

npTribune

The Student Voice of
Ngee Ann Polytechnic
theurbanwire.com/nptribune

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INSIDE

HEAR THE VOICES, SEE THE INVISIBLE

NP students visit Vietnam on a study trip to research on the topic of foreign brides.

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THE GRIT BEHIND THE GLITTER

At last, they have made it to the finishing line. As we remember the joy and tears of yesteryears in NP with our graduates, npTribune talks to the four top students of 2009 to see how they made it past the rest to be the best.

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In spectacular shows of flair and flourish, NP arts groups show that talent and passion for the arts are indeed thriving on campus.

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A DIFFERENT KIND OF PARTY

While everyone was busy making merry last semester break, find out how a handful of students found their party in the lives of the underprivileged in the Philippines.

READ IT ON PAGE 5 →

SCHOOL'S RISING UTILITY BILLS? IT'S NOT MY PROBLEM...

Funice Ng, Lee Dion & Michael Lum

NP is doing what it can to save energy and cut costs, but are students playing an equal part?

An extra \$1.1 million - this is the rise that the polytechnic has had to shell out for an increase in utility bills for the financial year 2007/2008.

In uncertain times like these, the 28 percent rise could have easily been channelled for other uses.

However, with such a huge increase, students still remain nonchalant about doing what they can to help the school.

NOT MY PROBLEM

"They know, but they just don't care," laments Joscelyn Tay, 19, a final-year Environmental and Water Technology student.

The President of the Building and Environment (BE) Green Volunteers adds, "I have a classmate who charges his PlayStation Portable in school everyday, claiming that since he is paying the school fees, he has the right to charge his things here."

Such is the mindset of most in NP, who remain blasé about the growing expenditure on utility bills.

npTribune polled 100 students, and asked them to identify various places in school that they feel are sources of substantial energy wastage. Sixty-five percent of the respondents singled out classrooms as the main source of energy wastage.

Perhaps most alarming is the fact that most students are not overtly worried about the increase in utility expenses that the school has to foot, with 80 percent of the students polled indicating that it is not of their concern.

To investigate the extent of this indifference towards the school's energy consumption npTribune went undercover at OurSpace@72, a popular spot with students during breaks, and left a door open at the entrance with the intention of monitoring how long it would take before someone shuts the door.

It took almost 15 minutes before Muhd. Hakim, a first-year Marine & Offshore Technology student, 17, finally closed the door behind him.

He was surprised to learn that the open door had been ignored for so long.

"Isn't the door supposed to be closed?" he asks. "It's about the air-con bills!"

This insouciant attitude has not gone unnoticed by the lecturers.

Mr Don Rodriguez, a lecturer at the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, believes that the cause of this indifference can be attributed to the typical consumer mindset.

"[The students] come here for a service. They see the school's utilities as a form of service rendered," he explains.

"It's like going to a hotel - you don't expect to help the hotel trim on its utility bills."

Final-year Information Technology (IT) student Cannie Kor, 20, agrees.

"I don't think students care about the electricity and water wastage because most students would have this mindset that we pay the school fees and so we can use NP's electricity and water as we can," she says.

However, most are probably unaware that school fees make up

less than a fifth of its total funds, nearly all of which come from other forms of income like government grants and contributions from corporate organisations.

For the 2007/2008 academic year, school fees formed \$38.1 million out of a total income of \$60.2 million, hardly enough to cover the campus' total expenditure of \$231.4 million.

THE TRUTH

However, Mr Mui Cheng Hock, Director of Estate Management Office feels that "[for] a big campus, [it's] quite an average bill".

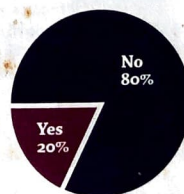
He also reasons that the rise was an "expected increase" and that the bill "fluctuates from year to year".

Mrs Ang Beng Wah, Director of Finance, agrees, saying, "We have a growing [student] population and we have day and night classes."

However, the rise in utilities is not just attributed to the enrolment of the school.

Mrs Ang cites other reasons that could account for the rise in bills, some of which are beyond our control. She says, "In that year alone, crude oil prices have gone up, thus causing electricity prices

In a poll of 100 students, 80% indicated that the rise of utility bills is not of their concern.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 →



BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

Organised by The Red Cross Humanitarian Network Ngee Ann Polytechnic Chapter, a blood donation drive from Apr 28 - 30 collected 300 packets of blood. Held at The Activities Centre at Block 16, the three-day event attracted close to 350 participants.

Many of the respondents who came down to the donation drive said that they had seen the email notifications and decided to give it a shot. One such person was Chang Ze Hao, 18, a second-year Aerospace Technology student.

He says, "It's my first time donating blood and I was quite nervous at first, but it turned out to be painless and quite fun!"

Ze Hao adds that he would "definitely do it again" during the next blood drive.

The Red Cross Humanitarian Network Ngee Ann Polytechnic Chapter organises an average of three blood donation drives on campus every year, with this being its ninth drive since 2006.

- MELODIE LEE

BIG WIN FOR BA AT LEGAL ESSAY COMPETITION

Final-year Accountancy student Ng Xian Hui, 24, won the third prize in "The Living Courthouse" Essay Competition organised by the Supreme Court in March this year.

Xian Hui wrote an essay on cyber law and the jurisdiction, something he deemed would be the most pertinent legal issue that the Supreme Court will be called upon to decide 50 years from now.

When asked about how he feels clinching the top prize in the tertiary category, he says, "I see recognition as a very important element in my life as it gives me courage and confidence to go further."

Besides being awarded \$200 worth of book vouchers, Xian Hui had a chance to meet two Supreme Court judges - Justice VK Rajah and Justice Andrew Phang.

Xian Hui adds that researching and writing the essay has enhanced his knowledge about Singapore's legal framework and helped him apply the theories that he learnt in lectures.

This experience has positively influenced his perception of the law in Singapore.

He says, "Law is very interesting and is ever-changing. It needs to improve as society develops to remain relevant."

- EUNICE LAI

STUDENTS GET PRIORITY AT NEW FUJITSU PC CENTRE

Student users of Fujitsu laptops can now expect to be served faster when they make a trip down to its new premium care centre, located at the fourth storey of Funan DigitalLife Mall.

The revamped service centre has a priority queue for students from Mondays to Fridays between 10am and noon. During these hours, students will be served first by customer service officers. Just last month, Fujitsu was awarded the PC Vendor Choice for all local polytechnics.

- LEE DION

PRODUCT DESIGN & INNOVATION SHOWCASE & EXHIBITION 2009



FUTURISTIC DESIGN: Second and final-year students show off their projects at the annual Product Design & Innovation Showcase & Exhibition.

NNT/ISSABEL NEO

Walk through the School of Engineering's Product Design & Innovation Showcase & Exhibition at the Jurong Regional Library on Apr 3 and for a moment, you might think that you have stepped into the future.

Judging from the innovative ideas and designs displayed at the event, this future could happen very soon from now.

The exhibition housed more than 20 modern innovations created by final-year students from the Product Design & Innovation (PDI) diploma as a part of their curriculum.

With creations ranging from the "Receptacle", a solar-powered charging station to "Doux", a self-powered lamp that provides mood lighting and doubles as a drink holder, the showcase attracted more than 200 students, lecturers and esteemed guests over the two-day event.

Deputy Principal of NP, Mr Foo See Meng, kick-started the exhibition with

a speech and shortly after, presented the awards for the best final-year projects during the opening ceremony.

"I'm so glad that we have this design exhibition. It is an accumulation of three years of hard work by our Product Design & Innovation students," says Mr Foo.

The award for best final-year project went to "S2 Tools", a collection of workshop tools specifically created for women. The brains behind the products, Karthikesan S/O Kuppuswami, 28, and Sebastian Lau, 19, both graduating PDI students, were overjoyed that they won as they had "sacrificed a lot of time" for their project.

With high hopes for their invention after having heard about a buzzing interest, Karthikesan adds, "I'm very happy to hear that companies have expressed interest in our product and it does real justice to the amount of time we put into our product."

- NICHOLAS JOSHUA LEE

FRESHMEN DANCE GALA

As part of the school's orientation activities for freshmen, a mass dance competition, Dance4Fund, was held at the Convention Centre on Apr 23.

Unlike previous years where academic schools vied for the championship by competing in telematches, this year's event took on a new twist.

Popular NP hip-hop group, New Revolving Age, who are also the organisers, kick-started the event with a dance routine of their own amidst loud cheers from the crowd. The competition began with the different academic schools presenting their faculty's mass dances.

As a treat for the students, one member of the staff from each of the 11 academic schools performed a short dance as well.

The School of Multidiscipline Engineering clinched the top prize, followed by the School of Mechanical Engineering (ME) and the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS). FMS also won the prize for Best Choreography, while ME won the Best Dressed prize.

- TANYA LAI

THIRD TIME'S A CHARM

For the third consecutive time since 2006, a team of six students from the School of InfoComm Technology clinched first prize in the Poly/ITE category at the annual National Infocomm Competition 2008 on Apr 7, 2009.

The National Infocomm Competition, organised by the Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, is a gruelling year-long competition where teams have to cope with the demands of their schoolwork, co-curricular activities and the competition at the same time.

One of the participants, final-year Information Technology student Bui Huy Quang Vu, 21, attributes passion as his motivation despite obstacles faced throughout the course of the competition.

"It was challenging. But our passion for this drove us to train hard," he says.

Indeed, the top award was worth the hardwork. The students received a variety of prizes, amongst which is a one-week knowledge acquisition trip to the Silicon Valley in the United States of America.

- DENISE CHONG

SCREENWRITING ICON SYD FIELD COMES TO NP

Screenwriting icon Syd Field graced the grounds of NP for a two-day screenwriting master crash course.

The course, held from Mar 7 - 8, was his only stop in Singapore before heading to the Philippines.

Undeterred by the pricey tickets, the masterclass attracted a diverse group of more than 140 professionals, film students, and even housewives.

Head of the Film and Television Department at the University of Melbourne's Victorian College of the Arts, Professor Ian Lang, says, "It's wonderful how he uses latest films that we can relate to, compared to some dusty old textbook."

Using clips from award-winning screenplays and films as visual aids, Field covered a myriad of topics at the workshop, which lasted a total of 18 hours.

The visibly engaged participants, far from fatigued at the end of each nine-hour session, concluded both days with an extensive question and answer session, which ranged from seeking professional advice to how to get the scripts to the hands of producers.

"[The audience was] great, very good, articulate, participating. I was very impressed [with the] good questions," Field says.

Field started his career as a documentary producer before doing freelance work.

He has since published a book entitled *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*, which has earned the reputation of being the bible for budding screenwriters.

He is now renowned in the Hollywood film industry and is highly regarded as an expert in the field.

Field is currently lecturing at the University of Southern California Master of Professional Writing Program.

- JOEL CHONG

HYPE MAKEOVER

On Jul 31, a new hype magazine is set to grace the shelves on campus and at select retail outlets across Singapore.

The student publication, which is distributed free of charge, is currently undergoing a revamp helmed by final-year Mass Communication student editor, Kenneth Chan, 19, who says that it is "timely". He pointed out that "even in the industry, magazines undergo revamps regularly to keep their readers excited and crying out for more".

Students in NP can help by spreading the word about the new look for the magazine to create buzz and excitement.

So what can readers look out for in the biannual publication that has previously won praise from the industry? Kenneth promises that improvements will include "everything from the content, to pictures to the layout".

He says, "It's about time someone gave our young readers something awesome to look forward to. This issue is going to be so rad, it'll knock your socks off when you read it."

- DANIEL ONG

WHAT YOU CAN DO

→ CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

to increase as well."

Fuel oil prices aside, NP has also, in the last two years, created more facilities for the student population's use. Both Mr Mui and Mrs Ang note that apart from OurSpace@72 and Makan Place, more places in school have also been converted to "covered areas" with air-conditioning as a result of feedback from students.

"In the past, we had more workshops with ceiling fans only. However, in recent years, quite a few of them have been converted into air-conditioned labs, which will require more energy to run," says Mrs Ang.

Despite these obvious reasons, Mrs Ang reveals that the school is still actively looking for ways to cut wastage and optimise the use of energy.

She cites the fact that more places have now been installed with timers and sensors that "will only be activated in the presence of someone", all of which help regulate the consumption of energy.

According to her, this "change is progressive" and will be implemented in stages. For example, new buildings in NP will have energy saving devices built into them, while those in older buildings will be replaced when they undergo renovation.

As such, most feel that the school has already made some

effort in conserving electricity and water through installing thimbles in taps in toilets to control water flow, and pre-programming lights to switch off at scheduled times.

Even so, more can be done, says a small group of environmentally-conscious students, who make the effort even when their friends do not.

