

# npTribune

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Ngee Ann Polytechnic

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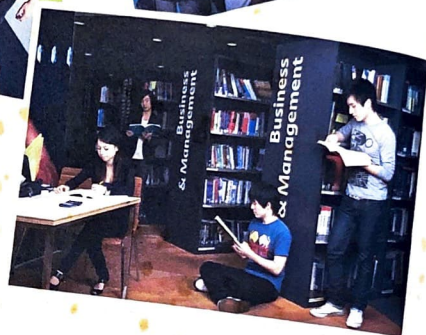
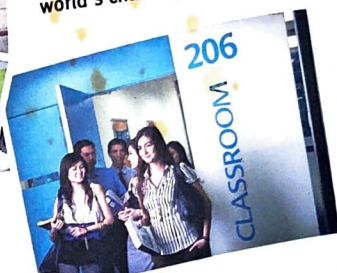
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# npTribune

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

JULY - SEPTEMBER 2009

## INSIDE

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Think of the liberal arts concept of "Money, Business and the American Culture", and one thing definitely comes to mind: It is a challenge.

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National Bowler Eugene Low shows us that passion for the sport is the key for excellence in the sport

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NP / AIRELL ANG

## DECODING THE MESSAGE BEHIND THE MEDIA

Secondary school students at the Singapore Youth and Media Camp 2009 go behind the scenes and through interactive workshops and interesting seminars to find out what the media is trying to tell them

Airell Ang, Eunice Ng,  
Lin Zicheng & Melodie Lee

"Is there a hidden message behind the media?" Students attending the Singapore Youth and Media Camp (SYM Camp) at NP from 15 to 17 Jun found themselves faced with this question.

Organised to increase media literacy among youths in Singapore, the SYM Camp incorporated both seminars and workshops taught by lecturers from the School of Film & Media Studies (FMS). More than 100 students from 14 different schools received first-hand experience behind the scenes in the media industry, as they attended various seminars such as Violence in the Media and Advertising Messages, as well as radio and filming workshops.

MEDUSA (Media-Education Solutions), a research and programming subsidiary of FMS and the organiser for the event, wanted to "inject fun", and also

to make the camp "not only about medialogues", which is the reason for workshops on top of the typical seminars.

#### ROCK DJ

The workshops facilitated by industry professionals were largely popular with the participants.

Inquisitive minds were on a roll and the radio studio buzzed with excitement as the students picked their songs for their very own radio capsule.

Curtis Tan, 14, a student from Fairfield Methodist Secondary School who attended the radio workshop, says, "The lecturers were interesting. They opened up my eyes about the subliminal messages behind the media, but I enjoyed the workshops more. It's my first time being behind the microphone as a DJ, and it was unforgettable."

During the workshops, hands flew into the air to compete for the facilitator's time and attention.

Mr Jason Chow, facilitator of the radio workshop, says, "It's good

exposure for them. This camp gets all the participants excited about the media business. It is easy for people to be critical of media personalities, but only when the students get put in the hot seat will they realise the pressure, and that's when they'll be facing their own demons."

When put in front of the microphone, many of the students were exasperated as they attempted to control the nervousness in their voices.

Yuying Secondary School student Jade Png, 17, recounts her experience in front of the microphone, "It's my first time. I stammered and had my tongue tied a few times through the capsule. But it was great fun!"

Still, it was not only about deejaying behind the radio stations.

Students learnt about media literacy, or having the "ability to bring critical thinking skills to bear on all media", which is also what the Media Development of Authority (MDA) hopes to achieve for seven out of ten Singaporeans by 2015.

#### UNRAVELLING THE MEDIA

"It's about the instinct to question what lies behind media productions and how it affects the viewer and the society at large," says Mr Herald Bangras, who was also in charge of the seminar Violence in the Media.

Mr Clement Tay, trainer at the Advertising Messages seminar, agrees. "Currently, I think youths are too comfortable with order taking, being spoonfed by one or just a few sources of information, and that can be very detrimental to an open, hungry mind."

As a result, it came as an utter surprise to the students when they found out that there is more than meets the eye in the media content that they mindlessly consume daily.

When Mr Bangras played the track "Relapse" from popular American rapper Eminem's album and flashed the lyrics on screen, the expression on the students'

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3 →





## REDESIGNING CHINATOWN

Six students from the School of Engineering set out with a mission: to redesign Chinatown.

Held in March, the three-day Challenge was organised by Urban Development Authority in light of its 35th anniversary. It was open to junior college and polytechnic students.

The all-female group from Real Estate Business clinched a merit prize of \$500, a big achievement considering that they were also the smallest group competing.

They went about redecorating a plot of land in Chinatown by adding sustainable designs and environmentally-friendly features, one of which was a water feature which enables rainwater to be used to flush toilet bowls.

The group also incorporated seamless connectivity between their plot of land and other groups', even working together to build a bridge.

Their effort paid off and the girls agreed that even though they had only won merit, it sure felt like first.

- RACHAEL NONIS

## BEYOND BROCHURES AND WEBSITES

Over 700 secondary school students got a chance to experience a day in the life of a polytechnic student.

Held from 8 to 10 Jul 2009, the students were here for NP's Poly Experience 2009. Amidst a series of facility tours and workshops, the three days saw students gaining valuable insights and exposure into what a polytechnic education offers.

Lecturers and student leaders were also at hand to answer the doubts of the secondary school visitors.

The event, now into its second year, is the first of a series of outreach programmes by the polytechnic for the year.

Other events include Red Camp 6, happening on 17 to 19 Nov and Open House, early next year.

- LEE DION

## CROSSING OVER THE INTERNATIONAL BORDERS

On 6 Jul, a team of 17 foreign students visited NP as part of their Young Reporters Training Camp.

The camp, organised to promote the Olympic spirit and values of excellence, friendship and respect among youths, is fully sponsored by MICA.

The visit was facilitated by third-year Mass Communication students and the participants ventured around campus while others embarked on adventures outside the school grounds in an attempt to create photo essays.

The group is the first of four camp groups. The remaining three will be visiting Singapore within the next three months.

Participants are chosen based on their excellent academic results, strong language and writing skills and a basic command of English.

Outstanding participants will enjoy a full sponsorship to return during the Youth Olympic Games in 2010.

- LIN VERENA

## EXPLORING PHOTOGRAPHY



**REFLECTIONS:** One of the pictures on display at the recent photography exhibition, organised by classes taking the IS module, Exploring Photography.

Students of the Exploring Photography module of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) recently held a small-scale photography exhibition in the Lien Ying Chow Library.

The exhibition, which was one display from 28 May to 18 Jun, showcased the best works of the IS module.

Mr Peter Yeo, the tutor in charge of the module, says, "This is the first time we have held an exhibition for IS students, so it is considered quite significant."

The photographs were the works of students from a diverse range of schools

in NP and were taken during their time spent in the IS class, where they learnt to handle the camera, as well as about its functions and features and the practical uses of the camera.

"I think [the exhibition] is very encouraging, as the students didn't know that they could have their works on exhibition for the first time in their lives," Mr Yeo says.

"It's something that students can put in their portfolio, which is very helpful for future [job opportunities]."

- EUNICE LEW

## THAT SPORTING CAREER

Close to 100 second-year Mass Communication (MCM) students realised that sports journalism is not that easy, after attending a talk by The Straits Times sports journalist, Mr Terrence Voon, as a part of their News Writing module.

"Sports articles require you to beat the clock. Yet at the same time, you need to find a unique angle in order to make your story stand out," Mr Voon says.

However, the job is one that constantly keeps him enthralled because of the desire to be the first to uncover breaking news.

As the sporting phenomenon in Singapore continues to grow among the youths, there seems to be a trend in seeing more aspiring sports journalists popping up.

Hence, a new elective, Sports Journalism, which covers different aspects of sports journalism throughout the various media platforms such as print and broadcast, has been developed for MCM final-year students.

- CHERYL TAN

## SHOWCASE SHOWDOWN

Multimedia Animation students are presenting their third showcase in 2010, which will display 14 final year projects and up to 41 demo reels and previews of graduating student works.

This upcoming showcase, called "Showdown 2010", is based on an oriental theme, and is tentatively set to begin early February.

According to final-year student Melvin Chua, 20, who is also the arts director for

## NEW COURSE FROM SOE

NP's School of Engineering (SOE) is keeping up with the government's efforts to drive Singapore towards sustainable construction and continual development by setting up a new course - Sustainable Urban Design & Engineering (SDE).

Commencing in April 2010, SDE is the first course among polytechnics to focus on training in sustainable design and development of the built environment.

The course will equip students with skills of urban planning and conservation. They will also acquire skills necessary to work with developers and consultants to carry out development and maintenance work for the urban cityscape.

Mr Teo Ee Huat, a lecturer in the Building & Environment Division, SOE, says, "Graduates will be able to provide added competitive advantage to the local companies they are working for, who are seeking to venture overseas."

- EUNICE LAI

Showdown 2010, the main attraction will be a "fully-functional 'action-platformer' game created by Tidal Games Studio".

The main purpose of the three-day public display is to attract companies from related industries and to allow the students the possibility of seeking further working opportunities with industry giants.

The showcase is entirely student-run, including the sourcing of sponsorship for the event's budget.

- LIU HONGZUO

## NPSU HANDOVER

The Ngee Ann Polytechnic Students' Union (NPSU) had its Annual General Meeting (AGM) for the year at lecture theatre 68E on 2 Jun 2009.

The committee chose to hold its handover ceremony publicly for the first time.

"We wanted to raise the profile of NPSU," explains Sophia Saw, 19, a final-year student from the School of Business & Accountancy, who is staying on for another term as the Honorary General Secretary.

During the evening, the committee also detailed new plans for the year 2009/2010.

In his speech as the President of the 28th Executive Committee, Mohamad Khairul Khan, a final-year student from the School of Engineering, promises to "work hard for the welfare of the student population".

He adds, "My goal is to engage more students about the issues affecting them."

- LEE DION

## HEADSTART IN LIFE FOR ECH STUDENTS

"There's no such thing as a recession."

That was what Mrs Choo-Yeo Cheh Hoon, director of NP's School of Humanities (HMS), proclaimed when delivering the opening address for the professional career seminar for Early Childhood students, held on 6 Jun at lecture theatre 69.

Sponsored mainly by MindChamps, the seminar was held for students pursuing a Diploma in Early Childhood Education.

It comes at a time when the government had recently approved the setting up of an additional 200 childcare centres in Singapore. These plans, according to Mrs Choo, will require approximately another 3,000 trained personnel.

For final-year student Chia Pei Yun, 21, the seminar served to re-affirm her future when she graduates in 2010.

"Not only do we get to see the many different approaches each centre uses, we also get the assurance that this market is a place where most (of us) are guaranteed to find a job," she says.

- MICHAEL LUM

## PITCH WHAT YOU LEARN'T

All it takes is just one winning idea. That is what the organisers of Pitch'09 hoped to achieve with their Marketing Communications conference, opened to all upper secondary students.

Organised by the School of Film & Media Studies, the event saw over 100 participants at the Convention Centre on 18 Jul.

The speakers for the event comprised of prolific individuals from the industry.

Following the conference, participants were encouraged to register for the Pitch'09 competition, held on 1 Aug where they could showcase what they learnt.

Teams presented their unique ideas to a panel of judges, including industry professionals, as well as representatives from the Health Promotion Board, which endorsed the entire event.

- LEE DION



## → CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

faces show that "they were unnerved if not shocked by the lyrics and the fact that Eminem actually admitted that he was inspired to do the album as a result of watching endless documentaries on serial killers!"

The last day of the SYMCamp 2009 also consisted of a Sports and the Media seminar by Mr Harry Ong, Assistant Director of Sports Industry Development in the Singapore Sports Council.

Mr Harry Ong's main responsibility is to help the media industry create compelling and entertaining sports content. He also aids owners of sports rights

discover new areas for revenue in sports media.

Delivering a speech to an enthusiastic crowd of secondary school students, Mr Ong talked about how sports and the media are closely related, using examples like the 2008 Beijing Olympic games where American swimmer Michael Phelps set consecutive world records and the media were quick to report on the event that made headline news.

### MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

In its own fun fashion, the camp accomplished what it set out to do.

Adamant Soh, 14, a student from Chung Cheng High School says, "I used to think that the media is for entertainment only.



**FIRST TASTE:** As part of SYMCamp, participants were invited to NP's School of Film & Media Studies to attend various seminars and workshops (left) and learn more about the media business



NP / CHEONG JIAHUI

Now, I have realised that actually, the media also tries to convey messages to the audience."

Bowen Secondary School student Brendon Lim, 16, says, "I enjoyed it because it wasn't all about sitting in a lecture and listening to people drone on and on. It was a lot of fun having hands-on experience mixing and producing films."

The SYMCompetition was also launched during the camp, which calls for research papers on the topic of "Sports and the Media" from students in secondary and

tertiary institutions. With more than \$3000 worth of prizes to be won, how do all these events in SYMCamp 2009 lead up to the SYMConference 2010?

For one, winners of the SYMCompetition will get to present their papers at the upcoming SYMConference.

When asked if the upcoming SYMC will be different from previous conferences held, lecturer at FMS lecturer Ms Sonia Chen says, "The previous topic was on Pop Culture, while

the SYMConference 2010 will focus on Sports & the Media as Singaporeans - and the Singapore media - focus their attention on upcoming sporting events such as the Youth Olympic Games 2010."

