

After the course of study, in which, other than knowing his job better, he managed to impart the importance of education into the minds of his children.

His eldest daughter, Tan Mui Hua, 22, final-year undergraduate at National University of Singapore, majoring in Chemistry, is impressed by her father's undying passion to improve.

She says, "I realised that in terms of studying, age doesn't matter, although there might be an impact on memory. What matters is the effort invested".

Mui Hua tries to help her father by making amendments to his grammatical errors but she says, "his presentation and project skills far exceed mine".

She also mentions how her mother, Madam Neo Geok Lian, 47, a housewife, provided the much-needed support for her father. Mr Tan added, "My wife puts in effort to cook soups that



Mr Tan Hooi Soon with his wife, Madam Neo Geok Lim, and their children at the CET Academy Graduation Day.

*"I needed her approval because the weight of the family would fall on her shoulders if I took up the course; she had to be ready."*

- Mr Tan Hooi Soon, 48, Senior Technical Officer

can help nourish my health, especially during critical exam periods".

Youngest son, Tan Bai Fong, 17, a junior college student, joins his father in the chorus of constant knowledge saying, "My father always tells

us that knowledge is power."

Bai Fong gives his best as a son by not stirring up trouble or playing computer games to "maintain a conducive studying environment at home".

Bai Fong adds that this life-

long learning path that his father has chosen to take has made an impact in his life.

He says, "Right now studying is my biggest priority. I should never complain because it really is a blessing."

## ADFP student tackles incest and homelessness

Ong Chong Ern

He sat spellbound as the credits began to roll on a silver screen that would someday be his canvas.

Since he was little, Loke Shen Fai dreamt of directing his own award-winning blockbuster.

Now 26, Shen Fai has a following on Youtube. One of his videos, titled 'My Singapore My Home', led him to be interviewed by ChannelNewsAsia.

That slightly controversial video portrays the plight of homeless people in Singapore.

The second-year Advanced Diploma for Film Production (ADFP) student finished filming an even more controversial film on Dec. 26 last year—an incestuous story titled Torn.

Shen Fai in person is different from Shen Fai the director.

"He does not put on airs," says Chong Cai Cang, 32, Torn's co-producer. "He talks to you like a friend would." When he is directing, though, he resembles a possessed man.

On the shoot for Torn, he maintained a constant level of energy despite gruelling night shoots.

"You can see the effort Shen Fai puts into rehearsals and his attention to detail," says Ron Nguyen, 33, Torn's assistant director.

He measures success by staying faithful to his vision. "You've got to stay true to your personal vision, even if people say it's lousy," he said, "I need to show people my universe, my world."

"As a director, I'm God. I can have lightning strike down a character if I'm not happy. What can anyone do about that?" he laughed.

Where does he draw his ideas?

"I keep my eyes peeled at MRT stations, where lots of weird things happen. I can copy from novels and movies, but it'll be nowhere near the originality of real life," he says.

When Shen Fai criticises a film, it is because it lacks passion.



Shen Fai (centre) briefs his cast and crew during a shoot for his latest film, Torn, a story about an incestuous story between a brother and sister.

"You should never shoot anything that's not true to your own feelings. I believe in filming for passion.

"Some movies are like a religious experience. Movies can be a powerful medium for change. They will influence people on a visceral level."



 Do you meditate? Share your experience at [nptribune.theurbanwire.com](http://nptribune.theurbanwire.com)

**NPEOPLE**

# SITTING STILL TO BEAT STRESS GAINS POPULARITY WITH STUDENTS

**Lau Liang Tong**

Forget Facebook, instant messaging or pending projects deadlines.

"Meditation helps me to let go of certain issues and feelings. It helps me concentrate on the positive side of things," says Thi Thi Khaing, 19, a final-year Civil and Environmental Engineering student. She is also President of the Buddhist Society.

She also mentions that meditation does not need to have any religious aims.

Thi Thi started meditation when she was six, but only returned to it a couple of years ago. She says that she used to be short-tempered, but now she "hardly sees a reason to flare up".