WHAT CAN BE DONE

"I have friends who will use every small scrap of paper they can find to write down notes, even using their M1 bills to do math sums," says Geena Neo, 19, a final-year Environmental and Water Technology student, who is also a member of the BE Green Volunteers.

However, Mr Max Lam, a senior lecturer in the School of Engineering, feels that it would be more prudent to create a culture of consciousness at the societal level to create awareness. For example, having energy conservation practices ingrained into its students' culture, similar to the practice in Japan and Sweden.

Sadly, environmental groups on campus have tried, and failed, to involve students in their efforts to help NP curb its spending.

"It is very difficult to get a campaign moving because most students don't want to join in the effort to do something for the

environment," says Jocelyn.

As such, Muhd. Hakim believes that incentives would be a good idea to get students to be more involved in helping the school.

"Incentives will work simply because of the typical behaviour of Singaporeans. They only want rewards," he explains. "But of course it does not work for all. Some just don't care."

Others were quick to point out that incentives are not the way to raise awareness. Instead, they opted for more educational campaigns.

Mr Lam says, "Without incentives, there is no motivation."

"But that's where the problem is," he warns. "When there are explicit motivations, it encourages artificial activities. You'll probably see students posing for it just to get those incentives."

In the end, changing the mindset of the students, although effective in the long run, remains idealistic.

Students like Evan On, 20, a final-year IT student from, deem the situation unsalvageable.

When asked about what he thought would be a good way to raise awareness about the rising utility bills, he says, "The serious answer would be to educate them."

And what about what he really makes of the situation?

"Nothing. Really nothing."

65%

of 100 students polled felt that classrooms are the main source of energy wastage.

POWER TO THE PEOPLE

We plug in and play daily, but have you ever wondered how NP gets its supply of electricity? npTribune speaks to Mrs Ang Beng Wah, Director of Finance, who reveals that it is actually through a process known as reverse auction

[Stage 1]

All the polytechnics and ITEs come together to discuss their projected power consumption for the year ahead to aggregate their demand so as to enjoy economies of scale. However, eventually, each of the schools will be billed accordingly.



[Stage 2]

A joint tender is issued after the various representatives have agreed on an estimated figure for the year. The five power companies/interested providers are invited to come participate in the exercise.



[Stage 3]

A system is set up for the companies to submit their quotations. The uniqueness of this system lies in it allowing the companies to keep track of the quotations from their competitors. It is then up to the various providers to out-bid one another to clinch the deal.



[Stage 4]

Once the lowest price is reached and it can go no lower, the deal is sealed with that respective company. Quoted prices are valid for a year until the next exercise.



FSV scales new heights with first-ever HD film

Airell Ang

To keep up with the latest technology in film, the School of Film & Media Studies' Film, Sound & Video (FSV) course has given its students the chance to film their first-ever project on a high-definition (HD) camera.

Last year, eight groups of second-year FSV students were given a Drama Production assignment: To shoot a short film about Chinese New Year on a HD camera sponsored by Sony.

The lecturer-in-charge, Mr Andrew Millians, later on pieced together the individual films into an as yet unnamed hour-long featurette.

He says, "Even though FSV is primarily operating on film, the majority of the industry has already started with HD. It's a leap for the students, but it will be well worth it to be kept in the industry's loop."

According to FSV graduate Sean Ng, he sees this experience as "a more practical medium", and a "format within reason for film students".

However, "the differences are negligible with the better HD cameras," says Mr Millians.

He aims to not only educate the students about HD, but also suggests that film students "should have access to the latest technology".

He says, "HD not only improves the students' workflow but also enhances the process. If we had shot on film, the students would have to wait for at least a week for the lab to process. Whereas for HD, students are able to edit and spot possible mistakes on the spot, which would save them from errors."

For the students, it is a development of certain measure to embrace a different format from film altogether, and a more practical one at that, says Sabreena Nazimudeen, 22, an FSV graduate who was part of the project.

Sabreena says, "Being students, we don't have an extensive budget to go around spending, and it's tough enough having to sort out all other costs of making the movie. Moreover, quite a huge sum of money actually goes into the production, and treatment of our film reel."

The film era is "slowly phasing out" and it exists only due to "sentimental reasons", adds Sabreena.

The move from film to HD is so warmly welcomed by the students that "most of us want to shoot our industry-based projects on HD", says Sabreena.



FILM MILESTONE FSV students filming with HD cameras sponsored by SONY.

"The visuals of film and HD nowadays are awfully similar. Maybe for feature films, film would still be used," says Mr Millians.

"Anyway, it's not the format or medium that I shoot in, it's how I tell the story," says Sabreena passionately.

The featurette is due to be screened at Sinema Old School in the third quarter of this year.

NEWS

Taking the recession by its horns

Deep in the throes of the recession, more students are reportedly seeking financial assistance and bursaries. npTribune takes a look at what has and can be done

Loh Qiu Lyng, Cheryl Tan & Revathie D/O Dhanabalan

The new academic year of 2009/2010 saw about 1,600 students applying for NP's bursaries. That is a 60 per cent increase as compared to the previous 1,000 applications for the academic year of 2008/2009.

Mrs Seow-Chng Cheng Nai, Director of Student Services (SS) of NP, says that the increase in numbers is "an indication that times are not that good" and that the surge was expected.

However, she assures students that the increase in applications "won't affect the number of

awards given out as long as the students meet the criteria".

In addition, SS has stepped up on publicity this year to ensure that students do not miss out on the schemes that they can turn to, even calling up students to submit documents they might have forgotten.

Furthermore, even though the application period ends in early May, needy students are still able to apply throughout the course of the year if they find that they require the assistance.

"NP is very proactive in coming up with schemes," says Mrs Seow. It is supported by the fact that NP offers around 20 different financial assistance schemes.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

While graduates and local students feel the strain, another pool of students are having it a lot worse - international students who have enrolled in NP with hopes of furthering their education.

However, a majority of them find it a struggle to juggle both a heavy financial burden and the demands of their education.

Chinese national Ke Yang Zhen, 20, a Biomedical Science student, explains that she works part-time so that her family does not have to send over more money.

She says, "The stress, I can handle, but I have to study and work at the same time, and it's hard finding jobs nowadays!"

Besides the NP Advantage scheme, which is applicable to all NP graduates regardless of nationality, SS offers counselling to the entire student population.

Student counsellor, Ms How Sher Linn says, "We also provide pastoral care to all students. It is our commitment to ensure that students' general welfare is taken care of."

For new students, SS also provides orientation programmes that are specifically designed for new international students to help them adapt to Singapore. It also serves as a platform for them to interact with local students.

Still, Malaysian Low Hong Wei,

19, a Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering student, believes that students should not sit back and wait for help to come along.

He says, "They can take a proactive approach to search for such organisations. There's also overseas students association available for any international student of any school to join."

NP GRADUATES

All the measures are in lieu with what NP set out to do for its student community when it became clear that the current recession will remain for a long stretch.

The new graduates were offered the NP Advantage, a new package to equip the graduating cohort of 2009 with the skills to upgrade and tide themselves over the bleak job market.

With three separate components (see box story) to the \$2 million-dollar package, each is meant to meet the specific needs of about 2,300 fresh graduates of NP.

Lim Kan Wei, 20, a recent Network Systems & Security graduate says, "It will be of huge help to those who want to change to another field or those who don't intend to take up a degree in universities."

He adds, "Even though this scheme does not apply to me as I will be going to National Service, I feel that the specialist courses will serve as buffer time for the economy to recover while allowing fresh graduates to upgrade themselves."

NP ADVANTAGE

NP Advantage is a \$2 million scheme by NP that is catered for 2009 graduating students to tide over the economic crisis. The package has three key components:

1. Specialist Diploma and Internship

NP hopes to be able to help its graduates through a range of 15 new specialist diploma courses, such as Tourism Management and Events Management and Hosting, as well as internships with partnering companies.

Director of Special Projects and NP Advantage Mr Peter Lam says, "The students will be taking up specialist diplomas of their choice during the day. This will also come coupled with internship opportunities that will be really useful to them."

2. Jobs in NP as project and research assistants

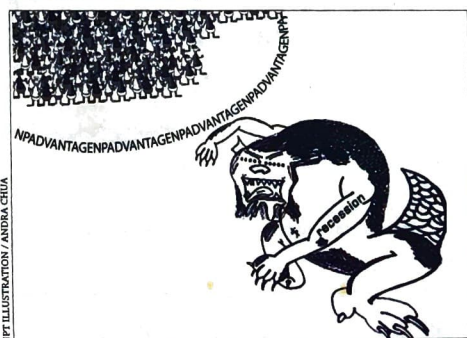
50 new positions will be created within NP for fresh graduates to work as project and research assistants in areas such as curriculum and pedagogy.

3. Interest-free study loans

Graduates who wish to pursue a foreign degree course through private education providers such as SIM or MDIS may apply for an interest-free study loan. The loan will be capped at \$50,000 for the first year.

Source: NP Student Service
Log on to www.np.edu.sg for more information

[heroes and villains]



NP ILLUSTRATION / ANDREA CHUA

NP staff learn to add life to days

A more human side to the professional and rigid image of staff in NP surfaced as they attended the very first talk of Public Service Week.

CHEE HUI MING reports

Think of a lecturer, and an image of a civil servant programmed to follow rules and regulations rigidly, barely stepping out of that mode while on campus, may come to mind.

Some might attribute that to sheer professionalism, but there are others who are on their way to correcting that misconception.

This was the greater issue at the talk, Adding Life to Days, held at the Staffhub on Apr. 30. Led by the key speaker, Sister Geraldine Tan, an Administrator and Director of Nursing at St. Joseph's Home, participants, which consisted of NP lecturers and staff were told to get their tissues ready, and sure enough, the sniffing began early on.

The co-pioneer of the hospice movement in Singapore that happened over 25 years ago, Sister Geraldine spoke with such conviction about patients and volunteers who made an impact on her life that it struck a chord with the 30-strong audience.

Although the talk focused on the best ways of caring for terminally ill patients, lecturers walked away not just with memorable anecdotes on the "low tech and high touch" methods of hospice care, but as the organisers hoped, with a sense of responsibility for the community.

Still, with only 24 hours in a day, few would see the point in putting strangers ahead of their own priorities.

In this case, the audience of busy NP staff who had sacrificed their lunch time to be there, rushed off after the talk and back to their commitments, save for a few who hung around to extend their thanks to Sister Geraldine and the organisers.

When asked about the possible misconceptions of Singapore's civil service, Sister Geraldine says, "Everyone has compassion, but they just must find the right opportunity to let that compassion be drawn out."

TOO BUSY TO HAVE A HEART?

Mrs Lim-Ek Ben Wai, the chairperson of the Singapore 21 (S21) sub-committee, which consists of management-appointed staff members, says, "Surely there are some who will be snobbish. They think they have too much to do and have no time and don't care."

Conversely, Mrs Sng-Fun Poh Yoke, a S21 sub-committee member and School of Film & Media Studies lecturer, feels that the civil servants do have a "caring heart". "I think the civil service has changed over the years. It may have been a harsh and hard face that they projected,

FOR THE JOY OF ALTRUISM

Paige Foong

Final-year Accounting student Mohamed Syahid, 24, visited Cambodia for his first community service project in 2007. He found the joy of helping others so appealing that he initiated project BA GOAL (Grace On Another's Life), as "a platform for students who wish to do community service, but do not know where to begin".

BAGOAL aims to serve the needs of underprivileged children from the Singapore Children's Society through various programme.

His most recent overseas trip was to Kampong Air Learning Centre in Batam, Indonesia. With 28 other students, Syahid focused on improving school facilities and imparting life skills to the children. The project was organised by BA Community And Reachout Endeavours (CARES), a community outreach arm of the School of Business and Accountancy that regularly sends teams of students to neighbouring countries on community service projects.

In the same spirit of volunteerism, NP and National Junior College (NJC) sent 13 students respectively on Mar 13 to a joint community service project for seven days to Dumaguete, Philippines, to aid children studying at Malaunay and Candauay Elementary Schools.

Organised by NP, the tie-up was open to students from NP's Talent Development Programme (TDP) and NJC's Sapphire Scholar Programme (SSP). NP

students focused on teaching the children life skills like managing relationships and behaviour, while NJC students built a kitchen with basic cooking facilities for the school.

Second-year Film, Sound & Video student, Joel Tan, 17, led the joint initiative. He says, "We used simple games to teach them life skills. We pasted a piece of paper on the backs of the children and asked them to write nice things about each other on it. Although simple, this really boosted their self-esteem and encouraged them to praise each other more often."