Many students requested for a SYMCamp 2010, and wished that the radio and filming workshops were longer in duration.

However, there will not be a camp next year as there will be the conference that is themed according to the upcoming Youth Olympic Games in 2010.

# Singapore united marks nation's birthday

**Eunice Lew, Keann Chong & Nathaniel Phua**

This year, NP will play host to an exciting range of activities and events to commemorate the nation's 44th birthday.

The celebration, themed 'Singapore United', will be spread out over three days, starting with a two-day carnival at The Atrium from 5 to 6 Aug, before culminating at the National Day concert at the Convention Centre on 7 Aug.

The carnival is the result of the hard work from students of the second-year Innovation and Enterprise module, the Student Entrepreneurship Club and the Cheers group.

Amongst the throng of stalls selling food and drinks, there is the Songs Of Singapore (SOS) game that encourages teamwork and racial harmony. Groups of contestants will have to work to get together to complete song lyrics, some of which are in other languages, amidst other tasks.

"SOS is a combination of three reality game shows - Wheel of

Fortune, Don't Forget the Lyrics and Dead or No Deal," explains second-year Electronic and Computer Engineering student Deborah Fernando, 18.

Ms Ines Foo of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies, who is also in charge of the carnival, says, "The spirit of the carnival is to celebrate Singapore in our own unique way, and at the same time not forgetting our community, especially in down times."

### STAGE CHEMISTRY

Come 7 Aug, the Convention Centre will be expecting audiences to watch the Singapore United Concert, which features performers from various schools in NP.

The entire staff body, including laboratory assistants from the School of Life Science & Technology, has gamely agreed to put up a song, dance and skit item in good fun.

Leow Yi Ning, 19, a second-year Molecular Biotechnology student, says, "It would be nice to see our lecturers on stage talking about something, and singing about something other than science."

But can they pull it off?

"Some lecturers in LSCT have experience in singing from a long time ago," says Dr Tan Hong Kiat, a lecturer from LSCT. "I can't tell you anything else, we want to give the audience a nice surprise."

Another group of lecturers from the School of Health Sciences (HS) have also signed up and will be performing a dance item during the celebration, with students like the Dancesports President, Malay Cultural Club Dance Head, as well as hip hop enthusiasts to take the lead.

Ms Chang Li Ping, the lecturer in charge of the production, saw an opportunity to put together a fusion item that combined all of these elements, much like multicultural Singapore.

"We (lecturers and students) were already close from spending time together in overseas trips, so it was really easy to ask," Ms Chang says. "They loved the idea, they were even more eager about it than we were."

"They may not catch up as fast, but they are very well-



**DANCING FEET:** As the Singapore United Concert draws closer, participants step up their practice to put up a good show.

NP / EUNICE LEW

disciplined and organised, much more than my other students!" says Dancesports President Yvonne Yue, 21, a final-year student.

### LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION

Also part of the concert is a video that has been put together by a team of 38 participants - 31 students and seven staff - from every academic school in NP.

"[My team] decided to get students from all over so that we'll have a good representation of every race to show that everybody has a part to play here. Something like a slice of life here

in Singapore," says Dr Tan.

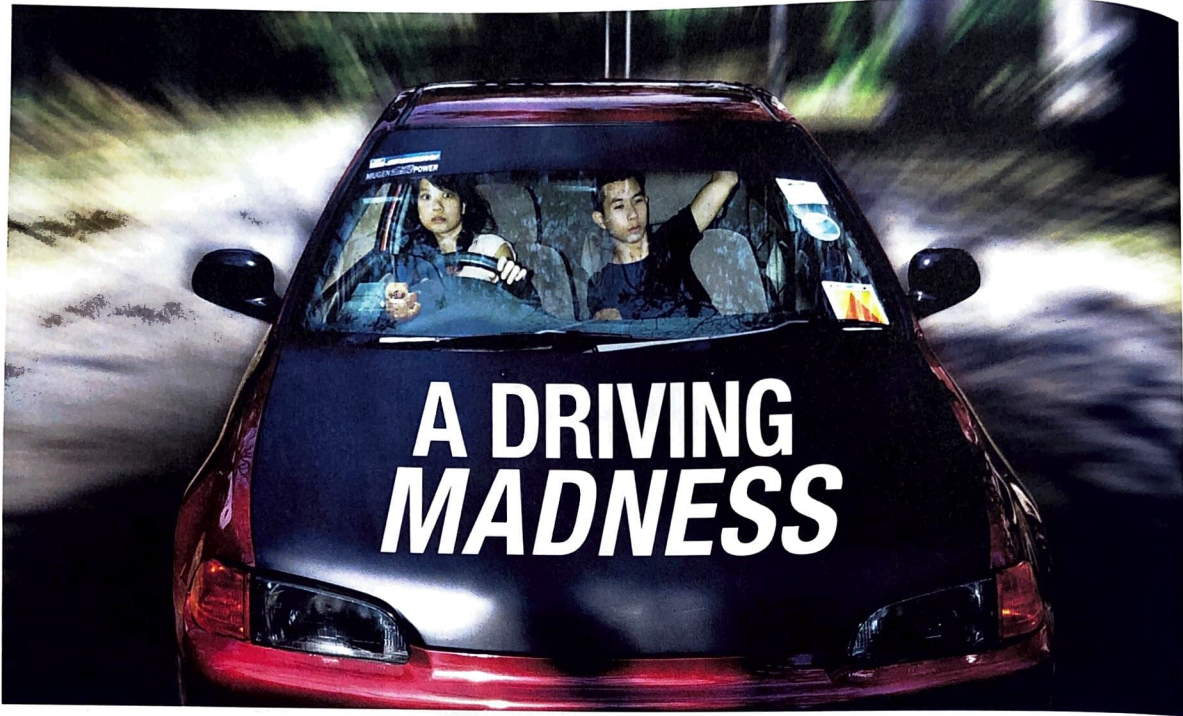
Produced by NP's in-house media developer Interactive Media Centre (iMC), the video sets the tone for the entire concert.

Tinagan, 20, a final-year Mechanical Engineering foreign student, is one of the participants who has been enjoying the filming process.

"I feel that they appreciate our talents and like I'm a part of Singapore. I'm proud to be a part of this event," he says.

Coupons for the Singapore United Carnival will be sold at the carnival booth outside Makan Place.





## A DRIVING MADNESS

Driving to school on the pretext of convenience is every student driver's excuse but **WONG YEANG CHERNG** finds out that some, in the process, end up being a nuisance to others

When a teenager celebrates his or her 18th birthday, it is almost inevitable that he or she feels that it is about time to sit behind the steering wheel and depress the accelerator.

But how many have paused to consider the phrase, "With great power comes great responsibility?" especially when one takes this "driving" power to the roads of the campus.

Student drivers are aplenty and they all have one thing in common: They see the need to drive as an escape from overcrowded public transport.

A recent survey conducted npTribune to understand the main reason for students driving to school has revealed that seven in 10 student drivers see no point in jostling with the crowd on public transport.

Similarly, the rest of the student population understands the drivers' needs, as an informal poll of 50 non-driving students shows. Some 64 percent attributed the reason for driving to "convenience".

However, the typical acts of student drivers to speed, swerve around corners carelessly, park illegally and have their speakers blast music, have led some of us to consider if they should be

allowed on campus roads.

Second-year Engineering Formatics student Axel Tan, 19, notes that some student drivers can disregard the safety of others.

"They speed past at the traffic light and they just go over at the pedestrian crossing between block 56 and the Atrium!"

Likewise, third-year Mass Communication student Ng Lye Ee, 18, says, "I see them going in the direction that the arrow doesn't point to, especially at the car park. And, on the road, they U-turn at the wrong places," she says.

Now, the lack of social responsibility of student drivers to pay extra attention to driving safely and to potentially cause accidents has come under fire.

Already, measures have been introduced the polytechnic to try and curb the problem.

Designated parking lots and waiting areas, like the foyer of block 52 for drivers picking up the children from Caterpillar's Cove, have been drawn up to execute a systematic driving compound.

This is set in place together with the issue of "warning letters" to traffic offenders.

Also, traffic controllers like Ms V. Soepoma, 61, help facilitate

safe driving conditions on campus grounds.

Ms Soepoma has noticed the rise in the number of student drivers and many have been kind to her by offering their heartiest wave, as a form of thanks, when directed to an empty parking lot.

However, some drivers, to avoid being late for class, resort to parking illegally and occupying lots designated for other users when the traffic controllers are not looking.

She says, "They (The student drivers) go round and round but they can't find the car park, and the class is starting so they park somewhere and just go off."

Incidents like these point to the lack of civic mindedness among students.

Student driver and third-year Electronics and Computer Engineering student, R Vignesh, 19, is able to identify with the problem, recognising that a driver can easily misuse the privilege of driving in school.

"I feel that students tend to show off their skills in driving, or how powerful their car is by speeding and recklessly swerving around school. I have parked illegally twice and have been

given warning letters by the security," he says.

While the Director of Estate Management Office, Mr Mui Cheng Hock, compares NP's situation to the cases outside with the view that "accidents happen everywhere", he encourages student drivers to consider the good of others within the school.

He says, "It's not saying they can't drive. They have to take the privilege as a responsibility. At

this age, it is the time for them to learn to be good citizens."

"At the end of the day, it's about personal responsibility," he reiterates.

He adds, "If they are mature enough to go for the test, they should have the responsibility not flout the [traffic] rules."

For now, NP needs to nip in the bud the problem of young drivers' diminishing social responsibility, but it will take time.

*"I see them going in the direction that the arrow doesn't point to, especially at the car park. And, on the road, they U-turn at the wrong places."*

**Ng Lye Ee, 19**

Final-year Mass Communication student on examples of reckless driving happening around campus

*"If they are mature enough to go for the test, they should have the responsibility not flout the [traffic] rules."*

**Mr Mui Cheng Hock,**

Director of Estate Management Office on the responsibility that student drivers have



## DIGITAL SPREE AT STUDIO27

Josceline Foo

Come October 2009, Studio27 will finally open its doors for all NP students to engage in various digital software and hardware.

Situated next to the iMedia centre at block 27, the studio will replace the former school of Film & Media Studies studios and be transformed into an interactive and cutting edge digital world.

Studio27 will boast of facilities such as a jamming studio as big as a classroom and a soundproof production suite where students can cut their own CDs on six to eight post-production workstations. Students will even get a production studio that doubles as a black box, where they can host and produce their own plays to an audience of 30.

Fiona Nah, a second-year Audio Visual Technology student thinks that the studio "will be quite cool", especially since "many people actually go to places outside of school to jam but now that it's in school, it will be more convenient."

Gaming fans in NP will also get to enjoy an area with up to 20 gaming consoles, three to four Wii stations, Xbox stations and Playstations.

Final-year Pharmacy Science student Nicolette Lim thinks that the new place is going to be lots of fun, "Students can now go there and play in between classes and when they've got long breaks." But because it is her final year, she is greatly dismayed at the fact that she might be too busy to enjoy the new facilities when it finally opens.

With a nice view and splendid breeze to boot, Mr Ng Weng Choh, director of the iMedia centre, promises students "a really cool place that looks like a Cineplex".

To top it all off, all of the aforementioned facilities are available to students at no cost.

Adelle Ong, a first-year Early Childhood student, is excited even though she's not much of a gamer. "The studio sounds like it is going to be the bomb. It'll be the ultimate digital world in NP!" she says.

However, there is a catch. As a preventive measure for gaming additions and to ensure that all students will have an equal chance of enjoying the state-of-the-art equipment, the iMedia centre will impose a booking limit of two hours a week.

Through Studio27, it is also hoped that students will have a place where they can enjoy themselves by appreciating the whole process of video, sound and animation production.

To enhance this, additional events such as video competitions and cosplaying are also planned for the near future. Students who are interested in production work are encouraged to take ownership of the place by organising activities such as competitions for other students to participant as well. Plans are also underway to hire students part-time to care for the place in the evenings.



**ALMOST STUDIO27:** Come October this year, Studio27 (above) will be opened for all students to use at no cost.

NP7/ZELIA SUN

## Enthusiasm for innovation going downhill

Activities organised by students under the I&E in Action module are no longer creative and innovative

Eunice Ng

Second-year students selling peanuts, muffins and brownies have become common sight at NP, as more students choose to take the easy way out for their Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) module, Innovation and Enterprise in Action (I&E in Action).

Introduced in 2003, the module seeks to "empower students to initiate, create and take charge of their own learning experience" by challenging them to "think out of the box, take risks, manage uncertainties, tap their inner resources and test their interpersonal and team skills to the limit".

As such, students are required to plan and execute an extended activity with their group mates from start to finish.

However, students are showing less enthusiasm and effort for I&E in Action in recent years.

"Frankly, no one likes I&E in Action," says second-year Mass Communication student Bryan Kwa, 18, who organised a skating workshop on 1 Jul for the module.

He adds, "Honestly, you can say that we put in too much effort. People usually just set up booths and sell stuff, and they still can pass."

It is a well-known fact that the module does not affect a student's grades - students either pass or fail - which is perhaps the reason for the lack of enthusiasm since students are then more likely to focus their efforts on their core academic modules.

"I often hear this phrase, 'after all, it's just a pass or fail module'," says Mr Max Lam, senior lecturer at the School of Engineering, and also part of the team that conceptualised the I&E in Action module.