Madam Goretti Lee, 49, a therapist for children with her own private practice, says, "Focusing on breathing helps to clear negative thoughts and feelings, entering a state of inner peace. It calms the mind and increase concentration".

"People react differently in situations, some chew nails and some have nervous ticks. By meditating consistently, they can use it as a

form of retreat when stressed".

Australian Kelsang Chowang, 33, resident teacher at the Odiyana Buddhist Meditation Society, says, "Meditation is a practical way to overcome stress and anxiety. It is concentrating on a virtuous object, like patience, so that we become familiar with it and in time we change our mindset and increase our inner peace.

"For example, having realised the importance of patience, when anger arises in our minds, we can apply patience as an antidote and recognise the disadvantages of anger."

Thi Thi says that she practises two kinds of meditation once a week either at home or at the Buddha Dhamma Mandala Society:

"Anapana sati", Mindfulness of Breathing, which is done by clearing your mind and counting breaths, and "Metta bhavava", Loving Kindness meditation, which channels your energy into positive thoughts for yourself and the people around you.

Oh Shi Hui, 19, a final-year Quality Management and

Engineering student, practises the Mindfulness of Breathing meditation technique thrice a week. "Meditation is like my hobby to keep myself calm and organised."

Shi Hui's mother, Madam Linda Chua, 45, part-time waitress, says, "There is no disadvantage in practicing meditation unless you go overboard and deprive yourself of essentials like food and water. As long as it gives her a positive-mindset, her father and I are supportive."

Both Thi Thi and Shi Hui have been encouraging friends around them to practise meditation.

Lau Han Yang, 19, final-year Information Technology student, one of the top

students in his course, is considering meditation for mental wellness.

"It seems it can help with self-discovery, which translates to better studying methods," he says.

Tan Jun Long, 18, first-year Electronics, Computer, Communications Engineering student from Nanyang Polytechnic, agrees.

The sports enthusiast says, "Meditation can help people relax, and thereafter, have better concentration for studying or sports."



*"Meditation is a practical way to overcome stress and anxiety."*

**hype**

**READ IT, NEED IT! OUT NOW!**  
[theurbanwire.com/hype](http://theurbanwire.com/hype)





# The world's MOST POPULAR GAME. NOW ONLINE.

**FREE  
TO PLAY**

**Win  
cash &  
prizes!**



## FIFA ONLINE 2



© 2005 FIFA

### GET YOUR FREE GAME:



**Download @**  
**www.EAsportsFIFAonline2.com**



**Collect\*\* from**  
**Comics Connection outlets & IAHGames iCafe @ Funan**

\* Find out more details at our website.  
\*\* While stocks last.



#### Send a SMS

<Play4Free> <NP> <Name> <Address>  
<E-Mail> to 79000 to get a free game DVD\*\*  
delivered to your mailbox.

Example: Play4Free NP John Ong Blk 123 Tanjong  
Pagar #01-234 Spore 123456 johnong@hotmail.com

#### Terms & Conditions

Each SMS costs \$1.50 and will be charged to your mobile phone bill. Singtel, M1  
and Starhub postpaid subscribers, as well as M1 prepaid customers, are welcome.  
SMS service provider: I-POP Networks Pte Ltd (Customer Service Hotline: 6236  
6828 - available during office hours)

EA SPORTS FIFA Online 2 © 2007 Electronic Arts Inc. All Rights Reserved. Certain components © 2007 Neowiz Corporation. All Rights Reserved. EA, EA SPORTS and the EA SPORTS logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of Electronic Arts Inc. in the U.S. and/or other countries. Official FIFA licensed product. © The FIFA Brand OLP Logo is a copyright and trademark of FIFA. All rights reserved. \* Manufactured under license by Electronic Arts Inc. Player names and likenesses used under license from The International Federation of Professional Footballers (FIFPro), national teams, clubs, and/or leagues. © 2007 MLS. MLS, the MLS logo, Major League Soccer and MLS team identifications are proprietary rights of Major League Soccer, LLC. All rights reserved. All sponsored products, company names, brand names, trademarks and logos are the property of their respective owners.