Joel recalls how on the last day of the trip, some volunteers felt reluctant to leave the children at Candauay Elementary School. Final-year Banking and Financial Services student Gerald Alexander Anand, 18, says, "When we had to leave, children ran after us to ask whether they could come along."

He adds, "Although we were strangers who entered their lives for a short period, we really felt a connection with them."

FUTURE PLANS

Just like Syahid, the same students from TDP are planning for another community service project to Malaunay Elementary School this coming September holiday.

As the majority of the school-going children there come from humble backgrounds, student leader Joel senses the urgency to do more to further equip the school with basic facilities and teaching materials so as to



FRIENDSHIPS FORGED: During their stay, Joel (left) and his team befriended the local children, making it harder for them to leave on the last day of the trip.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOEL TAN

facilitate a conducive learning environment for the children.

Besides their bid for another community service trip back to the Philippines, the same group of students are proposing to kick-start NP's very own community service month where students are encouraged to participate and serve different groups of the needy each week.

When asked why they chose to give up part of their holidays for community work, Joel and Syahid agreed that there would always be opportunities to party and relax in the future, but for now, they prefer to concentrate on reaching out to disadvantaged people.

VOLUNTEERISM: CAUGHT, NOT TAUGHT

Many assume that volunteering is for those without a social life. However, a forum organised by the Rotaract Club on May 8 aims to change that thinking.

Titled Volunteerism: Activities For Youth That Have No Life?, the forum saw 178 students listening to various speakers, among whom was Dr Lam Pin Min, a member of Parliament for Ang Mo Kio GRC.

Challenging the stereotypes of volunteering, Dr Lam feels that it "does not necessarily have to be about helping disabled people".

Another invited speaker, Mrs Joyce Tang, course manager for NP's Business and Social Enterprise,

agrees that in order to convince sceptics, students must "turn creativity into something that can be used for volunteering".

Moreover, volunteering is not without its merits.

Final-year Marine & Offshore Technology student Teo Jun Hao, 19, says, "You get to learn many different skills on the job such as interaction skills."

The chairman for Pertapis Children's Home, Mr Alfie Othman, sums up the talk perfectly, saying, "Volunteering is a journey. There is a starting point and hopefully no ending."

- NUR AINI BT JAFFAR

but I think it has softened a lot," she says.

Differing slightly is Mrs Chew-Kong Yeong Choy, a senior lecturer with the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) who hopes to begin voluntary work after she retires. Admitting that her reason for not having done any before due to her busy work life "may sound lame", she attended the talk in hopes of "being more active" in the community after retirement.

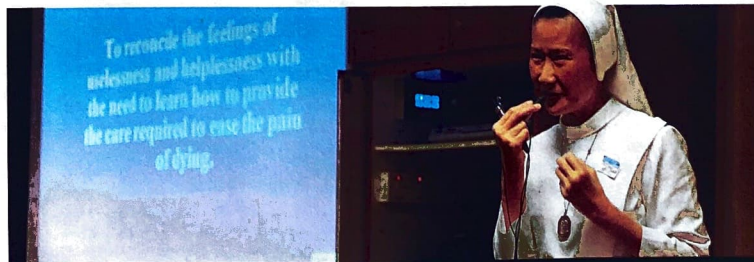
However, she says, "As full-time staff, we have only [the weekends], and these are days we need for our family. I'm sure my colleagues and students face the same problem."

Similarly, Sister Geraldine gave her talk a fitting closure with insightful words of advice: She simply hopes that the participants will "aspire to inspire before [they] expire".

"Aspire to inspire before you expire."

Sister Geraldine,
Administrator and Director of Nursing at St. Joseph's Home

According to Mr Thomas Chua, an IS senior lecturer who compiled results of the post-talk survey, most of the participants indicated an interest in keeping up with future community service efforts. However,



SISTER ACT: A volunteer since 1985, Sister Geraldine shares with the audience the thrill of giving.

NP / ARIEL ANG

Mr Chua asserts that these results cannot be generalised to the entire staff population due to the "small sample size". Still, the S21 sub-committee is not deterred.

The talk, held in recognition of the sub-committee's launch of NP Community Service Programme during Public Service Week in early May, is only the start of their plans to organise an extensive series of talks and events.

More importantly, the programme aims to promote the two main tenets of S21 - Active Citizenry and Staff Volunteerism - so as to raise the level of awareness and participation in community service among staff.

In the long run, Mrs Lim insists that they are not there to force staff to volunteer, but will "take however long it will" to make this public service initiative a success.

GLOBAL

"PLEASE, SIR, BUY A FLOWER?"

She pleads, kneels down and wraps herself around my legs



Jeremy Toh, Guest Writer

I am standing in the cramped partition of her house, furnished sparsely with little more than crudely made wooden beds, and before she is pulled away by her caretaker, Ying Ling leans over and whispers in my ear. Her voice is like a broken wind chime, "I want to run away one day. I hate it here."

Mr Xiong You Hua, 49, a taxi driver in Wuhan, explains, "When you learn that you are taken away from your parents to sell flowers in a city, helping a stranger earn money while getting beaten on a daily basis, would you stay?" Pulling over next to a 'flower girl' in Jiang Tan, he adds, "These girls don't have what it takes to run away yet, but I can tell you that when they can, they will."

Many like Ying Ling - 'flower girls' - dot the 400-metre long street near Jiang Tan, a bustling area in Wuhan, the capital city of Hubei province in China.

Ying Ling, her caretaker reveals, has parents of mixed European descent - something one might suspect with her hazel-eyed, chocolate-haired visage. Her looks lend her an edge over her peers when it comes to selling flowers.

Though only nine years old, she has been on the streets for two years and knows exactly what to do to move those flowers. She will ask, beg, kneel and weep just to sell 20 of them a day for RMB5 (\$\$1.00) each. If she does not meet her quota, she gets either beaten up or has no dinner for the night.

During the day, she works at textile factories in the cities - both illegal and legal, in the city - for as little as RMB5 a day.

Her life is routine and simple; rise at 5am, go to work at 6am, have lunch at 12pm, continue working at 12:30pm, have dinner at 6pm and sell flowers from 9pm.

Most 'flower girls' come from rural villages, sold off by their parents to a caretaker who then brings them to developed cities to work. The caretakers profit from the proceeds of the flower sales and in exchange, the children are fed, clothed and the families receive a sum of money every month.

In Ying Ling's case, RMB400 was the magic number. Now, she has no family and her only friends are fellow 'flower girls' from the same rural village in Sichuan province, China - a village so minuscule and isolated that it does not even exist on the map. To Ying Ling, however, that was where she was born.

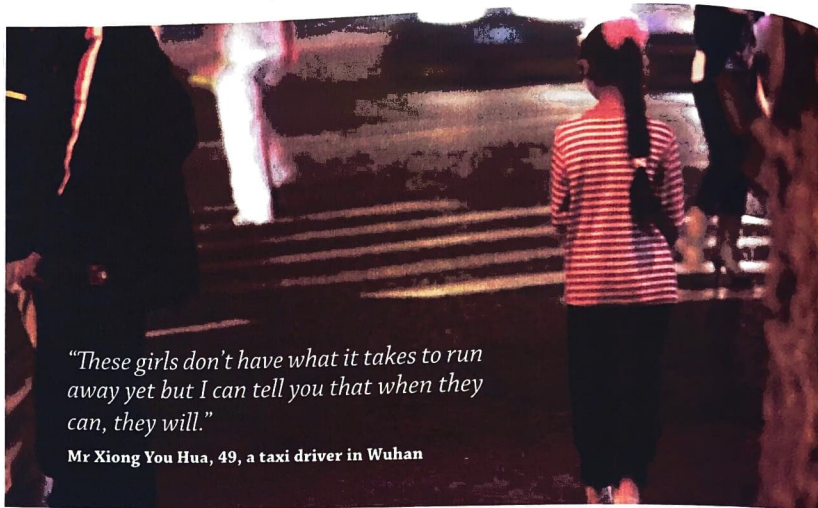
In her highly traditional village, females are considered inferior as they cannot be used for manual labour or to carry on the family name. Ying Ling was considered a burden.

Education was in the form of learning to use the farming tools and tractors, but teaching Ying Ling was deemed a 'waste'. According to the caretaker, the fact that Ying Ling could not continue the family line or contribute to the farm meant that selling her off to Wuhan was a perfectly sound, 'economical' decision.

Ying Ling's caretaker, Ms Sun Bai Yun, 54, is a tough lady. She almost raves, "What good is a girl? It's good that she is being sold. It's good for her life. She comes here, gets to do work and earn money." Although some argue that exploiting children is unethical, Ms Sun thinks otherwise.

Ms Sun's eyes flash as she retorts rather vehemently, "Look, it's not really selling her to me. I am giving the family, the child and myself a win-win-win situation. The child sells the flowers, the families get the money, the child gets fed and clothed and I can make a living - what's so bad about it?"

"You want to talk about education? You want to talk about life? Leave them in the villages and they don't even do anything! No schools! Can they even live till how old Ying Ling is now? No! They die! I am giving them a new



"These girls don't have what it takes to run away yet but I can tell you that when they can, they will."

Mr Xiong You Hua, 49, a taxi driver in Wuhan

life!" she claims, ending her fiery tirade.

Now, Ying Ling stays in a rented apartment in the Hankou district of Wuhan with 20 other children from the same village. In a few years' time, none of them will be here - it does not take much to run away. Identification papers can be bought off the streets, factories in need of labour can hire these girls cheaply and, if all fails, they find a man and get married.

Locals believe that there is nothing the police can do to help these girls. In a piece written on Southern China Net, a netizen commented that though the Wuhan Morning Post reported on the matter in 2005 and a police crackdown

has been conducted since, this tragedy still lives on.

As the city lights whizz past us, a shadow flickers over Mr Xiong's weathered face as he quietly laments, "There's just too many people in China. How many of them can you help? 1.3 billion people - each one has a story to tell. Can you help them all? No, it's sad, but it's reality."

As I stand up after my interview with Ying Ling and her caretaker, she clings to my jeans with her tiny hands and looks at me with wide, pleading eyes.

And in barely more than a whisper, she asks, "Take me away, please?"

The writer was in Wuhan, China in August 2008 for an FMS overseas immersion programme.

NPT GLOBAL SNAPSHOT

The Children of Intramuros



MANILA BOYS: Boys from Intramuros, Manila's walled city, hold up a sign taken from a Jeepney, a popular form of transport in the Philippines. They are among dozens who swarmed to pose for the camera.

The photographer was in Manila, Philippines in March 2009 for an FMS media study trip.

Hear the voices, see the invisible

11 students visit Vietnam on a study trip to research on the topic of foreign brides

Lum Xin Mun

Money may not be the only reason many Vietnamese women choose to be foreign brides, as 11 NP students found out on a 10-day research trip to Vietnam.

What started out as an ordinary research trip about foreign brides under the module Practical Research Methods by the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, turned out to be so much more when students unearthed a darker reason - domestic violence.

Mr Chong Ching Liang, 42, the lecturer-in-charge, says, "My goal for every student was for them to 'hear the voices and see the invisible' and the only way to do that is to push them out to the society in question to collect data and experience it first-hand."

Before the trip, students had to research on Vietnam's culture and conduct interviews and surveys to understand how foreign brides are perceived by Singaporeans. They found out that such women were seen as "submissive, meek and money-minded".

It was only through interviews with the local women and talks by non-governmental organisations (NGO) in Vietnam that they found disconcerting information about foreign Vietnamese brides.

One of the student leaders of the trip, Priscilla Su, 18, a second-year Mass Communication student, was shocked when she "found out that many Vietnamese women felt it was better to marry overseas so that they could escape potentially violent Vietnamese husbands".

Mr Chong adds, "In Vietnam, cases of domestic violence are so bad that every two to three days, some women would have died."

This led the team to realise that gender inequality issues, such as violence against women, correspond with the rising number of foreign brides.

For 18-year-old Nguyen Quang Linh, a second-year Network Systems & Security student, it was a wake-up call. The Vietnamese student leader and translator for the trip says, "I had been aware of these problems, but going there and finding out about its severity hit home - literally."

On the subject of home, the team also researched on domestic violence in Singapore and obtained alarming statistics.

According to the Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVe), out of 800 reported cases of abuse in 2008, 5 percent were made up of foreign women. Unfortunately, the number of cases is expected to rise, with the possibility of more cases being left unreported.

Sarali Lalit, 18, a second-year Psychology & Community Services student, says, "You really feel the need to inform and educate people of the reality that has been hushed all this while."

Come Nov 9, these students



LOCAL HELP: IS students interviewed Vietnamese women in Dam Ha village with the help of local translators like Hanoi University student Trinh Van Tung, 19 (left).

PHOTO COURTESY OF SERINE YAP

HEARD IT THROUGH THE GRAPEVINE

"I came home with a different purpose and it (the research) made everything so different."