Sherman Chen, 20 a second-year Electrical Engineering student who set up a pushcart selling sugarcane juice for two weeks at the Convention Centre underpass as part of the module, says, "I feel it's very unfair. They should have a more sophisticated grading system."

Acknowledging the fact, Mr Lam, explains, "When the module first started out, the students

didn't have any point of reference, so they began initiating ideas. Subsequent students began to find loopholes from seniors, and understanding the system, they realised that they didn't need to put in so much effort (to pass)."

As if to make the situation worse, word has it that that some students cheat on their projects by taking photographs of other students' activities and passing it off as their own.

Some lecturers prevented that by attending every one of their students' events though.

"If 30 percent of the marks are allocated to the activity, and you are not present for the activity, can you really assess it well?" says

Mr Colin Goh, senior lecturer at the School of Engineering, and also an I&E in Action mentor who attends his students' events.

For now, plans are currently being drawn up for a review of the I&E in Action module.

Category manager of I&E in Action, Mr Willie Hsu, says, "This is part of our strategic thrust to infuse the spirit of I&E in our students, and to take the module to a higher level."

Some plans include "moving it beyond IS" and "making it a year one to year three encounter".

Changes will be communicated to students closer to the point of inception in academic year 2010/11.

### HOT DIGGITY DOGS



**UNDETERRED:** Participants fooling around before the hot dog eating competition begins

NP7/ZELIA SUN

In mere 20 minutes, a certain project group from the Innovation and Enterprise in Action (I&E) module made a loss of \$100.

Nonetheless, they were not disheartened. To set themselves "apart from the masses", a group of five students from various schools opted for a radical idea in place of the typical pushcart sales: a hot dog eating competition at the Student Plaza on 6 Jul.

Their "business model" was simple. For just \$5, participants could enter the competition and wolf down "a minimum of 10 hot dog buns in seven minutes" to win the grand prize of \$100 that came from the group's own pockets.

"Our group wanted to create something that was uncommon and fun at the same time", says second-year Horticulture &

Landscape Management student, Hairi, 19, one of the organisers.

Armed with just a bottle of water, the 10 contestants had to improvise and come up with their own methods of finishing the hot dog buns in the shortest time possible.

Second-year Business Information Technology student Vincent Yeo, 18, emerged as the winner eventually, by attacking the hot dogs first, before compressing the bread and eating two pieces at one shot in a desperate bid to win.

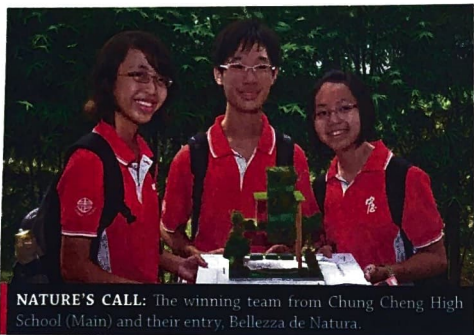
"We thought the challenge would be impossible to win!" exclaims Ooi Tong Ann, 18, fellow organiser and second-year Business and Accountancy student.

"No risk, no gain", says Jun Ming, 17, a fellow organiser from BA who adds that "everything was done in the name of good fun".



# NEWS

## NURTURING FUTURE TALENTS



**NATURE'S CALL:** The winning team from Chung Cheng High School (Main) and their entry, Bellezza de Natura.

Melodie Lee

If you thought having a blooming garden required green fingers and mounds of patience, you would only be half right.

That is what 72 secondary school students found out while in during a two-month long competition, which ended on 17 Jul.

The first ever Landscape Model Competition 2009 was organised by the School of Life Science and Chemical Technology (LSCT) as

part of the sixth Horticulture and Landscape Management Festival.

Twenty-four teams from 11 secondary schools pit their skills against each other in a bid to create the best miniature garden.

Eight weeks prior to the finals, students attended a two-hour long workshop to learn about plant selection and landscape designing.

Sally Wong, 15, from Shuqun Secondary School, thought that plant miniature modeling was a unique concept. "When you say trees, you would think of the

normal branches and twigs. But here we're taught to use netting and wires to make the trees."

The teams spent their school break in June working on the entries and they did not disappoint.

Winning first prize was the team from Chung Cheng High School (Main). Their submission impressed the judges with its design that was both practical and creative.

Mr Kenneth Er, the Guest of Honour at the finals of the competition and GM of Gardens by the Bay, NParks, was "pleasantly surprised" by the finished products.

"Though the students had no prior experience in landscape design, they could produce such good work. I also thought that the winning entry encompassed certain sustainable technologies that we currently use in the industry," he says.

Mr Dhanenthiran Mohanadas, lecturer in charge of the competition says, "The students had a lot fun with this new concept, and we received very good feedback about it. We will definitely come back with an even better event next year."

## A beacon of youth

Peh Sin Ee

The recent Asian Youth Games (AYG) was not just a learning experience for the nation and its athletes, but also for Mass Communication (MCM) students who volunteered in media aspects at the events.

At the AYG 2009, eight NP students took on volunteer roles to bring the excitement of the sporting events to audiences who were not present at the scene.

These eight students are final-year MCM students and some of them are currently taking the Sports Journalism module. As part of the process of honing their skills, these aspiring sports journalists volunteered as broadcasting crew with World Sport Group, a major sports media company in Asia.

"I learnt many hands-on skills about 'live' shows that went right on air. Also, I applied many things I'd learnt in school to the work that I did there, such as floor managing," says Cheryl Tan, who had a part to play in the official broadcasting of 'live' table tennis matches and diving at the Toa Payoh Sports Hall.

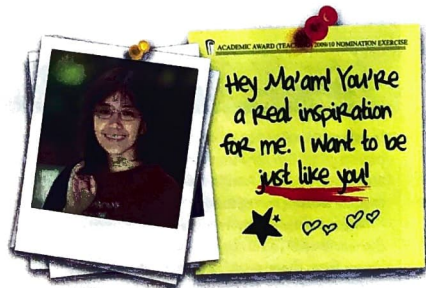
On the other hand, Lum Xin Mun, who was in charge of media broadcasting for the beach volleyball segment at Siloso Beach in Sentosa faced "never-ending" problems.

"But the satisfaction that I got after the broadcast of each episode and 'live' broadcast was tremendous, because now, I can point to the beach volleyball segment at the AYG and say, 'I was part of that,'" says Xin Mun, 19.

The AYG involved about 1,000 youths from 44 countries and was held from 2 to 10 Jul. It was scheduled in practice for the Youth Olympics Games that will be hosted in Singapore next year from 14 to 26 Aug and will be thrice the scale of the AYG.

## Singapore's first student-run conglomerate opens its doors

Airell Ang



**Sure! It's the thought that counts.**

But it's the action that makes all the difference to those who've made it their purpose to *shape your learning, to impact your life.*

**Academic Award (Teaching) 2009/10**  
Nominate your lecturer/tutor today. Don't delay!  
<https://www.np.edu.sg/apps1/fas/ast/studentsignin.aspx>

Nominations close 15 Nov 2009

m:idea, NP's School of Film & Media Studies student-run media conglomerate, opened its doors to new premises at the ground level of block 52 in June this year.

Established in 2008, m:idea is a media services and entrepreneurship training platform that works with internal and external clients at a lower cost than professional services to reach their desired target audience.

The conglomerate consists of m:idea marcomm, Radio Heatwave, ctv, Inspire design, theurbanwire.com, npTribune, hype, and Klix photography.

Even at its teething stages, m:idea has worked not only with Singapore's mainstream broadcasters and media players, but also with global brands such as Apple, Fujitsu and Nike.

The manager of m:idea, Mr Ronald Wan, 26, explains, "We give the students free reign over their creativity and entrepreneurial skills. Besides, the conglomerate's portfolio speaks for itself. Currently, we're working with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the ASEAN Cinematic Showcase in collaboration with ASEAN day."

Ctv's station manager, Vincent Fok, 24, says, "We have quite a number of prominent clients. Stanleyworks Asia Pacific is one of them - we produced a corporate video that will be used not only for their recruitment drives but also for their corporate presentation. It's all about our work that is of professional standard but going at a competitive rate."

The biannual lifestyle magazine, hype, has also been given a revamp; from the regular A5-sized publication to a bigger and easily readable size.

hype's editor, Kenneth Chan, 19, says, "The older version was quite a task to read with such a small page size. Comprehensive articles had to be cut down, and images weren't packing the punch. But now, with the bigger page size, it spells a fresh beginning for hype. npTribune has gone through a couple of facelifts but hype has remained the same throughout. It's inaugural, and I'm glad to be spearheading the change."

Speaking to one of the advertisers in npTribune's classifieds, Stefanie Koh, a 20 year-old blogshop owner, says, "I needed to advertise my products. I decided to advertise with npTribune and thankfully business has been improving. I'm really satisfied with the reach that npTribune has within my demographics."



## HEALTH ALERT CARD

Since the threat of H1N1 virus was first announced, the world has been sent into a frenzy – face masks were snapped up at all departmental stores while governments stepped up public awareness campaigns. **JOSCELINE FOO** takes a look at how NP has fared against the bug

**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**  
**Ngee Ann Polytechnic Healthcard**  
**535 Clementi Road**  
**Singapore 599489**

## Recount of NP and the H1N1 virus Diagnosis:

On 17 Mar 2009, H1N1 made global headlines.

Singapore was not spared and five NP students were infected by the virus during the two-week study break in June.

Fortunately, with the experience gathered from the SARS pandemic, the campus reacted quickly, and as soon as the virus was announced publicly in March, Ngee Ann's Influenza A (H1N1) Working Group Committee was formed.

The school sent out emails and put up posters to raise awareness of the situation among students. Temperature checkpoints were set up all around school and students were required to take their temperature twice daily. The daily process of monitoring body temperature twice a day continues.

Lecturers were roped in to ensure students take their temperature and were asked to constantly remind students of the precautionary measures.

Those who travelled to infected countries were asked to go on a leave of absence for seven days.

Chong Qi-En, a final-year Mass Communication student whose sister caught the virus through community spreading, shares his experience of being quarantined.

He explains how he felt very stifled facing four walls every day. The fact that it took place during the holidays made it even more depressing for him.

"It also felt horrible possibly being one of the people who might spread it to tons of other people, because I came into contact with tons of people at my church on Friday and Saturday while still having contact with my sister," he says.

He revealed that he "felt like a possible walking time-bomb", and that he was concerned about the people around him getting infected.

Thariq, 17, a first-year Biomedical Science student, thinks that the school is doing well with its precautionary measures so far.

However, Chen Si Qi, 20, a Marine and Offshore Technology student, thinks that the school could do even more.

"They should use antibacterial wash for

all the tables and chairs," she says.

Ever since the virus broke out in Singapore, she washes her hands more often and goes out a lot less.

When H1N1 was reported to be less deadly than initially thought, the school also made changes to its precautionary measures as recommended by the Ministry of Education after the government also announced a shift in its H1N1 strategies.

Since, students returning from H1N1-affected countries no longer need to take a leave of absence. Instead they are asked to be socially responsible and stay home if they feel unwell.

Personal thermometers have also been distributed to students campus-wide, to encourage them to be responsible for their own health and take their temperature on their own daily.

Mr Mui Cheng Hock, Chairman of the Influenza A (H1N1) Working Group Committee, explains that the polytechnic will always be ready to ensure the students' wellbeing, and has been keeping tabs on infected students.

"We call them up as often as we can to reassure them and express our concern," Mr Mui says.

However, he insists that the responsibility lies with the students themselves.

"Our objective now is to encourage individual responsibility to help prevent further spread of the virus," he says.

## History

○ **Monday, 27 Apr, 2009**  
Students and lecturers who travelled to infected countries are asked to go on a leave of absence for seven days.

○ **12 - 25 May, 2009**  
Due to ministry guidelines, students are asked to take their temperature twice daily on these dates at the following locations: Atrium, Library, LT 38, Makan Place, LT 76-79, even though H1N1 has not infiltrated Ngee Ann.

○ **Friday, 26 Jun, 2009**  
Students are asked to fill in travel declaration forms and those who travelled to infected countries during the two-week break are asked to go on a leave of absence for seven days.

○ **Monday, 29 Jun, 2009**  
Permanent temperature checkpoints for students are set up. Students are encouraged to take their temperature twice daily.

○ **Friday, 03 Jul, 2009**  
The school sends out its second email. Students no longer need to go on a leave of absence. Instead, they are asked to stay home if they feel unwell.

## MANDARIN FUN

**Lum Xin Mun**

Having fun with Mandarin proves to have its advantages, as Cindy Ng, 21 found out in a big way – she was chosen to represent Singapore in the Grand Finals of the 8th Chinese Bridge Chinese Proficiency Competition in Hunan, China.

The fresh graduate from Chinese Studies (CHS) beat 12 finalists from local tertiary institutes in the Singapore Finals to win a two-week tour to China and participate in the Grand Finals, which stretched over the month of July as winners from various nations such as England competed.

Cindy says, "My teacher (Dr Shi Shu Ping) approached me just one week before the competition. I was really reluctant to participate because I didn't think I would have enough time to prepare. It was because of her encouragement that I participated."

Organised by the Office of Chinese Language Council International in Hanban, Beijing, the Chinese Bridge Chinese Proficiency Competition is an annual international Chinese Mandarin-speaking and performance competition, which aims to provide to create a platform for study and exchange programmes.

The theme for this year's local competition was 'Fun with Chinese, Hope of Success'. Participants had to come up with performances that involved learning Chinese in a fun way.

