

X!capade: Showcasing NP's Best

The outdoor event at Ngee Ann City Civic Plaza was the biggest showcase of talents in Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) 43 years of the history. G.DINESH KUMAR reports.



POWER PACKED PERFORMANCE: Members of the public were treated to spectacular performances by NP's full spectrum of talents. (Pictures Courtesy of Chan Gent Ho and Low Yujin)

Staged at the large open space in front of Takashimaya Shopping Centre, X!capade was held on the first weekend of 2006 as NP's chance to show Singapore how an education here offered "that something X'tra" as the school's tagline goes.

Talking about the rationale behind X!capade, deputy principal Mr Tan Hang Cheong, who helmed the project, reasoned that the event is an excellent platform to showcase NP's very best since "we have the whole spectrum of talents".

He added, "It's not so much about publicising our courses but it's more about branding, showing that Ngee Ann is vibrant and full of energy."

There was some apprehension initially about being able to meet the demands of an Orchard Road crowd, he acknowledged, but when a poll revealed that staff were confident about the event and prepared to give their best, the school plunged headlong into the project after the prime venue, sponsored by

Ngee Ann City, was secured.

The showcase, which cost NP \$10,000 to \$15,000, saw a great deal of participation from departments such as the Corporate Communications Office and Student Development & Alumni Relations Office (SDAR) as well as NP students themselves.

Mr Tan was extremely satisfied with the outcome, adding, "There was an unintended benefit in that it gave us an opportunity to work together, team spirit was very high."

At the showcase, students and alumni members took turns to deliver power-packed performances back to back. Visitors were entertained by Singapore Idol finalist Daphne Khoo, Project SuperStar finalist Derrick Hoh, The Straits Times School of Rock first runner-up soul-funk band Audio Break'Out, Parking Lot Pimp vocalist Vanessa Fernandez and professional jazz singer Alemany Fernandez even crooned for an hour of unforgettable evening jazz. Alumna radio DJ Jean Danker hosted some parts of the show with current students.

Even Sylvester Sim, Singapore Idol's first runner-up, also dropped by to say hi to his fans and sang a few tunes, making X!capade one unforgettable experience for visitors and student participants alike.

Corinne Chua, 15, a secondary three Fairfield Methodist Secondary School student who was there on Sunday said, "I really enjoyed the performances. Daphne was really good! This is the first time I'm seeing her dance and sing at the same time. But it's a pity Sylvester didn't sing much I was really looking forward to him performing."

Performances and celebrity appearances were not the only highlights of the event. Innovative games like hoop takraw – a new take on sepak takraw that requires participants to kick the sepak takraw ball into hoops hung five metres high – and beach volleyball – played in the heart of bustling Orchard road – gave visitors an opportunity to join in the fun.

Business and engineering students also shared their unique projects and experiences with the public in the form of various booths placed around the stage. At these booths guests got a taste of the latest technical wizardry available at NP by flying virtual aeroplanes with the help of a flight simulator and controlling mini-robots at the LiFo Robo Challenge. Students who had been on overseas trips also shared their unique experiences with members of the public at another booth.

Kamalraj s/o Kannan, 16, a secondary four student at Yuhua Secondary School said, "The flight simulator was pretty unique... the whole setup was very realistic."

The learning carnival atmosphere kicked up a further notch at the finals of S.M.A.R.T.S. (Space Mission: A Reciprocal Treasure Search), an original NP creation and the first online charity gameshow in Singapore, if not in the world. Besides raising \$8,000 for three charities, it rewarded players with more than \$10,000 worth of prizes sponsored by SingTel and Apple.

Wannabe DJ-Idol 2006, the annual DJ competition held by Radio Heatwave, NP's campus radio station gave secondary school students a chance to fulfil their dreams as a radio DJ in the semi-final round (refer to page 9 for the full stories).

However, poor weather on both days created a logistical nightmare. The downpour caused some performances and activities to be cancelled and soaked a large number of goodie bags meant for visitors. Nevertheless, spirits were not dampened and most of the scheduled events were held as planned.

Ms May Goh, senior manager of Marketing Communications of Corporate Communications Office at NP said, "All of us were soaking wet but you could feel the warm bonding of being part of the Ngee Ann team."

Ms Pam Hu, director of Community Relations and International Relations of the Media Development Authority (MDA) and guest-of-honour at the S.M.A.R.T.S. finals said, "This event is very powerful. It shows how students can help manage something so huge... I must say I'm very proud." ■



A NEW CREATIVE SPACE

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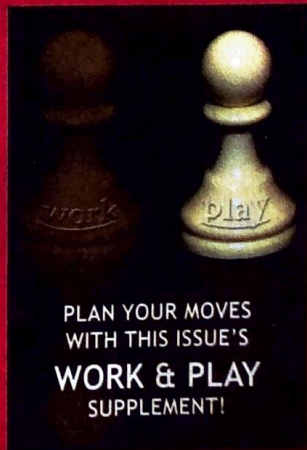
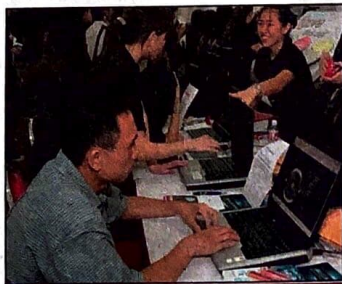
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Three Years And On...



BY G. DINESH KUMAR
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Hosting Xicapade – an outreach programme by Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) – at Ngee Ann City on 7 and 8 January was certainly a poignant moment for me. Just three years ago, I would have been at the other end, wondering whether I was truly ready to commit myself to a polytechnic and now here I am telling prospective students how awesome poly life at NP is.

And the more I talk about polytechnic life, the more I realise that it's all going to end soon, the more I realise I'm going to miss the school and most importantly the people who have crossed my path.

The blissful nights spent outside the photojournalism darkroom on the rooftop, under the stars, brooding and wondering about life and its infinite possibilities, the

mindless banter and gossip in the lecture theatres (while the lecture was on, no less)... I can't bear to leave all of that and start, horror of horrors, National Service, certainly not looking forward to that.

Looking back, I reckon my grades aren't really going to matter as much as I thought they would. It's the stupid little things, the crazy antics that we get into with our buddies, that we're going to remember, not some lecture on hydromechanics.

And no matter what institution we come from or country we belong to, the core of our education is people – the people we meet day in and day out. Our course mates, lecturers, guests, visitors, exchange students, even the cleaning lady we see every morning; these individuals define our education.

Any journalist worth his/her salt will tell you that people are a valuable source of just about anything. Be it information, inspiration or even fallacies and hate. The people we meet in life can have a great impact on us and how we respond to them determines the outcome of the interaction.


The polytechnic or tertiary stage of life may not be our most impressionable but I think it has the greatest influence on our adult lives. Most of us are at a transition point when we graduate – right at the brink

of adulthood and the working (some say, real) world. And the people we meet now and our relationships with them will affect this transition.

I'm glad to have had the awesome company in these very vibrant three years. Not just for all my good friends but for the ones I have had a great distaste for as well. To put it in perspective, in NP, I picked up smoking and then quit, received an F in one assignment and got a smashing A in another, screamed at a friend and praised the very same person – and best of all – didn't believe in a higher power and then found God and built a relationship with Him in a matter of months; all these thanks to the people I've met, the people I know and the people I treasure.

So that's it, three years of people in a nutshell. Am I going to let it all go just like that? Of course not, good people are hard to come by, and I've found a great deal of them here in NP.

To all the people I know – thank you for the wonderful three years. Let's try to keep in contact. For the rest of you, I hope you have had an awesome time, as I have. And of course not forgetting – thank you, Ngee Ann.

God bless you all! 

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Tribune, Jan to Mar 2006

Ngee Ann Polytechnic Introduces First Ever Diploma In Pharmacy



A WINNING SOLUTION: NP has introduced a Diploma in Pharmacy where subjects such as pharmaceutical sciences, chemical sciences and biomedical sciences are taught. (Picture Courtesy of NP Corporate Communications Office)

BY MOHAMAD FARHAN MOHAMAD SHAH
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In April, Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) will be accepting its first batch of 40 students in Pharmacy (PHARM), the first diploma of its kind in Singapore.

NP was given the green light ahead of other polytechnics to offer the pharmacy

course after its proposal was deemed the most appropriate by the Ministry of Education (MOE).

Director of the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT), Dr Sushila Chang, said in an NP press release, "The Pharmacy course will ride on our extensive range of facilities such as our state-of-the-art centres in molecular biosciences

and nanotechnology, as well as chemical engineering, biochemistry and biotechnology labs. In addition, we are also setting up new dispensing and pharmaceutical analysis labs specifically for the pharmacy course."

The course will help Singapore's aim to be the premier healthcare hub in the region.

The new course combines the disciplines of pharmaceutical sciences, chemical sciences and biomedical sciences. As such, training in areas like medicinal chemistry, pharmacy management and clinical biochemistry are the main pillars of the course.

According to a press release from LSCT, the expansive focus of the pharmacy course ensures that its graduates will be able to pursue a vast range of "careers in a wide range of industries".

These industries include drug discovery research, biomedical research institutes and the nutrition business.

Dr Julia Gandhi, an LSCT senior lecturer and the course manager for PHARM, said, "The course will train students to become pharmacist technologists."

According to Dr Gandhi, pharmacy is "an essential part of the healthcare team and is a well-respected profession".

Graduates from PHARM are also suitable for a variety of industrial jobs and will find a great deal of opportunities in different healthcare settings.

This includes preparing and evaluating new drugs in clinical trials and even be involved in the "sales, marketing and distribution of pharmaceuticals".

One interesting aspect about the new pharmacy course is the electives that students can choose in their final year.

They can either work on a research project or learn about "complementary medicine and traditional Chinese medicine," according to Dr Julia Gandhi.


Josef Johan Lees, 16, who has just sat for his GCE 'O' levels, said, "The module, traditional Chinese medicine, sounds really interesting because we always [take] Western medicine... It's good to explore other areas of healthcare too."

Skye Sia Kong Yew, 17, a secondary school graduate, agrees.

"Chinese medicine is a really fascinating module because the history of Chinese medicine goes back many thousands of years," he explained.


The minimum entry requirements for the course are similar to other LSCT courses.

Students must have at least a D7 grade in English and a passing grade in any other two subjects for their 'O' levels. Biology is not a requirement.

Dr Gandhi believes that the pharmacy course "will be successful" and popular with future polytechnic students when it is launched. 

Corrigendum

In the last issue of *Tribune*, for "Part-Time Diploma Gets NUS Recognition", we erroneously reported that NUS is accrediting NP's part-time Diploma in Technology (DipTech) for all its engineering degrees. The Centre for Professional Development has since clarified that the accreditation is only for NUS's part-time BTECH (Bachelor of Technology) programme, and does not discriminate against those who major in Building Services or Marine & Offshore Technology, as the article wrongly suggested. It was also the Student Services Office (SSO) and not Academic Affairs Office (AAO) that was involved in the accreditation process.

We are very sorry for the errors. 

Lessons On High Seas

Ex NP Council Chairman Donates \$500K For Student Bursaries

BY MOHAMAD FARHAN MOHAMAD SHAH
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Imagine studying on a floating classroom, with fine dining and entertainment thrown in.

Well, selected students from the new Tourism & Resort Management (TRM) course in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) got to experience just this.

They were recently attached to the SuperStar Virgo cruise ship during its three-day, two-night trip that made a stop in Kuala Lumpur in preparation for their classes next year.

The 18 students are part of a group of more than 80 first-year Business Studies (BS) students who have chosen to take the TRM course specialisation from their second year onward.

The students went on board the ship on 18 January.

To earn their places, interested students had to write an essay explaining why they wanted to go aboard and how they planned to learn during the cruise.

The school picked up the whole tab of more than \$3,000 for the 18, charged for the cruise learning experience.

TRM course manager Mr Michael Chiam Kah Min, a senior lecturer at the School of Business & Accountancy (BA), elaborated, "The cruise serves to expose the students to the service and resort industry.

"The 18 students were expected to attend workshops on the cruise and learnt an overview of the operations in areas like food & beverage (F&B), entertainment and cabin operations."

Students gained not only knowledge but hands-on experience in areas such as hospitality, retail, as well as F&B.

They were unanimous about the cruise being beneficial to their learning.

One of the 18 lucky students to be chosen, Althea Teng Shu Min, 17, revealed to *Tribune*, "It (the cruise) was good because it provided a lot of information that you don't learn in school, like how things worked behind the scenes. For example, what goes on backstage in the theatre."

The students aboard were divided into six teams of three.

"There were six different topics relating to the various departments on the ship like housekeeping, entertainment, etc. and each team had to work on one different topic," explained Lim Hui Peng, 17.

However, it was not all hard work. Students also got plenty of opportunities to enjoy themselves on board the cruise.

"We had short tours around the cruise ship and took a lot of photos. The whole trip was very fun, enjoyable and educational," Hui Peng added.

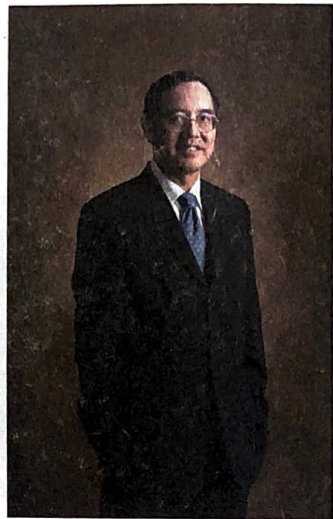
And this will surely not be the last such learning trip that TRM students can expect in the near future either.

"All first-year students will have a chance to go through this," Mr Chiam said.

Besides Star Cruises, other industry partners include companies such as M Hotel Singapore, event company HYDL and international restaurant chain, Hard Rock Café.

Mr Chiam explained that students have other different learning programmes that they can look forward to besides cruises and normal lectures and tutorials.

"There will be a lot of outdoor events, including talks, on-site learning and an internship programme where the students will be attached to places like hotels and F&B outlets," he promised. ■



THE GREAT PHILANTHROPIST: Many students will get to benefit from the kind donations of Mr Choo Chiau Beng. (Picture: Courtesy of NP Corporate Communications Office)

BY G.DINESH KUMAR
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Most people feel sorry for promising students who have to leave school because of family circumstances. But Mr Choo Chiau Beng puts his money where his mouth is.

The former chairman of the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Council recently donated half a million dollars to establish the Choo & Lim Bursary Fund, in remembrance of his late parents Mr Choo Lye Heng and Mdm Lim Swee Heng.

The Fund will be used to help deserving full-time NP students pay for their polytechnic education. 20 new bursaries, each worth \$1,500, will be given out in academic year 2006, according to NP's Director of Finance, Mrs Ang Beng Wah.

"No one should be deprived of an education because of a lack of financial resources," said Mr Choo, 56, who is Chairman and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Keppel Offshore & Marine.

He says this with conviction and from

experience because his family of six came from humble beginnings. Mr Choo saw his parents struggle to provide him and his siblings with a good education. Helping them along the way were the various bursaries he received as a student.

In an interview with *Tribune* at his fourth-level office at Pioneer Yard, he recounted, "When I was in school I was a recipient of a bursary and I know how valuable it is [to someone who is] in need."

Mr Choo remembers fondly the first bursary he received as a student in Raffles Institution. It was a sum of \$72 per annum and was awarded to him by the Ministry of Education (MOE). He added, "\$6 a month was quite big then."