Nguyen Quang Linh, 18, a second-year Network Systems & Security student, on his experience going back to his homeland.



"One of my friends called the marriage agency on the pretext of looking for a marriageable prospect for her 'brother'."

Priscilla Su, 18, a second-year Mass Communication student, on one of the methods they used for research.



"I have learnt to be more patient and more accepting after encountering a lot of difficulties in Vietnam."

Katherine Lesmana, 18, a second-year Business Studies student, on what she gained from the trip.



"The people there strongly believe in a patriarchal system, which actually makes me feel fortunate that I am in Singapore."

Sarali Lalit, 18, a second-year Psychology & Community Services student, on what they found out through their interviews with the Vietnamese women.



will do just that.

A conference called A Woman's Worth, will be organised by the research team to share their experiences and stories, and to raise awareness about the realities of domestic and dating violence.

Details are still unconfirmed, but organisations such as 938Live, The Asia Foundation

and PAVe have already affirmed their participation.

In addition to the conference, a fundraising event for NGOs, such as PAVe, is also being planned as well. The money will be used to aid victims of abuse by creating programmes to empower them and raise the awareness of domestic violence.

Incredible India Immersion

Bunice Lew

Held from Mar 8 to Apr 17, a six-week immersion programme saw 30 students and two lecturers travel to Kerala, India, where they were pleasantly surprised by the country's hospitable culture.

Amidst the bewilderment and awe for the stupendous cityscape of India, the students found interacting with the locals most memorable.

Second-year Mobile Business Solutions student from the School of InfoComm Technology (ICT) Vinson Phua, 18, says, "I was taken aback when I landed in Kerala because the local students actually came to help us with our luggage."

Aside from compulsory classes at the National Institute of Technology Calicut (NITC), students also participated in a module specially designed by NITC to help students

understand India's history, culture and industrial landscape.

Director of the School of ICT Ms Angela Wee, says, "The module is very holistically developed because it's by the locals, a group of experts from various fields in India."

However, the six weeks that the students spent in India were not strictly academic.

Mr Willey Tang, one of the two lecturers who accompanied the students to India, says, "This immersion trip gave our students a first-hand insight into India. It is important for [Singapore's] youth to have the global exposure to India and open up their perspective about the world beyond Singapore."

With the success of this trip, the School of ICT's second Overseas Immersion Programme, plans for follow-up activities are already underway.

Ms Wee says, "NITC is thinking of sending a small group of students over [around June], to do projects together with our students and staff."



PAINTED FACES: ICT students celebrating Holi with the locals, which is marked by throwing coloured powder and coloured water at each other.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MR WILLEY TANG

This will give the NITC undergraduates a chance to experience student life in Singapore, as the ICT students did in India.

VIEWS

Email your letters (no longer than 300 words) to nptribune@gmail.com

[editorial]

THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS

Rebecca Quek
Editor

Without meaning to sound whiny, the truth is Singaporean youths are not happy.

A recent survey of youths in 11 different Asian countries by research company Synovate found out that only 73 percent of Singaporean youths feel that they are happy, as compared to 97 percent in India. We rank the third lowest, only coming behind Hong Kong (65 percent) and Japan (55 percent).

The most obvious and trite reason for this would be the rigid and highly competitive system that Singapore's education is built on.

Even from a young age, Singapore's youths have been

taught to match up to their peers, to race to the top of the class with disregard to how much they have to sacrifice in other areas of their lives.

With these expectations to fulfil, many youths find it difficult to break out of definition of happiness that their parents and society on a whole have established for them.

The fact that most of us live for the future only hurts as well. Practicality is stressed in our society, and can be seen in every calculated move on our part, from which course we want to major in to which club or society to join.

All these decisions pool together to form consequences that, as our parents would put it, are "for your own good".

However, the society we live in is materialistic. Even though we finish our education and move

on in our lives, we still put in that extra effort to make sure that we do not "lose face". We go through great lengths to keep up with the façade, from modelling the latest designer trends to driving posh cars, to even making sure that our careers are something our peers would be envious of.

It could very well be the fact that as we charge forward, ambitious and capable, in an effort to make a name for ourselves in the secular world, we find that although we are on our way to accomplishing our dreams, the satisfaction is just not there.

Perhaps we should take a step back and reconsider the happiness that we are chasing after. After all, British scientist and novelist C.P. Snow once said, "The pursuit of happiness is a most ridiculous phrase: if you pursue happiness you'll never find it."

[forum letters] * Forum letters may be edited for reasons of brevity and accuracy.

Noise levels only in Lifestyle Library

I refer to the article "Noise at study area exceed WHO standards" in the January - March 2009 issue of npTribune.

The NP Library comprises of the Lifestyle Library on the entrance floor and the Academic Library from levels 3 to 5. The Lifestyle Library is intended to facilitate social networking and positive interaction. Open discussion is allowed and noise is to be expected.

The Academic Library is intended to support curriculum needs. Here, the library strives to maintain a pleasant and conducive learning environment for study and learning. Quiet zones have also been created on each floor.

Our Library Security Officers (LSOs) patrol the premises at regular intervals. However, they have been instructed to allow reasonable volume of noise in the Lifestyle Library while maintaining a conducive study environment in the Academic Library.

We understand that the readings on noise level solely in the Lifestyle Library was used as the basis to comment on its effectiveness for study and learning. This is not appropriate as only the Academic Library is intended for this purpose. Readings covering the Academic Library should have been used instead.

Agnes Ng (Ms)
Circulation Manager
Lien Ying Chow Library

[Security Issues]

NP OPENHOUSE



Due to the increasing number of second and third-year students sneaking off with goodie bags, the Committee decided to up the security this year.

Society mature enough for religious tolerance

I refer to the letter, "No proselytising on campus please" from Mr Vinoth Kumar R. published on the Jan 14, 2009, in which the Maria Hertogh riots were used as example of how religious conversion is, in his opinion, "a sensitive and controversial issue".

While the fundamental differences in various belief systems have been and still are a source of violent conflict, I think that it is unnecessary to be overly sensitive towards non-extremist religious proselytism, as society in Singapore has long moved on from those tumultuous times; it is highly unlikely that the actions of the people proselytising on campus will spark violence. I believe that our students are sensible enough to peacefully respond to religious evangelism, and that society is mature enough to enjoy a high level of religious tolerance.

In addition, I strongly believe that students should always critically evaluate the points presented by those who engage in proselytism.

Koh Wei Jie
Second-year Information Technology student

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VIEWS

FOR PASSION OR PENNIES?



Alicia Lee

During the time of our parents, bringing home the bacon for the family meant that you had to have a successful career. Regardless of whether you enjoyed it, money was the top priority.

Is it still so now? After decades of technological and societal advancement, Singapore has developed from being a third world country to one of the world's cleanest and greenest cities.

That leap has since manifested itself in the form of a paradigm shift in our society.

When business degrees started falling out of fashion, it marked the beginning of a new era for young people. Once-unpopular degree courses like computer animation and music saw a surge in enrolment at universities all over the world.

Now, we have the freedom to let religion, passion, and even friends and family sway our

65%

of 50 students polled ranked happiness and satisfaction as most important when looking for a job. The remaining 35% would rather have a high salary.

decision of a career choice. We are no longer bound the same way our parents were.

It begs the question: Have our priorities changed?

A quick poll among 50 students in NP showed that 65 percent believe that happiness and satisfaction are the ultimate pre-requisites for

a job while only 35 percent claim that a high salary is critical. Even though the results of this poll are questionable in light of our current recession, it is comforting to know how little the downturn has affected our youths and their priorities about money matters.

Adeline Yeo, 21, stormed out of National Junior College three years ago to sign herself up for the Visual Communication Course in Temasek Polytechnic when she decided on her passion over money.

"I wanted to be an artist doing paintings for a living," she says. "Somehow, I knew that equipping myself with design skills would make for a brighter, more rewarding future."

After three years, Adeline is now a fresh graduate looking for a job. When posed with the question of

whether she made the "right choice", she was quick to answer, "While my rewarding future hasn't happened to my bank account yet, I don't regret my choice."

On the flipside, out of the several youths interviewed, some said that their area of study was merely 'tolerable' and they were only in those areas to achieve a "means to an end". Joshua Chong, 25, who is currently pursuing his degree in medicine, is one who shares this view. He

says, "My parents are both doctors and I see them living quite well, and thus my career choice. In order to lead an overall fulfilling life, you need the money."

However when asked about his personal stand on what defines a good job, he says, "More people are stressed from working hard than not working at all. The allostatic load of stress destroys your health in ways many people do not know about. If you had

such poor health, is all that money going to be of any use other than to pay a doctor to treat you? To me, the ideal job pays well, requires minimal effort, time and responsibility. But this ideal world does not exist. Amassing wealth in the near future will be my priority because our capitalist meritocracy demands that of me."

At the end of numerous interviews, I find that the concept of a good career and how it is

defined becomes evident. Clearly, no one would choose melancholy for themselves if they had a say in how life pans out.

No matter how or when you look at it, whether in this decade or the last, it depends not on what you think of a career as, but really, what you define happiness to be.

Our parents had theirs decided for them.

So how will we define our careers to be?



NP ILLUSTRATION / CHEONG JIA HUI

Three words, eight letters. Say it, and I'm yours



Josceline Foo

In a recent episode of popular American television drama Gossip Girl, queen of the Upper East Side, strong-headed, independent Blair Waldorf fell from the top of the world and into the worst of her nightmares.

She fell in love.

It starts off like an exciting, addictive game. You practically live for that split-second moment when his eyes meet yours and you give him a giddy grin in return. You lose when you let fleeting thoughts of him slip into your mind and consume you, so much so that it interferes with your ability to think, judge, or function. You cannot help but let him grow on you, allowing the echoes of his laughter and the voice of his words to make or break your day.

Doubts, insecurities and disapprovals from friends be damned. You never have

to live through another day of feeling alone and unloved again, because he knows just how to make you smile.

You finally feel like you belong.

However, as the days melt into months that melt into years, this red-hot, fiery love starts degenerating and eventually, the weight of the relationship drags you down. Like an anvil tied to your ankles, it threatens to rip apart the core of your once impregnable "love" for each other. You wonder, "Why can't we understand each other anymore?"

Famous English novelist Neil Gaiman aptly describes the effects of love gone bad: "They did something dumb one day, like kiss you or smile at you, and then your life isn't your own anymore. Love takes hostages. It gets inside you. It eats you out and leaves you crying in the darkness, so simple a phrase like 'maybe we should be just friends' turns into a glass splinter working its way into your heart."

Emotional dependence can be a crippling poison. People are inevitably attracted to other people, wanting affection, friendship, encouragement, sex or love. Along the way,

"They did something dumb one day, like kiss you or smile at you, and then your life isn't your own anymore. Love takes hostages.

It gets inside you. It eats you out and leaves you crying in the darkness, so simple a phrase like 'maybe we should be just friends' turns into a glass splinter working its way into your heart."

- Novelist Neil Gaiman

you have grown used to having him around. You have made sacrifices that he may not have seen and altered your life to revolve around his.

Fortunately (or not), you are entitled to lean on his shoulder with the hope that tomorrow will be a better day, much like a complimentary gift for falling in love with him.

Perhaps it is the comfort in the promise that he will shelter you, rain or shine, that acts as a catalyst for accelerating the rate in which dependence takes its toll, until both of you, at some point, suffocate.

Now, where does that leave you and your heart that has long been signed, sealed and delivered?

I do not really have the answers. Neither will stacks of research into the love paradox tell you anything more than you already know.

As intoxicating as love can be, it takes two to work. After all, man has long been grappling with this pesky emotion to understand what it could potentially mean or do to us, to no fruition. I guess we will just have to go through the seemingly monotonous motions of falling in and out of love before perhaps, one day, we'll find our very own interpretation of it.

• Online Isaac Tan shares about love at nptribune.theurbanwire.com

NPEOPLE . BREAKING STEREOTYPES

THE ROSE AMONG THE THORNS

Nicholas Joshua Lee &
Tanya Lai

Pick Chong Kai Yi and nine of her classmates during a lecture and chances are, Kai Yi will be the only girl in the group.

Final-year Aerospace Electronics student Kai Yi, 19, is currently enrolled in a course where only 10 percent of the 240 students across three levels are female.

When asked why she decided to enrol in a course that is predominately filled with males, she states simply, "I like aeroplanes, that's why I chose this course. I didn't realise it was a 'guy's' subject."

Unlike her, many have the misconception that courses in the engineering field are more suitable for men. The widely known fact that engineering is a male-dominated profession only reinforces the stereotype.