With only a week to prepare for the competition, Cindy decided to make use of her love for food to come up with her winning skit entitled, 'Who Does It Belong To?'

Bringing up the topic of cultural food, the skit sees Cindy playing a Chinese lady who marries into a Muslim family. The funny scenes pour in when she tries to teach her



**WINNING MOMENT:** Cindy Ng plays a mother married into a Malay family. Acting as her son, Adi Jumaludin had to recite his lines in Mandarin.

child Mandarin and the origins of some local cuisine.

Apart from the good humour, the skit had undertones of the importance of remembering one's heritage.

"I managed to convince my Malay friend, Adi Jumaludin, to help me in the skit and perform in Mandarin. I am very thankful to him considering the short time span we got to rehearse before the competition,"

says Cindy.

A freelance actor, Adi, 27, says, "I am very pleased and proud of our performance. I know a little bit of Mandarin here and there but it was not good enough. Cindy was patient in teaching me the correct way to pronounce the words."

Cindy adds, "I really did not expect to win because my Mandarin wasn't good enough. It was a big challenge for me."



# GLOBAL



Tell us about your overseas experience on [nptribune.theurbanwire.com](http://nptribune.theurbanwire.com)

## That special spark

**JOSHUA TAN** reflects on his five-month journey in Hong Kong without parental guidance

It was a phone call that changed the course of the next 20 weeks of my life.

The call was from NP, informing me that I was being sent to Hong Kong to fulfill my final-year internship. Excited as I was, I had never been to Hong Kong before and did not speak a word of Cantonese. Still, I strode through the departure hall, hopeful and in high spirits.

In retrospect though, it must have been hard on my parents to let their barely legal son travel more than 3,000 kilometres to Hong Kong, all in the name of education and with nothing more than a 'take care of yourself'.

I have to say that my fears were mostly unfounded, as I have experienced no life-altering handicap here, despite the language barrier.

Do not get me wrong, the journey has not been easy. While roughing it out on your own may be a dream come true for some, living independently really puts life into perspective.

I've learnt that reality always finds a way to leave you at its mercy. While it may be thrilling to realise that, all of a sudden, the world is your oyster and you are answerable

only to your whims and fancies, certain things do come around once in a while and bite you where it hurts.

I especially remember one occasion. The clothes I had hung out to dry were pulled off the clothesline by uncharacteristically strong winds and fell down three floors to an inaccessible section of my apartment building. To say I panicked is an extreme understatement.

It must have happened at about one in the morning and knowing all my neighbours would be asleep and that I had to go to work the next day, I reluctantly suppressed my worry and left the clothes there. It was a slightly foolish thing to do, since due to unforeseen circumstances, I only managed to pick up my clothes a full three days later. I have never washed clothes so thoroughly before.

However, it has to be said that in most other aspects, it almost feels like I never left home at all. Perhaps that is the reason why I have become so comfortable here.

Apart from the fact that everyone speaks Cantonese

and all the signs are in traditional Chinese, the roads are still packed with cars, shopping centres are still everywhere, and people walk as though they are always in a hurry, just like back home where everyone is in a perpetual state of work.

That led me to ponder where my heart truly lies; in Singapore where I call home, or Hong Kong that has become home. It was not long before I got my answer.

While both cities are rather similar on the surface, Hong Kong seems to be missing that indescribable spark that Singapore has, like strange familiarity in the unknown, and that makes Hong Kong foreign and altogether cold sometimes.

Without a doubt, I love Hong Kong. I love the food and I love the fact that it is a big city experience just like back



PHOTO COURTESY OF FLICKR

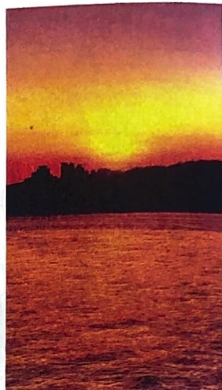


PHOTO COURTESY OF FLICKR

## Oh, baby, it's a wild world

With overseas trips as hot as the latest iPhone, npTribune gathers the thoughts of those who have returned from abroad and lived to tell their tale

### Hong Kong Media

#### Study Trip

**Ng Lye Ee, 19,**

*Final-year Mass*

*Communication student*

In Hong Kong, people in poverty are very different from those in Singapore.

They have pride and don't rely on the government. On the other hand, they take up such heartbreaking jobs that I can't even bear to look at.

It's disheartening to see old folks selling sex toys.

The image of an old lady approaching customers, looking grim and tired as she hides her reluctance will forever be ingrained in my mind, but you know she has to do it for a living.

It is just mind-blowing and you are left feeling sad, but grateful that you do not live such poverty.

### Vietnam Overseas

#### Immersion Trip 2009

**Lee Pei Lin, 19,**

*Final-year Early Childhood*

*Education student*

The trip to Hanoi was enlightening and enriching for me. What I expected to see was what had been indoctrinated in us from young - that, if we don't strive to work hard, we will lead a life of unhappy poverty.

But what I saw was a different story - people were not unhappy, and despite having little, they made the best of what little they had. It was then that I understood that poverty is relative, and poverty is by itself not a cause of unhappiness or suffering.

It made me truly wonder whether Singapore's focus on economic advancement is really as important as the government has made it out to be.

### Germany Overseas

#### Immersion Programme

**Raynard Koh, 19,**

*Final-year Chemical and*

*Biomolecular Engineering student*

Spending two weeks in Germany was a very cool experience (literally too) for me. I realised that in the midst of the beautiful people, gorgeous scenery and great ice-cream, serenity could be found in the simplest of places.

While traveling by the countryside on the bus, I was able to take a step back and feel at peace. It is in these little momentous gems that you truly understand the joys of travelling, even to unknown, faraway places.

Perhaps the grass is greener on the other side, but the trip made me want to pick up a new language and venture out to the big, wonderful world.

### Bangkok Study Trip

**Carita Ng, 19,**

*Final-year Nursing student*

After being on a study trip to Bangkok with my school in my first year, I've learned to be appreciative of Singapore and my school, in terms of health care and teaching facilities.

Although the teaching facilities in their school were not up to date, the students were very keen to learn.

In the past, I used to feel that nursing is a lowly, dirty job, but in Thailand, the nurses were well-respected and well taken care of.

I feel that what I've really gained most from this trip was the attitude of the people there, be it the nurses or the students that I've met.

It was their eagerness to learn and to serve that really touched my heart.

### Shanghai Overseas

#### Immersion Programme

**Evelyn Wong, 19,**

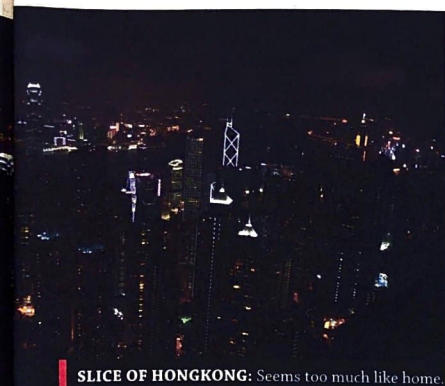
*Second-year Accountancy student*

The six weeks I spent in Shanghai was an eye-opener of sorts. Beyond a chance to visit and sightsee, I took it as an opportunity to dispel any preconceived notions I had of China. It was as if this trip was the defining point of my teenage life.

Owing to food poisoning, I was hospitalised for three days. Strangely, but interestingly, it was then that afforded me an opportunity to experience the warmth and amiability of the locals - something I had never expected to receive in a foreign land.

Living amidst creature comforts here, what we deem as insolence is a way of life that the locals have adapted to there. Being able to stand on my own two feet is just awesome.





**SLICE OF HONGKONG:** Seems too much like home.

PHOTO COURTESY OF JOSHUA TAN

home. But that is where the problem is.

At the end of the day, I am still comparing it to Singapore.

I do not mean to complain, because Hong Kong has been great, but perhaps these feelings mean that I'm more than a little ready to come back home, to walk through the arrival gate and meet with my family and friends for the first time in a really long time.

Right now, I could even be looking forward to national service.

Just kidding.

*The author is a final-year Mass Communication student currently working at The Business Traveller as a part of his final-year internship programme.*



**CONQUEST COMPLETE:** The participants of the California Challenge scaled the heights of the scenic Yosemite Park Lambert Dome, San Francisco, as part of the trip's final leg.

PHOTO COURTESY OF KENNETH CHAN

## CHALLENGING EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Wong Yeang Cherng

Think of the liberal arts concept of "Money, Business and the American Culture", and one thing definitely comes to mind: It is a challenge.

This was the 18-day liberal arts challenge that 20 scholars of different disciplinary from NP's Talent Development Programme (TDP) had to uptake in the compound of Menlo College, San Francisco, from 13 to 31 Jun.

Mr Mun Kwok On, Director of Student Development and Alumni Relations (SDAR) and advisor to the trip's participants, says, "The 'liberal arts education 101' stint will get our students to think differently and aims to produce well-rounded students."

To hone their analytical skills, students attended a humanities course daily where they would study American literature classics and visit culturally significant museums and social organisations.

As simple as it sounds on paper, the course was crammed into four-hour lessons daily with assigned readings, papers to write and a final examination, during the short duration of the trip.

"Despite being intimidated initially", final-year Aerospace Technology student, Tan Jun Liang, 19, "came to realise the importance and the fun of learning more about humanities".

The coursework was particularly insightful, especially since he "had little opportunity to experience humanities studies" due to the nature of his course in NP.

*"One day we were on the top of a high rock in a vast area, and the next day we were at the bottom of the cave in a dark enclosed area. Two great, polarised experiences in two days. More than what a teenager could ask for!"*

**Esther Lim, 19**

*Final-year Early Childhood Education student*

In addition, students had to plan the programme's final leg as part of the challenge, which took the team close to three months prior to the trip to draft out the places they wanted to visit - with a learning objective in mind of course.

TDP Manager and advisor to the trip, Mr Brendon Lam, 36, says, "The premise for the last leg of the challenge was for students to plan a learning journey in California, which has lots to offer in learning out of the classroom."

Initially, the final segment was to be a week-long but the duration was eventually reduced due to unforeseen constraints.

Regardless of the glitches, the team thought that the preparatory work was worthwhile, especially for Jun Liang who handled lodging.

He says, "One of the most memorable experience was when I stayed up to 4 a.m. to contact one of the hotel operators."

"However, the team had worked closely together and managed to live up to the California Challenge's expectations," he adds.

The plans materialised when the participants scaled the heights of Yosemite Park's Lambert Dome and literally got down and dirty

in the confined caves of San Francisco's Moaning Caverns.

For final-year Business Studies student Fung Yi Biao, 19, the trek up the mountain and crawl through the caves summed up the "emotional, mental and physical" test of the trip.

"It challenged me to fight my fears," he says.

Nothing could quite capture the plan's success as what final-year Early Childhood Education student Esther Lim, 19, describes as "experiencing the fruits of our effort".

She says, "One day we were on the top of a high rock in a vast area, and the next day we were at the bottom of the cave in a dark enclosed area. Two great, polarised experiences in two days. More than what a teenager could ask for!"

However, Mr Mun, affectionately known as the father figure of the trip gained something totally different.

He says, "I got to know the students better, treasure the friendship and affirmation they gave to me, and hope to be their informal mentor in their final leg in NP before they graduate."

"Maybe, if they wish to, (even) after they graduate from NP!" he adds cheekily.

### NPT GLOBAL SNAPSHOT



## Rest among ruins



**A WELCOME BREAK:** A girl holding food given out by NP students. Children like her spend their days scavenging the local dumpsite in Stung Meanchey looking for anything they can take to sell for food.

*The photographer was in Cambodia from 18-21 May 2009 for an IFMS PCS study trip.*

PHOTO COURTESY OF TAN PEI BAO



# SPECIAL REPORT

## School facilities

**GOOD**

- The café in the library provides a good place for studying and relaxing.
- The Loft@94 is a very comfortable and useful place for students to hold camps and organise stay-overs, giving the feel of a chalet.
- Half the students polled praised the presence of OurSpace@72, because it is comfortable and makes a good place for project discussion.

**BAD**

- Printers are inaccessible for students of certain schools, which make it troublesome for them to print their assignments to hand them in on time.
- Sixty percent of the students surveyed complained that the supposed "study" areas were too noisy, which made it hard to concentrate on their work.
- All of the Muslim respondents resented the lack of Muslim food, and the prices of what was being offered were too steep for their tastes.

### CAN BE IMPROVED!!

- Extend the café, as it is always very crowded and students find it really hard to find seats.
- Make the loft easier to book, as it is currently a hassle, having to book through a lecturer.
- Have another "OurSpace", because it is currently overcrowded, especially by students who are there to play, and not to do work.

## School culture

**GOOD**

- Students of NP agree that the school has done a good job in marketing itself to the public. However, they would like to see more effort geared towards fostering a stronger school culture within.

- Just recently, a group of NP students have also started a Facebook group in protest of those wearing the SP shirts. Some members have also taken the initiative of designing their version of an NP shirt, before posting it online.

- Students have claimed that the shirts and jackets that hold the NP name gives the students a sense of belonging to the school.

"SP (Singapore Polytechnic) has managed to do so. Even NP students are wearing it. It's time we have a shirt of our own," says Jeremy Tse, 18, a second-year student from Bio-Laboratory

**BAD**

- Students also feel that the school could be more realistic and understanding, especially when it comes to the amount of stress and tension they undergo from juggling various projects and assignments.
- Those who were polled have also indicated that they are either not aware or are not likely to seek help from resources the school has put in place. Most would prefer to confide in just their friends only.