Mr Choo went on to score a prestigious Colombo Plan Scholarship that gave him the opportunity to obtain a Bachelor of Science (First Class Honours) and then Masters of Science in the United Kingdom.

Having benefited greatly from such help financially, this Harvard Business School alum, is offering similar opportunities to students whose families cannot afford to pay for their education.

This is not the first time NP has seen the tangible fruits of Mr Choo's concern for students. In his nine years as the Chairman of the NP Council, he has mooted and instituted many initiatives that are focussed on students and their development.

The broad-based Ngee Ann Learning Model (NLM), for example, was one initiative that bears Mr Choo's stamp that has come into fruition. Other areas where Mr Choo has left his mark include the Co-Curricular Activities (CCAs) programme in NP and the polytechnic's policy on overseas exposure for all students.

NP Principal, Mr Chia Mia Chiang said, "I am overwhelmed by Mr Choo's kindness and generosity. As our Council Chairman for nine years, Mr Choo epitomised passion, dedication and personal commitment. Warm and big-hearted, he firmly believes that every human being is an important individual – to be valued and respected."

"He lives by this mantra, and this personal donation shows just how much he feels and cares for students from disadvantaged

backgrounds. Mr Choo's kind gesture inspires us to keep doing our best for all our students."

There is a reason why Mr Choo lavishes so much attention on polytechnic students, although he himself had taken the academic path as a youth, he recognises the merits of a good polytechnic education.

Mr Choo, who was named Outstanding Chief Executive 2001 in the Singapore Business Awards, said, "We find as employers that polytechnic graduates – some of them [who have also gone on to become] university graduates – are generally more grounded, more practical."

"People from the polytechnic have been exposed to more practical experience, project work [and] working exposure. They understand working life better."

It is the institutions and educators who are responsible for equipping these students with the appropriate skills required of the industry. Mr Choo explained, "The school plays a very key role and your teachers play a very key role."

Tapping into his wealth of industry experience, he has sought continually to make NP an excellent educational institution that produces industry-ready tertiary students.

Even after stepping down as Council Chairman in 2003, he continues, informally, to play a part in NP's development and this donation is a very good example of his unrelenting concern for the school and its students in particular.

21-year-old M. Harishankaran, a final-year Aerospace Technology student said, "The bursary will be helpful for many students because their families might be in a tough financial situation. Some people still get retrenched and many people in Singapore are not getting enough pay to support their families."

Details on application procedures and criteria of this award and details on other bursaries will be available on the Student Services website at <http://www.np.edu.sg/ss/> from March.

Application for bursaries begins three weeks before the beginning of the new semester on 24 April. ■

InnoSparks: A Place For Imagination

BY NAZURAH MOHD MAJEED
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Peering through the floor-to-ceiling glass wall you will see beanbags, bar stools and a pantry of sorts.

A Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) staff recreation corner? No.

A room to showcase living art? No.

It is the InnoSparks Room, the latest hang-out spot for students to have laid-back project meetings and discussions. This room is yours for the booking, and not only during school hours but also after school hours.

Launched at the beginning of the semester, the room is furnished to be inviting and cosy, yet with a spacious interior that can accommodate a maximum of 60 people comfortably and even allow professional presentations through laptop projection.

Located at the Innovation & Enterprise (I&E) Office at Block 25, the InnoSparks Room was primarily meant to cater to students of the Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) module, Innovation & Enterprise in Action (I&E in Action).

Since it opened, however, the room has

gained popularity with others, and more varied events are being held there, including departmental events from the different academic schools.

According to Mr Max Lam Kah Mun, the manager of the I & E Office, "It has been quite busy and there is a high usage with a wide range of activities but I am still hoping for more buzz because some students are still unaware of the facilities that we provide here."

Besides events, students are encouraged to use the room as a creative outlet to showcase their talents or passion for a subject. The room can be used even for non-curriculum or co-curricular (CCA) activities.

"It's all about the five Cs: creativity, confidence, courage, character and collaboration of ideas. If you have a genuine passion in a positive light, we encourage you to go all the way. We do not restrict our students to school-related activities," Mr Lam added.

Some events held at the InnoSparks room include project showcases, mini forums, exhibitions, movie marathons and even a paranormal awareness programme.



SPACE FOR IDEAS: Students gather to work their creative juices at the InnoSparks room at Block 25. (Picture: Low YeeJin)

Students can book the room through their module mentors and advisors or they can make their way to the I&E Office.

Mr Lam hopes to see even more unconventional and creative proposals of activities from students and not only from those who are taking the I&E in Action module. He added, "It is not a matter of what you can or cannot do; it is more a matter of 'Why not?' It is about being unique and innovative and how resourceful you are. 'Students must be daring to go beyond their capabilities, persevere and explore their potentials... surprise me.' ■

SoE Students Get New \$3 Million Centre

BY MELISSA CHANG MEI YOKE
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Engineering students in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) will get a chance to work with high technology research to better prepare them for the work force, thanks to a new \$3 million Centre of Innovation that NP and manufacturer AEM-Evertech Holdings Limited (AEM-Evertech) have joined hands to build.

Research work has already begun in the Centre at Block 7 but the Centre will only be used by students from April onwards, when the new academic year begins.

It is run by five full-time researchers from NP and three full-time researchers from AEM-Evertech. According to the director of the Centre of Innovation, Mr Chan Kuan Yew, in a year's time, the total number of full-time researchers will go up to about 20.

In addition to the main team of researchers, another team of technical experts and industry players will also act as technical advisors.

Mr Chan, a Mechanical Engineering (ME) lecturer, also revealed that industrial machinery used for testing the products developed and scaling up prototypes for industrial application will be brought in. Such machinery is seldom seen in schools as they are costly, with each piece of machinery costing about a quarter of a million to half a million dollars. In total the Centre will hold up to \$1.5 million worth of machinery.

AEM-Evertech is a public-listed company that manufactures equipment for the semiconductor industry.

According to Mr Tan Hang Cheong, deputy principal of NP, a larger portion of the infrastructural costs and equipment costs



A HEFTY INVESTMENT: Industry-standard equipment such as the one shown above can easily cost up to \$1.5 million. (Picture: Low Youjin)

will be borne by the company whereas NP will be covering the operational costs. At press time, AEM-Evertech had already spent half a million in renovation costs.

NP alumni member Mr Tok Kian You, Group Managing Director of AEM-Evertech, said, "The presence of the industry-led collaboration between the private industry and polytechnic would bring about a vibrant entrepreneurial culture within the polytechnic that thrives on the students' creativity, nimbleness and good business sense. This will also further bring about good and skilled manpower development programmes that would bring

readily available skilled NP graduates into the industry."

On the collaboration, Mr Tan said that they "wanted to raise the technical capability of the school". He felt that "pulling people from different [engineering] schools" will help the synergy among the schools and with AEM-Evertech as well.

The Centre will allow students to play an active role in developing new and cutting-edge technologies. This will benefit the manufacturing sector as innovations produced by the centre can be used to improve work efficiency and add value to the final product.

Mr Chan said that the centre will not only focus on Research and Development (R&D) but also to identify and enhance new or existing technologies in areas like the vision laser systems, chip packaging, material finishing as well as infrared technology. The engineering divisions that will use the centre most are ME, Mechatronic Engineering (MTE) and Electronic Computing Engineering (ECE), since their syllabi are most closely related to manufacturing.

On the benefits for NP students, Mr Chan said, "[School of Engineering (SoE)] students will be involved in the activities of the centre either through Industrial Attachment [Programme] or taking electives in the related subject areas.

"They would be working alongside the full-time researchers and on projects which will contribute to the R&D activities in the centre. In this way, they would be exposed to the R&D culture in the centre."

AEM-Evertech also saw a need to start such a centre because of the complementary strengths between the academic community and the requirements in the industry in terms of the practical application of academic knowledge.

Mr Tok explained, "We assessed that there is a great potential of tapping on the knowledge of the academic community to bridge and transform this valuable knowledge into more applications and industry-relevant technologies."

According to Mr Tok, AEM-Evertech has worked with NP since 2002. Scholarships were also provided by AEM-Evertech for NP students studying MTE.

Good working relationships between NP and AEM-Evertech over the years had led to the set-up of the Centre of Innovation. ■

LSCT Produces Special Bread



MAKING GOOD DOUGH: LSCT induces bacteria culture into its bread to boost the bread's nutritional value. (Picture: Nazurah Mohd Majeed)

BY NAZURAH MOHD MAJIED
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A group of students from the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology (LSCT) have formulated a sourdough bread that is actually good for your health.

What is special about this bread is that it has cultivated refined bacteria, which is rich in iron, zinc and copper, essential to our body's needs.

Dr Wayne Lee Forday, deputy director of LSCT, said, "Our bread is different from other sourdough breads because we don't use pre-prepared dough, like other commercial sourdough bread, and we incorporated bacteria which is rich in the essential metal traces... so it is more of a nutritional product, not just a food product."

According to Dr Forday, this bread is especially good for vegetarians because phytyc acids in vegetables bind up metal traces, preventing their proper absorption into the body.

The seven-member team of researchers took six months and around 25 experiments before coming up with this product. It takes about five to six hours just to bake one loaf of bread.

The final product is similar to normal oven-baked bread, except for a slightly firmer texture and a pleasant sour taste.

One of the researchers, Shailaja d/o Aridass, 21, a final-year Biomedical Science (BMS) student said, "It tastes quite good, unlike other nutritional products, where most of it [has] either a bitter medicine-like aftertaste, or no taste at all."

The team is considering introducing the sourdough bread as a nutritional product in the market.

"Although it takes quite a long time to bake a loaf, if we're going to market it, we can just scale up the amount of bread that we bake at one go... we haven't really spoken to any of the bread companies but we are looking to do so soon," Shailaja said.

Shailaja said that they encountered quite a few setbacks during the research process. "Initially we had some problems growing the bacteria as some bacteria died after a while, and others didn't grow well so we had to [reproduce the bacteria culture]."

Effendi, 20, a final-year Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering (CBE) student, felt that this specially-produced bread is impressive. "I am impressed by the quality of the research and the final product... it is very encouraging to see what people can do if they set their mind to it." ■

SoE: A New SuperStar Is Born

BY MELISSA CHANG MEI YOKE
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Budding singers at the SoE SuperStar '06 enjoyed a close encounter with two Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) celebrities, Singapore Idol finalist Daphne Khoo and SuperHost finalist Liang Yi.

Daphne, a first-year Mass Communication (MCM) student, spoke about her Singapore Idol experience, while Yi, a Logistics Engineering & Management (LEM) graduate, conducted a lucky draw and revealed the results of the competition.

More than 1,000 students flocked to NP's Convention Centre on 11 January to support their performing friends. This is the first time the School of Engineering (SoE) has organised a singing competition for all their students.

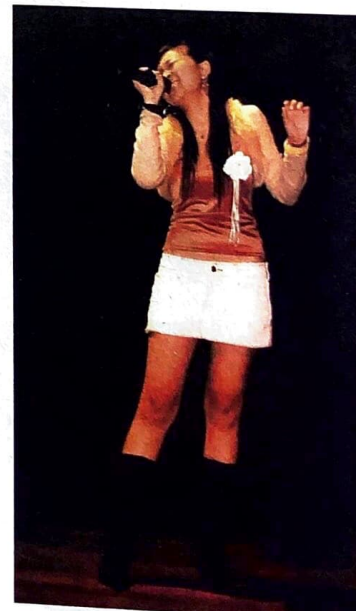
"Organising the contest was rather tough as it is something rather large-scale," said the event's organising chairman Seetoh Chee Whye, 25, a final-year Multidiscipline Engineering (MDE) student.

The 15 finalists were drawn equally from all SoE divisions - Building and Environment (BE), Mechanical Engineering (ME), Electrical Engineering (EE), Electronic Computing Engineering (ECE) and MDE.

60 percent audience voting and 40 percent judges grading formed the results. The judges' grading was based on articulation, pronunciation, stage performance, X-factor, mass appeal and overall appearance.

The top three winners of the competition received a trophy each and \$800, \$400 and \$200 in cash respectively. The other participants received a medal each.

Winner Irwin Fua, 19, a second-



A NATURAL SONGBIRD: Aspiring singers took part in the SoE SuperStar competition to showcase their vocal capabilities. (Picture: Low Youjin)

year MDE student, who had the highest popularity votes, said that there were more deserving contestants. Jennifer Koh, 19, a first-year BE student and Gracielynn Flores, 17, a first-year ECE student, got second and third respectively.

The judges were Mr Aaron Lim and Ms Estella Sia, the head of department and senior instructor of Lee Wei Song School of Music respectively. Mr Lim said, "[Popularity] is actually a very important factor that is quite difficult to train." ■

Imparting The Value Of Charity To The Young

BY BENJAMIN FONG
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You're never too young to start embarking on charitable acts for the good of society.

Children between four and six years of age from the NTUC childcare centre in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) learnt that for themselves by offering their hand-painted ornaments and home-made cookies for sale at a charity booth outside the centre.

Besides the childcare centre, the children also peddled their wares at the Atrium.

According to Mrs Christine Ng, principal of the childcare centre, the proceeds of roughly \$400 were in aid of the Society for the Physically Disabled.

The makeshift booth was set up outside the childcare centre on 16 January. A group of four NP students proposed the idea for their Innovation and Enterprise in Action project, an Interdisciplinary Studies module taken by all second-year NP students.

Stevenson Ho, 18, a second-year Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering (CBE) student, said, "During a group discussion, we came up with the idea of getting kids involved in our project and in the process, get these young ones to know a little more about charity."

According to Stevenson, 15 to 20 children from the centre painted photo-frames, key-chains and prepared cookie mixture for the cause. Staff of the childcare centre also contributed by paying for the materials needed to make the photo-frames and key-chains, which were sold for between \$1 and \$3 each.

Mak Kai Yan, 18, a second-year Accountancy (ACC) student, explained that the NTUC childcare centre was the group's first choice as it was convenient and most of the children's parents are staff of NP, which would make the process of getting the children involved much easier.

Kai Yan added that apart from NP students, she also hoped that "the parents of the kids who made the items would support their child's efforts for charity".

Working with children proved to be quite challenging for Stevenson, he said, "Some children were really difficult to handle at times as they can be quite mischievous." For others it was a joy. "They were really adorable and easy to work with," said Kai Yan.

Kai Yan added, "Although [the children] are young, we hope that they would understand the basics of community [service] by letting them be exposed to such charitable activities."

Mrs Ng also added that prior to the charity event, the children and their parents were properly briefed on how they could participate and once the parents' concerns for the safety of their kids were settled, the project got the green light. "We also took into account previous similar events the children had worked on such as the setting up of a mini-restaurant within the childcare centre last December. The only difference is that this time, they [the children] are bringing their wares to students and staff as far as the Atrium," said Mrs Ng.

Although she was initially skeptical about the students' idea of getting the children to help sell their own products outside the centre, Mrs Ng was glad that it all worked out in the end.

"I really appreciated the effort made by the children and students, as the end result was huge, plus, the children enjoyed it tremendously," she said. ■

PITCH-ing On Solid Ground

BY LOW YUJIN
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Imagine not hitting your remote control to channel surf when the TV commercials come out but watching a whole series of them attentively.

Then again, these were mostly humorous, thought-provoking and unexpected foreign ads that showed highly creative approaches to selling a product or brand.