## BREAKING BARRIERS

# 'I feel like a cyborg'

Born hearing-impaired, she made sure she did not lose out at school by working doubly hard at home. Today she hears with a hearing implant directly connected to her brain

Ong Chong Ern

**S**HE'S not your typical student. No iPod earphones glued to her ears, no movies without subtitles, no ring tones on her cell phone.

For Ginny Ong, 21, it's all silence.

Even though the third-year Information Technology student was born deaf, she is determined not to let her disability become a liability.

She finds inspiration in Mr Adrian Yap, the co-winner of the Amazing Race Asia, who is also deaf. "Adrian fought all the way to the top in the Amazing Race despite his deafness. If he can do it, so can I," says Ginny.

As if to affirm this, the third-year Information Technology student recently won the Outstanding Deaf Student award for the International Day of the Deaf, on Sep. 20 last year.

She had also recently helped publish a book on sign language for the Deaf, titled Resource Book of Religious Sign Language.

In the largely picture-based book published by Wesley Methodist Church in September, Ginny was the model for all the different sign gestures demonstrated.

She is determined to succeed no matter what life throws at her. But school remains an uphill struggle for people like her.

## THE PEOPLE WHO HELPED

Besides facing obvious disadvantages in class, the hearing-impaired must also rely on others.

"Even with helpful friends, a deaf person will always be one step behind others," says Tony Seet, 19, a third-year Business Accountancy student, member of the Hearing-Impaired Club.

"They've got to rely on second-hand info. It's even worse if no one's willing to help them."

Ginny admits it is tough to cope academically, "I can't catch up with the others in class. So I've got to do twice the amount of preparation at home."

Jeanne Koh, 17, a first-year Nursing student says, "People are sympathetic, but they don't know how to help."

Ginny feels that there are a few things that the polytechnic can do to help.

"I wish the school could provide interpreters for the deaf in lectures so that we can understand better. Even better, note-takers like in universities," says Ginny.

## HOW SHE STARTED

Ginny, the eldest of four siblings, learnt to lipread when she interacted with fellow students at the Canossian School for the Hearing (CSH).

Undeterred by her disability, she moved to the mainstream course at St. Anthony's Canossian Primary School when she was eight.

She found the transition tough as there were 40 students in the mainstream class compared to the 8 students in CSH.

She was reluctant to mix, but interacting with hearing students gave her confidence..

"I faced lots of hurdles. But I pulled through, thanks to my parents and friends who've been encouraging me since young," she says.

## CYBORG GIRL

Technology helped.

She has a greater sense of sound after an electronic device was implanted into her brain.