*Ng Sin Lee, 19, a final-year Information Technology student notes that for lecturers who express care and concern, "it is probably their own initiative and definitely not a directive from the school."*

### CAN BE IMPROVED!!

- The easiest and most feasible manner to create some identity lies in something as simple as a school t-shirt, good for branding and inculcating a sense of belonging.
- Student Services (SS) can step up publicity efforts of the initiatives they have put in place. Have more posters and lower the stigma associated with it. These include a cyber-counselling portal to afford students, anonymity, regular face-to-face counselling and personal development workshops.

## THE GOOD BAD, THE

While NP is fundamentally still a place where students go to further their education and get a diploma, to many others it is not merely an educational institution, it is a significant part of their lives, a place where friendships are forged and knowledge is acquired.

To further understand students' feelings about the school, npTribune carried out a survey on **635 NP STUDENTS** about these five aspects - facilities, student support, campus culture and environment, financial support and welfare as well as learning experience to find out what students truly feel about their second home.

This is NP's report card according to the students:

### 97% OF STUDENTS

surveyed knew at least one out of the nine financial assistance schemes such as the Post Secondary Education Account Scheme (PSEA), assuring that the communication from Student Services (SS) is adequate.

90% OF THE R  
felt that they were had  
level of confidence in fu  
studies with their diplo

### 87% SAID THE

approach the school if t  
which is reassuring, kn  
students are not afraid  
when they need it.

## Student support

**GOOD**

- Matthew Zachary Liu, 20, second-year Mass Communication student, NP Ambassador and part-time Radio Heatwave deejay, says, "NP's very supportive of all student-related activities and events and it's pretty awesome actually. Most of the things that happen within campus are usually by students for students, with the backing and encouragement of the school."

**BAD**

- More support from peers, Students are not united.

- Less red tape

"The school should reduce the level of complication in submitting ideas. Students have to go through many levels of approval [before their projects can carry through]."  
-Isaac Chung, 22, final-year Multimedia & Animation student, president of NP Students' Union 2008/2009



# SPECIAL REPORT

## GOOD, THE E UGLY

YOUR MOST USED FACILITY:

#1 MAKAN PLACE

Makan Place is the most used facility of NP, with 92.77% of the respondents utilising it

#2 LIBRARY

The library is the 2nd used facility of NP, with 84.86% of the respondents utilising it

#3 ATRIUM

The Atrium is the 3rd used facility of NP, with 59.83% of the respondents utilising it

RESPONDENTS

at least a mid-range  
thering their  
ia.

339 OUT OF 635 STUDENTS  
are involved in co-curricular activities (CCAs) and  
student activities.

4 WOULD

y needed help.  
ing that most  
look for help

50% OF THE RESPONDENTS

who were leaders in their CCA groups  
thought that the school should provide  
more funding.

-np+

by Chee Hui Ming, Lee Dion, Loh Qiu-Lyng, Lum Xin Mum, Tanya Lai

BE IMPROVED!!

udent suggested less red tape, saying that the  
ent Services (SS) and Student Development  
Alumni Relations (SDAR) Offices should be  
oined into one to prevent "students need to  
o and fro between the two offices", which is  
undant and inefficient".

thew Zachary Liu, 20, second-year Mass  
munication student and NP Ambassador,  
"I guess what's lacking in NP specifically  
e 'school spirit' one would probably best  
tify with in secondary schools or junior  
ges. Perhaps NP can consider sending out  
ces and gathering supporters to support  
chool teams at a competition final or major  
t. It might make everyone even more proud  
part of the school and not just a place they  
study."

## Finance

GOOD

• **Criteria to obtain a bursary is better than outside:** Agreeing with her is Jasmine Kim Si Min, 19, a third-year Nursing student. "I am very satisfied. The criteria to obtain a bursary in school is much better than what is offered outside." Jasmine had applied for a bursary earlier this year and has gotten it recently.

• From the survey results - open-ended questions: A significant number of students commended SS's help financially. Some stated that they have seen SS helping their friends greatly.

BAD

• One School of Electronic & Computer Engineering student currently on his OIAP also expressed disappointment, especially regarding financial help with OIAP - for which he was only supplied with "insurance and some subsidies", and "nothing else".

CAN BE IMPROVED!!

Quite a significant number of students suggested that the cost of textbooks and lecture notes can be subsidised by SS. However, a few students also mentioned that it is up to the students to make use of the help given wisely

## Education / Overseas experience

CAN BE IMPROVED!!

- It is more fair that some places be given to those with results that are not as excellent.

- "Students should have been given more time to absorb the culture beyond campus grounds, instead of weighing them down with assignments and exams."

- Ivy Lee, 19, final-year Chinese Studies student, who recently returned from the Wuhan Immersion Programme

GOOD

• One respondent from the School of Business & Accountancy who had been on an overseas study trip felt that there was a good balance of freedom, and says, "I didn't feel mothered, but I didn't feel abandoned either."

BAD

• **View:** Students with a low GPA are often not selected for overseas trips.

• **View:** Several are under the impression that NP is "very rich" and feel that subsidies should be more flexible. The polytechnic aims to have all students travel abroad with the school at least once in their time here, be it for a CCA or for study trips.



# VIEWS



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

[editorial]

## FLYING THE COOP

Rebecca Quek  
Editor

When I think of National Day, three things naturally come to mind: a new National Day song, fireworks, and the slew of articles about how while we youths should learn to spread our wings and fly, we should still always remain rooted to the sunny little island we grew up on.

Almost immediately, I remember a talk I had with a friend a while back. He had been urging me to consider studying overseas, because as he claims, I could "see the world and experience a lot more than I ever could in Singapore".

On the other hand, however, I have my parents, who are dead insistent that I should further my studies locally, because "a local university is already good

enough". My father also thinks that it will take me a good "six months before you'll get any friends".

They see absolutely no need for their daughter to be somewhere on the other side of the world for three whole years when Singapore already has everything that she could possibly need.

While I ponder this dilemma, the fact is that many Singaporean youths these days are indeed considering migrating.

Fifty-three percent of youths aged 15 to 29 are thinking of moving abroad.

Six out of every 10 undergraduates have also expressed interest to go abroad to live or work, mainly to get away from the stressful environment in Singapore.

You could very well blame it on globalisation, the fact that the world is so connected, so much so that - friends and family aside

- uprooting is very much easier than what it was 20 years ago.

Perhaps the biggest irony is that while the government is busy attracting expatriates to come and work in Singapore, its very own pool of local talent is looking to move out and make their home in some other part of the world.

Will the time one day come where Singapore will be nothing more than a "hotel island"? Where we will be nothing more than a collection of people from all over the world, looking for a temporary place to work and live?

I feel that the overused cliché, "the grass is always greener on the other side" is very much apt in this situation.

The thing is, I believe that no matter where we go, no matter how bright the city lights shine in some other part of the world, Singapore, with its flaws and quirks, will always remain home.

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

## H1N1 precaution measures: Hit or miss?

Singapore, often known as "the little red dot", is literally turning red with H1N1 cases amounting to the thousands. NP has already taken measures to protect our students. But are these measures effective?

A while back, my friend and I were on our way to a tutorial when I suggested that we take our temperatures before entering class. She then placed her hand on her forehead and said, "36.5 degrees. No problem! Let's go!" Following that, she grabbed two 'I'm Well' stickers from a nearby board and dragged me along to class.

This incident may tickle you at first. However, its implications are worth considering. The fact that most people consider this temperature-taking exercises a joke is no laughing matter.

Apart from temperature-taking, there were also several declaration forms we had to fill up on Mel. I know a few people who don't even know of these forms and another few more who know of their existence but do not bother filling them up.

This begs the question: Are these precaution measures working? All these seem to be mere formalities that the school has to conform to in order to look good to the public. If we really want to prevent the spread of H1N1, either the school enforces its policies strictly or the students take up personal responsibility.

Ng Lye Ee

Final-year Mass Communication student

## New courses too specialised?

In recent years, I have noticed many new courses emerging from the various polytechnics. Some of these courses are helpful as they provide more choices for students and open up the fields in which they can venture to, such as the Optometry course recently introduced by NP. However, I feel that some courses do not offer a better standing for their students.

I believe that a diploma should provide a broad-based foundation of a field, which allows the diploma holder to apply for an array of university degrees or a range of job positions. However, the new courses that have been springing up seem too specialised and have lost their ability to provide the aforementioned.

I believe that it is not too outright to suggest that the diploma holder of such a specialised course will find it hard to secure jobs in the other sections of a similar industry, or even pursue a degree in similar fields.

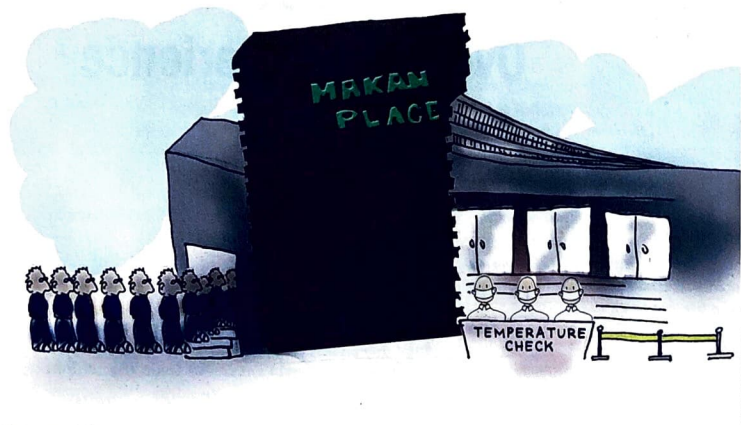
Wouldn't it be more advisable to study in a course with a broad curriculum that allows one to join a wider range of disciplines?

My suggestion is that rather than creating a new course, we should stick to offering a broad range of disciplines for a particular course before presenting options for students to take that would lead to a specialised academic career later on.

Low Hong Wei

Final-year Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering student

[Backdoors]



Because of the temperature-taking exercise, the main entrance to Makan Place always seems a lot more quiet these few days.

npTribune

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# CENTS AND SENSIBILITY



Isaac Tan

The Lehman Brothers saga left the world in shock. Overnight, many who were rich became significantly poorer, and even worse, it left a multitude jobless and penniless.

This recession that we still evidently suffer from is a birth child of the lack of planning and reckless spending. With the repercussions caused through poorly structured schemes, one cannot help but ponder over their spending habits.

Do we really spend more than we should?

Well, almost everyone I talked to about this concurred with the statement.

One school of thought suggests that we spend more than we should because our parents are the ones providing and motivating our spending habits.

"Our parents are eager to make us comfortable all the time. They like to give us whatever we want," explains Amanda Wee, 19, a final-year Molecular Biotechnology student.

"We're quite spoilt," she admits.

Saranya Dhanabalan, 16, a first-year Horticulture in Landscape

Management student, says, "Most of the things we have are provided by our parents but we just spend their money on material things that are not necessary."

This point of view highlights our ignorance and by subscribing to this ideology, we agree that our personal endeavours govern our spending habits.

Won't this mean that we would very quickly run out of our possible inheritance?

On the other hand, there are those that agree with our extensive spending habits but say that it is because the recession has not truly impacted us.

"Most of us come from middle income families and we haven't exactly experienced a phase where money is scarce," says Ong Zhi Yuan, 19, a second-year Business Studies student.

Chew Chi Yang, 19, a final-year Electrical Engineering student, adds, "We are also not affected by the recession directly. I still get the same amount of pocket money."

These two opinions are not without their own flaws. Both conveniently excuse our generation of spenders from any fault.

However, can we simply say that the providential "love" of our parents is solely to be blamed for our loose spending habits?

Well, all is not lost. There is a sizable group of people who still remember the old saying, "Save for a rainy day."

"Saving is important at any time. With the rising prices and all, it has become a necessity to understand the value of money," says Zhi Yuan.

Saranya agrees. "Nothing in this world is stable. If we don't save now, what will save us in the future?"

In retrospect, it is ironic that those who advocate spending also realise the need to save.

American comedian Groucho Marx once said, "Money frees you from doing things you dislike. Since I dislike doing nearly everything, money is handy."

From his quote, we see similar truths about money in today's society. With it, we escape most difficulties in life yet without it, things can easily get difficult. The only option to avoid getting stuck in such a situation is through balancing spending and saving.

However, it is not as simple as keeping your accounts in check, it is a willingness to think about our future and evaluating our wants.

As Aesop's fable of the frivolous grasshopper and the diligent ant warns, "It is best to prepare for days of necessity."



WITZELDA TAN

# Now or never



Melodie Lee

Michael Jackson left us too early.

So did Heath Ledger and Elvis Presley. Each of these three had touched the world and left some sort of lasting legacy in their wake. But they also had one more thing in common: Each of them had taken a turn, and spiraled downward into an inextricable maze of sleeping pills, drugs and depression.

A new study by researchers at Liverpool John Moores University suggests that rock stars are up to three times more likely to die young than the rest of the population, mainly because of drug and alcohol abuse.

While watching the live news coverage of Michael Jackson's memorial, it hit me that we are a generation of people who speed through life too quickly and are too fond of living in the here and now, often with reckless abandon.