Approximately 150 secondary two to five students were exposed to them in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), the first time in Singapore an audience this young has been given an insight into the world of advertising and public relations.

At NP's PITCH 05/06 Ideas Alive! Conference on 14 January, they learnt from established media professionals about the two industries.

Leon Seow, 19, one of six final-year Mass Communication (MCM) students organising PITCH, said, "We're aiming to impart an intriguing and deeper insight of the marketing communications industry and its professionals to our participants through our events. We also want to instill in them the desire to solve creativity-based challenges through our competition."

Armed with tips gathered from the conference, PITCH culminated in a final competition on 4 February for 15 secondary school student teams, as they competed with each other to throw up the best advertising and public relations ideas based on problems found in their own schools.

The PITCH team doubled up as mentors to the contestants. "Besides, sharing our passion and knowledge of the advertising and public relations industry with our participants... As mentors, we are there mainly to facilitate the 15 competing school teams by clarifying any uncertainties they might have with regards to the information and templates provided," added Leon, who acts as the media and publicity manager for the event organised by the



LEARNING TO PITCH: Secondary school students listen attentively as Mr Anand A. Vathiyar imparts his advertising knowledge. (Picture: Low Yujin)

School of Film & Media Studies (FMS).

The competition was intended for 12 teams, which were the first to snap up places for the competition last year. However, another three schools, Bartley Secondary School, Presbyterian High Secondary School and Bedok Green Secondary School pleaded to be given a chance to compete after being inspired by the presentations during the conference. The organisers finally relented.

Mr Benson Woon, an information technology teacher with Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary School, was appreciative of the initiative taken by the PITCH committee to organise the conference. "The students have all shown interest in the media industry, which is why they've come down. Hopefully they will learn some public relations and marketing skills at the end of this."

Secondary two participant, Ameer Baraktali, 14, from St Andrew's Secondary School found PITCH beneficial. "I've learnt something new, something more

about advertising and this will definitely help in the competition... it will be quite an experience."

FMS director Mr Henry Tan sees PITCH's relevance to young participants, saying, "[It] will give [the participants] a headstart in the industry as well as introduce them to the fun aspects of it and the kind of work they can look forward to."

Conference speaker Mr Anand A. Vathiyar, managing director of UP Brandbuzz, a local advertising firm, said it is important to "expose students as early as possible" to the way the media works.

He said that elements of the media factor into our life and help to "shape popular culture". Hence, a better understanding of how the media operates helps students make "better informed choices". He added, "The industry works and lives on young talent."

Presbyterian High won the 4 Feb competition, taking home trophies, \$1,000 in cash and a \$800 Digiworks training voucher for their teacher. ■

Engineering Alum Turn Celebs

BY NUR HIDAYAH SALAMAT
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Two graduates from the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) School of Engineering (SoE) have proved to be "more than engineers", as the school's tagline says, turning into local celebrity hosts.

Liang Yi, 22, a Logistics Engineering & Management graduate and Liu Shiao Jou, 25, a Building & Environment division (BE) graduate, are at press time, among the last seven still in the running for the title at this year's SuperHost, a local talent search competition airing every Tuesday on Channel U.

Both Yi and Shiao Jou have made it to the finals, a great feat for two individuals who were trained in a field of study totally unrelated to one in which their quick wit and eloquence are being tested.

Shiao Jou said he cultivated a fair bit of his on-stage talent at his alma mater.

"When I was in Ngee Ann, I took part in one of the groups within CASSC [Cultural Activities and Social Services Club] - the Stage Art Group [SAG]. CASSC always has this annual performance (AP). I was one of the emcees for one of the years."

Yi, who came to Singapore all the way from Sichuan, China, to seek an education, sees SuperHost as a way for her to make local friends. Speaking in a mixture of English and Mandarin, she said, "When I studied



BUDDING HOSTING TALENTS: Big smiles from contestants, Liu Shiao Jou and Liang Yi, as they make their way to the top in Channel U's hosting competition, SuperHost. (Picture: Low Yujin)

in NP, I always keep in touch with people that are from China. This competition gave me [the] chance to be involved with a lot of local people."

Yi admitted to facing some challenges while vying for the much coveted SuperHost grand prize. Being a foreign student, with a much smaller local network, Yi felt that it "might affect the audience votes".

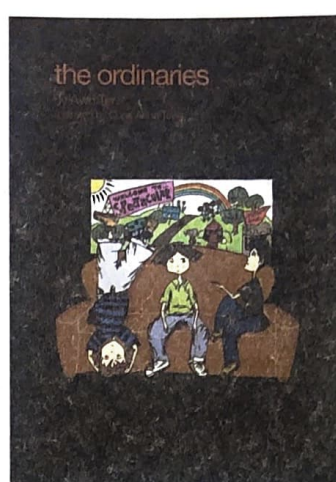
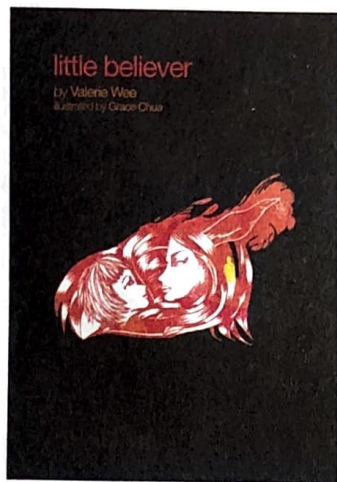
The competition is fronted by the

effervescent Quan Yi Feng and the winner of SuperHost will walk away with a \$50,000 cash prize, a Renault Megane 1.6-litre sedan and a two-year MediaCorp contract.

The Grand Final will feature the final seven contestants live on 26 February.

NP students can offer their support by calling into the phone lines, which are open throughout the show and vote for our versatile graduates. ■

FMS Student And Alumni Publish Children's Book Set



INSPIRING THE YOUNG: A set of three children's books will be published by a group of alumni and a final-year student from the School of Film & Media Studies, in the hope of moving people, young and old alike, with their stories. (Picture: Courtesy of Felix Ng)

BY JESSY CHUA
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Inspired by their Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) lecturer, a group of alumni from the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) have produced a set of three children's short stories titled BlyssPackOne.

The product, a collaborative effort between eight graduates and a final-year Mass Communication (MCM) student, features three writers and three illustrators, each paired up to produce a set of short stories for the book.

Apart from the six contributors, the team consists of MCM graduate Felix Ng, 23, the founder and chief art director of

Silnt (pronounced as 'silent'), former 987 FM deejay Grace Chua, 23, head of public relations of Silnt and also an illustrator for one of the short stories and final-year MCM student, Vanessa Fernandez, 23, chief strategic director of Silnt.

The project, initiated last August, was set out to be an "honest attempt at book-writing, illustrating and publishing", said Felix. He managed to raise \$10,000 for the project with Germaine Chong, 21, the team's interactive art director.

"What we wanted from this project was a chance to explore ourselves and our creative abilities. Being written and illustrated by different authors and illustrators, each book has its own style to it and each, its own

unique story," said Felix.

The team's inspiration to produce the book came from their learning in the now-defunct Book Publishing module, which was once offered as an MCM elective.

Vanessa, who performed in Prague when the last book of the module was exhibited in the Czech Republic's First International Poetry Festival in 2005, said, "We wanted to produce the book for art's sake. For those who have been involved in Book Publishing or had taken the Written Communication module taught by Desmond Kon, they would understand the idea of 'art for art's sake', which was an idea that Kon really inspired in us."

Now a photojournalist for The Straits

Times, Mugilan Rajasegeran, 25, author of one of the books, added, "Kon was very successful in breaking down the barrier in a teacher and student relationship. With him, it was not a dialectic top-down relationship. We felt that we were his colleagues and were treated on par with him. He instilled a sense of ownership in us and made everyone feel like they owned the book; each of us owned our roles."

It was this sense of ownership that sustained them for the three-month-long project. Felix explained, "Everyone had a day job so it's very difficult to be able to work on the project every day. Even though there isn't much monetary incentive, everyone stayed on to work so hard - sacrificing either their sleep or free time to work on the project and I'm extremely grateful for that."

Despite the fact that the short stories are intended for children, Felix hopes the book will help "kick-start a revival of storybook publication in Singapore and will rekindle the child in readers of all ages, encouraging them to take on child-like imaginations and creativity in their own fields".

The team plans to release the book in Japan and to release another book titled BlyssPackTwo: The Art of Haiku, an anthology featuring the infusion of poetry and art, later this year.

BlyssPackOne comes in a customised corrugated box and contains three illustrated books, a sticker pack, A2 art print, three bookmarks and a sketchbook. It retails at \$34.95 and is available at Asylum in Ann Siang Hill and Anthropology, next to Coffee Bean at Holland Village. Interested parties may also contact Silnt at connect@silnt.com or visit their website at www.silnt.com for more details. ■

RHyMeS Centre Opens In NP

BY AESTEE ADILA SAMSURI
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It's any hotel's nightmare - having a few bombs set off by terrorists at the same time and not being able to locate hotel guests during an emergency like that. But when equipped with a Radio Frequency Identification (RFID)-enabled privilege guest card, guests can be easily tracked.

The tracking can also help to recognise and recall the preferences of repeat guests, making them feel truly special, something more important now, given recent emphasis on improving service.

The RFID, which uses radio frequency communication, will allow better security and hospitality for hotel guests.

Millenium & Copthorne (M&C) International, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) on 23 January to develop several enhanced services "for the lifestyle and hospitality management sectors", according to the NP media release. Two other partners signed the MOU: Symbol Technologies and Sun Microsystems, whose contributions will be in hardware and software as well as technical consultancy alongside NP staff and students in the R&D work.

All four MOU partners are coming together to set up the RFID Hospitality Management (RHyMeS) Centre, in NP, within the eGarage. This is where projects and industrial collaboration by the School of InfoComm Technology (ICT) are showcased. RHyMeS is an investment Ms Angela Wee, the director of NP's School of InfoComm Technology (ICT) puts at over a million dollars.

On the partnership, Ms Wee told

Tribune, "Basically, RFID technology is a proven technology which is widely exploited in traditional application like logistics and the four partners feel that there is potential in many other sectors such as the lifestyle and hospitality management sectors."

Of greater interest to her is that the project will also enhance the experience of ICT students taking up this project.

"We encourage students to take up the RFID project because for a lot of IT students, we are actually creating opportunities with key industry players like M & C, who is the real domain expert here," said Ms Wee, "and students actually get to dabble and familiarise themselves with real projects and applications that will be directly usable for hotels."

For final-year ICT students, Loo Tin Song, 20 and Lam Pei Xuan, 21, who took up the RFID project, it has been a fulfilling learning experience and they agreed that the partnership with the key industry players would be beneficial to them, especially when they enter the industry.

Tin Song said "Having taken up the RFID project, we are able to use what we have learnt throughout our course of study since it's directly applicable to the industry and that gives us an added advantage."

Ms Wee was proud to announce that the pioneer batch of RFID projects by final-year ICT students, Sangar Annadorai and Tan Shu Ren, both 19, are already being used in the industry by Symbol Technologies.

One such project is the Smart Shopping Lane, a system that can track the identity of the shopper and provide recommendations of different products that would suit the shopper's needs. With the support of key organisations, Ms Wee also aims to make RHyMeS a national icon. ■

\$50 Hike In Polytechnic Fees

BY NG YAN BO
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Polytechnic tuition fees will increase by \$50 with the new academic year (AY) 2006, affecting both existing and new polytechnic students in all five polytechnics from April.

This is the second increase poly students have seen in two years.

In AY 2005, tuition fees were increased by \$100, from \$1,950 to \$2,050. From April onwards, students will pay \$2,100 per academic year.

As most people affected by price hikes object to them, it was no surprise the almost 7.7% increase in school fees over two years did not sit well with some students, although it will apply across all polytechnics.

Justin Ong, 18, who graduated from Woodlands Ring Secondary School, feels it is uncalled for. "I find it very unreasonable, why do they have to increase the \$50?"

However, more students were interested in knowing why school fees are going up.

Larry Koh, 18, a first-year Biotechnology (BIO) student echoed others in saying, "I think \$50 is okay because it's not a lot. [Though] it's reasonable, I'd like to know the reason behind the increase."

According to Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) finance director, Mrs Ang Beng Wah, "Polytechnic fees were not changed from AY2001 to AY2004 following the economic downturn in 2001-2002."

"The fee revision for AY 2006 is to meet the cost increases in 2005 and further projected cost increases."

This means the 7.7 percent increase was really over five years instead of two, or an average of a 1.5 percent rise per annum.

In contrast, on the top end of tertiary

education, Singapore Management University (SMU) upped its fees by 15 percent last January.

Mrs Ang further clarified that, "The tuition fees paid by students are only a small percentage of the full cost of training."

"The bulk of the cost of a poly education [is] still borne by the Government. The average recurrent cost of training a polytechnic student in NP in FY04 [financial year 2004] was about \$12,000. This was without considering the costs incurred from the facilities and equipment used in the training."

The \$1.5 million new student plaza at the bus stop in front of NP, is one of many recent improvements in NP wholly paid by the Ministry of Education.

Many students remain positive about the increase, but some worry for those with financial concerns.

Anthony Poh, 16, a student from Guang Yang Secondary School said, "I think the increase in fees next year will not really affect us all [because] \$50 for a year is worth it for a poly since you are going to learn a lot."

"I think for the low income [people] they should not add \$50, or they can ask the government or someone to help out?"

Responding to students with similar enquires, Mrs Ang affirmed that financial assistance will be provided by the MOE to needy students. NP students can also visit http://www.np.edu.sg/ss/financial_assist.htm for information on financial aid.

To increase this pool, NP is setting up a new NP Student Aid Fund, and is trying to raise \$1.1 million to be given out entirely over three years. You can donate to boxes at Blk 73 #02-10, until 21 April.

Principal Chia Mia Chiang said NP will match all donations dollar for dollar. ■



All work and no play
makes Jack a dull boy.

So in this issue of *Tribune*, we bring you a

Work & Play Supplement
to banish those post-poly blues and
help you kick-start your career.

Getting The Pay You Deserve



GET YOUR WORTH: For fresh graduates, a \$100 pay increment may seem little but it can do wonders to help offset your monthly expenses. (Picture: Low Youjin)

BY JESSY CHUA
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When Tracy Wong, 21, first received a job offer as a programmer for an auditing firm last September, she was offered \$1,300. But the fresh graduate from Singapore Polytechnic (SP) didn't dare to negotiate for a higher salary even though she felt that the offer was too low. She was expecting at least \$1400 because the market rate was about \$1500.

"It's rather hard to get a job these days. A lot of my seniors couldn't get a job when they graduated. I accepted the offer because I didn't want to lose out to others who were willing to take a lower pay than me," she told *Tribune*.

Tracy's reluctance was understandable. With no experience, a fresh graduate is often strapped with no choice but to accept the offer made by his/her new employer.

To help make your own salary negotiation experience less awkward and painful, *Tribune* suggests six steps to effective salary negotiation for recent graduates.