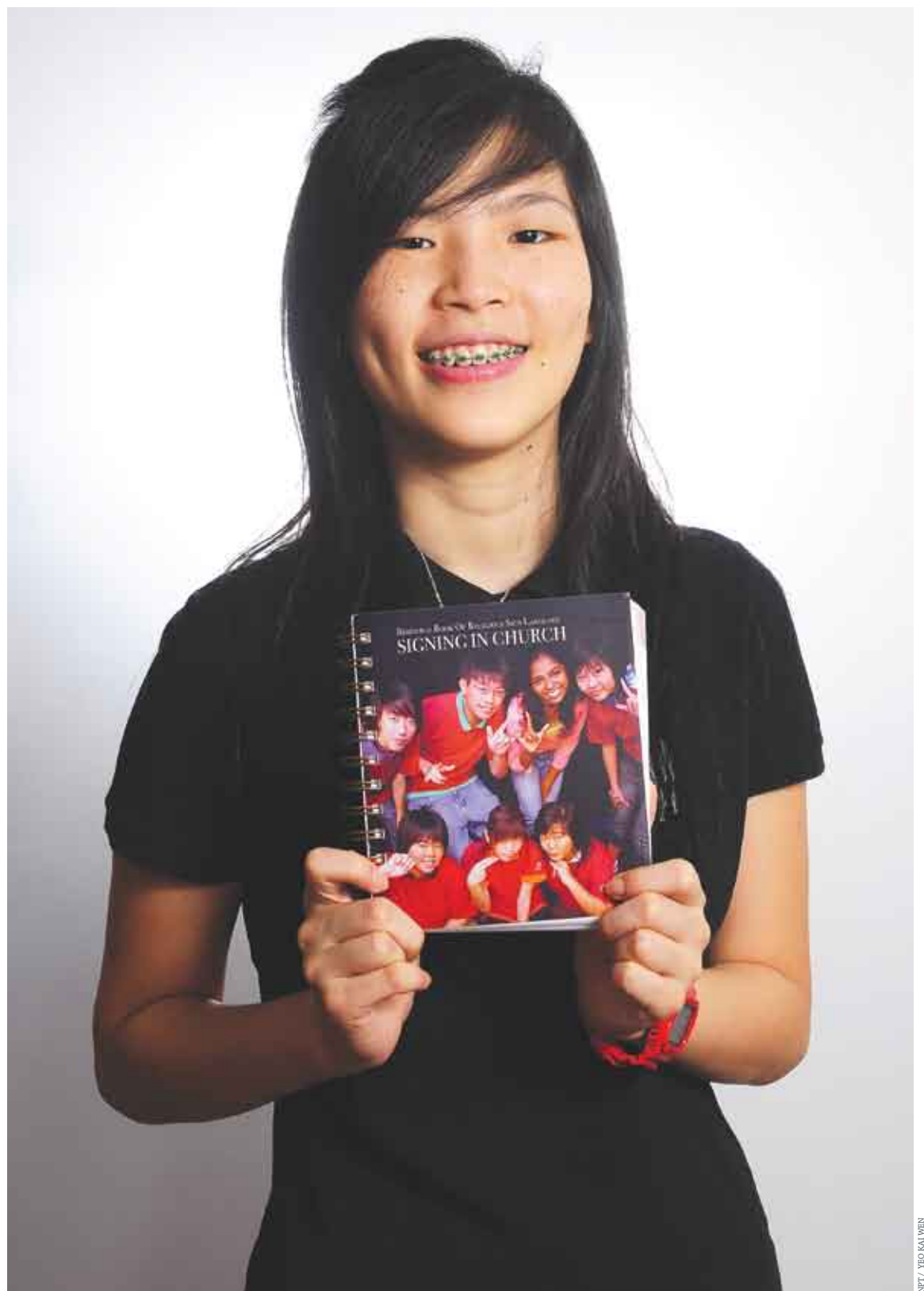
"I feel like a cyborg," she said referring to her \$40,000 cochlear hearing implants, which directly stimulate her auditory nerves.

While it does not cure deafness, it helps her hear things she never thought possible.

"I never realised," she says, "how much I loved to hear birds chirping."

Though this reporter felt awkward talking to her about her disability, her disarming smile and affable presence dissipated the tension immediately.

She remains unyieldingly ambitious. "I hope I will achieve big goals and do what others can do. Deaf people shouldn't be afraid of their disability."



Ginny Ong, 21, third-year Information Technology student, with the picture-based sign language book she helped publish at church last year.

*"I never realised how much I loved to hear birds chirping."*







Have your say on our website: [nptribune.theurbanwire.com](http://nptribune.theurbanwire.com)

## SPORTS

## OPINION

Three NSMen lost their lives in 2008 after collapsing during training activities. All three were polytechnic graduates. Many seem to have neglected their fitness

# Why are polytechnic students so unfit?



Daryll Nanayakara

Last November, my friends and I were sent for a reality check when we did our National Physical Fitness Award (Napfa) test.

We crunched our tummies to complete as many sit-ups as we could and then put our lungs to the test as we ran 2.4 kilometres as fast as we could.

All that in order to obtain either a Gold or Silver, which would help shave off two months of National Service.

I crossed the finish line and retreated to the sidelines of the track watching the others go through the hell I had just been through.