As you've probably heard from your friends who have told you about someone they know getting involved in drugs, drink driving, and casual sex, it is easy to realise that these are not restricted to the haloed arena of stardom. We certainly don't have to look as far as Hollywood to see it happening.

Right here in Singapore, we have one of the worst road-fatality records among developed countries. In 2005, there were 2.3 deaths for every 10,000 vehicles

here, compared with 0.8 in Japan, 1.2 in Australia and 1.8 in the United States. In 2006, it rose to 2.4 deaths for every 10,000 vehicles.

This is a startling statistic to note. It reminds me of too many friends whose lives revolve around thoughtless partying and excessive drinking, all in the supposedly harmless name of "having a good time".

Like a friend once said, "At some point in your life, you've got to be a little wild. After that it's all about work, getting married, bringing up kids, paying taxes."

Perhaps it is an inevitable result of being influenced by the media, where magazines, pop stars and movies alike all tell us that we need to live fast, live rashly,

*If you were asked to recall your youth, what would you rather remember? Heady from drunken party or the fragrance of flowers?*

Some might call it living in the moment or living like there is no tomorrow. But that does not mean you should not care about the future, and it certainly does not give you the reason to get involved in reckless and irresponsible things.

However, instead of lamenting on about thinking about your loved ones and your future, I would like you to consider this alternative interpretation of living in the moment: Seeing the beauty in every moment.

I have learnt that there is nothing wrong with slowing down to smell the flowers, taking notice of the world around you, finding something beautiful to marvel at,

or simply catching the sunrise on the way to school.

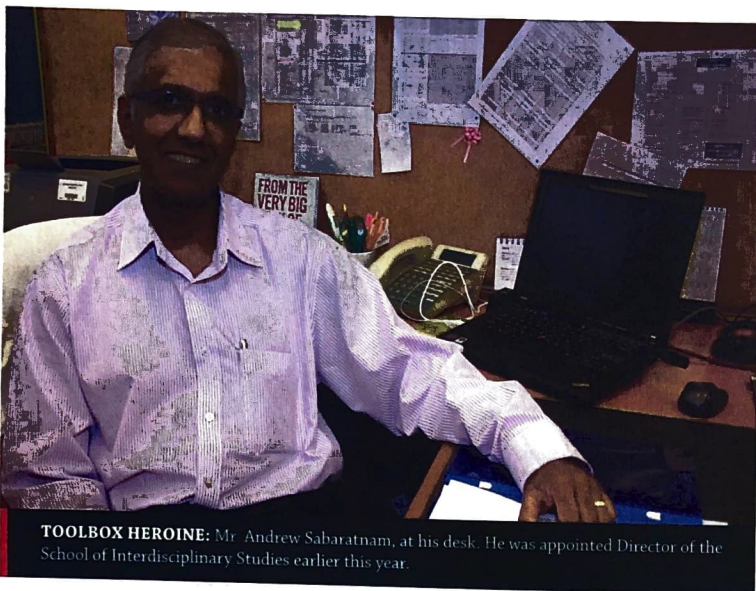
It is still living in the moment, just at different pace from what we're accustomed to.

If you were asked to recall your youth, what would you rather remember? Heady from drunken party or the fragrance of flowers? To quote Charles Dederich, "Today is the first day of the rest of your life."

So, perhaps we should take a leaf from Michael Jackson's book, from the extent that he revolutionised the world, maybe revolutionising the way we look at living in the moment and is our first step to truly living it up.



# NPEOPLE



NPT/ZELDA SUN

**TOOLBOX HEROINE:** Mr. Andrew Sabaratnam, at his desk. He was appointed Director of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies earlier this year.

July '09 marks 21 years of teaching in NP for Mr Andrew Sabaratnam, Director of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies. **DANIEL ONG** unmask the man driven by dedication and passion

## Love IS worth two decades

"Have you seen the movie, *The Bucket List*?" Mr Andrew Sabaratnam asks, referring to the 2007 movie in which Jack Nicholson and Morgan Freeman played two terminally ill patients who went about fulfilling a 'bucket list' - a list of things they had always wanted to do before they kicked the bucket.

"So," the 49-year-old continues, "I thought of coming up with my own bucket list now that I've come to this age."

And while most people his age are quick to deem themselves

too old to try anything new, the newly-appointed Director of the school of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) still has a few more ticks he wants to add to his ever-expanding checklist.

He points out, "Now, at this age, I can do all the things I always wanted to do."

"I've gone to Egypt and even traveled up the Nile," he recounts. "I've learnt to swim, and tomorrow I'll start my first guitar lesson," he says excitedly.

"I'm looking forward to visiting Greece and Morocco, and I also

want to take up a new language."

It is with this same passion and earnesty that Mr Andrew has spent his last 21 years in NP.

He started his teaching career in 1988 as a lecturer at NP's Electronic and Computing division (back then known as the Electronic Engineering division). Opportunity arose when he was sponsored by NP to pursue his Masters in Laser Technology. After his return to teaching, he spearheaded the project to start the first-ever photonic centre in a tertiary institution.

*"Expose yourself to different lifestyles; expose yourself to different thinking and take whatever challenges that come."*

He stayed in the division for 16 years.

Eventually, he went on to the position of manager for academic quality amongst other key roles before becoming the Director for the School of IS.

Now, Mr Andrew's typical workday comprises of "a lot of meetings at both the NP and IS level with various schools". He is also involved in overseeing various outreach activities that NP offer to the secondary schools to "get their students excited and interested in NP".

"It's very hard to find a day when I don't have any meetings," he says, shrugging it off.

However, daunting as it may sound, his 21 years at NP has primed him for the job.

"NP manages and takes care of their staff. If any capabilities are displayed, they will be given more challenges to help them grow. I've been challenged a lot of times; I supposed they've all helped to prepare me," he says.

He recounts being inspired by his lecturer in his second year of university, saying, "I saw the way my lecturer spoke, the way he communicated, and I just said to myself, 'I want to be like him.'"

Yet while Mr Andrew does

his best to manage and make all IS classes enjoyable and challenging, there are those who simply do not appreciate attending IS lessons.

"I think it's sad," he replies after a slight pause.

"When students graduate and work, they would be faced with things they'll have to do. They need to know that what has to be done just has to be done," he adds.

"Likewise, when it comes to doing a module you have to do, and you think, 'Why must I do this?' It's also training them for the future," he adds.

For all students, he advises, "The world is getting smaller. When you search for a job, there are going to be graduates from other polytechnics competing for that same job. What's going to separate you from the others is how broadly you think."

"So expose yourself to different lifestyles; expose yourself to different thinking and take whatever challenges that come," he urges.

For now though, he plans to continue working with students for as long as he can.

When asked if he will ever tire of teaching, he smiles and says, "Well, I've always got my bucket list."

## Of birds, brains and block 73

NP students and alumni come together to share their stories and bid goodbye to the oldest building on campus

**Eunice Ng**

It was certainly an evening of reminiscing and reconnection, as some 180 NP students and alumni gathered for Nostalgia Night at block 73 to bid their last farewell to the oldest building in the polytechnic on 20 Jun.

Established more than 40 years ago, block 73, which was also home to Canteen One, is due to be pulled down to make way

for a new Cultural Centre that is slated for completion in 2011.

Taking the opportunity to catch up with old friends, alumni members traded stories and laughter over dinner and wine, while current students recalled with excitement the times when the building was still buzzing with activity, especially during busy lunch hours at the canteen.

When asked about their memories of the building, final-year Early Childhood Education students Lim Hui Juian, 19, and Nur Kamilah, 20, immediately started rattling off a number of food items they used to buy at the canteen, including "ice cream, bubble tea, Takoyaki, Yong Tau Foo, sweet corn, peanuts, and oh, don't forget Tutu Kueh too".

In fact, many remember the "cheap food" at the canteen. Mr Albert Au, 44, the first Vice President of the Ngee Ann

Alumni, claims he "will miss the Western chicken chop that cost \$2.30" which also came with "refillable beans and chilli sauces", available 20 years ago when he was still a student.

"We always asked the uncle (at the Western food stall) to give us more fries," Mr Au recalls with a laugh.

He also recalled how he and his classmates would spend their lecture breaks at block 73 "sitting facing the Business Studies department to 'bird watch'".

He adds, "Some of my classmates would make this familiar 'kissing' sound by smacking their lips together [to attract the 'birds' attention]!"

For the older graduates though, block 73 was a place where they spent a bulk of their school days attending lessons there.

One such graduate is Mr Raymond Chua, 57, course manager of Mechanical



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

# NPEOPLE

## A DIFFERENT KIND OF LOVE

**WONG YEANG CHERNG** sits down with NP's first female deputy principal to understand the unexplainable force that drives her to continue loving and living for the school



"It is simply about doing everything possible to make Ngee Ann stronger tomorrow than it is today."

That is the motto Ms Looi Mei Fong, 47, NP's first female Deputy Principal, lives by.

Propped comfortably on an armchair, Ms Looi uncovers her responsibility over four different arms of the school: Corporate communications, campus development, human capital development and student development and alumni relations – an added duty with her new appointment which started on 1 Jun this year.

"I enjoy it and believe that working the ground is the best way to build up my strengths to be able to tackle larger issues of the polytechnic," she adds.

Stating that the principal has the "biggest heart for NP students", Ms Looi, on her part, has adopted that similar motivation in her work.

"When I am lost, I go back to this same purpose," she says.

Centering her ideas on improving the life of NP students, Ms Looi even went to the extent of signing up for a Facebook account.

As soon as she finds out she jumps in her seat, exclaiming, "You found me ah!"

And she says that she does it all to know the students better.

"If I want to understand how students relate to each other, I must be in it," she explains.

Apart from containing pictures of her well-loved NP Ambassadors, her account also displays photographs of her

Student Plaza as "something she holds dear to her heart".

She says, "At around 6pm, it's the best feeling because you see students jogging. It gives you the warmth of a living campus."

"It's something I look at most of the time and this field reminds me of what my work is about. It gives me a sense of fulfilment," she adds. The passion in her voice can clearly be heard.

After all, there is obviously no other way that she is able to stay bubbly after an arduous five-hour-long meeting.

To de-stress, she claims to like baking, especially banana cakes.

She then dives into a frenzied discussion of her hobbies, and Ms Looi divulges her wish to "be a great cook like my mum".

Other than busying around the kitchen, this ex-netballer is also very appreciative of the arts.

"I love looking at the architecture of buildings, both old and new. When I travel, this is what fascinates me," she says.

An "accidental leader", as she calls herself, Ms Looi was described as an Audi when she posed the question "What car would I be?" to her students nearly 10 years ago.

While she may not fathom why that comparison was made, her husband explains that the car's personality mirrors Ms Looi's character of "quiet elegance".

However, she begs to differ.

She pauses for a moment to think of an answer, then says, "I think I'm a Honda. Dependable, low-maintenance, highly efficient, decent-looking, but clearly not flashy."

*"I think I'm a Honda. Dependable, low-maintenance, highly efficient, decent looking but clearly not flashy."*

— Ms Looi on the type of car she would be

Having such a huge responsibility is not simple, but it is easy to see why Ms Looi takes her role seriously.

"It is simply a case of doing what I enjoy and finding meaning in what I do," she says.

The former School of Film & Media Studies lecturer passionately relates her strive towards the "single-minded purpose" of the principal, Mr Chia Mia Chiang.

family and is well-linked to her children's accounts.

The acceptance of her children as "friends" surfaces as a chance to observe and appreciate her family rather than to keep them in check.

However, her love does not stop at family; it extends to the NP community.

Looking out of her window, Ms Looi describes the view overlooking the field by the

Engineering, who also presented a slideshow of the past, present and future of block 73 that evening. He recalls the time he used to study at the polytechnic in 1971 when it still was known as Ngee Ann College.

"Ngee Ann back then was just one block in block 73. All classrooms, labs, tutorial rooms, lecture halls and workshops were all under one roof. There were no CCAs to speak of, as studying was the only thing on our minds then," he says.

With more than 40 years since, the polytechnic has definitely changed, with block 73, once a standalone block of the school, now remembered by students as a hub for various clubs and societies.

Mr Jeffrey Yang, Deputy Director of the Student Development and Alumni Relations Office, recalls "staying overnight with students" at the "dormitories on the fifth floor" of the building for various activities,



which were organised when he was still a lecturer at the Building and Environment Division a couple of years back.

Sad as it may be that the polytechnic's iconic building will no longer be here, Ms Poh Xiao Wei, 23, a graduate from Molecular Biotechnology in 2006, says aptly, "After all, it is part and parcel of redevelopment. When the new building comes up, it will be a totally new experience."



**MOSTLY MEMORIES:** NP alumni gather at block 73 for a last meal before the building gets demolished to pave the way for a new Cultural Centre.

PHOTO COURTESY OF MS LOOI MEI FONG

NP / ZELIA SUN

NP / ZELIA SUN





# ASEAN CINEMATIC SHOWCASE

CELEBRATING THE DIVERSITY OF ASEAN

**MY MAGIC (SINGAPORE) & THE TIN MINE (THAILAND)**  
4 AUG 19 00 - 23 00  
PREVIEW THEATRE LEVEL 9, SCHOOL OF FILM & MEDIA STUDIES  
NGEE ANN POLYTECHNIC

**GOODBYE BOYS (MALAYSIA) & CESAR ASAR (PHILIPPINES)**  
5 AUG 19 00 - 23 00  
PREVIEW THEATRE LEVEL 9, SCHOOL OF FILM & MEDIA STUDIES  
NGEE ANN POLYTECHNIC

**RAINBOW TROOPS (INDONESIA)**  
6 AUG 20 30 - 22 30  
UNIVERSITY CULTURAL CENTRE,  
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

CALL 6460 8448 OR EMAIL [ASEANCINEMATIC@GMAIL.COM](mailto:ASEANCINEMATIC@GMAIL.COM) TO BOOK YOUR TICKETS!