1. Be active in your research

According to Mr Robert Conceicao, managing director of Epiphany PR & Marketing, the more knowledgeable you are of your prospective company, the more impressed your potential employer is likely to be. It also pays to know what the existing market rate is for the job that you are interviewing for. Mr Joseph Ong, human resource manager in a foreign bank, said, "For fresh grads with no friends or ex-colleagues to benchmark against, a good start could be the headhunters (employment agencies). Go with reputable ones that have specialists managing different industries. They have the experience, especially about the industry pay scale and will usually advise you on the highest appropriate pay to negotiate for based on their evaluation of your credentials as well as all the important insider knowledge to the amount of pay that a particular company is willing to pay to fill a specific position." However, Mr Ong added that one should note that these headhunters often draw a percentage from

the applicant's salary as commission once they have helped an applicant secure a job.

2. Don't ever lie, however strong the temptation

Honestly, lying gets you worse than nowhere. If you can't speak a third language, eg German, French, then DON'T indicate in your resume that you can just to make yourself look more impressive. Mr Conceicao warned that one should not think that he/she can get away with small white lies. It's only a matter of time before your boss will realise the truth and have your services terminated. Moreover, word gets around quickly not just in small industries. Mr Ong said, "I have worked with enough people who got employed because they oversold their skills and abilities during the interview, only to be found awfully lacking when finally put to work. Obviously, they didn't last very long on the job and yes, word gets around, quickly, even in an industry as big as [finance]."

3. Understand how negotiation works

"Negotiations are usually more successful when the applicant is aware of not just his own 'worth' in pay but also how willing and able the employer is, with regards to the salary," Mr Ong said.

Be aware too, he added, that "pay" should also take into account the 'entire package' which may include medical/health insurance, annual leave and miscellaneous employee benefits. Intangible benefits like career development within the company and future employability should not be overlooked or worse, forgone, just because of a marginally higher offer by a lesser employer. One should always remember that the short term benefit of a high current pay in a lesser company/job scope can never match up to a reputable company offering a lower starting pay but has better career growth opportunities."

4. Focus on your goals, not on winning

The objective in negotiating for a higher wage is not to win but to strike a fair deal. Mr Ong advised, "Be firm but polite. It is a negotiation, so there can be two winners

instead of just one. The salary should not be the only incentive for applying for a post. Other intangible benefits like industry exposure and experience can be more valuable in the longer term than a high starting salary. Your goal should be to 'grow' your salary or 'worth', by gaining the relevant experience first. The higher pay would come with a proven track record, not bargaining."

5. Be mindful that you don't start haggling

Don't be insatiable. If the offer is reasonably good, stop. "With a higher pay comes higher expectations," said Mr Ong, "especially when the higher pay was gotten through overselling of one's abilities."

He recounted, "I once worked with someone who claimed to be everything that the company was looking for during the interview. Needless to say, he was given a salary at the upper-end of the salary scale. When he did not deliver the goods, he was given the sack, in less than half a year. Hardly enough time for anyone to settle-in let alone perform to the high expectations of the managers, which ironically, he had built-up throughout the interview."

6. Remember that your employment is a continuing relationship

Understand that salary negotiations are a form of managing your career. It is your starting point. Mr Conceicao said, "Employers tend to think of future pay increments in percentages and if you shortchange yourself with a disadvantageous pay right from the beginning, it will be very hard for you to ask for your ideal pay from your boss in future." However, Mr Ong observed that no employer can underpay an employee for too long. "Most of the people I had worked with and some whom I still work with have had open discussions and negotiated with their employers when they felt that their salary was lagging their contributions to the company... Remember, you can't be underpaid if you are not contributing enough. Neither can you continue to earn above average wages delivering average results."

Networking: For Higher Net Worth

BY VANESSA FERNANDEZ
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You've heard the saying often enough, it's not what you know, it's who you know.

Whether you're trying to get a job, promotion or a better package from a headhunter, you're better off if you've got good networking. *Tribune* asked professionals from various industries for their advice on what to bear in mind when networking.

"The key is sincerity, basically you need to mean what you say and be able to deliver to build the trust. Never make use of the relationship for own personal gain instead of the company's interest."

- Charmayne Yap, Talent and Artist
Directions Director,
MTV Network Asia

"With clients and colleagues in a bank, a person's conduct must always be guided by professionalism and adhering to the bank's policies on disclosure of sensitive information, conflicts of interest and dealings with clients. A person will gain clients' trust and also respect from colleagues if he/she is seen to be consistent and uncompromising on these issues."

- Choo Hiew Shien, Advisor,
Risk Advisory Services, ABN
AMRO Bank

"Tell them something personal [about yourself], because when you reveal more about yourself, people feel more comfortable opening up to you. Networking is about making a connection with someone and often this is achieved simply through good conversation."

- Kimberley Soliano, Oil Broker,
GFI Group (Asia)

"Be consistent with staying in touch with the contact - even a short email every month or so helps you stay connected with the person and turns your connection from just being a passing acquaintance whose name card is in your Rolodex to a personal friend who may have more in common with you than you previously thought. Don't just pick up the phone when you need their help."

- June Kong, Public Affairs and
Communications Manager,
F&N Coca-Cola (Singapore)

"When you speak well people take you more seriously and your opinions seem to matter more. People will trust you more if you are articulate and to the point, because it shows confidence and honesty."

- Daniel Ong, DeeJay,
Mediacorp Radio 98.7FM

"You have to be polite and friendly to not only your external customers but your colleagues as well. You never know when you might need a favour from a particular colleague. Be professional. Never let a bad mood affect your work, because if you're rude to anyone they won't have respect for you. Always wear a smile - it makes a difference."

- Jolene Lee, Guest Relations
Officer, Swissotel The Stamford

How To Be Your Own Boss

BY SABRINA CHEW
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Almost every Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) student would have taken Innovation & Enterprise in Action (I&E in Action) lessons in second-year and possibly dabbled with setting up stalls at the Atrium. If the bug of being your own boss has bitten you, before you get established in a career, when you have nothing to lose, is the best time to try starting a business.

Let **Tribune** reduce the risk even further for you with our step-by-step guide to realising your dreams.

Step 1: Know the market.

Lay a good foundation for your business, which you can do by conducting market research. According to Mr Samuel Lim, 28, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Business Studies (BS) alumni who owns two companies—Event Solutions & Concepts Pte Ltd (an events management company) and Therapy, a clothing accessories outlet at Far East Plaza, a good way to test the waters is by selling your goods at bazaars. By doing that, you can “do something on a smaller scale first, test the market; see whether if there’s a demand for [your goods]”.

Step 2: Get investors to provide some financial support

As you well know, no business starts without capital, so start promoting your business ideas to potential investors. A good place to start would be home – yes, your parents and siblings can be your investors too. Or, if you’re particularly persuasive, you can take Mr Lim’s advice: “There’s a lot of people outside in Singapore [who have] a lot of money but they [don’t] know what to do with it, so try to find one who believes in you.” According to Mr Herald Bangras, a lecturer with the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS), who gets his students to present business proposals for his Media



NO MEAN FEAT: The Podesej team has proven that even recent graduates can venture out to be their own boss. (File Picture: Low Youjia)

Management module, networking is vital. People you meet this way can help you beyond just giving you funds. The former business journalist with Dow Jones and CNBC elaborated “Investors want to see you succeed” and will give you suggestions to “introduce [your] product in a certain market [and even] give you contacts”. On your part, you need a proper business proposal with basic information—like your business objectives, targeted market, expected revenue, “cash flow over two, three years” and marketing plan.

However, external investors are not the only people you can approach for funding. Mr Bangras suggested, “Instead of going in alone [and] taking the risk alone, the other way is partnership. Find two, three people who show the same passion as you and have the same objectives and goals.”

Step 3: Have a firm belief in your ideas

You can hardly expect anyone to believe in your business if you don’t believe in it yourself. Be persistent and confident, advised Mr Lim. “So long as you’ve got the idea, so long as you’re confident of your

idea, you can always find ways and means to get investors to invest in your company.”

Step 4: Learn as much as you can about the business

It is good to learn all you can about your chosen business as it will help you to stay on top of your game. A good way to start is to check websites related to the area and to attend relevant seminars. According to Mr Lim, you can also learn through working for an established company in the area and use the experience in your own business. Knowing more will make you less reliant on your staff, which, in turn, makes you less vulnerable should any staff leave your company. Mr Lim explained, “Everyone is dispensable in the company – that is the ideal situation that you should create your company to be. The reason being if you hire a staff and you don’t know what the staff is doing, basically if the person leaves the company, you’re dead.”

Step 5: Watch your spending

The ultimate aim of all businesses is to make money so keep a sharp eye on

those numbers to ensure that you are not spending too much on expenses. Be sure that the revenue is coming in steadily to turn up profits. Ms Jocelyn Chew, 29, a financial analyst who has worked with many companies, including MTV, advised that “if you have just started your business, you should think about outsourcing as many of your departments as possible, [like] accounting to an accountancy firm, IT to an IT service provider”. She added, “The areas that you can cut [expenses] are always support departments [like] accounting, IT, admin, HR... these are the non-revenue generating departments [and] are usually outsourced when you want to cut costs.”

Step 6: Observe the competition

Observe your competitors, including how they are pricing their goods but that doesn’t mean you have to follow suit. Mr Lim discouraged slashing prices as a price war can be damaging to your business. “You’re spoiling the market and that doesn’t do you any good. At the end of the day, people can do the same thing back to you. It’s a never ending story.”

Step 7: Be a consumer-pleaser

Do everything you can to please the customer. Customer service is so important and this cannot be stressed enough. A pleasant shopping experience makes happy customers repeat clients, asserted Mr Lim. He said, “We believe that if someone feels comfortable in our shop, they will always come back.”

Mr Lim’s ultimate advice to aspiring entrepreneurs is not to “think too much”. He said that one should not wait until he/she has saved enough money to start a business. “By the time you have saved enough money, you’ll be asking yourself, ‘Is it worth it for me to take this amount of money and put into something that is totally new?’ When you grow up, you have more [baggage and] responsibility... so if you don’t try it while you’re young, then you won’t be able to do it.” ■

Volunteering Your Way To A Job

BY SIMREN KAUR PANOO
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The late Senator Hubert Humphrey said, “The moral test of any society is how it treats its weakest: children, elderly, sick, needy and handicapped.”

If you agree with this statement or remember the high you got from doing community service, even if only in school and don’t have to start earning money immediately after graduation, you may want to devote a little time on volunteerism.

And it’s not such a crazy thought either. The 2004 National Volunteerism Survey Singapore conducted by National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) showed that, excluding the compulsory volunteers in school, there were 440,000 volunteers here.

Moreover, time spent volunteering can be considered as a wise investment.

Besides doing good, you will gain invaluable experiences and a better perspective of life.

Also, putting your voluntary services on your resume can help you score brownie points with your future employer.

Mr Michael Rebaczonok, a lecturer teaching the Job Preparation module at Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), confirms this.

“A student who puts volunteering on his resume would impress me.

“It tells me that he most definitely cares about his community. He is also likely to have excellent people skills,” he added.

Having had prior experience as a preliminary interviewer for candidates interested in working at NP, he shared with **Tribune** that job candidates who have had volunteerism experience will gain an upper-hand over their competition.

“In a tight job market, this [volunteerism on your resume] would prove to be the cutting-edge as opposed to just a good grade sheet. I would definitely take a second look,” he said.

Ms Julie Chiang, the account director for public relations consultancy Asia PR Werkz, agrees.

“It’s actually good [to have volunteerism on your resume] as it reflects a pro-activeness to a person’s interest. It also shows me dedication and I personally find that a person with volunteerism [on his resume] is highly likely to put the same effort and dedication in his work. So I highly recommend it.”

With so many volunteer avenues available in the market, volunteers are most spoiled for choice. **Tribune** offers a guide

on four great places to volunteer.

Pulau Ubin Nature-Guide

Nature enthusiasts or the outgoing sort will probably enjoy being involved in a range of activities including being a nature guide, habitat restorer, wildlife researcher or gardener.

If you have photographic or design skills, you can also put them to good use. Pulau Ubin is also the ultimate place to unwind and indulge in the simple life.

Singapore Zoo

You may not be able to talk to the animals like Dr Dolittle but if you’ve always wanted to get up close and personal with wild and exotic animals, you’re one step closer to that dream by signing up with the SZG Docent.

This group of volunteers, who must devote at least one year to the job, is responsible for creating awareness about wild-life conservation and protection.

Their tasks include providing guided tours as well as manning stations around the zoo so as to better educate its visitors.

They even get to be assistant zoo-keepers as this is part of the mandatory training programme that all new members have to

undergo before they become full-fledged members of the club. Animal-lovers should definitely jump at this chance of a lifetime.

The closing date for this year’s annual recruitment is 31 March.

Club Rainbow

If bringing joy to children delights you, you should consider signing up here. Club Rainbow is a non-profitable charity organisation that provides support for families with children suffering from major chronic and life-threatening diseases.

Its volunteers devote their time to supporting these children by offering pro-bono services with relations to their own specific skills and talents.

Riding for the Disabled Association Singapore (RDA)

Another way to help disabled children is simply to walk beside them.

In the case of RDA, you assist disabled riders as a “side-walker” or helper.

Not only will you get to meet lots of new people, you will also get a chance to make friends and learn to handle the resident horses.

This is certainly a fruitful experience for anybody above the age of 16. ■



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POLICE
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展开你的祖谱搜寻之旅

林惠玲报道
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你是否曾想过自己的祖先是来自中国的哪一个省份？你又知道中国与新加坡历史之中的伟人谁和你有血缘关系？

在忙碌的学生生活中，可能无法抽出时间去寻找这些答案。何不毕业后，在踏入社会之前的一段时间，画出自己的世系图，加以了解自己的家庭背景？谁知道，这可能会帮助你决定将来的全职行业。

在画世系图的过程，你很可能必须重画很多部分。所以Tribune建议你上网免费下载世系图记录样板。其中之一是：
<http://www.familytreemagazine.com>。

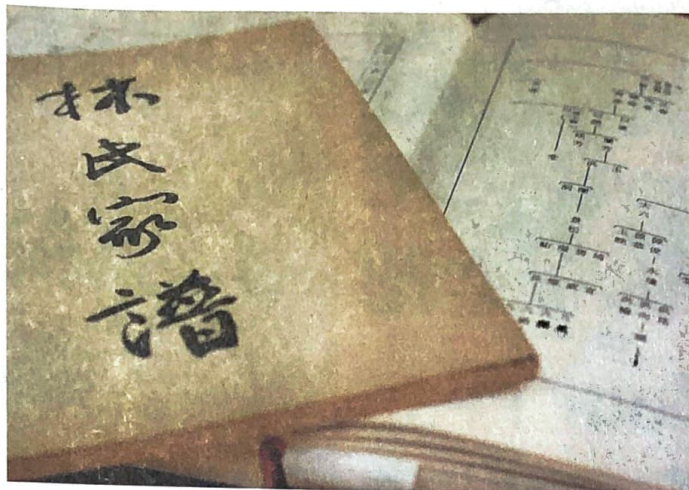
搜寻祖先资料的第一步是向家人和亲戚问取他们所知的资料，然后用这些资料画出最基本的世系图。其中，最大的线索就是你亲戚与祖宗的身份证与死亡证书。这个步骤做了以后，你可以去掌管同籍贯同姓的会馆继续追问。各别会馆的联络资料可从互联网查询。

据新加坡福建会馆了解：要查询祖先的资料，应该去比较小型而且只掌管同姓、同籍贯的会馆。多数大型掌管所有同籍贯的会馆就没有这样一种资料库。

你也可以从历史悠久的免费祖谱资料库中查出别人所留下的资料，同时也能让你联络上同样正在搜寻资料的人，从中取出线索。那个网站是：
<http://www.rootweb.com>。