What I observed shocked me.

For every student who completed the run in gold-medal timing (just over 10 minutes, I believe), 10 others strolled past the passing mark of 13 minutes.

Similarly, for every student who bothered to run the distance, at least 15 others chose to walk instead.

And they walked with huge smiles of accomplishment on their faces, as if walking a national fitness run was something to be proud of.

I sat at the track in disbelief.

The New Paper (TNP) reported in June last year that seven out of 10 polytechnic students live a "physically inactive lifestyle".

That same month, two National Servicemen died during training. One during a jungle orientation exercise in Brunei, while the other, during a 2-kilometre walk at Pulau Tekong.

Barely three months later, a third soldier died doing chin-ups at his camp.

The trio were "former students at polytechnics where physical activities are not compulsory," The Straits Times reported in October last year.

The tragic loss of three young soldiers sparked off a national debate on whether polytechnics ought to implement compulsory physical education, akin to Junior Colleges.

## POLYS DOING THEIR PART

It is a sad reality that sports and exercise take a back seat for a majority of polytechnic students. Most of them throw up excuses such as a lack of time.

Granted. But for the fitness level among our polytechnics to increase, everyone has to play their part.

Polytechnics are already doing theirs.

Last year, TNP carried a report on how the

polytechnics were doing their bit to encourage their students to engage in sports.

This year, three polytechnics—Republic, Temasek and Ngee Ann—took their game (pun intended) one step further by adding more fitness programmes to their curriculum.

They seem to have heeded then-Minister for Education

Tharman Shanmugaratnam's call in 2005 to have "more students play sports regardless of whether they have the talent."

## NOW FOR YOUR PART

Now it's time for the students to do their part in keeping fit.

I make it a point to run at least four times a week in order to stay fit and to de-stress when

the going gets really tough.

I understand that it isn't easy to get that point across to students, especially if sports has not been part of their lives since secondary school.

What I'm trying to say is: Go out, have some fun, and keep fit.

Because, really, walking the 2.4 kilometre test because you are unable to run is a shame.



## 3 ways to submit your entries:



### Vodcast

Film your very own "Ole!" moments and share them with us (no longer than 1 min)!

(Accepting in formats of .mpeg, .mpg, .mov, .avi)



### Podcast

Record down what "Ole!" means to you (no longer than 1 min).

(Accepting in formats of .wma, .mp3)



### Photograph

Show us your best "Ole!" picture!

(Accepting in formats of .gif, .jpg, .png, .tiff)

## How to take part:

1. Log on to [www.EAsportsFIFAonline2.com](http://www.EAsportsFIFAonline2.com) to register for a FIFA Online 2 (FOL2) account
2. Submit your entry (on what "Ole!" means to you), along with your name, contact number, and FOL2 user ID to [cris.agency@gmail.com](mailto:cris.agency@gmail.com)

## Terms & Conditions:

- Contest ends 22 March, 2009
- Multiple entries accepted
- Winners will be notified by phone & email
- Prizes are non-exchangeable for cash
- Prizes are limited to one per winner
- Management reserves the right to change the prizes without prior notice



Main Organiser

THE AGENCY  
ADVERTISING & PUBLICITY

Official Sponsor







# Water polo boys beat Republic 11-6 in POL-ITE with ACS spirit

**Kenneth Cheong**

In the past, life for Ong Chen Tat, 21, used to revolve around basketballs, hoops, and a running court.

Eight years on, these have made way for a pool and a larger rectangular goalpost. The ball still remains, albeit a different kind, and in different colours.

It is a decision the final-year Business Studies student and Captain of the Water Polo Club says he "never regretted".

He led a team of eight former Anglo-Chinese School (Barker Road) boys to a second consecutive gold medal in the recent POL-ITE games held from Oct. 20 to 24. They beat rivals Republic Polytechnic (RP) in the finals 11-6.

"I'm proud that we put in the effort to train hard to make this possible. We feel a great sense of satisfaction," he says.