According to a paper by the Singapore Department of Statistics in 2005, 83 percent of graduates from engineering sciences at university level were male, with female graduates making up a measly 17 percent.

THE GENDER DIVIDE

To find out more about the perception of girls enrolled in engineering courses in NP, npTribune conducted an informal poll of 50 female and 50 male students.

Of the 100, 37 felt that girls face limitations in engineering courses. However, it is interesting to note that 70 percent of those who thought that women face limitations are male.

Also, more than half polled believed that females engineers are looked down upon.

However, Kai Yi disagrees with the poll results. She says, "It's not only guys that excel in engineering. There are girls who score 3.8, 3.9 for their grade point average."

Take for instance, final-year Business Process and Quality Engineering (BPQE) student, Nor Hashanah Bte Mohd Razif.

With a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.95, Hashanah, 19, is doing better than most of her male course mates.

"A girl not being able to do a man's job is just the traditional thinking," she says.

Fellow schoolmate, Huang Jiayi, 18, a second-year Mechanical Engineering (ME) student, firmly agrees with her.



TOOLBOX HEROINE: Nor Hashanah Bte Mohd Razif (above) is one of the few NP female students who dare venture into the male-dominated engineering course, to much success academically and holistically.

Having scored an astounding six points for her GCE 'O' Levels, she could have easily entered a top junior college. However, Jiayi ultimately decided to enrol in NP's ME course because she prefers a more "hands-on" approach.

Even though the odds are stacked against her, the aspiring engineer has a steel resolve and believes "girls can do equally well

compared to guys in engineering". Jiayi has a GPA of 3.8 to prove her point.

Quiet and unassuming, she is modest about her achievements. However, when it comes to the gender divide, she thinks that females may have an edge over the males in the course.

She feels that while men tend to focus on the "technical aspect of engineering", women have a slight advantage as they look at the situation "both technically and holistically".

Hashanah's lecturer, Mr Liao Kok Pang, 45, also believes that women can be "more perceptive, and they can come up with more interesting solutions".

The BPQE lecturer thinks that women tend to have the "soft skills that a lot of guys lack".

Jumping on the women's bandwagon is Mdm Tan Peck Ha, a Biomedical Engineering (BME) lecturer, who agrees that "in areas that require meticulous attention, such as programming,

"A girl not being able to do a man's job is just the traditional thinking."

Nor Hashanah Bte Mohd Razif, 19

Final-year Business Process and Quality Engineering student

girls tend to do better".

She should know better too, since Mdm Tan is one such female engineer who debunked the myth that women and engineering do not fit.

In the 1970s, she transferred from Paya Lebar Methodist Girls' School to the now-defunct Upper Aljunied Technical School. She was one of only two of her classmates to do so.

TOUGH WORK, TOUGH LUCK?

However, Mdm Tan warns, "It's a lot of hard work. The financial returns are not on par with the amount of work put in."

As a result, engineering is still unpopular among female students, and more definitely needs to be done to promote various

engineering courses to females.

In NP, certain lecturers have made an effort to ease the difficulties of being the 'rose among the thorns' by helping the female students out more.

Second-year BME student Eu Jun Jie, 18, says, "For example in class, the lecturers will answer questions asked by them or help them out first."

However, the general consensus is that lecturers still treat female and male students equally.

Mdm Tan says, "I do encourage girls not to think of themselves as disadvantaged."

Kai Yi agrees, saying, "It is possible [for girls to outshine the guys] because we are all learning the same things. If we want to, we can."

"GIRLS FACE LIMITATIONS IN ENGINEERING COURSES"

37%

agreed with the statement above.

PERCENTAGE OF MALE STUDENTS WHO FEEL THAT FEMALES ARE LIMITED IN ENGINEERING

70%

✉ Tell us about someone who is different. Email nptribune@gmail.com

NPEOPLE

A nurse like no other

Eunice Lai

Reporting on patients, making rounds and ensuring that the patients are comfortable - Who says only girls can do all these tasks?

Second-year Nursing student Teo Koon Teck, 24, believes that nursing allows him to meet and interact with people from all walks of life.

The life lessons gained from his work experiences with his patients often become the topic of the conversations he has with his family, especially his younger siblings and relatives.

"Youngsters think they are invincible and often do things recklessly, landing themselves in the hospital. What they don't take into consideration is when they encounter a mishap, their

family suffers as well," he says.

Despite the rigorous physical and mental requirement of the job, Koon Teck finds it especially rewarding when patients under his care recover.

"When a patient is discharged, the appreciation you get is different from the one you get by doing a friend a favour. You know you've just helped someone recover from his illness and there is a sense of satisfaction."

Fellow second-year Nursing schoolmate Mohamed Ridzuan B. Sulaiman, 24, took up this course as he felt compelled to help those in need.

He says, "I have the knowledge and skills, but what's most important is how I make use of it to help people."

"In a hospital, there are always patients with financial difficulties and have various issues to deal with. This drives me to find the best possible way to help them."

MISSY SISSY

An informal check found that there are currently about 20 final-year male nursing students, as compared to 200 female students.

Ridzuan says, "A female nurse is known as a missy, so a male nurse would then be called a sissy!"

Koon Teck feels this stereotype should be addressed. He says, "It depends on the individual. You don't have to be feminine to show care and concern to patients."

Stressing on gender equality,



IN A HEARTBEAT: Teo Koon Teck (left) and Mohamed Ridzuan B Sulaiman (right) practise their nursing skills on a mannequin.

Koon Teck adds, "Why make nursing a female job? Ladies can take up the guys' jobs, so why not the other way round? There are women engineers, chefs and lawyers, and that doesn't make them manly. So how would men taking up nursing make them feminine?"

He adds that although women may be perceived as more attentive, there are certain things which men can do better.

"Some patients are heavy and a man's strength is needed to carry them out of their beds. In terms of showing care and concern, the guys don't lose out to the ladies."

Both agree that jobs in the healthcare industry should be gender-blind, since they feel that passion is all one needs for the job.

"It all depends on your heart and mind. If you have the heart and the correct attitude, where there's a will, there's a way."

As part of their academic requirement, nursing students in NP are attached to a local medical care centre where they put what they have learnt from class to practical use.

THE BENEFITS

Both Koon Teck and Ridzuan agree that interaction with the patients has positively influenced who they are as a person.

"Every day we encounter different types of patients who are in pain. But people don't see the hidden problems they're going through, like financial difficulties and family problems," Koon Teck says.

To those who are afraid of being stereotyped as a "sissy", Koon Teck and Ridzuan have this to say: It is time to rid those worries and rise to the occasion.

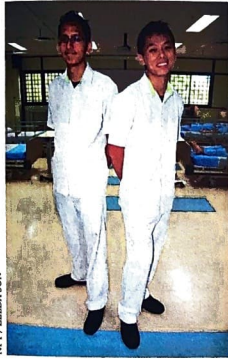
"Initially, it might be difficult

"Why make nursing a female job? Ladies can take up the guys' jobs, so why not the other way round?"

Teo Koon Teck, 24
Second-year Nursing student

as people might not understand your decision. But don't be overly conscious of what others say. They would come to realise that nursing is hard work eventually and respect you for that," Koon Teck says.

He adds that there are insufficient men in this growing industry, which might be an advantage for those who choose to seize the moment since a 34 percent increase of public healthcare nurses is expected within the next five years.



'My uncle, my classmate!'

Lee Dion

His classmates call him "Uncle" but it does not offend him. This is because Mr Phua Hock Choon is not just any student.

In a class where most of his classmates are no older than 20, Mr Phua, 43, stands out as the only student with a teenage son and a wife.

A recent Electrical Engineering graduate at NP, Mr Phua received his Diploma with Merit at the graduation ceremony on May 14.

He also bagged two additional awards from the Institution of Engineers, Singapore and Singapore Technologies for his hardwork and determination.

His excellent work performance as an unmanned airborne vehicle instructor earned Mr Phua a scholarship from the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), to "upgrade and improve himself" to cope with the ever-evolving technology.

Furthermore, with monthly allowance given to him by the SAF, Mr Phua did not have to worry about finances.

However, the decision to enroll in NP did not come easy. "It had been 20 years since I left school," says Mr Phua, who graduated with an Industrial Technical Certificate in Electrical Power in 1985.

He concedes that if not for his family's support, he would probably not have returned to school.

Of his first day, Mr Phua laughs as he says, "There was some kind of surprise as everyone thought I was a lecturer rather than a student!"

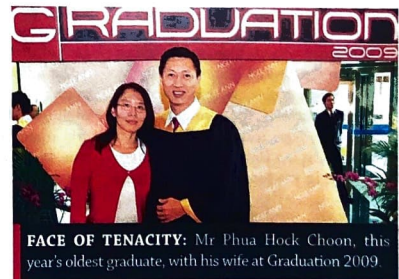
In the end, he had to go through student life in NP just like everyone else, and that included attending Interdisciplinary Studies modules, often dreaded by most students.

"I did them all! I even picked up badminton from Sports & Wellness," he adds cheekily.

Even so, Mr Phua admits that "it was a steep slope to climb" and he had to grapple with the fear of failing.

However, his worries were quelled when his classmates proved more approachable than he had initially assumed.

He adds that he "was never treated any differently" and was considered by his fellow classmates as "one of them".



FACE OF TENACITY: Mr Phua Hock Choon, this year's oldest graduate, with his wife at Graduation 2009.

Ultimately, the experience has not only helped Mr Phua academically, but allowed him to reconnect with his son, Malvin Phua, 17, a junior college student.

"There were times where I had to approach my son for advice or help with my grammar," he recalls fondly. Unlike what many think, "there was never really an issue with saving face", he insists.

As a parting shot, Mr Phua urges students today to "not restrict themselves" as there is so much more to learn. He says, "Take advantage of the services provided in NP, you have a beautiful campus."

NPEOPLE

THE GRIT BEHIND THE GLITTER

At last, they have made it to the finishing line. As we remember the joy and tears of yesteryears in NP with our graduates, npTribune talks to the four top students of 2009 and see how they made it past the rest to be the best

Nadia Shah

The Steady Marathoner

Loh Qiu-Lyng

The Ngee Ann Kongsi award is known to be exclusive, epic in proportions and elusive to many who dare dream of bagging the coveted prize.

The only girl among the top graduates this year, Mass Communication golden graduate Nadia Shah, 20, scores it big with both the prestigious Ngee Ann Kongsi and the Lien Ying Chow awards under her belt, all while staying sane and sanguine.

"I knew about [winning] the Lien Ying Chow award, but when I heard I won the Ngee Ann Kongsi award, I was shocked. I just sat there and went, 'Oh, okay.' But it was good because I wanted to go overseas [for further studies]," Nadia says.

The Ngee Ann Kongsi Gold Medal is awarded to the top student of NP each year, who can then opt to pursue any degree from any university in the world on an all-expense paid, bond-free scholarship. The Lien Ying Chow Medal is awarded to the most outstanding graduate from a non-technology course in NP.

Currently, Nadia has plans to further her studies in the United States of America, either taking a double major in Television, Radio and Film, and Magazine at Syracuse University in New York, or major in Print Journalism at the University of Southern California. In the future, she hopes to be

a feature writer, or produce and host for television documentaries.

Despite her lofty ambitions and dreams, Nadia was not expecting all the academic prizes at graduation.

"My GPA is around 3.77, so I didn't expect much."

It was a confident attitude and scores of hard work that brought Nadia her big wins. As Mass Communication lecturer, Ms Koh Joh Ting, who taught Nadia for two modules, says, "It goes to show that in our school, hard work and intelligence pays off."

Ever the music aficionado, Nadia recalls having to sacrifice time to finish her assignments instead of taking part in her favourite hobby.

She says, "I used to jam with my friend, but I often had to cancel last minute because assignments would pop up."

When stress levels seemed too overwhelming to bear, Nadia would either work it off at the gym or talk to her friends and family.

She says, "I was lucky because my classmates were different, so I could go to each of them to de-stress."

She adds, "One time, there were just more and more things coming in, and I went home and talked to my brother. He said something that I thought was very true. He said, 'Remember, it's a marathon, not a sprint.'"

"[My brother] said something that I thought was very true," she adds.

He said, "Remember, it's a marathon, not a sprint."

Nadia Shah, 20

Mass Communication graduate
Ngee Ann Kongsi &
Lien Ying Chow award recipient



NP / ZELDA SUN



PARTING SHOT: From left: Richard Kong, Ang Jin Hui, Nadia Shah and Daniel Low share a photo moment as they say their final goodbyes to their school of 3 years. All of them intend to pursue a higher education.

Richard Kong

The Compassionate Conqueror

Lin Zicheng

Electronic & Computer Engineering graduate Richard Kong is one step closer to his dream of being a technopreneur after bagging two distinguished awards.