在 <http://cn.netor.com/m/memindex.asp> 的网页里的万家姓资料库，就可以找出相同姓氏的伟人与他们的个人历史。

义安理工学院大众传媒系讲师梅文杰就曾试过寻根。他还写了一本有关寻根的书，名为《寻根基本手册》，梅文杰讲师



新加坡九老堂一林氏会馆所收藏的家谱之一。(照片：刘育伟)

认为寻根是否能成功，关键在于祖父母是否还在世。若祖父母还在世，追寻过程就容易多了。想要追寻到第一个移民到南洋的祖先，快的话一个月里便能完成。

一般对寻根很有热诚的人，都会想把资料保存好，这样家谱才会完整。有一样值得庆幸的是，我国国家文物局在去年刚设立了一个能记载世系图的网站：
<http://www.sft.com.sg>。

追寻到了第一个移民过来的祖先，想要和中国联系继续查询就比较困难。因为那里收集的祖谱会比较多。很多祖先来到新加坡时都没带家谱，因此在新加坡方面搜寻资料就比较困难。

梅讲师对于寻根的意义表示：“寻

根，就是保持一种家庭的关系。就是一代跟一代的分享。当你寻到根之后，你就会整理这些资料，然后再传给下一代。那下一代接过来也知道‘啊，我的爷爷或者父亲曾经做过这些事情。他们是谁。’我觉得这是一种家庭都可以一起做的一种活动。”

要画出一幅从祖先年代到今日的准确家谱并没有想像中那么简单。这项非常具有挑战性的活动或许比我们习惯做的专题作业来得有趣。寻根能促进家庭关系，令你更了解自己，也能让你和失散的亲戚联络。在将来来临的长假里，你也可以接受这项挑战，试画自己家族的一幅世系图。能做这样有意义的事，何乐不为呢？■

专业导师教你如何唱出未来



陈彼得老师歌唱班进行中(照片：陈宁曦)

黄佳仪报道
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近期，电视上常看到以歌唱为主的偶像选拔赛，要把歌唱得好单靠天份或许不够。

去年刚创办的音乐学院，“音乐之道”创办人以及音乐导师，陈国梁(24岁)表示：“唱歌就和读书一样，天份加努力才会得到100%的效果。当中，天份只占有30%而努力是剩余的70%。”周遭或许有人不须上课就有把动人的

歌声，但创办“音乐诊所(Music Clinic)”的陈彼得(42岁)认为歌唱课程也对他们有所帮助。

陈彼得老师表示：“如果本身有天份、已会唱歌，上一些课程可以让你更了解音乐的基本知识。再说唱歌是需要不断地练习，所以如果平时没有特定的时间来练习，就可以利用每星期一两次的课程来练习。对已会唱歌的人来说也会有很大的帮助。”

毕业后，工作前或许可以给自己这3个月的时间上歌唱课程，提升、充实自

己，或许可以从中发现自己的潜能以及理想职业。

“音乐之道”的另一位创办人及导师，林梓炯(22岁)说道：“唱歌是松懈身心的最好方式之一，不管你属于什么年龄层都能学习。它也是一门艺术，不论是在社交方面或是未来职业上都有可能派上用场。”

和音乐脱离不了关系的职业就包括：歌手、歌唱导师、音乐制作人、音乐创作人等等。

陈彼得老师也认为：“唱歌算是一种良好的生活习惯，可以让人修身养性。上了3个月的歌唱课程就可以学到音乐的基本知识。这包括：音准、节奏、丹田发音以及舞台表演。”

许多音乐学校的班类分为组群班以及单人班。陈彼得老师解释，它们的分别在于：组群班的一个半小时学习时间与需与一班人分享，但单人就有一小时的个人学习时间。但是，组群班可以练胆识、培养自信以及互相切磋技艺，因为须在多人面前唱歌。所以，如果希望在短时间学多一点，而不喜欢与多人一起学习就可以选择单人班，喜欢表现、需要练胆的学生就比较适合上组群班。

新加坡音乐学校不少，要怎么挑选适合自己的学校并不容易。我们应该抱着认真的态度来学习音乐，所以选择音乐学校绝不能马虎。‘校园Superstar’的评判之一——陈彼得老师，给我们以下指点：

1. 不能单靠学校的知名度
2. 一定要对学校、导师做足背景调查
3. 要考虑学校的环境是否适合自己
4. 以学校的名誉和导师的专业水准断定价钱是否合理

如真有兴趣学歌艺，千万要记得做好准备功夫才上门拜师。■

有话说!

有话不怕说，就怕没得说！Tribune以街访的方式征求您对一些热门话题的意见和看法。

这一期的话题：你毕业后最想做些什么来松懈精神？■

“我会想到夏威夷去吹吹海风，晒晒太阳，接近大自然会给我一种很自在的感觉。”

—林吉顺，19岁，二年级机电一体化工程系

“我会去学日语，那是我的兴趣，只是念书时一直没时间投入。”

—李坤宝，18岁，二年级商务系

“我会约几个朋友到度假村去，那会是个很好的叙旧机会。”

—余丽虹，20岁，二年级资讯科技系

“进修‘吉它’吧，在念书时学过一点，希望可以在毕业后更提升自己对于音乐的认识，而且音乐也是很好的一种松懈方式。”

—陈佩珊，20岁，二年级会计系

“我认为在家里好好休息是最好的松懈方式。”

—余文耀，19岁，二年级建筑与地产系

“阅读一些跟中华文化有关的书籍，让自己更充实。因为平常上课都是在赶功课所以没有时间仔细地阅读。”

—陈清兰，20岁，一年级中文系

“我想去日本旅游吧，我欣赏那里特别的文化而一直没机会去，毕业后是最适当。”

—梁俊伟，19岁，二年级互联网与通信系

“大概是到香港去旅行吧，那里很好玩，很多东西买。”

—黄雪钦，19岁，二年级大众传媒系

“应该会和朋友到较远的国家旅游，或者追随兴趣投入一些舞蹈的活动。”

—麦嘉思，18岁，二年级会计系

“我想我会找朋友出来做运动，聚在一起玩吧。”

—李忠正，19岁，二年级建筑与地产系

“约几个朋友出来一起尽情地玩电脑游戏。”

—陈安文，18岁，二年级生物科技系

“我会在家里看电视节目，因为在家里是最轻松自在的。”

—任惠燕，19岁，二年级商务系

“我想我会去学空手道吧，因为可以健身、学防卫，读书时时间很难配合。”

—洪溢荣，20岁，二年级化学工程系

“我会和几个朋友到游轮上度假，那里可以吹海风，可以游泳还有魔术表演看，我的几个朋友都没上过游轮，所以可以乘毕业后去松懈一番。”

—许嘉莹，19岁，二年级会计系

“约朋友打通宵麻将，因为我们都很喜欢。”

—江依玲，19岁，二年级商务系



SPEAK UP: Good body language and confidence will capture the attention of your audience but content is no less important. (Photo: Low Youjin)

Conquer Your Fear Of Public Speaking

BY SIMREN KAUR PANOO
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It is common knowledge that public speaking is one of the biggest fears we have in life.

However, in a competitive and global market such as ours, where presentations are a part of everyday work culture, basic oral presentation skills are practically a survival tool.

Nithya Ramasamy, 19, a final-year Financial Services student from Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) attributes her presentation skills to a special workshop she attended at her secondary school. The trainers at the workshop were professional speech-coaches.

"I learnt so many things like making eye-contact with the audience, the correct tone to use and also the manner that should be used when speaking. At first it was frightening standing up there to give a speech but I got over it."

The course she attended, however, was an expensive one that was heavily subsidised by the school. Nithya is extremely appreciative of what she's learnt as she's managed to use her skills while in school and is confident the skills will help her with her career.

But there is a less expensive way to brush up your skills.

Ms Ang Sin Sing, a public relations lecturer at Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) suggested, "For a new graduate of NP who has not had any formal training in public speaking, I think the best way to learn would be to join a Toastmasters Club."

The Toastmasters Club is an international non-profit organisation whose members meet monthly to learn and practice all aspects of public-speaking. There are 156 clubs in Singapore across the island, including one in NP.

Ms Ang, herself a former member, attributes her public speaking skills to what she learnt at the club.

"The club has both regular members, such as myself, as well as professionals who evaluate and mentor all participants during the monthly meetings. This is very useful as you get the critical feedback that you need to improve from your mistakes."

But what about those who even fear speaking to small groups of people?

Ms Ang lets on that the best way to overcome this would be to, "Start small. There are so many places for you to speak up. When people ask you a question, answer them confidently. Be the first to put

up your hand and offer your opinion.

"Build up from there by taking these first few baby steps."

Although people naturally fear criticism or being put down for what they say, Ms Ang advises looking for opportunities to speak, whether at your social club, societies or even religious groups. Volunteering yourself for presentations or speeches that your group needs to deliver is another good way to improve.

"The fear is always there but the more you speak and the more opportunities you get to speak, the more comfortable you'll get," she said.

Mrs Cordelia Fernandez-Lee, a speech communication lecturer at NP, fully agrees with Ms Ang about grabbing all opportunities to practise.

"Practice doesn't just mean going through the points in your head. It means physically repeating your speech out loud."

Physical preparation for any speech is also as vital as stress can affect a person's performance during a presentation.

Mrs Lee added, "Stress usually shows in the form of excessive perspiring, scrounged up shoulders, stiffness etc. and these usually show during a presentation... The best way to curb this problem is to physically warm up before your presentation."

From her experience, people usually only start to get better during the presentation so the best method is to warm-up beforehand.

Her personal method is to "Pace up and down or shake your hands out so as to get rid of any stress or pent-up energy. When the actual time comes for you to present, your body language will be perfect."

Her key tips to accomplishing a successful presentation include preparing yourself in the right frame of mind, ensuring that you are completely ready to present as well as being confident and comfortable with the speech or presentation.

Only then will you truly be ready to present it well.

Ultimately, both lecturers agree that self-confidence is the key factor to becoming a good public speaker.

Self-confidence will definitely show up during a presentation, be it through the speaker's body language or through his/her manner of delivering his speech.

Presenters should have faith, not only in themselves, but in their speech too, which requires you to make sure that your content is worth listening to. ■

Dress For Job Search Success



UP FOR HIRE: What you wear to an interview does make a difference but employers take other aspects into consideration as well. (Picture: Courtesy of Mr Robin Yee)



BY SHAUN CHRIS TEO
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the same attire."

- Teo Heng Lam
Director, TPIS Associates Pte. Ltd.

You might think that your image is only important when you're applying for a glamorous front-line job, but with the job market being as competitive as it is, can we afford to take chances?

Tribune decided to send two photos of the same job applicant to a few companies and asked what the person's chances are of getting a job if he turned up for their interview dressed either casually, as the first person, on the left, or formally. ■

"Assuming we had a position open for the post of Floor Manager, we would not hire the first person. A candidate for an interview at a hotel should know and understand that proper dressing is a requirement, and that if he has to turn up for work in a suit, he also has to turn up for an interview in a suit. It's something that doesn't need to be spelt out. The second candidate, assuming he is a different person, is dressed acceptably. However, whether we hire him will depend on whether he passes our interviewer's judgment in the interview."

- Rachel Lim
HR Executive @ Mandarin Hotel

"My company [which deals with cabling and internet technologies] does not enforce such strict regulations on dress code and I don't either. Simply put, as long as [the employee] isn't scruffy or messy, it's okay. I go to work in formal clothes, just a shirt and pants, no tie or blazer except for meetings, but I don't expect my staff to do the same as I do or report for work daily in

"We aren't sticklers at SoundBuzz. However, we do expect our employees to turn up in respectable attire. The guy in the first picture wouldn't have got any job at all, except as an intern, assuming he's a student. If he turned up in formal wear like the second picture, however, I think he would be even more well dressed than the interviewer! We don't emphasise formal dressing as all our dealings with customers are mostly through the Internet, so something semi-formal would suffice."

- Jason Teo
Management Executive, SoundBuzz

"It depends on the position they're applying for... If [what] they're wearing... simply isn't appropriate, if they take it as Adecco is just an agency, then of course we won't be too happy with them, and whether they get the job is up to us. However, a person who turns up in a blazer and full formal wear might be overdressed for a temp job. If he is applying for a permanent position, then I think the [applicant] should dress appropriately."

- Shirley Chua
Ops Executive, recruitment agency Adecco

"At the end of the day, it depends on the person's attitude. If the person wearing jeans has a good attitude and is willing to change their appearance to suit the organisation, I will consider hiring the person."

- Sandra Subner
Senior Manager, Div of Medicine, SGH

Travelling On A Tight Budget



BUDGET TRAVEL TIPS: Hang out where backpackers do and you will slash your travelling budget significantly. (Picture: Courtesy of Chan Cheong Xin)

BY YUEN YI YING
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Now that school's out, you're free to travel overseas. **Tribune** lets you in on budget travel tips that will come in handy for the adventurous student.

The key to budget travel is extensive planning, which helps to reduce mistakes too costly to remedy. It also lets you make the most of your trip by letting you know what's worth seeing and doing.

Besides reading guidebooks, you can do your research by reading forums where people who've been to various countries post their thoughts, speaking with friends and family, asking a local and by scouring the Internet for other sources.

Popular blogger Adrianna Tan, 20, a second-year Singapore Management University (SMU) student better known as Popagandhi, who travels two to four

times a year, mostly in Asia, doesn't believe in under preparing. She said, "As I prepare to go to a place, I make sure I have all the information in my head, to the point that sometimes my travel companion wonders since I 'know so much, doesn't it feel like you've already been there?'"

Some aspects of the trip also require you to act long before you go. A visa may take up to two weeks to process according to Chan Brothers' Visa Chart, your lodging and tickets need to be booked early, especially if you plan to fly during peak periods like holidays or when major conventions or events are being held. Walk-in prices are always much higher than if you've booked through e-mail or telephone.

Ultimately, budgeting for a cheap trip depends on how flexible you are. Ms Debbie Ng, 25, marketing executive for STA Travel said, "We actually have students that take the bus all the way from Singapore to

Thailand."

If you're going to be backpacking, Adrianna suggests that you do as she does and, "fly into a country at one point, go around by trains and buses, and then fly out of that country, or a neighbouring country, through another point."

Budget airlines like Tiger Airways and Valuair, which has merged with Jet Star Asia, offer great prices for trips around the region. For example, a promo flight to Phuket on Jetstar Asia costs as low as \$9 and a flight to Bangkok could cost you just \$29, without taxes. Remember that they have higher prices, comparable to commercial airlines during peak seasons.

The main difference between travelling on a budget and commercial airline, according to Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Mass Communication (MCM) student Kimberly Shen, 19, "The seats are obviously smaller and not as comfortable, but it's fine for short flights." She added, "You've to buy food off the food cart but it isn't worth it because the items are usually over-priced."

During peak seasons, it can be hard to find a budget hotel vacancy. The cherry blossom season in Japan and autumn in Connecticut, America are good examples of peak seasons specific to certain countries.

Hotels and airlines also tend to charge more on weekends, so avoid them if you can. If you're planning a day-trip, try taking the last bus or train of the day out and spend the night travelling. Doing this will save you one night's worth of accommodation.