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# NPEOPLE

## FOR A STARRY, STARRY CAUSE

Lin Verena

As part of Youth for Causes 2009 (YFC), a team of four NP students collaborated to conduct a social entrepreneurship project to help the Cannosaville Children's Home.

Jointly organised by Citibank and YMCA, the objective of the competition is to encourage students to work their social entrepreneurship skills.

The competition commenced on 16

Mar with a free workshop on how to write a business proposal, and will end on 21 Nov with an awards ceremony.

The group, all first-year students from the School of Business and Accountancy, attributes the purpose of the project to their compassion for less-fortunate children. The Cannosaville Children's Home is the chosen beneficiary of their project.

Leader of the group Jesper Tong, 17, says, "It is about identifying a social problem and using entrepreneurial principles to create, organise and manage a venture to make a social change. The impact made on the community would then be a measure of our success."

Sylvia Phua, 17, another member, says, "What makes this NGO (Non-government organisation) so special is their vision and belief in making each child a happy, confident and creatively "others-centered" child. This was similar to what my group believed in as well, thus the collaboration."

Just like the five sides of a star, the team has divided this four-month long program into five main events, one of which is the Sunny Side Starlets Project, where volunteers fold straw stars to make into key-chains. These accessories are then sold to the public at a dollar each to raise funds as well as create awareness for their cause.

When the project began, the positive response of fellow NP students surprised the group.

Leong Bih Shean, 17, a fellow member, says, "It was surprising and heartening to see that close to 200 students signed up for our Sunny Side Starlet Project just within two days after we opened our recruitment drive for volunteers."

"We personally didn't expect such an overwhelming response within such a short time," he adds.

So far, the group has raised close to about \$2,000.

Through these events, the group aims to raise a sum of \$10,000 in funds to help the home develop their facilities and curriculum for the students.

Even though the team is still far from reaching their goal, enthusiasm and morale remains high.

Fellow group member Ng Zhuang Ying, 18, says, "We want to create an awareness and stress the need for parental love and guidance for the children in their families."

He adds, "We [also] hope the students who actually participate in our event would foster friendships, bond with the children from the home and just have fun!"

The last event, a walkathon and a notebook sale, will be held on 8 Aug from 9am to 1pm at Singapore Management University's Lee Ka Shing Library. The group is confident of the outcome.

Sylvia says, "We just want people to know the importance of having a family, and through the walkathon, we hope that people will be aware of this home and provide these children with the necessary help they need."

The group insists that winning the race is not of top priority.

Jesper says, "The prizes include titles like best group or most funds raised."

"But we are not concerned about that. We just want to genuinely do all we can to help Cannosaville."



# SAVE ENERGY

Every single action counts. If we do not start conserving energy, we will have to pay a price eventually.



# ZEST. REVIEWS

## [video games reviews]

### DRAGONICA

#### Dragon of all MMORPGS

Initially, one may be inclined to write Dragonica off as a MapleStory wannabe.

After all, cute characters beating up cute monsters and getting rewards for their efforts sounds like what MapleStory has been offering for years.

Thankfully though, that is where the similarity ends.

With Dragonica, the player is in command of a job right off the bat. No more spending hours leveling-up, all you have to do is to just select your job and gender at the character creation screen and you are ready to battle monsters with your newfound skills.

But ultimately, the game's draw has to be its impressive combo system.

Dragonica's combo system is a sight to

behold: It allows you to chain together a series of attacks and skills, or even catapult an enemy high up into the sky and unleash a devastating air combo.

Not surprisingly, the jobs you select will have a direct impact on your ability to combo effectively in the game.

The Warrior is looking to be one of the better characters for gamers looking to level up at the fastest possible rate simply because of his (or her) awesome strength and HP capabilities. Coupled with the fact that they have access to a destructive charge special at the start, the Warrior is a walking pillar of terror. The flipside though, is that they are not very fast, making it extremely hard for them to unleash chain attacks successfully.

All in all, Dragonica is a pretty decent and cute-looking game for just about anyone who enjoys grinding it out to gain levels ala MapleStory, or wants a quick, casual game which allows the player to jump into the thick of action immediately.

Michael Lum

Dragonica is currently in open-beta status, and can be downloaded at <http://dragonica.iahgames.com>



### FIFA ONLINE 2

#### FIFA ONLINE 2: A Winning Formula

Since FIFA 98 debuted 11 years ago, the series has certainly improved in terms of graphics and gamer control. Nonetheless, its closest competitor in football video games, Winning Eleven, has always had the upper hand when it comes to interplay and control, well until now.

With FIFA Online 2, players are given the choice of playing against their peers and gamers from all over the world. Although the option of playing against artificial intelligence is still available, the level of difficulty and adrenaline rush is raised when playing against your peers.

Moreover, FIFA Online 2 enables players to chat, connect and challenge one another using their own custom teams to earn experience points, items and reputation. Winners will earn rewards such as energy drinks, medical kits, and uniform cards, which allow them to heal, refresh, and add new players to their team. Players can be bought and sold between gamers, simulating a real-life football community.

With the additional features of playing online, trading players, multi-player mode, upgrading players and the league mode, the game allows for increased interactivity among gamers, to discuss tactics, strategies, and player positions. For its relatively young age, the new features make the game a surprisingly good deal.

The controls are slightly tweaked as compared to previous editions of this series, and it takes some getting used to.



But with the training mode, it is a problem that a few tries can overcome.

Perhaps the only drawback with the game is the graphics that are identical to that of FIFA 07 graphics, which is strange considering the fact the manufacturers have already improved on that in FIFA 08 and 09.

That said, most of us don't need cutting-edge animation for our football games.

With user-friendly features and a community-like interface, FIFA Online 2 promises a good game for friends and fans alike.

Shaun David Martin

Fifa Online 2 can be downloaded at <http://fifaonline2.iahgames.com>

### GIVEAWAY!

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## [food reviews]

# THE SWEETEST SIN

PAIGE FOONG discovers that the best kind of sin is tasting the sweet cocoa as it fills your mouth and brings you to heaven



**MEIJI MILK CHOCOLATE**  
\$1.80 for 65g  
Available at Co-op

Under the dull dark brown wrapper of Meiji Milk Chocolate, lies a delectable slab of chocolate that is heaven for sweet-tooths. Boasting an incredibly smooth and velvety texture, it glides easily down your throat leaving behind a wonderful, satisfying feeling. However, those who do not like their chocolate too sweet be warned, this is perhaps the sweetest. Still, luscious and creamy, it is possibly the best chocolate to indulge yourself with. But don't take too long, because this chocolate melts quickly.



**CADBURY DAIRY MILK**  
\$1.60 for 55g  
Available at Cheers

A top trait of these bite-sized scrumptious goodness is its convenient packaging. It is the only brand among the others to be packaged like a tube of sweets, which allows one to carry it around without worrying about causing a sticky brown mess under the hot tropical sun. Calbury Dairy Milk is not too overbearingly sweet; they are nice and simple pieces of chocolate that requires absolutely no fuss. It gives a gratifying crunch and, due to its pocket size, is a breeze to eat.



**HERSHEY'S MILK CHOCOLATE**  
\$2.00 for 43g  
Available at Cheers

Hershey's Milk Chocolate is definitely not for slow eaters as it melts incredibly fast. It is extremely creamy and rich, so much to the point that when you swallow it, the chocolate forms a lump in your throat, which has to be said, can be rather uncomfortable. However, for those who love their chocolate creamy and do not mind chocolate-coated sticky fingers, Hershey's is extremely decadent, and would definitely make a gratifying treat.



**DARS MILK CHOCOLATE**  
\$2.35 for 48g  
Available at Cheers

Delicious. That is what comes to mind when you pop these bite-sized pieces of heavenly goodness into your mouth. Although slightly pricier than the other brands, it is definitely worth every cent - it tastes as good as it looks. Dars has texture and is not cloyingly sweet like most milk chocolates. It provides an extremely satisfying crunch when you bite into it. With its convenient packaging, Dars is great for sneaking into class during the times when you're feeling a little peckish between breaks.



**CADBURY TWIRL**  
\$1.55 for 42g  
Available at Cheers

Of all five chocolate bars, Twirl stood out the most due to its airy texture, which is a lot different from the other denser bars. Although it is rather sweet, the fluffiness within the chocolate gives it a light feeling, which makes the chocolate not too overbearing. Once sinking your teeth into it, the chocolate almost seems to crumble in your mouth and leaves you wanting more. Twirl is extremely value-for-money. Besides being the cheapest among the five chocolate bars, it also tastes the yummiest.



Tell us about your favourite book on the npTribune website: [nptribune.theurbanwire.com](http://nptribune.theurbanwire.com)

**ZEST**

**[DVD reviews]**

**THE HOME SONG STORIES**

Directed by: Tony Ayres  
Starring: Joan Chen, Qi Yu Wu  
Rated: M18  
(some sexual content)

Available at the  
Lien Ying Chow Library



and the stigma he faces while living in a foreign land in the 1970s.

Throwing up themes like familial love, racism and trust, the movie accurately depicts the struggles of a mother and child to keep their relationship steady even through the family's toughest times.

Overall, the movie is melancholic in tone, and perhaps even at times, slightly overdramatic and slow. But actress Joan Chen puts up a stellar performance of a single mother that makes every scene of hers a joy to watch.

The narrative of the character Rose could not have been told any better: Chen does a subtle but expert job of exuding rather erratic emotions of anger, love, hatred and seduction that Rose wholly encompasses.

It is of no surprise that The Home Song Stories has also done well at international film festivals, bringing back Best Cinematography, Best Actress (for Joan Chen) and Best Director during the Australian Film Institute Awards 2007.

More than its sombre overtones and oriental flavour, The Home Song Stories promises a riveting watch.

Cheryl Tan

*"I write these stories about my mother," Tom says. "Trying to understand her and all the things that she did." He adds later, as an afterthought, "Or perhaps to punish her, or just to remember, to feel, to forgive, to love."*

- Tom, The Home Song Stories



"I write these stories about my mother," Tom says. "Trying to understand her and all the things that she did." He adds later, as an afterthought, "Or perhaps to punish her, or just to remember, to feel, to forgive, to love."

And that is the premise of The Home Song Stories, told from the viewpoint of Tom (played by Darren Yap), a writer.

In the picture, he muses about his childhood with his mother, Rose Hong (played by Joan Chen), who is a glamorous nightclub singer in Shanghai and older sister, May (played by Irene Chen). One night, Rose meets Bill (played by Steven Vilder), an Australian sailor, and after a whirlwind romance, decides to move her entire family across the sea to settle down with him in Australia.

An autobiographical account of director Tony Ayres's own life as a child, the story depicts the plight of a Chinese boy who struggles to find stability amidst his mother's infidelity with a younger man

**[book reviews]**

**[FICTION]**

**Trauma: A Novel**  
Patrick McGrath  
Available at the Lien Ying Chow Library

If the world is our stage, and life is a play, then our mind must be its playwright. At least according to this timeless dark, twisted love story, set as a psychological thriller by Patrick McGrath.

A psychiatrist by profession, New Yorker Charlie Weir is slightly too aware of his slow trudge to depression and emotional isolation for his liking. However, like watching a car crash in slow motion, he can only watch helplessly as his psyche slowly breaks down right in front of him.

He recognises the signals – those not of "the imminence of a catastrophic event, but the presence of repressed memory" – and tries to make sense of the chaos, during which he falls into depression, ironically, becoming his very own patient.

Taking on various problems dealing love, be it unrequited love, lost love, or finding love, Charlie's dysfunctional relationship with his family and friends is the core of the novel Trauma.

On a whole, the book is a disturbing realisation of how we take on our memories according to our mood; We watch helplessly as Charlie drowns in internalised anger and endless self-rationalising, while he struggles to draw the line between his work and personal life, between disillusion and the framing of memories.

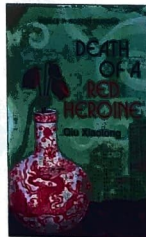
The novel plays on our tendency to seek solace in someone we know won't judge our actions, and unfortunately in this age, that has become a total stranger: a psychiatrist. Still, even if our lives aren't as dramatic as Charlie's, McGrath's disconcerting words seem to have this innate ability to seep into your conscience, just as Trauma makes you wonder: What demons do we actually have that we refuse to acknowledge?

As parts of the Trauma will resonate with you, it might be hard finding a consolation if you see yourself in Charlie, but in the end, McGrath reminds us solace can be discovered in the most unlikely of places – once you bother to find it before you give up on yourself.

Chee Hui Ming

**[FICTION]**

**Death of a Red Heroine**  
Qiu Xiaolong  
Available at Lien Ying Chow Library



Set in a post-Tiananmen Square Shanghai and during the beginning of China's economic reforms, the body of a young beautiful woman is found discarded at an unused canal outside the city. Chen Cao, head of the Shanghai Police Bureau's Special Case Squad, takes on the case that is fast becoming cold.

When the victim is identified as Guan Hongying, a communist poster girl and former national model worker, the once-assumed homicide case takes a deadly political turn.