The former Institute of Technical Education (ITE) valedictorian received the Lee Kuan Yew Award that is awarded to the top graduate of an electronic course, as well as the Tay Eng Soon Gold Medal, which is awarded to the best graduate, formerly from an ITE.

Although from a humble school background, Richard did not let the

negative energy interfere with his dreams of distinction and success. Instead, he used it to spur him on to reach his goal.

In fact, according to Richard, ITE provided him with "a good platform to go overseas", inspiring him to build up confidence in whatever he does.

This also raises an interesting question: How did he do it and from where did he draw inspiration?

He says, "I remember on enrolment day, there was this list of awards that students had won previously on display. It gave me a dream to be up there in that list, a push to achieve my goals."

All this did not come easy for Richard,

8 HABITS OF HIGHLY EFFECTIVE STUDENTS

ONE

You have just got to really know who you are. It is always about meeting your own expectations.

—Daniel Low

TWO

Whatever group you are in, cherish and appreciate the people. In everything you do, build, not burn bridges.

—Nadia Shah

THREE

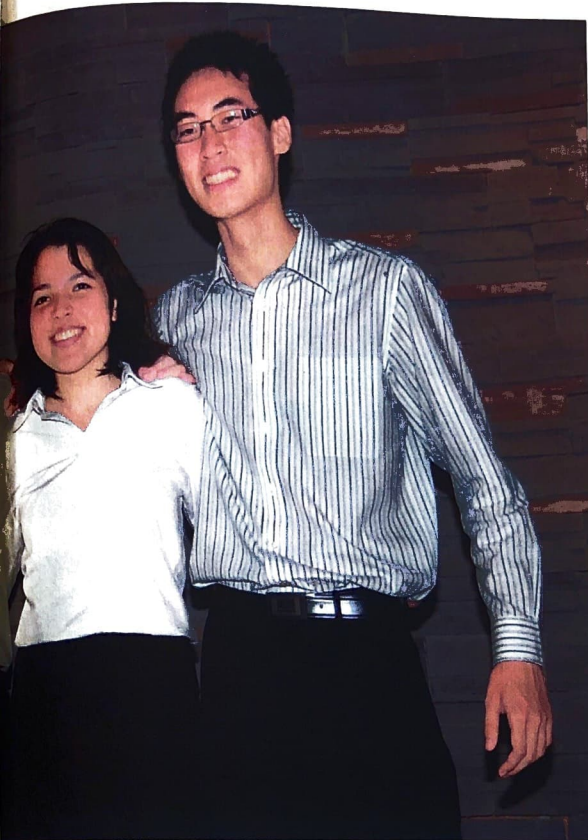
Keep a positive outlook. Hitting a dead end in the project can mean a new direction to explore and not necessarily more work to do.

—Ang Jin Hui

FOUR

Do some volunteering work. It helps you look at life from a brighter perspective.

—Richard Kong



Ang Jin Hui The Fun-loving Winner

Liu Hongzuo

The boy has it all – the brains, charisma and a body to boot. After Graduation 2009, Information Technology golden graduate Ang Jin Hui, 21, now has one more accolade to his name – the highly regarded Lee Kuan Yew Award.

A notable figure in his own right, the easygoing Jin Hui attributes his success to keeping a delicate balance between work and play, even when the hectic work schedules sweep in.

"I found schoolwork really enjoyable actually," says Jin Hui in a muted manner, when asked about tackling a daunting project. "If we [the project team] get tired of work, we'd just take a break, and continue on work later."

Even with two Lee Kuan Yew awards to his name (the first awarded to him for topping the 'N' Level Examinations in 2003), along with a gold certification in his CCA amongst other awards, Jin Hui is a big fan of having fun, citing "slacking" as one of his pastimes. It is hard to believe that a self-proclaimed merry-maker like him is a winner on so many levels.

"I slack with my friends during free time! Going around, tasting good food around campus or hanging out at the library or Ourspace@72," says Jin Hui, who is a happy-go-lucky person, ready for anything that comes his way.

"I also go out with my friends, catch a movie or do some silly things and have fun," he adds with a cheeky grin.

Besides taking it easy at the right time, Jin Hui also believes in staying in the pink of health.

His favourite activities include going to the gym at least once a week, jogging with his friends and serving the community by helping out at the Red Cross Home For The Disabled.

With whatever free time left, he takes up snorkelling as well.

"I would like to try diving in the future too," he says. "My dream job is to be a motivational speaker."

So what does this budding speaker have to say to motivate his peers in NP?

"You have to prioritise your time. Don't overload yourself if you have many projects on hand, don't take on more. Most important of all to learn and enjoy at the same time."

Daniel Low The Ambitious Realist

Wong Yeang Cherng

who did not just spend his time studying. He was also actively involved in two CCAs – the Electronic & Computer Engineering Society and the Toastmasters Club. In fact, the list goes on. Due to his passion for the community, he spends any free time doing volunteer work.

When asked if he has ever felt suffocated, he says, "I don't think it felt tough to me. I worked hard, but it's not just for the sake of studying."

"These three years have been very enjoyable for me, especially making new friends and doing community work."

He notes that there is "more openness in NP", where anyone can pursue their dreams "as long as they're passionate about it".

Richard's most memorable experience in NP was participating in WorldSkills

Singapore 2008. Going up against other polytechnics and ITEs, his team spent about nine hours in preparation for the competition of technological skills. Their dedication eventually secured them a third place.

Mr Sunarto Quek, a senior lecturer at the School of Engineering, who has known Richard for close to two years, has nothing but praise for Richard's conscientious efforts and attitude.

He says, "Richard is a very hardworking, very consistent student. I've never known him to hand in late work, and his work is always outstanding."

Richard has since been awarded a scholarship at NTU that recognises freshmen who have achieved outstanding academic and CCA records, while possessing leadership qualities.

Strike up a conversation with Marine & Offshore Technology golden graduate, Daniel Low, 20, and he will come across as being opinionated and meticulous, with a calm disposition and a logical flow of thought.

"Daniel is very analytical. No matter what he does, he's a very application-oriented person," says Mr Subrata Chanda, course manager of Marine & Offshore Technology.

Working with Daniel for two modules and his final-year project has given Mr Chanda sufficient opportunities to realise how Daniel is one who "if you've met him, you'll like him".

"He's a likeable person and he mixes very well with people," he adds.

Daniel's affable personality is streaked with the ability to handle pressure that stood his way during his years in school. He cites picking up a hobby as his solution to stress.

Moreover, Daniel is an advocate of good sleeping habits. While other students may burn the midnight oil in a mad rush to finish work, he chooses to "try and sleep normal hours".

"I think sleeping is part of a good lifestyle. I don't think very well once I don't sleep, and I become quite cranky. The important thing is not to study hard, but study smart," he says.

Fun and sleeping habits aside, Daniel is a realist. As part of his "study smart"

policy, he makes certain that he does not get too caught up in competition.

He says, "Quite frankly, whatever you learn in NP is going to be outdated by the time you come out of army or by the time you go to university and come out."

"But, what you can bring with you," he adds, "is the ability to process and think in a manner that is different from the rest."

Essentially, it boils down to being proactive when taking steps to greatness.

"Once you're in poly, you've got to recognise that you're in poly. You don't expect to be spoon-fed. Don't expect opportunities to land right in front of you and don't expect teachers to come and beg you to go for overseas trips," says Daniel.

The ambitious "inventor of sorts" in the marine industry will continue to pursue a degree related to his current course of study in Newcastle University, a NP-affiliated institution.

Whatever the future might hold for this zealous individual, he says that he will go with the flow.

"Hopefully, I can have a post-graduate [degree]. But, let's not look too far. Let's just do one thing at a time."

As Daniel readies to begin the next chapter of his life, he describes his time in NP as one great lesson learnt.

He muses, "You don't really have to be good at doing everything. Just know what you want and what you are good at doing and then, make the most out of it."

FIVE

Know your own limits and the amount of time you have to commit to different aspects of your life besides work.

– Ang Jin Hui

SIX

Get your hands dirty and do not be afraid to try. Widen your network and make your study in NP fruitful.

– Daniel Low

SEVEN

Do not forget to have fun. As much as possible, go out.

– Nadia Shah

EIGHT

Prioritise your work – always start with the most important work first, then leave the unimportant stuff for later.

– Richard Kong

NPEOPLE



Why do you take up part-time jobs? Tell us on nptribune.theurbanwire.com

WALKING DOWN JOB STREET

Lin Verena

Part-time jobs continue to be all the rage among students, despite the heavy demands of school. The question is whether students are still taking up the jobs for the same reason as before.

Although earning an extra income remains the most popular motive, it is interesting to note that there is an increasing number of students engaging in part-time jobs for other purposes, like achieving a sense of fulfillment and contributing to the community.

Final-year Business Studies student Jasmine Low, 18, who has been working at an ice cream parlour for a year, says, "I work because I find that it adds value to my application to the universities and I gain a lot of experience in areas outside my line of study."

She adds, "I can also make more friends and improve my networking skills because working at Ice Cream Chef has allowed me to interact with many different kinds of people."

Waitressing, data entry, secretarial or retail positions and private tuition are the more common jobs that students undertake, according to a recent online report.

Others like final-year Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering student, Rachel Ng, 19, however, prefer more challenging types of part-time work that include freelance writing and designing, which add value to a student's portfolio. Rachel does "freelance design work for Orchid Country Club and newsletter layouts for junior colleges".

DIFFERING PURPOSES

First-year Digital Visual Effects student Zulhilmly Azrin, 17, works part-time at Jamiyah Ar-Rabitah Mosque as a Youth Development Officer, where he plans various programmes for youths to help them "mix with the right company to avoid being led astray".

There are others like Zulhilmly, who pick part-time jobs that allow them to do their part for the community while providing them

with a sense of accomplishment.

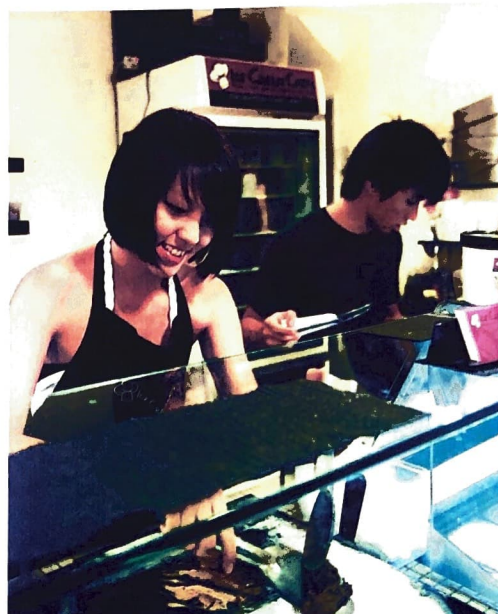
Final-year Business Studies student Chan Kai Chin, 19, says, "The reason I work at the Apple Store is because I enjoy meeting people's needs. It gives me a sense of satisfaction being able to solve their problems."

On the flipside, students hold part-time jobs for the obvious purpose of earning their own keep or getting more spending money.

Final-year Logistics Management student Ong Shui Xian, 20, works as a retail assistant because she wishes to "learn the importance of money coming not just from your mummy's pockets, but earning it on your own".

She adds that looking for a part-time job that allows her time to complete her schoolwork is an important criteria and that "having a positive mindset as you work could mean that you could be having fun as well".

For those who require a job that is convenient, NP's Career Portal (<http://np.jobscentral.com.sg>) is a useful search portal where students may search for job placements. The school also



WORKING REASONS: NP student Jasmine Low (left) works at an ice cream parlour because she gets to interact with different people - one of the many reasons students take up such jobs.

NPT ZELDA SUN

offers on campus jobs that vary from simple administrative functions to complex projects. Salary is fixed at \$6.50 per hour.

Final-year Business Studies student Ernie Kwok, 19, has been working at the school gym since he was a freshman. On the perks

of working part-time in school, he says, "I can maximise my time in campus and at the same time earn money for it."

"If I don't work at Gymwerkz, I will have nothing to do during long breaks [in school] anyway," he adds.

That's what I go to school for

Keann Chong

Strong friendships were forged and many fond memories created as this year's freshmen thronged the school grounds for a flurry of orientation activities from Mar 16 to Apr 17.

For many of them, it was their first experience with activities such as wet games, horror-themed night walks and spontaneous cheering competitions where their seniors often pulled out all the stops in an effort to break the ice, no matter how silly they had to behave.

"The dirty games were really unexpected," says first-year Business Studies student, Priscilla Sung, 17, referring to those played at the camp organised by the NP Student Union.

"The group leaders were really enthusiastic," she adds. "When they

start cheering, it's just not right not to cheer!"