Being the top contender for the title this season, the team faced relentless opposition from other schools.

## NATIONAL THREAT

Two national players, Shaun Ong, 20, along with Benjamin Tan, 19, were fielded by RP in the finals held at Singapore Polytechnic. The duo proved intimidating to our boys in blue. It looked to be anyone's game as Ngee Ann barely edged out RP 3-2 in the first quarter.

However, the strategy of marking these two key players, one of

which Chen Tat was assigned to take on, started showing its effectiveness after the break.

The two national players, whom Chen Tat previously played with and against, began to lose focus under continued pressure.

The team capitalised on their blunders and converted counter-attacking opportunities. By the end of the third quarter, the game looked set at 11-5.

"We played exceptionally well during the match. The game plan was well executed. We didn't give up even when things got really rough," says Royce Tang, 19, a second-year Electrical Engineering student.

## SPECIAL BOND

Chen Tat attributes the double dose of success to this special bond among the ACS (Barker) players "right from the start". It is this bond that inspires even his juniors from his alma mater to join the club upon their graduation.

"Being an ACS boy helped me gel with my teammates because we share the same background," says Royce, who served the role of providing cover and setting up defence in the match against RP.

It was not all smiles during every other training session though. Royce says their tempers do tend to flare up occasionally.

"Sometimes it's difficult having to be stern," says coach-cum-player Bryon Quek, 20, a final-year Multimedia &



Royce Tang, 19, Ong Chen Tat, 21, and Chng Bing Han, 19, at their first training session after the POL-ITE Games.

*"Being an ACS boy helped me gel with my teammates because we share the same background."*

- Royce Tang, 19, second-year Electrical Engineering student

Animation student who has been coaching the team since his first year here. "But without discipline, the team will be disorganised."

However, the team does not hold grudges. "What happens in the

pool stays in the pool," they say.

They train three times weekly. A typical session involves swimming two kilometres, followed by sprinting, and ball handling. They end with a practice game.

"Without the pressure, one can't step up to meet the expectations. Sacrifices have to be made, especially when it's in-season, but when it's not, I try to spend time with family and friends," he says.

## DRAGONS ROW IN WRONG LANE BUT SNAG MEDALS

**Daryll Nanayakara**

They failed to make it to the finals.

But the Ngee Ann Dragon Boat Club made up for it by snagging a gold and bronze in National Championship category at the 26th Singapore River Regatta 2008.

The two-day event saw hundreds of dragon boaters and enthusiasts at Raffles Place to compete in the 300m races.

The 20-crew mixed team sliced through the waters, clocking in first at 1:30:78. They narrowly beat Nanyang Polytechnic by less than a quarter of a second.

Despite coming in earlier at 1:26:93, the other men's team secured a third-place finishing for a different final of the same category.

The medals made up for the team's disappointing showing at the heats for the Tertiary Category when two of the

womens' boats were disqualified for rowing in the wrong lane.

The captain of the girls' teams, Phin Lee, 19, a final-year Molecular Biotechnology student praised her girls' efforts despite the mistake.

She says, "We made a costly error but our performance is a leap from previous years."

She explains, "We used to be more than a boat's length behind champions Republic Polytechnic. This year, we closed the gap."

## 1<sup>ST</sup> GOLD FOR WOMEN'S FENCING

**Raffles Invites** - The women's foil fencing team from the Fencing Club made its presence felt with its first tournament win at the Raffles Invites, held at Raffles Junior College from Dec. 18 to 21 last year.

Women's foil team captain, Andra Chua, 18, a second-year Mass Communication student said, "It was a very unexpected win, and I'm very proud of my juniors. They are less experienced, but kept their cool."

In the second round of direct eliminations, the fencers came up against the top-ranked team, Absolute Fencing Club.

It was a close match that came down to one point, scored by Andra herself for a winning score of 45 - 44.

The team went on to beat Blade Club 45 - 39 in the semi-finals and beat Raffles Girls' School 41 - 37 in the finals to take gold.

-JOSHUA TAN