The lies that wrap Chen Cao and his older subordinate Yu Guangming slowly peel away to reveal the appalling sexual shenanigans of the son of an old revolutionary leader that could very well further upset the unstable political scene in China. This forces him to make a choice between his integrity and the communist ideology of the leaders.

The author's characters are brought to life with vivid descriptions Qiu also succeeds at a poignant portrayal of Old Shanghai and the lives of the Chinese with colourful and rich details, such as the public phone service system along the busy and narrow streets at a time when private phones in Shanghai were scarce. Also impressive in description are the impossibly cramped housing conditions and the delicious meals that the characters take delight and relish in.

All throughout, the book is peppered with references to classical Chinese literature, Confucius, and the occasional Western literature, which results in a literary masterpiece that provides a delicate balance between the Oriental and Western flavour and brings more depth to the table than the average crime novel.

At the core of Death of the Red Heroine is a thought-provoking read that infuses crime-fighting with shrewd cultural and political insights into a Shanghai almost 20 years ago. If you have a taste for adventures and profundity, Death of the Red Heroine will not disappoint.

Lum Xin Mun



# ZEST



# HYPE

## KNOCKING YOUR SOCKS OFF

ONE ISSUE AT A TIME

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## A race to the pinnacle

Eunice Lai

NP held its third adventure race, The Pinnacle 2009, on 27 Jun, where it put teamwork and unity to the test with various physically and mentally challenging activities.

Ng Rong Choon, 20, the assistant race director says, "This year's route was more interesting as they were made to crawl under an expressway and even walk along a railway. It's something most of them have not tried before, making it more memorable."

Despite the drizzle that stalled the teams for about 20 minutes and caused a few game stations to stop activity, the participants showed patience and an undying enthusiasm to continue the race.

One of the partners of the winning team of the NP Men



**UNTIRE SOME:** With their adrenaline pumping, participants trudge on in the cycling part of the race in an effort to win.

category, Trey Phang, 19, a final-year Aerospace Electronics student, felt that the toughest part about the race was not the physical challenges, but the mind-boggling quizzes that they had to solve.

"We had to try to empty our minds and relax in order to solve the challenges. Having a strong focus and a control over our temper were important. It was a good thing my partner and I communicated well," he says.

Having won on their first try, Trey felt a deep sense of achievement as they had trained hard.

"It was definitely a success as we were new to this and didn't know what to expect. We just decided to join for the fun of it. Our CCA trainings, triathlons and canoe practices surely paid off," he says.

The Youth Men and Youth Women categories were open to students from other polytechnics and junior colleges, while the Open category was for NP Alumni.

Participants from Nanyang Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic and Singapore Polytechnic made up about 10 out of a total of 63 teams this year.

## Twice the leap for Track and Field twins

Anand S/O Sasangan

NP's Track and Field team snagged five medals in this year's Swift Akira Track and Field Championship with twin medalists contributing three of the five medals.

The competition, now in its 56th year, was held at Gombak Stadium on 6 and 7 Jun. The team went into the competition without expectations, but was pleasantly

surprised when they ended the two days with two gold and three bronze medals.

For this, the team owes a large part of their win to a pair of twins, Khan Meng Linn, 19, a final-year Biomedical Engineering student and Khan Meng Sunn, 19, a final-year Business IT student, both of whom competed in the Men's High Jump open category.

Meng Linn and Meng Sunn clinched the gold and bronze medal respectively.

Meng Linn also participated in the Men's Triple Jump event and secured a gold for his efforts.

Although they were technically competitors during the competition, the twins agree that joining the same event is an advantage as they can "spot each others' mistake" and help correct it after each jump.

The Track and Field team also managed to secure a third place in both the Men's and Women's 4x100m relay.

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# A RIPPING GOOD TIME

It was not an easy task, but the NP Concert Band and NP Strings impressed the audience with their collection of popular pieces in their first concert together

Eunice Ng

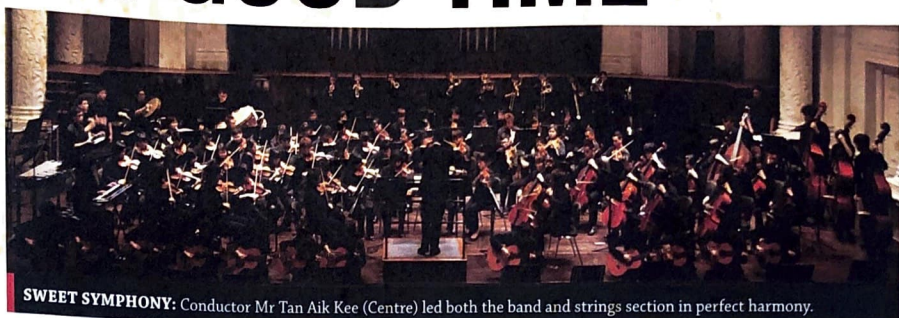
Popular songs were clearly the crowd favourite of the night at Ripieno, the first official concert put together by NP CCA arts groups, NP Concert Band and NP strings, on 4 Jul at the Victoria Concert Hall.

Ripieno, which means "all together" in Italian, was the whole idea of the concert that saw members from both CCAs collaborate to form a symphony orchestra for their performance.

Familiar melodies such as those from fantasy movie Harry Potter and Japanese anime film Spirited Away were played. The concert also featured two pieces arranged by the band's very own flautist, Benjamin Toh.

The two pieces turned out to be the crowd favourites, namely "Viva La Vida" by British rock band Coldplay, and the encore piece, an arrangement of the popular song "Love Story" by American country-pop singer Taylor Swift.

The upbeat melody of "Love Story" even got the audience clapping to its energetic beat



**SWEET SYMPHONY:** Conductor Mr Tan Aik Kee (Centre) led both the band and strings section in perfect harmony.

from the charismatic percussionists, and the bright, uplifting tones from the trumpets.

The arrangement also weaved in the string players and guitarists, who sat at the edge of the stage strumming.

The listeners were left on a high note as various sections of the orchestra pitched in, taking turns to play the main refrain in a gradual build up, eventually ending in a rousing finale to thunderous applause.

Spotted in the crowd was Kathy Zhou, 9, a Raffles Girls' Primary School student who attended the concert with her family.

She says, "I enjoyed the performance, especially the strings and the band when they played some notes that were quite high. It was very nice."

Angela Goh, 20, a first-year Occupational Therapy student at Nanyang Polytechnic was also impressed.

"The concert was quite innovative. They played modern songs, which were more appealing," she says.

The success of the concert, however, did not come easy. Joint rehearsals between the concert band and strings were "not effective" at first, as many of the string players had just started learning their instruments.

"I was concentrating solely on the strings and found the band members dozing off," says Mr Tan Aik Kee, the conductor of the concert band who also lent his expertise to coordinating the whole orchestra.

As a result, Mr Tan separated the two groups and "focused on training the strings first", leaving the band members to practise on their own. He only combined the two ensembles in the "last two weeks" before the concert.

Having the committee members of both CCA groups working together was also a tricky task.

"The combined committee strength was more than 20. Obviously, it led to occasional chaos, but thankfully, we managed to pull it off in the end," says Ibrahim Hazm bin Amran, 17, a second-year Accountancy student from the strings section.

Thankfully the two groups got their act together before the performance, and in the end, the satisfaction of being able to perform with a symphony orchestra was an experience not to be missed.

"It felt pretty amazing! Especially during songs like 'Love Story', when I heard the full sound of the orchestra; it felt so uplifting and joyous. Just being part of it made me feel great," says Hazm.



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# BOWLING FOR SUCCESS

National Bowler Eugene Low shows **EUNICE LEW** that passion for the sport is the key to excellence in the sport

Tall, athletic and well-versed, Eugene Low exudes the air of a confident young man. And he should be, since he was handpicked for Singapore's national bowling squad when he was just in secondary three.

Eugene's love for bowling started at the age of 12. Back then, he was a keen rugby player in Anglo-Chinese School (Primary).

"My mum would bring me to the bowling alley and I'd bowl 20 games in a row for three hours straight. I kept a notebook and wrote down my scores every time," recounts the final-year Mobile Business Solutions student.

With his parents' support, Eugene eventually decided to pick up the sport. Once he entered Anglo Chinese School (Barker Road), he joined both the rugby and bowling team.

"It was hard to juggle because bowling training was on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and rugby training was on Monday, Wednesdays and Friday."

Eventually the intensive training took its toll and he had

to choose between rugby and bowling. He ended up making a list about the pros and cons of bowling.

"I remember writing why I wanted to choose bowling, since my parents told me that I couldn't have both. So I wrote down, in that notebook, why I should and shouldn't stick to bowling," he says.

"For me, bowling is the perfect sport. You take the ball, walk five steps, throw the ball, walk back and the ball comes back to you, all in an air-conditioned room," he jests.

"I've already played rugby for four years - I don't like the sun," he adds before laughing.

His enthusiasm for the sport was key to his improvement. He started sponsoring himself for tournaments in secondary three and it was then that he was noticed by Indonesia's national team bowling coach Billy Choo.

Mr Choo became Eugene's personal coach, and at the end of six months, Eugene was called up to join the national squad.

Now a full-fledged national bowler, he has since travelled to

countries such as Thailand, Hong Kong and the United States to compete in tournaments.

He even scored a hat trick when he won the Three Perfect Games award for the third time, sanctioned by the Singapore Bowling Federation last year.

However, an incident at the Milo International Junior All-Stars tournament at Kuala Lumpur last year got Eugene suspended for three months.

"It was Christmas, in-between the tournament and our lights-out was at 11 o'clock, but a few of us gathered in my room to have a few drinks, which broke the code of conduct and we got caught," Eugene reveals.

The incident cost him a promotion to the elite squad this year that would have seen him play among the likes of former bowling champion Remy Ong.

Nonetheless, Eugene remains positive about his outlook. "I still think I'm next in line [to be promoted]," he says with a grin.

His slightly cocky demeanour, however, is not just all talk and no play.



PHOTO COURTESY OF EUGENE LOW

Between working on his final-year in-house projects, he has regular trainings from Tuesday to Thursday. Despite the rigorous demands, Eugene would have it no other way.

"If you're not passionate about the sport, you'll never push yourself as much for it," he says.

Pausing for a moment to think, he says in all honesty, "I really can't see myself doing anything else other than bowling."



NP/EUNICE LEW

## Slalom or die trying

Alicia Lee

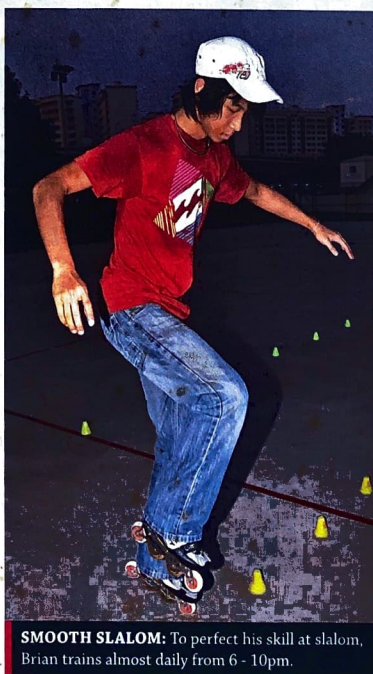
When renowned Irish playwright George Bernard Shaw exclaimed that "youth is wasted on the young," he had clearly never met someone like 18-year-old Brian Kwa, who would defy the statement.

Brian is neither a lark nor an owl, although he is awake most of time, spending time practising, choosing music, choreographing, and doing what most of us cannot achieve - balancing schoolwork and keeping his parents happy.

For those yet in the know, slalom is a style of inline skating best characterised by the cones skaters use to weave about on unhindered wheels. The skater typically weaves and maneuvers his skates around and about the cones without knocking them down.

While this may sound simple as most extreme sports do, it rarely is. The basics normally take a skater new to his wheels months, or even a year to master.

That is why Brian is such a force to be reckoned with. Only receiving his first pair of skates from Carrefour hypermart at the age of 11, Brian graduated to his first pair of proper skates when he was 16, on which he then



**SMOOTH SLALOM:** To perfect his skill at slalom, Brian trains almost daily from 6 - 10pm.

NP/ZELINA SUN

began to learn how to slalom.

His first pair of skates, as he reckons, were "lousy skates" that was not ideal for slalom.

Brian's first training ground was at the underbelly of Ang Mo Kio MRT railway line and has since moved on to the basketball court at Sembawang MRT, where he trains almost daily from 6pm to 10pm daily, and till about midnight on others.

When the second-year Mass Communication student was asked about his balancing act of training and schoolwork, Brian shrugs it off, saying, "I did warn them about my training, and my group mates understand. I do my best and there have been no complaints so far."

Aside from his hectic schedule, there is something to be said about his bravery, as inline skating is known to be one of the more accident-prone sports.

"Most people fall, tear their jeans and never come back. When we tear our jeans, it makes us want to go back for more," he claims.

A thrill-seeker who enjoys the danger of the sport, Brian also choreographs his own routines for competitions, which has gotten him into the national team of inline skating, Team Micro.

In addition to his own choreography, he is also his own DJ, mixing music in tandem to his routine for added personality and flavour.

With only one year into his skating, Brian is already slated to take part in an upcoming Shanghai competition.

His big dream? To become one of the Top 20 skaters in the world. Judging by the rate he is going, Singapore might actually see him there one day.