Not only did the orientation activities help the freshmen befriend one another, it also helped to build bonds between seniors and freshmen.

First-year Multidisciplinary Engineering student Gerald Cheng, 16, feels that the activities also helped them to get to know their seniors better, citing the fact that the "freshmen and group leaders still get together quite often to do activities like play basketball".

The result of the bonds from the orientation programmes is evident. Even after the camps have long ended, groups of freshmen can be seen hanging out with the friends made in camp.

"I think we will remember this for a very long time," says Gerald.



NPT PHOTO CONTEST



See your face in the photo above? Come down with your Student Card to Blk 52, School of Film & Media Studies, #07-01, to collect your prize. Courtesy of npTribune.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF VARIOUS SCHOOLS & THE STUDENTS' UNION

NP ARTS FIESTA

Wong Yeang Cherng & Tanya Lai

HOMEcoming AT 30

With their characteristic mix of fluidity and nimbleness, the Chinese dance performers commanded the halls of Victoria Theatre as the azure blue linen of their costumes twirled and glided effortlessly across a stage of psychedelic lights, much to the delight of the audience.

Finally, they were home.

Celebrating 30 glorious years in the Chinese cultural dance scene, the NP Dance Group wowed the crowd with their anniversary production on Apr 18.

The club's seventh public performance, entitled *Recollections*, opened with a dazzle of turquoise, as the dancers drifted to the serene number of *Awakening of Spring*, the first of their 12 dance items.

From ethnic elements to contemporary flair, the performance conjured dreamy images of tranquillity, love and unity. The show even saw the support of NP Dance Group alumni, like Noorin Najmi Nawi, 22, who performed in the contemporary dance piece, *The Letter*.

"We try to portray [the dance] through our emotions and facial expressions [so that it is] easier for the audience, because some of them, I believe, are non-dancers," she says.

The matinee was a collaboration between five clubs: the Dance Group, Chinese Orchestra, Choir, Harmonica Troupe and Stage Art Group, all of which used to come under the now defunct Cultural Activities and Social Services Club.



WITH GRACE AND POISE: The NP Dance Group wowed the crowd at Victoria Theatre with their fluid and nimble dance routines.

Fong Koon Kit, 19, a third-year Biomedical Science student, was wonderstruck at the versatility of the campus' arts and cultural talent pool.

He says, "I think it's quite new because you have different CCAs performing at different intervals. It's better than having an entire dance performance solely on its own."

However, the stage ultimately belonged to the dance group. The performers lured the audience into a trance with their fluid movements, coupled with the eclectic use of streaming lights and shadow-play.

Looking back, the NP Dance Group has blossomed into a big family. Hoo Wan Ting, 22, president of the NP Dance Group, agreed after witnessing the group grow closer during their gruelling dance practices.

It was a tumultuous ride for the club when the members had to handle "trial and error with committee members" at the beginning. With time, "thinking hats were put on, which quickly bonded us together and friendships were made firmly between us," says Wan Ting.

As the recital finally came to an end, the dance group scrambled to perform the grand finale, entitled *Yellow river*.

The final act which is about "with determination, the people continue to strive and triumph over the difficulties and obstacles for a better future", saw 34 members finishing the dance in a towering sensation of pleasure and satisfaction, to the rousing sound of applause from the enraptured audience.



VOCAL HARMONY: Early Childhood Education graduate Grace Lee (centre) took the lead as the NP choir backed her up vocally.

THE TRIPLE THREAT

Audiences at the NP Choir's annual concert were treated to an auditory and visual feast as the choristers performed an eclectic mix of song, dance and theatrics at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts.

Held on Apr 26, the first half of the night saw the choir perform eight choral pieces, including six a cappella performances and a 35-minute musical titled *Journey*.

The first note soared into the night when the choristers crooned two popular songs from popular movie-musical, *Sister Act*. Although there were a few technical glitches, the subtle display of vocal strength by the performers was sufficient to draw a delighted round of applause from the audience.

The crowd also burst into an excitable buzz when the choir, accompanied by guest singers and dancers, belted out a cappella versions of chart-toppers by Justin Timberlake and The Pussycat Dolls.

NP Principal and Guest-of-Honour of the night, Mr Chia Mia Chiang, thought that the overall standard of the production was high.

He says, "We're doing our best. The standards of the arts groups in NP are going up every year."

Fingers were crossed as the first-ever musical staged by the choir began its first act. In the drama, the protagonist finds herself trapped in and freefalling into despair after losing her parents at the tender age of seven. In a surprise twist of fate, she befriends an outgoing classmate and together, begins a journey through music to self-discovery, trust and hope.

Judging from the raucous applause after each of the cast's antics, the show was definitely a hit with the audience. Recent Early Childhood Education graduate Grace Lee, 21, who played the lead, showed her appreciation. "We wanted to show we can not just sing, but we can act as well."



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ZEST. REVIEWS

SMOKIN' HOT BARBECUE CHIPS

It's a must-have for long nights of studying. Smoky and intense, you know you love it.

RACHAEL NONIS chips in on the crowd-pleaser flavour, barbecued potato chips



RUFFLES
TEXAS STYLE
BARBECUE
FLAVOURED
POTATO
CHIPS
\$4.00 for 200g*



LAYS
BARBECUE
FLAVOURED
POTATO
CHIPS
\$4.00 for 200g*



PRINGLES
SMOKY
BBQ CHIPS
\$2.90 for 160g*



JACK 'N JILL
POTATO
CHIPS
BARBECUE
FLAVOUR
\$2.80 for 180g*



TAI SUN
POTATO
CHIPS
BARBECUE
FLAVOUR
\$2.10 for 150g*

With its bright blue and white packaging, Ruffles potato chips is easily one of the more noticeable brands of potato chips at first glance. And just like its bright, loud packaging, its chips pack a good punch too. Munch one of these and you can immediately taste the intense barbecue flavour, followed by a lovely smoky aftertaste. Be warned though, for those who dislike salty food, Ruffles is a tad too salty. However, these crinkle-cut chips are an absolute joy to eat. Though slightly thicker than your average potato chip, just listen to the loud crunch as you bite down on a chip – utterly satisfying.

Arguably one of the more well known brand of potato chips among students, Lays is popular and not without reason. Its chips are just right, salty with a hint of barbecue flavour, that is not too overbearing. Thin and clean-cut, the chips are perfectly crisp without becoming a chore to chomp on. With its sleek, black wrap, Lays is unassuming amongst all the other garishly coloured packages on the aisle, but tear open a packet and 15 minutes later, you find yourself licking the salt off your fingers. You have to admit, these chips are pretty darn addictive.

Pop off the lid of Pringles barbecue flavoured potato chips and your inner neat freak will rejoice. Instead of the usual mix of different sized, sometimes-ugly potato chips, you will find chips that are beautifully arched and stacked perfectly on top of one another. Taste-wise though, Pringles leaves much to be desired. It is bland, with only a bare hint of barbecue. The chips are also soft, and they just do not pack quite the same crunch you would expect from a potato chip. However, for convenience sake, Pringles are a breeze to store. Just pop the cap back on and save it for another day.

At first glance the chips looked delicious, they were a golden yellowish, with slightly charred edges. However, after tucking into the packet enthusiastically, it was disappointingly tasteless. The barbecue flavour was weak, but thankfully, there was a very mild smoky aftertaste, which was quite pleasant. Even so, they were sliced a little too thickly, and as a result, the chips were a little too hard and tiring to munch on after a while. However, retailing at only \$2.80 for such a huge pack (180g), it is definitely quite worth the quantity given.

A little more well-known for its array of nuts and dried fruits, Tai Sun's range of potato chips has not had much popularity. The chips did not have that smoky barbecue flavour the other chips had. Instead, it tasted slightly sweeter and was a little less salty. The chips were really thin and light, and even though it did not have the fullness of a satisfying crunch, it had a certain crispiness about it. However, Tai Sun is great for a light snack in the afternoon. Furthermore, this is the most affordable of the lot, at \$2.10 for a fairly large (150g) packet.

* Price may vary between stores.



simplyHIS

Top:

The vibrant neon colours from this Nike polo shirt will certainly bring out your cheerful side. The boldness of each coloured stripe will rip through with vibrancy, distracting people from any unsightly folds you try to hide.

Bottom:

The plain khaki bermuda shorts are intentionally kept bland to help the boldness of the polo shirt stand out. You may want to work around with a variety of earth colours to match your skin colour or off-whites for a softer feel.

• **Note:** Straight cut bermas are the way to go, not oversized ones to show off your SpongeBob SquarePants boxers!

BE STARK, BE LOUD, BE BOLD

This season, dare to be bold with your dress sense as **ISAAC TAN** shows you his favourite pick

Footwear:

This orange blazoned Nike Dunk Hi Supreme pair is just loud. The boldness is stark, yet pleasing. With the stereotypical warm feel of summer, these neon shoes bring out the raw edge to the whole look.

simplyHERS

Wind Breaker:

This purple Nike Best Icons Women's Windrunner Jacket from their Spring/Summer 2009 spread is perfect. The eye-catching hoodies with dri-fit technology keeps you looking chic, sporty and comfortable all at the same time.

Top:

This bright yellow Nike Sportswear Women's T-Shirt, is garishly in-your-face, but the subtle tinge of purple from the brand name is key to making this look daring and matching. The basic design is a remastered version of a 1979 classic Nike look.

Shorts:

The plain white Cotton On shorts is meant to be a safe pick. The basic pair amplifies the richness of the other colours involved to make this look perfect. Getting the right pair of shorts will help emphasise the length of your legs without looking skimpy.

Footwear:

This pretty little pair looks good worn with or without socks. The bold purple does an excellent matching number with the windrunner and certainly brings out the moxie in you.



To find out where you can get these items, log on to <http://nptribune.theurbanwire.com>

Tell us about your favourite book on the npTribune website: nptribune.theurbanwire.com

ZEST

ALL MY FRIENDS ARE SUPERHEROES



[FICTION]

All My Friends Are Superheroes

Andrew Kaufman
available at
Lien Ying Chow
Library

Set in Toronto, the story starts at the airport, where the Perfectionist, a superhero, is waiting in line to board an airplane to Vancouver, Canada. Her boyfriend, regular human being Tom, is standing at her side, visible to anyone but her, due to an unfortunate event on their wedding day, when Hypno, a disgruntled ex-lover of the Perfectionist, hypnotises her into believing that Tom does not exist.

Heartbroken (quite literally), Tom tries all he can to make her see him to no avail. After 600 cigarettes and six months of waiting on the Perfectionist's part, she chooses to start a new, perfect

life in Vancouver without him. This leaves Tom with only as much time as an airplane flight can offer to convince her of his existence, or lose her for good.

What results is an honest, completely romantic (though not overbearingly so) book with its larger-than-life characters woven into an intriguing story filled with life's little quirks and upsets.

Though Tom's plight is seemingly urgent, the pace of the book is mellow and languid, and Andrew Kaufman strings his readers along on a lovely ride, moving back and forth between flashbacks detailing Tom and the Perfectionist's individual love lives, and Tom's growing sense of desperation to make himself visible to his girlfriend.

Kaufman's style is casual and witty, and he manages to work insights about the simpler truths of love and life into a clever narrative. Through the awkward first dates and imminent heartaches that Tom and the Perfectionist experience, Kaufman strikes a parallel to our plebeian, everyday worries, making these characters, despite their otherworldly

powers, completely relatable.

However, for a book focusing on heroes, *All My Friends Are Superheroes* is quite the anti-hero, and many of the abilities of the superheroes portrayed in the book are the exact opposite of our ideal caped crusader. Take, for example, the Impossible Man, who spent 13 months trying to build fire underwater, and Tom's best friend, the Amphibian, whose only superpower is the ability to live on both land and water. Even so, as pointless as some of these superheroes may be, their descriptions, peppered in between chapters, are an utter joy to read.

Ultimately, this book is comparable to the simpler things in life, like a nap on the couch on a Saturday afternoon, or waking up to the smell of pancakes in the morning – not at all indulgent, and yet somehow utterly satisfying. It definitely takes superhuman effort to put *All My Friends Are Superheroes* down before sinking back into life's more ordinary routines.

Daniel Ong



[FICTION]

Second Glance

Jodi Picoult
available at
Lien Ying Chow
Library

Depressed after the death of his fiancée, Aimee, Ross finds all sorts of ways to be with her again, even trying to kill himself, but to no avail. Desperate, he becomes a paranormal investigator, hoping to bump into Aimee on her way to the other side.

However, he finds himself caught up in inexplicably strange things when a developer tries to buy a plot of land in Vermont, said to be an ancient burial ground for the native Abenaki Indians, who were sterilised by a group of "progressive thinkers" in the 1920s and 30s.