Budget hotels don't have to be flea-ridden slums either. For example, you can get a three-star hotel in Bangkok, The Residence, for S\$10 a night. Staying close to public transportation or the business district will cost more, so decide how much you're willing to pay for convenience. Some hotels offer a cheaper rate if you stay longer, so find out if your place of accommodation offers this.

Adrianna said, "While travelling to places like islands and mountains... Air conditioning... in fact, causes more discomfort with dry skin and eyes! I just opt for fan rooms, with bathrooms, of course, which lets me save more than half the price." You might also get them to provide breakfast, early check-in and late check-out for you to stretch your dollar further.

Try looking at backpackers' inns and hostels as well. You may have to share a room with strangers and deal with a common toilet and cooking facilities but staying at such places greatly reduces the cost of your accommodation. Another option is to travel with a tour agency, because they get a better rate for hotel rooms. And if you know someone who stays where you're headed, especially pricey cities such as Tokyo or New York City, you can always bunk in with him/her and save a lot.

A useful tip for all under the age of 25 is to sign up for an International Youth Travel Card at the STA Travel website. For \$20, it entitles you to discounts on "travel, rail passes, accommodation, telecommunications, currency exchange, shopping, cultural venues and museums in over 50 countries" says the website. Even if you don't want the card, check out their site for offers for student and youth travellers.

Adrianna said her biggest tip is to forgo "...generic souvenirs and gifts... [they] take up the bulk of the budget, and baggage space. It sounds like you're being cheap, but nobody wants any more of those 'My friend went to the Angkor Wat and all I got was a lousy shirt' t-shirts, especially when they're at tourist-rip-off prices!"

Her final reminder: "Don't let your entire travel experience be governed by not wanting to pay more, or not getting ripped off... That's the most important bit that lots of travellers, budget or not, tend to forget. You're there to have fun, not to make a home video of your travel experience." ■

Forget The City, Try the Outback

BY NATALIA SENG
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Instead of going to a beach resort to tan or to a city to shop, some youths have embraced the barren outback and found how good it was to get away.

The North West region of Western Australia, or outback, is mainly wide open desert land. Pretty dry stuff, literally, until you realise it is Australia's wilderness, boasting nature in abundance, in its unadulterated glory, in wildlife, rivers, deserted beaches, gorges and sand dunes.

Kaminni Kumar, 19, a first-year Nanyang Technological University (NTU) undergrad who was there last October said, "It's a good experience, I appreciated the change of environment... being in wide, open spaces made me feel free and taught me how to live in a different setting."

Perth's similarity to Singapore makes your adjustment less drastic and getting around is a breeze even if you don't drive. Kaminni said, "Hotels are located within the city area so you won't have to worry about travelling from the suburban area. They also have a highly efficient bus service, Transperth." At <http://www.transperth.wa.gov.au/>, you can even plan your bus journeys before leaving home.

If your budget is tight, for example A\$150 [S\$181] a day, outback tours that take you up to Monkey Mia are the

shorter four-day tours but fun-filled and more affordable. An average outback safari package to Monkey Mia costs A\$500, including accommodation, food and entry fee to the National Parks. Throughout the tour, you will not have to spend money unless you buy supplies or souvenirs. Other outback safari tours can take you up to Exmouth and Ningaloo reef (seven-day tour) or up to Broome (13-day tour). These tours cost between A\$300 and A\$1,300 more than the Monkey Mia tour. Prices have been taken from websites of outback safari tour companies. You can book these at Perth city's main information centre at Murray Street Mall.

Sign up for one and you'll find yourself bouncing in a small four-wheel drive vehicle, whose first stop is The Pinnacles. These limestone formations stick out of the ground for unknown reasons. Their conical shapes and irregular sizes are intriguing.

Next, you head to the gorges through the Kalbarri National Park. Kaminni said, "This was the most exciting part for me. We had to climb all the way down the gorges, about 200 metres. Along the way we saw real [foot]prints of ancient animals that roamed the land... it was a real workout to climb back up!"

Don't be daunted if you're not fit enough to climb the Gorges, though, you decide if you can or want to do it.

Along the way, you can stop along empty and white-sand beaches and stores to stock up on supplies. Kaminni said, "Shell Bay was my favourite beach. You can walk about 200 metres into the ocean and the water would only be at your knees. The entire beach had no sand; it was naturally filled with shells."

As you end up at Monkey Mia, the nature-lover in you will rejoice, as wild dolphins come close to the shore and interact with guides.

You can also go out to sea to view dugongs, also called sea cows. Kaminni said, "I've never been so close to such wildlife before. It was exciting and an experience that I truly treasure. It's not every day in Singapore that you get to come so close to these animals unless you work in the zoo."

On the way back, the package allows you to try sand dunes. These mounds of sand rise up to about 10 metres and are fun to slide down. The guide provides you with sandboards to slide and there is no danger. The sand is incredibly soft so climbing up will give your thighs a work out.

There are enough activities to see the outback in a whole new light. But Kaminni's best takeaway is, "the way you learn to manage yourself. You have no choice but to be independent. You have to cook your own food (with help from the guide), you sleep in dormitories/Aussie swags/sleeping bags,



Natural Occurring Wonders: The Pinnacles, one of the most popular attractions in Perth, Australia. (Picture: Courtesy of STA Travel)

learn to interact with other tourists and the change of environment is indescribable. Your encounter with nature will definitely teach you to appreciate being in an urban society more."

To book a reasonably priced trip to Australia, some will turn to agencies that specialise in packages for students, such as STA Travel. Its travel advisor Ms Debbie Ng, said, "the travel packages that we put together are tailor-packaged, taking into consideration the traveller's preference, price priority... and most importantly, reason for travel."

You can apply for an Australian visa online in minutes. Go to <http://www.eta.immi.gov.au/> and click on "Apply for ETA". You will need to pay A\$20 for registration, through credit card. Or you can apply for it through the travel agency, while paying for your air ticket. ■

Shooting From A Different Perspective

BY LOW YOUJIN
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If you've ever admired the works of Ansel Adams, Russell Wong or other top-notch photographers and lamented that you're handicapped from not having high-end equipment, it's time to know that a point-and-shoot camera, shouldn't just be relegated to social events.

According to Mr Steven Yee, the Honorary Secretary of the Photographic Society Singapore (PSS), producing a good photograph with an idiot-proof camera is "possible, with [proper] composition, appropriate use of colours or shapes or subject matter".

Read on and we'll introduce you to the basics that you need to get started.

Basic Tech Aspects Of Taking A Photo

While Mr Yee admitted that point and shoot cameras have limitations, in terms of the amount of control it gives the user when compared with a professional camera, what it does offer is usually good enough for the amateur photographers.

Mr Joseph Nair, a freelance photographer who has been shooting weddings for close to two years, also agreed that the point and shoot camera is a good way for potential photographers to start off. "It makes it easier for you to shoot people on the streets because its small size makes it less aggressive than a big professional camera. People will think you're a tourist and are less likely to avoid you or take notice of you, if that's what you want."

You could shoot on the auto mode alone, but where's the fun in that? Apart from letting you determine the exposure (how bright or dark your pictures are) of your photo, a camera with a manual override function, which most point and shoot cameras have as the M on the dial, allows you to be more creative.

A fast shutter speed (1/300 of a second or faster) could be used for freezing a motion shot. Conversely, a still subject could be taken with a slow shutter speed (anything under 1/20 of a second) to express motion when the camera's focus is moved away from the subject.

Of course, when you play around with the shutter, be sure to balance it by adjusting the aperture (this determines the amount of light that enters through the camera's iris).

The general rule of thumb is that when you increase the shutter speed, your aperture needs to be smaller and vice versa.

The aperture allows you to determine the depth of field (DOF) of your photos. The DOF determines how much of the photo is in focus. For example, a shallow DOF means that only the subject is focussed, while the surrounding is blurred. A greater DOF means that not only will your subject be in focus, but so will its surroundings.

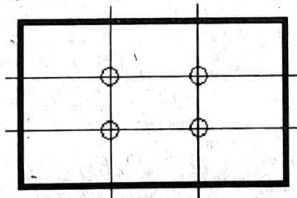
An aperture value of around F3.5, allows more light in and results in a shallow DOF. A larger aperture value of F8 gives you greater DOF. Neither is better necessarily, it all depends on you want to achieve.

When Shooting, Look Out For

There really are no limitations to what you can shoot, especially since you'll be shooting with a digital camera, there's no need to worry about film. Shoot as much as you want, wherever you want. While it may not sound professional, even poor photographers are likely to find at least a couple of good photos from a batch of 50.

Mr Nair added that the compact size of the point and shoot camera allows you to bring it anywhere. "Whip it out when you're waiting for someone. Short of sports, you could explore different forms of photography with your available surroundings like macro, abstract or candid (street) photography."

Before you press the shutter, though, remember that it's good to frame up your subject according to the rule of thirds.



GOLDEN RULE: Subject of the photo should be placed within one of the four imaginary points indicated. (Illustration: Low Youjin)



PICTURE PERFECT: You don't need a fancy camera to take scenic shots. This shot of Lower Seletar Reservoir was taken at 7am with just a Canon Powershot A70. (Picture: Low Youjin)

Not only will it make your photo more "pleasing" to look at, it also balances the subject and the rest of its surroundings.

If you decide to shoot indoors, Mr Yee advises caution: "For shooting inside a commercial building such as shopping centre, it is advisable to seek the owner's permission. It is about property rights."

If you do get the go ahead, however, building architecture can make for some very nice photos.

Post-shooting

Depending on how hardworking you are, you can opt to touch up your photos digitally to enhance them further.

Photoshop is the weapon of choice for the serious digital photographer, though other programmes such as Picasa- a free photo album software - can do an equally good job.

With these programmes, it is possible to properly expose a photo that's a tad too dark, remove blemishes on the face of your subject or simply to give the photo punchier colours.

When you're done editing, it's all a matter of storage and presentation. Do you

want to keep it online and post it for your friends to see on your flickr (www.flickr.com) account? Or do you want to have a physical copy of it?

Generally, most photo developing studios do offer services to print out digital photos. However, those who are fussy with the quality of prints usually opt for specialised printers such as Ruby Photo at Peninsula Plaza.

Serious About Photography?

If you're really serious about photography though, Mr Yee recommends enrolling in courses to get yourself started.

"PSS has photo clinics and it's free for its members every Friday night by the instructors. PSS membership is open to public," he said.

PSS has courses from basic to advance level. Mr Yee encourages beginners to sign up for the Digital Basic Photography Course costing \$244 for 12 lessons of two-hour duration for non-members.

Ultimately, photography is a technical subject that's hard to learn through books alone. Actual practice is required.

So just start shooting! ■

What's Next? A How-Not-To Guide From The Movies

BY ADELINE PANG
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As graduation approaches, you may try to model your life after popular graduation movies to find some much-needed direction for the next step. But looking at four Hollywood offerings, **Tribune** finds that there's danger in your life imitating art.

Textbook Movie: The Graduate

Aim: To get laid- by an older woman.

Most people know the infamous scene in this classic coming-of-age film by Mike Nichols, when Mrs Robinson (Anne Bancroft), the wife of his father's business partner, seduces fresh college grad Benjamin Braddock (Dustin Hoffman). Any graduate can identify with the feelings of anxiety in the movie's tagline: "This is Benjamin. He's a little worried about his future." While this well shot 1967 film touches on subjects that ring home, such as inner turmoil and insecurities in our lives, its moral is to face life and its scary decisions bravely.

Don't do this unless... you're prepared to forgo dinners or any kind of social interaction with your wife's family.

Textbook Movie: American Pie

Aim: To get laid- by hot young chicks.

The movie's tagline, "There's something about your first piece" sums up the gist of what the movie, and American popular culture, are obsessed about- sex. In this smarter-than-it-looks 1999 movie, four high school guys are more focussed on how to lose their virginity before graduation, than how to deal with the academic challenges of college. On the road to their first sexual encounter, they understand there really is more to life than sex.

Don't do this unless... you really intend to make other life plans after doing "it".

Textbook Movie: Legally Blonde

Aim: Conquering the corporate world while looking fab.

Legally Blonde is about a seemingly bimbotic blonde sorority queen Elle Woods (Reese Witherspoon) who regains her dignity and more after being dumped just before graduation. Her goals in life, which were basically to look great and marry her boyfriend switch to looking great, getting her ex-boyfriend back and marrying him after she gets dumped. She miraculously gets into Harvard, where her life goals then

change to best her heartless ex. Now, she wants to be a lawyer and empower women she meets along the way.

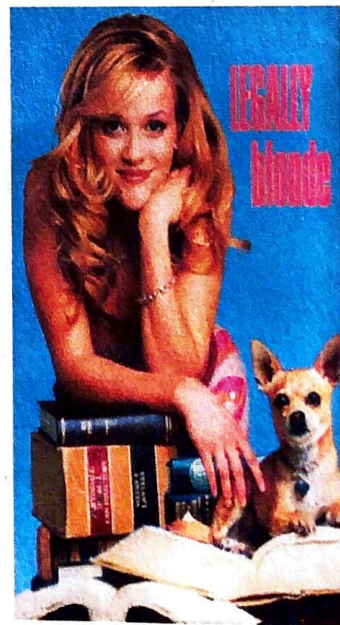
Don't do this unless... you're blonde.

Textbook Movie: Old School

Aim: To throw everything you've learnt from books and take uncalculated risks, because they'll be 10 times more fun.

This 2003 graduation movie is different from those listed before. Events take place years after the main characters have graduated and when all of them have either started families or are holding stable jobs. Three friends, Mitch (Luke Wilson), Beanie (Vince Vaughn) and Frank (Will Farrell), disillusioned with their lives because of recent happenings (like Mitch walking in on his girlfriend having an orgy with strangers) decide that the only form of escape is to relive their college days by setting up a fraternity on a local college campus. Despite the old geezers behind this new fraternity, it enjoys a huge following, and by the end of the movie, the three men have become campus legends.

Don't do this unless... you and your pals have enough "cool" to win over an entire school. ■



BLONDE AMBITION BOMBS: Aping the movies only pays off for very few. (Illustration: S Meenachil)

义安举办第一届全国校际方块精灵锦标赛

周丽美报道
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在游戏之余同时学习华文的确会让来自各所中学的学生获益不浅。义安理工学院人文学院中文系与一家名为Colorwise的公司将在今年二月联合举办这样一场中拼字游戏,《第一届全国校际方块精灵锦标赛》。这是人文学院中文系第一次举办类似的活动。

《方块精灵》(Creative Tile Genie)是由安德顺中学的一位华文老师,张秀慧发明的拼字游戏。到目前已有许多间中学的学生尝试过这个游戏了。

中文学会主席,陈韵蕾(17岁)表示这是Colorwise主动邀请中文系和他们一

同合作举办的一项比赛。中文系在这场活动中将负责组织整个比赛的活动及提供比赛的场所。

这个中文拼字比赛主要是为中学生举办的。韵蕾解释:“这个游戏类似Scrabble(英文文字游戏),也类似玩麻将。”游戏中指的“方块”就有如麻将牌,但这些“麻将牌”上则会印上汉字的不同偏旁部首。每一桌子会有四组同学参加,每组由两位学生组成。拼成最多字的一组,得分就最高。得分越高,就越有机会进入下一局,继续比赛。参赛组合里的两人将分配工作,其中一个负责摸牌,另一个负责翻查词典,看看有什么偏旁部首是可以拼在一起而成为一字的。

负责这项比赛的中文系讲师,南治国博士(37岁),为我们讲解这个游戏意义。他说道:“首先,因为中文系刚刚成立,我们要组织一些稍微可以有利影响的活动来提升人文学院和中文系的知名度。我想这是一个很大的目地。第二,我们通过这个活动也让(中文系)学生们有机会参与系里面的一些活动,也提升他们自己的组织能力。”

人文学院院长,杨静云女士用英文表示:将来有兴趣想当华文教师的中文系学生,可以从这项比赛中学习到一种创新的教学方式与学者互动。

除此之外,南老师也表示这项活动是一种“响引新加坡教育部的一种耗昭”。他说道:“很多学生觉得华文很难学,(所以通过这个游戏),学生们将可以以捉摸不同的偏旁部首,怎么样把它拼成字来。通过这种方式让他们觉得汉字也有些是活的,



学生们比一比,看谁拼的字最多。(照片:Colorwise)

不是那么死板板,那么难的”。

杨院长也认为:同类的电脑游戏能让学生们在自己的空闲时间随着自己的步伐学习华语,但它无法让学生与学生互相切磋以及交流。《方块精灵》就能做到这一点。

这项游戏显然的对中学生可说是益处良多,他们不只会赢取价值超过2000元的奖品也能够增添知识。

自己曾玩过《方块精灵》的韵蕾觉得:“这个游戏最有趣的部分就是和同

在一组的参赛者合作以及培养默契的过程。”另外,她也表示参赛者互相帮忙把字拼在一起也是相当有趣,相当精彩。

到目前为止有大约100名学生会报名参加这项比赛。本校中文系的其中32名学生会充当前裁判计分员,帮忙确保参赛者没有犯规。

这次的游戏比赛只限于中学生参与,但人文学院中文系也有意为理工学院学生和初级学院的学生们举办类似的活动。

《第一届全国校际方块精灵锦标赛》在2月11日,本校大礼堂,二楼举行。■



义安校园再度星闪闪

陈宁曦报道
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何维建后,义安理工学院再出现一位耀眼之星。她是新传媒电视新连续剧《星闪闪》的第一女主角-阿黎,本名-姚懿珊。

懿珊在本校念的是工商资讯科技系。爱漂亮的地,曾想自己创业,当服装店的老板娘。除此之外,她也曾想过当老师、建筑师和空姐。懿珊就像一般少女一样爱织梦,直到近五年来,一向喜欢唱歌、表演的懿珊,才确定了自己的人生目标-当一名艺人。为了迈向演艺生涯,懿珊积极地参加了一些比赛,表现优异的她在群芳中脱颖而出。2004年的“Teens Model Search”她首次获得冠军。

在义安念书时,懿珊也和维建一样选择了“创作访”为她的课外活动。在创作访里,她再次肯定了自己的兴趣所在-唱歌、创作。懿珊说道:“创作访给予我一些创作的知识,现在我也才能有信心地为自己的歌曲填词。”懿珊忙着赶功课偶尔会牺牲课外活动的时间,所以现在的她后悔当时没积极地参与创作访的活动。

在义安第二年的第一学期接近尾声的时候,懿珊面临了人生的一大抉择。她得到了经纪公司的赏识。要踏出演艺生涯的第一步,就必须签下合约。懿珊心里挣扎了整整一个礼拜再与父母商量,得到父母的支持之后,她决定放弃社会最关注的文凭,选择把握这个千载难逢的机会,追逐她的梦想。

十九岁的懿珊比一般青年们早踏入社会。要她拿读书和工作做个比较,她说:还是读书比较轻松。她表示,在拍第一部连续剧《星闪闪》时,整个过程很辛苦,因为常常为了赶戏,一天睡不到几个小时。但,懿珊并无怨言。懿珊说道:“拍戏不是一个人的事,大家-包括导演、助理、演员等也与自己热夜,所以辛苦的不是自己。想到大家都在尽力地把戏拍好,就觉得应该尽自己的本分。”

懿珊也说道:“拍戏虽辛苦,但也带给我不少快乐。能学习表演技巧,不是每



前次义安懿珊首次登上荧幕为女主角。(照片:Future Stage Artists UK Asia)

个人都有机会。当在荧幕上看见大家的成果时,总会有些小小的满足感。我很幸运,遇到的这班幕后工作人员,都很友善,所以,就算天天工作,还是觉得非常开心。”

懿珊不后悔自己的选择。她坚定地说道:“如果让我再选一次,我仍然会选择演艺事业,因为这是我的梦想,它让我觉得生活多姿多彩。我就是喜欢这种每天都过得很充实的感觉。”

懿珊虽享受演戏的过程,但相比之下,她还是比较喜欢唱歌。懿珊表示唱歌才是她的主业,她的第一张个人专辑也将在今年内发行。她目前正参与一部新偶像剧《把爱寄给你》(暂名)的演出,其他演员包括邱泽、白薇秀等。《星闪闪》将在3月,8频道播映。

懿珊已找到了属于她自己的天空,让我们一起祝福这位勇于追逐梦想,努力为自己的将来打拼的校友吧。■

心有“宁曦”“佳言佳触”



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正在思考我这一篇编辑该写什么时,我收到了另一位编辑的编辑稿。细读慢嚼,电光火石间捕捉到的思绪竟是那么熟悉,我恍然大悟,她在里头诉说的竟是我想说的话。也许,这就是大家所谓的:默契。

朋友之间相处久了,自然就会培养出默契来。这时,我回想起了三年来,与朋友和同学们度过的日子。这些回忆,可是要陪伴我一辈子,的。那...记忆里最重要的人呢?

记得在第一年,我和几位好友同组做专题作业,最后,五人组,也只剩两个人熬通宵,赶在天亮之前赶完剩余的工作。听起来,仿佛有些不公平。当时情况闹得很僵,差一点儿连朋友都没得做。第三年时,与同班同学做另一份专题作业,刚开始一切还好,但后来因为沟通上的问题,搞得组里的几位同学碰到面连招呼都不打。感情越好,往往越难做事。因为你要顾的不只是成果,你还得考虑朋友之间的友情,一起做事,难免会产生摩擦。

和好友同时当上了报社的中文编辑,工作中我们当然有不认同对方的时候;我们也曾与写稿的记者意见不合。但我们都学会了:硬碰硬解决不了问题,这只会把友谊陷入冷宫。

有时,感情闹僵问题并不在于谁对、谁错,而是因为大家没收拾好自己的情绪。正所谓:“忍一时风平浪静,退一步海阔天空。”把友情搁浅在一次的作业里,并不值得的。■



黄佳仪著
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从小到大,我都习惯与周围的人说华语。中学的英文老师不知费了多少精神让我们在英文课上只用英语与同学交谈。老师必须对我们展开惩罚,用文章甚至罚款来制止我们在班上以母语交谈。进入义安理工学院大众传播系后,我很惊讶地发现我所说的华语竟会得到英语的回复,能听到回答已经很好了,有些同学甚至听不懂我在说什么,用英语也无法回答我所问的问题。

来到这样一个以英语为主的环境,我起初还真不知如何应付。说实话,我没问题,但当同学们谈起西方娱乐圈的事,我也只听过几个名字而已。害怕大家觉得我肤浅而遭人鄙视,我则选择沉默。同学们常说让我安静,但我心想该谈陈冠希的新电影、杨丞琳的新歌时会有谁会懂?就这样,我的自信直线下降,逐渐觉得不管在哪一方面华语始终是二等语言、在英语之下。

这两年来,我不断地挣扎不断地探索。当上Tribune的中文编辑,让自己获得肯定。加上找到了几个知心好友,渐渐的我不再沉默,也找回自信。不管与谁交谈,爱用华语,就用华语。听得懂,很好。听不懂,我再解释。抱着那种“Cindy Crawford?我不懂。林志玲,你懂吗?”的态度。结果,我并没遭受歧视,而且同学还要和我学华语。原来一直只有自己在排挤自己。华语从来就不是二等语言,精通双语才更胜一酬。■

宁曦上

佳仪上

Expressing Poetry Through Street Drama

BY NAZURAH MOHD MAJEED
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When you have 20 people with blotchy white paint on their faces, dressed in glittery bows, vests and bowler hats approaching strangers at Ngee Ann City Civic Plaza, you can be sure heads will turn.

The idea behind the spectacle on 7 and 8 January was not to shock but to showcase the talents of students from the Self-Expression in Drama and Poetry and Appreciating Literary Works classes in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP). These are modules offered by the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS).

Said IS lecturer Mr Desmond Wee Shao Min, "Well, we wanted to show the public the applied IS modules. It just makes no sense to have a booth. We felt that this would provide the public with an idea about what IS is all about. We also wanted to showcase IS as a creative part of Ngee Ann."

He and fellow lecturer Ms Sharon Ismail, guided the group of students who performed mimes and managed to involve the public in helping the students to create a poem, by rearranging words that were displayed on pieces of paper placed on the walkway.

To keep the crowd fascinated, the students also improvised by striking weird poses outside Takashimaya Shopping Centre



POETRY IN MOTION: NP's IS students turned mimes at the Ngee Ann Civic Plaza, converting daily objects into instruments of literary expressions. (Picture: Low Youjin)

and changing these every five minutes.

Eric Lim Xiaowen, 19, a Business-Information Technology (BIT) student from Institute of Technical Education (ITE) Clementi, found the performance interesting and refreshing.

"It's not always that you see things like

this in public, so it definitely caught my attention. It's fun trying to figure out what they are trying to emulate in their different poses," he said.

Mr Wee added, "Improvisation is a very important element... because the students can apply this context to the world and they

learn how to adapt to their surroundings. I feel that the students benefited the most in this event because this is a self-exploration process [where] they get to play the role of being another."

Soh Kian Ming, 20, a final-year Business Studies (BS) student, took this experience as a chance for him to express himself and stand out from the crowd.

"Most people don't dare to be different. Even the society is not willing to accept change or uniqueness in people. When the paint was on my face, I could see the true colours of the people around me," Kian Ming said.

One of the challenges for Kian Ming was when Mr Wee told all the students to walk around the shopping mall alone and this process required Kian Ming to sum up all his courage.

"The people pretended not to see me when I [was walking] past or [looking] at them, but they [were laughing] at me behind my back... From here I learnt that [some] people are really fake," Kian Ming related.

Mr Wee was pleased with the students and the lessons they had learnt, though some of them felt humiliated by the experience.

"They do it not to impress others, but to impress themselves and they learnt that only after they had impressed themselves, others [would be] automatically impressed," he added. ■

NP Ambassadors Heat Up X!capade With Flash Mob

A Great Start For Genesis

BY BENJAMIN FONG
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The inaugural inter-poly drama festival, organised and staged in Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), may not have been a commercial success, but it was a professional one.

Genesis, the three-day festival hosted by Poly Stage F'Actor (PSF), sold between 80 to 100 tickets in NP for each day of performance, said a spokesperson.

On the other hand, according to Abdul Rahman, 18, production manager of PSF, "Some even bought season passes for \$12 which meant that they could see all five shows for the duration of the festival" held between 13 and 15 January, at NP's Lecture Theatre (LT) 28.

The second-year Business Information Technology (BIT) student and production manager of PSF, who helped conceptualise the theme, said, "We hope that Genesis will cultivate a love [for] theatre and performing arts among polytechnic students."

The festival, which featured five plays including three of PSF's productions: *Bottled Dreams*, *Hide It* and *The Office*, led to a healthy exchange of ideas and tips among drama club members and enthusiasts in NP, Singapore Polytechnic (SP) and Temasek Polytechnic (TP). Rahman added that PSF also approached Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) and Republic Polytechnic (RP) but due to some internal problems there, they could not make it for the festival.

Genesis, which took six months of planning and preparation fulfilled its secondary agenda to cultivate networking and "peer-to-peer" learning among polytechnic drama clubs, said PSF president Muhammad Mahadi Bin Jama Ludin, 23, a final-year Mass Communication (MCM) student.

Rahman agreed, "If there's no friendship, there's no chemistry, there's no drama," adding that Genesis helped them make new friends from the other polytechnics.

Rahman also hoped that "Genesis will open [NP students] to other aspects of

theatre and allow them to realise that [drama productions are not] just about acting."

Among those that enjoyed the festival was Audrey Teo, 23, a childcare centre teacher and NP alumna. She said, "Apart from a few technical hiccups, I thought they [PSF] put in a lot of effort and it showed."

As Genesis was the first event of its kind to be held in NP, Rahman anticipated that the drama festival would serve as a catalyst for more of such events.

The process of creating Genesis was not without challenges. Mahadi, who acted as the sales coordinator for the event, said "Of course transportation was an issue for us as some of the polytechnics like Temasek Poly [are] very far from [NP]."

Despite facing difficulties, Mahadi considered Genesis a qualified success in terms of invaluable knowledge gleaned from others. However, he was unsure if the event will be staged next year. "As I'm graduating this year, I'll leave it to the future president of PSF to decide," he said. ■



FUN IN A FLASH: NP ambassadors drawing attention from the crowd as they and other people spontaneously perform the chicken dance just outside Ngee Ann City. (Picture: Low Youjin)

BY NUR HIDAYAH SALAMAT
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When a whistle blew at 1.30pm on 8 January, a fairly large crowd at Ngee Ann City started pointing curiously at a large X!capade sign on the ground. After the second whistle, the participants performed the chicken dance and pretended nothing had happened after the dance was over.

Ladies and gentlemen, we've just been hit by a flash mob.

A flash mob, described as an inexplicable mob by Dictionary.com, refers to a group of people who communicate through the internet or SMS (Short Message Service) to plan a quick assembly in public, during which participants will engage in a bizarre act and disperse as quickly as they appear.

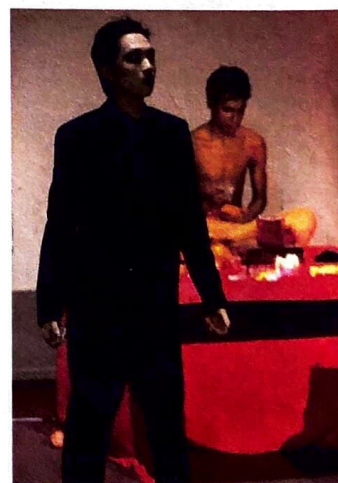
The act coordinated by the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) Ambassadors was possibly the first time such a publicity stunt was

employed by the school.

"Both the students and Corporate Communications [Office] had wanted to do something that would bring instant attention to X!capade. We felt that flash mob was it," explained officer-in-charge Mr Adrian Phuah.

Despite the unpredictable bouts of heavy rain, the flash mob was a success. "We even had passers-by who participated in the flash mob. Due to the fun we had from the first flash mob, we did another three during the evening at three different locations," gushed student ambassador Norhidayah Binte Abdul Rahim, 20, a final-year Mass Communication (MCM) student.

Mr Phuah was not surprised that it was successful. "What was key on our minds was for all to have fun and we knew that there will be people who would be happy to join in the fun. So there was no doubt that it will succeed," he said. ■



IN THE BEGINNING: Genesis, initiated by Poly Stage F'Actor, saw not an exodus but an exchange of theatrical talent among three polytechnics. (Picture: Low Youjin)

S.M.A.R.T.S: A Game With A Good Cause

BY G.DINESH KUMAR
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Singapore's first online charity game, S.M.A.R.T.S (Space Mission: A Reciprocal Treasure Search), a product developed entirely by Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP), hit the streets for the finals on 8 January at Ngee Ann City Civic Plaza as part of NP's Xscape outreach programme.