Jodi Picoult, while tackling controversial issues like stem cell research, manages to weave in themes of family, love, and sacrifice. Except this time, instead of the usual courtroom drama, she adds a mysterious ghost to the mix.

Though deeply intriguing, *Second Glance* starts off slow, but gradually picks up pace towards the second half and manages to accomplish what readers have come to expect from Picoult.

The book is filled with complicated relations between characters, enlightening facts through thorough research, and real drawing power: Proof that love can overcome all odds.

Eunice Ng



[FICTION]

I Write A Page

Kit Chan
available at
ethosbooks.com.sg

In a superficial world where beauty takes precedence, it is rare to find the truly gifted. However, *I Write A Page*, written by Kit Chan, sets the popular local singer apart from the pack.

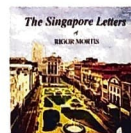
Basically a collection of 33 English poems written over a span of five years from 1990 to 1995, the poetry is deeply personal, like passages in her life.

For the truly bilingual, there are also Mandarin versions of all her poems translated by Singaporean writer-composer Liang Wern Fook, who manages to capture Chan's very essence and zeal for life. She also includes notes at the side of her poems to aid interpretation of her works.

Of all the poems, *Smile For The Camera* stands out unquestionably. Chan manages to depict the burden of stardom without sounding whiny. With crossed out profanity and played down sarcasm, this gem of a poem is utterly refreshing to read.

Not afraid to wear her heart on her sleeve, Kit Chan has definitely found her own zone in Singapore's tiny pool of homegrown talent, and this book is real and rare, much like the poet herself.

Amber Chan



[NON FICTION]

The Singapore Letters Of Rigor Mortis

Dr George Caldwell
available at
ethosbooks.com.sg

The *Singapore Letters of Rigor Mortis* is an excellent embodiment of the saying: The pen is mightier than the sword.

The book, essentially a compilation of letters published in Singapore newspapers and written mostly by Dr George Caldwell, also known as Dr Igor Mortis, between the late 60s and early 90s, advocates Singapore's need to preserve certain streets and buildings.

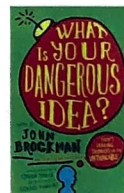
Covering streets that Singaporeans are familiar with even today, reading the book feels almost as if you know the end of the story even before picking it up.

The letters, though concerning issues such as the destruction of buildings and environmental problems of the past, are laced with good humour and wit, which saves the book from sounding like a history archive.

Furthermore, the individual letters are like puzzle pieces of the island's history that when pieced together, form a larger and more complete picture of Singapore's past, making the book an easy read.

With its interesting take on how Singapore has developed into what it is today, the book is definitely worth a read for a crash course in the history of Singapore's more well-travelled roads.

Anand S/O Sasangan



[NON FICTION]

What Is Your Dangerous Idea?

John Brockman
available at
Lien Ying Chow
Library

If the most dangerous idea you could come up with is to walk on a tightrope over a lake teeming with piranhas, think again.

A collection of essays from some of the world's most brilliant, the book is filled with concepts that could undermine the beliefs that people live by.

Edited by John Brockman, founder of the Edge Foundation whose purpose is to have brilliant minds discuss complex literary and scientific topics, the essays are written by members of the foundation in response to the question: What is your dangerous idea?

Among these are blasphemous theories. One such shocker is *The Posterior Probability of Any Particular God* is Pretty Small by Philip W. Anderson, and it seeks to disprove the existence of a higher being.

To partake in intellectual debates that will question your view of the world, *What Is Your Dangerous Idea?* gives one the perfect platform to begin.

However, it is important to have a good grasp of general knowledge, as the discussions range from quantum physics to religious beliefs.

Now, care to share your very own dangerous idea?

Nathaniel Phua

26 Sep 2009
Open House@SIM

Ong Chong Hui
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Play that funky Tempo!

Japanese theatre group The Original Tempo uses everyday objects like teacups and bicycles to make sounds in their wacky musical-play

Melodie Lee

It looks like a morning scene in someone's house. An alarm clock rings. A man stretches and rubs his eyes, yawning. He moves to what one would presume to be a bathroom, when all of a sudden, he starts hitting a couch with a consistent beat, producing a bass rhythm. Then, another man enters and begins brushing his teeth, creating the sounds of the high hat of a drum. Out of nowhere, other people enter the scene, and the cacophony begins.

This is how Japanese theatre group The Original Tempo might open their musical-play when they perform here from Jun 12 to 14, as part of the Singapore Arts Festival at the Esplanade. The group, comprising of six musicians and performers, turn ordinary everyday objects like teacups, vacuum cleaners, boxes and bicycles into an aural and visual spectacle.

Their performance, Shut Up, Play! can be likened to the one by widely acclaimed British percussion dance troupe, Stomp. However, what sets these two groups apart is The Original Tempo's clever use of video

effects and mildly haunting atmospheric soundtracks.

The result is a charmingly offbeat kaleidoscope of sounds, colours and lights, all blended together to form a surreal tale, reminiscent of Alice in Wonderland.

Formed in

"We are constantly surrounded by many sounds. I realised that when these pieces of sound overlap, music is created."

Mr Masahiro Kinoshita, 37
Writer and stage producer

2002 by Mr Masahiro "Worry" Kinoshita, a 37-year-old writer and stage producer based in Japan, the group first started performing their own interpretations of theatre play, like Othello by William Shakespeare.

Then in 2003, they branched out and finally found their own niche - making music from everyday items. In Shut Up, Play!, members even create sounds by

blowing air bubbles while submerging their faces in a basin filled with water.

In an email interview with Mr Kinoshita, he revealed that the group had started simply with the desire to "produce a different sound". Their set was simple, just four members dressed in

yellow raincoats playing the drums simultaneously,

or using cassette recorders to create techno music, similar to the way deejays spin music.

For Shut Up, Play!, The Original Tempo drew inspiration from "the sound of daily lives". In particular, the "sound of water, construction sites, hitting the human body and voices," adds Mr Kinoshita.

When asked about the story behind such ingenuity, Mr Kinoshita says, "We are constantly surrounded by many sounds. There is sound even when people walk by. I realised that when these pieces of sound overlap, music is created. I found it amusing and saw that as something I could harvest."

This unusual concept seems to have worked, and apart from Japan, The Original Tempo has since performed in numerous venues in countries like Taiwan and South Korea.

Despite Shut up, Play! having been described by the Esplanade as a "comedic musical-play", there are few lines uttered throughout the act.

Mr Kinoshita explains that it is because they want to create plots that will naturally interest the audience and break down language barriers.

He says, "In our performances, we try and create plots that involve the audience." Adding that despite the language and cultural differences, they "want to have the same perspective as our audience".

So what can the audience expect from their performance when they arrive in June?

A mysterious experience, with an unpredictable Japanese twist, says Mr Kinoshita. He even adds, "We hope audiences would want to put their faces into buckets filled with water when they get back home!"

SINGAPORE ARTS FEST

Shut up, Play!

by The Original Tempo is on from Jun 12 to 14, 8pm at the Esplanade Recital Studio. Tickets are priced at \$35 and \$27 for students, full-time National Servicemen and senior citizens. The Singapore Arts Festival 2009 is held from May 15 to Jun 14. To find out more about upcoming performances, visit <http://singaporeartsfest.com>



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DANCE LIKE THERE'S NO TOMORROW

National youth dancer Lim Chong Aik shows **CHERYL TAN** how he juggles his stressful schedule of both school and professional sports

At first glance, it is hard to believe that Lim Chong Aik can dance with his skinny, gawky frame and unassuming demeanour.

Yet, watch him on the dancefloor with his partner, Raine Low, in the middle of a sensual, sexy dance routine, and you will realise why Chong Aik was chosen to represent Singapore in youth danceport competitions.

Having started dancing competitively at the age of 14 under the influence of his dancer parents, Chong Aik, 17, a first-year International Business student, takes to dancing like a fish takes to water.

"[Dancing] was kind of forced at first but after a while, it became natural," he says.

Now, Chong Aik is well-versed in five different dance styles: Cha Cha, Rumba, Samba, Paso Doble and Jive.

Instead of fear and uncertainty, dancing gives him a sense of pride, especially when he represents Singapore and competes with world-class dancers from all over the world.

"It's a great sense of national pride because you know you are there carrying the flag," says Chong Aik.

He adds enthusiastically, "You just have to give it your all because you are selected to represent Singapore, and not many people

can do that. It's a great feeling."

Dancing has not only helped him grow as a person but has, quite literally, broadened his horizons. His passion has him traversing the world to countries such as Italy, Japan, and most recently, Thailand.

It was there that he and Raine came in 17th out of 41

down pat.

"I was dancing even in the midst of my 'O' Levels. It's a good stress reliever for me, like an alter-ego. You express yourself differently from who you are in the day," he explains.

Chong Aik managed to jive his way through his GCE 'O' Levels and ironically, it even helped to

"If you dance, you will always want to be the top. It's just a sense of satisfaction."

couples in the International DanceSport Federation Open Championships 2009.

"It was one of my proudest moments because we made it through the second round without a re-dance," Chong Aik gleefully recounts.

However, with both long and energy-consuming dance practices, it is hard to understand how he manages to juggle both his schoolwork and his passion.

Chong Aik makes it a point to practise at least three times a week and has additional stamina training before competitions to keep himself both mentally and physically prepared.

However, he has his schedule

improve his grades.

"After I started dancing competitively, my results went up as well. I think it's a good balance in life. You need to work hard and play hard as well," he declares with a knowing smile.

While Chong Aik seems to have everything going for him, from his parents' support to having attained a seemingly perfect balance between work and play, he struggles with a different problem: reaching the top.

"If you dance, you will always want to be the top. It's just a sense of satisfaction," he states simply.

He believes that having the skill is not everything, and that one must have the passion and love for



SHALL WE DANCE: The heat is on as Chong Aik graces the international dance floor with his sleek moves.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LIM CHONG AIK

dancing in order to shine.

"You might be very good technically, but if you don't feel the music, it shows quite evidently," says Chong Aik.

Although dancing carries a certain stigma for men, Chong

Aik feels otherwise.

Frowning a little, he says, "I think that people who dare to dance are actually more manly. In dance, the guy takes control of the girl and so, in fact, it makes the guy look more macho."

NPT SPORTLIGHT

CYCLISTS CLINCH MEDALS AT MOUNTAIN BIKE CARNIVAL

With wheels turning and feet pumping, students of the NP Cycling Club blazed through the tracks at the Great Singapore Mountain Bike Carnival, which was held from Feb 28 to Mar 1 at the Tampines Mountain Bike Park, also the site of the 2010 Singapore Youth Olympics Mountain Bike Race.

Of all the different events that were showcased there that weekend, the students participated in the downhill race, the short track race, the off-road duathlon and the main event, the 100-kilometre night mountain bike marathon.

Of the many cyclists, both local and foreign, who participated in the various races, NP Cycling Club managed to clinch the gold and bronze medals for the short track event and the downhill event respectively.

Winner of the short track event, Ellery Png, 18, a second-year Business Studies student, says, "I think we did pretty well, given the fact that we had to juggle between three events, which were back to back."

-NATHANIEL PHUA

DANCESPORT JUNIORS CAN DEFINITELY DANCE

Dancing their way into the finals, NP Dancesport juniors made the best out of their training while competing in the Singapore Dancesport Nationals.

The competition, held by the Singapore Dancesport Federation, took place on Mar 14 at the Hougang Community Club. Participants from different institutions were graded on a variety of Latin dances.

The team's gruelling training reaped results when NP Dancesport swept the first positions for the Cha Cha and Rumba dance styles, and also came in first and second for Jive. The seniors also finished as champions in the Tertiary Grade C category.

First runner-up for Jive, Brandon Chong, 18, a second-year Mass Communication student, says, "We did really well! I remember having heat after heat, which was crazy as we did not have any breaks in between."

He adds, "In fact, Ngee Ann had the most juniors coming to the finals as compared to other institutions."

-NATHANIEL PHUA

TRI ELITE FINISH FIRST IN SPRINT DUATHLON

NP's triathlon club, Tri Elite, did one better this year in the Singapore Sprint Series by finishing first in the Men's under-20 category of the sprint duathlon.

The annual competition was held on Mar 15 and consisted of a three-kilometre run, a 15-kilometre bike trail and another three-kilometre run.

Although Tri Elite had sent in two representatives, it was Ng Zhaomu, a final-year Mechanical Engineering student, who eventually clinched the coveted prize for the club.

He says, "Although I have achieved what I set out to do, I still feel there is room for improvement, especially in my transitions."

Zhaomu had finished as first runner-up in last year's event and immediately started intensifying his training, as he believes that "the only way you can improve for next year is to train all the time and not just when a race is coming".

-ANAND S/O SASAGAN