Guest-of-honour Ms Pam Hu, director of Community Relations and International Relations of the Media Development Authority (MDA), speaking at the prize-giving ceremony said, "This is a shining example that combines our youths' love of online gaming while giving something back to the community."

She continued, "What differentiates S.M.A.R.T.S from others is the emphasis on social responsibility where journalism

students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic, together with their teachers, have created this game to raise funds for charity."

The online general knowledge quiz show, initiated by School of Film & Media Studies (FMS) lecturer, Mr Robin Yee, 38, was a labour of love involving an interdisciplinary team of staff from the Teaching & Learning Centre, Mass Communication (MCM), Film, Sound & Video (FSV) and Infocomm Technology (ICT) lecturers, their students and alumni.

Some 2,500 questions, original storyline and music, animated characters and the website design, database and game engine programming, canvassing and event organisation were all handled in-house.

S.M.A.R.T.S rewards any player with \$1, from a pool of \$8,000 sponsored by corporate donors, for answering at least three consecutive questions correctly.

This \$1 is then given to one of three beneficiaries of the player's choosing.

Players from 118, or almost 70 per cent, of secondary schools in Singapore battled online for five places in the School category.

Together with another five finalists from the public category, the school players tackled the questions from 15 knowledge categories, fighting the clock for high scores.

Having played the game online in front of their computers all this while, contestants had to adapt to the game show format, which was modelled after the Who Wants To



Be a Millionaire? He said, "I'm really happy because I didn't expect to win... I was kind of nervous at first, but during the finals everyone knew each other in a way, since we played [the game together] in the semi-finals, so I was more relaxed."

Mr Yeo said, "[The game] was very fast-paced, although there were glitches here and there. But it's always exciting [to participate in something while it's] in development."

All S.M.A.R.T.S finalists were rewarded handsomely for their efforts, scoring 3G mobile phones, Z520i phones, iPod shuffles and MP3 players for themselves.

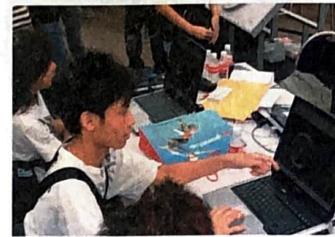
But most importantly, the three beneficiaries – The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund, Mainly I Love Kids (MILK), and The Choice Initiative (TCI) received the full \$8,000 pledged by sponsors, Lee Foundation and Royal Brothers Pte Ltd., meeting the initial goal set by the organisers, in just a few weeks.

The game is so addictive that at press time, the highest number of question a single contestant has attempted is 3,995, by a player from Whitley Secondary School.

Tribune readers get a lucky draw chance to win a Sony-Ericsson Z520i phone (worth \$500) sponsored by SingTel, by playing S.M.A.R.T.S until 31 March. ■



PLAYING IT SMART: The 10 finalists of S.M.A.R.T.S went home with most of the \$11,000 worth of prizes. [Pictures: Low Youjin]



Be a Millionaire? television series in front of an attentive crowd and witty gameshow host former YES 93.3 radio DJ, Mr Danny Yeo, a lecturer with NP's School of Humanities.

The game show format proved to be a challenge for some as 13-year-old Yong Zhi Yi, a secondary one student from Raffles Institution put it, "I was more nervous the second time, but overcame it by not reacting too much." Yong Zhi, the champion of the 'Schools' category took home a 3G handphone, SingTel subscription, Samsung MP3 player, all sponsored by SingTel, which put up more than \$10,000 worth of prizes for the game. He told **Tribune** that he was "very exhilarated" by the win.

In the 'Public' category, 25-year-old Edwin Tan, a National University of Singapore graduate, clinched the top spot.

Wannabe DJ-Idol 2006 Semi-Finals



WANNABE A DJ: Matthew Lin, one of the 15 contestants, trying to get into the finals by showcasing his confidence and charismatic presence. [Picture: Low Youjin]

BY AARON WILFRED
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The semi-finals of Wannabe DJ-Idol 2006 saw 15 talents from various secondary schools showcase their talents in front of about 300 people to compete for a place in the finals to be the first Campus DJ Idol.

The competition was held as part of Xscape, a Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) showcase of youth and talent, on 7 January

at Ngee Ann City Civic Plaza.

The panel of judges included ex-NP students Justin Ang from 987 FM and Jean Danker from Class 95FM as well as radio lecturer Ms Anita Kuan from NP's Mass Communication (MCM) course.

Unlike the previous three years of competition, this time a new "Idol" component was added to the competition.

Mr Ramakrishnan Yokanathan, a radio lecturer who advises campus radio

station Radio Heatwave, the competition organiser, explained, "After the American Idol phenomenon caught on around the world, Idol mania has become popular among the youth in Singapore. We wanted to... let the youths themselves show their talent on stage."

"Another reason is that the DJ persona nowadays hardly stays behind a console in a studio, they're always running around doing road shows or guest starring in television shows so stage presence is important."

Ahmad Faizal, 16, a student of Yuan Ching Secondary School, said, "Including the Idol component makes it harder for me as a contestant as I have to perform on a stage in front of so many people but it also makes it interesting since [I] can showcase what other talents I have besides being just a voice". He later made it to the finals.

The rainy conditions made it hard for the 15 semi-finalists who had to compete with the sound of the thunderous rain. Nevertheless, they managed to impress the judges and gain applause from their schoolmates in the audience.

Ms Kuan was happy with their enthusiasm. "Three or four of the contestants really stood out and I was really impressed with their youthful vigor," she said.

Final-year MCM student Cherie Ngo, the events manager for Radio Heatwave, was also impressed with the performances put up by the participants.

"The previous Wannabe competitions were mostly DJ competitions. Now that the Idol component was added and we put them on a stage to perform, it makes it a lot harder.

Yet they still managed to pull through and wow the crowd," said Cherie.

The final 10 were shortlisted based on judges' scores and the number of supporters who sent in a SMS (Short Messaging Service) for their favourite contestant.

"The good ones really shone through and it's a change of environment since it's the first time it's being held outside of NP. I could see the contestants really enjoying themselves jumping around and just let loose," Justin Ang said.

Qai Ser Zaini, 14, another Wannabe DJ-Idol finalist and student at Whitley Secondary School, was more confident about getting into the finals after pulling a crowd-pleasing rendition of Fort Minor's "Believe Me".

"I felt pretty good because I always perform in school be it emceeing, breakdancing or rapping. I even performed in a school musical. So I guess that gives me a slight advantage," he said.

Ms Kuan had some advice for the finalists: "After watching the 15 of them (semi-finalists), I realised most of them decided to sing for their talent bit and that made those who did something different, like magic tricks, stand out because we as judges are looking for that X-factor which makes you different from everyone else."

The contestants did that at the finals in which Qai Ser won the first prize.

He walked away with \$1,000 cash sponsored by Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC), a trophy and certificate, a Motorola L7, a \$400 Replugged music voucher and an iPod. ■

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IVP And Poly-ITE Coverage By
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The clash of academic calendars has resulted in the creation of a new post-secondary competition. In addition to January's Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic (IVP) Games, the Poly-ITE Games, which only includes the polytechnics and Institutes of Technical Education (ITE), and in special cases, other institutes such as Singapore Institute of Management (SIM), have come into existence since November.

The Poly-ITE Games, which removes the older and usually more experienced players as competitors, is expected to boost NP's performance. **Tribune** does a quick roundup of how Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) has done in these competitions. ■

Squash



[Picture: Courtesy of Lee Shwu Huey]

Current Ranking : Men - 2nd, Women - 3rd
Last Year's Ranking : Men & Women - Unranked (IVP)

"It's a great improvement compared to last year but we really could have done better because it was a three-way tie for the women's team and the rank was decided on the set scores, which were really close," said women's team captain and final-year Business Information Technology (BIT) student, Lee Shwu Huey, 22.

Tennis



[Picture: Low Youjin]

Current Ranking : 1st
Last Year's Ranking : 5th (IVP)

"It was pretty close, Singapore Polytechnic (SP) players have not lost any of the matches against other schools... [but] we had a lot of physical and mental training during the holiday... and it helped that everybody in the team wanted to win... no one wanted to lose," said tennis captain and final-year Building & Real Estate Management (BEM) student, David Maung, 19.

Dragonboat



[Picture: Low Youjin]

Current Ranking : Men 2nd, Women 4th
Last Year's Ranking: : Men 3rd, Women 3rd

"The girls were quite sad because we originally had two coaches, one for guys and one for girls.

But the girl's team coach had to leave for a while, meaning the remaining coach had to carry the burden... he couldn't concentrate very well on both teams," said dragonboat publicity manager, Yong Shuling, 19, a final-year Mass Communication (MCM) student.

Hockey



[Picture: Courtesy of Mohd Murtizal bin Mohd Taib]

Current Ranking : 3rd
Last Year's Ranking : 2nd (IVP)

"Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP) were the favourites of the competition and they scored against us in the last few minute but considering we had a lot of first-year players, we still did pretty well and gave them and combined ITE a run for their money," said hockey captain and final-year Mechatronic Engineering (MTE) student, Pravin S/O Loganathan, 20.

Netball



[Picture: Courtesy of Wenlin Zhang]

Current Ranking : 5th
Last Year's Ranking : 4th

"We were definitely very disappointed but we tried our very best. We were grouped with the stronger teams in the competition like National University of Singapore (NUS) and Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP)... [and] we have a very young team [that doesn't have] much experience," explained netball captain and final-year Accountancy (ACC) student, Siti Sakilah, 19.

Basketball



[Picture: Courtesy of Leong Xiu Han]

Current Ranking : Men 7th, Women 7th
Last Year's Ranking : Men 3rd, Women 7th

"Our senior players all graduated leaving us to field inexperienced first-year players which caused the difference in ranking. We're waiting for some good first-years who we know are coming to NP next semester and continue from there," said the men's team captain and second-year Business Information Technology (BIT) student, Leong Xiu Han, 19.



Sports Coverage By
AARON WILFRED
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New NP Swimmer Shines at IVP



PLUNGING INTO SUCCESS: NP's swimming team managed to do well despite stiff competition from other tertiary institutions. (Picture: Low Youjin)

Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) new first-year swimmer Amanda Lee performed well at the Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic Games (IVP) held on 14 and 21 January at the National University of Singapore (NUS) Sports Complex, giving hope for the future of the NP swim team.

She won two gold medals – the best individual NP swimmer performance in at least two years' worth of IVPs. NP's swim team won gold in the Women's 100m

freestyle thanks to Amanda, a Biotechnology (BIO) student who is an inspiration to others on the team.

"She's really good. At every training session, we'll aim to beat her. She's our motivation to work harder and we are really proud of her," said Chan Xian En, captain of the NP swimming team.

NP also won gold in the 4x50m mixed relay which Amanda also took part in. Alim Osman, a member of the swim team

and final-year Aerospace Technology (AT) student, was quietly confident before the race. "We have strong swimmers for each section of the relay so I think we will do quite well," he had said before the race.

Xian En, 19, was proud of the team's performance. Even though NP ranked 7th again this year, it was out of 10 teams as compared to the eight teams last year.

"We have done much better in terms of our timings as compared to last year, showing that we have grown a lot," he said.

The first-year Information Technology student attributed the team's improvement to their recent dedication. "Our members take pride in our CCA (co-curricular activity) now because we actually take the time to come down for training to prepare for the IVP."

A shy Amanda praised her team mates for their support. "I was quite enthusiastic to join the swimming team when I came to Ngee Ann because of the new environment. To me, my team mates were the motivation for me to work harder and improve my timing and just do my best. I really didn't expect to win gold," said Amanda.

The swim team is looking to continue training hard and do better next year and they know it will be a tough challenge.

"We'll definitely be training harder, there's going to be more competition next year because the younger swimmers coming in are very fast," Amanda said. ■

Stronger Opposition Weakens NP Track & Field Team



A BITTERSWEET END: Despite a fantastic showing at the Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic (IVP) Games, the NP Track & Field team fails to hit its mark. (Picture: Low Youjin)

A record-breaking performance in a sprint event was not enough to stop the Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) women's Track & Field team from slipping to third place this year from second place in the Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic Games (IVP) last year.

Second-year Accountancy (ACC) student, Raihan Mohd Dzuleghram, broke the record for the women's 200m sprint with a time of 25.8 seconds.

Raihan also secured all of NP's three gold medals in the women's 100m and 200m sprints as well as the women's long jump event. She also snagged two silver medals in relay events.

"I've improved a lot this year. I was just hoping to maintain my 200m and aim for first in the 100m. The long jump came as a surprise because it was just my supplementary event and there were national long jumpers competing as well," said Raihan.

NP's Track & Field team emerged fifth in the overall standings on 21 January, dropping two places from last year. The men's team managed to maintain its fifth placing in the rankings.

Track & Field president Yeo Cheo attributed the drop in ranking to the increased competition from the other schools. "Competition this year was stronger, especially Nanyang Polytechnic because they've improved a lot in their sprint events," said the final-year Multimedia Computing (MMC) student.

NP still managed to clinch three silver medals in the men's high jump event, the women's 4x100m relay and the women's 4x400m relay and four bronze medals in the men's 3000m steeple chase, men's 800m, men's 4x100m relay and women's javelin.

Track & Field will organise a cross-country race, Project Nutz, next semester, open to NP and secondary school students. For more details: www.nptrack.com. ■

NP Canoe Polo Team Bags Silver

Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) Canoe Polo women's team went up one notch than last year, clinching second place at the Singapore River Raft Race (SRRR), after losing 2-3 to National University of Singapore (NUS) on 14 January.

In SRRR 2005, the women's team clinched third place after being knocked out at the semi-finals.

Vice-president of NP's canoeing team Lianne Seah, 19, said, "It was an improvement from last year, so we were actually very happy just to have achieved our goal of making it into the finals this year."

The final-year Mass Communication (MCM) student, noted, however, "We were disappointed with the result because we didn't play our best in the finals."

Lianne added, "We were apprehensive about facing NUS in the finals because we knew they were a strong team to begin with, but we beat them in our opening match, which proves our women's team is on par with their team."

The NP men's team failed to perform as well as the women's team although they managed a credible fifth place out of the 17 teams competing.

However, Lianne was proud of the fact that despite them facing "a lot older and more experienced teams", they were not cowed and still gave their all.

The SRRR is an annual fund-raising



ONE ROW ABOVE: Ngee Ann's Canoe Polo team shouts in joy after clinching a second place in the Singapore River Raft Race 2006. (Picture: Low Youjin)

event in its 18th year organised by Singapore Polytechnic and includes other events such as art competitions, floorball competitions, rock-climbing contests and more.

Proceeds go to the Down Syndrome Association (Singapore), MINDS Yio Chu Kang Gardens School, Clementi Student Service Centre and Singapore Polytechnic's Overseas Community Service Programme.

The upcoming challenge for the canoe polo team is the Institute-Varsity-Polytechnic

Games (IVP) in which they are currently the defending champions.

However, they are not resting on the laurels of their SRRR victory as they know that in the three months leading up to IVP, the other teams will have time to train and better themselves.

"We learn not to underestimate any team by judging them from their performance in SRRR. We just aim to work hard and defend our title come IVP," Lianne said. ■