

# npTribune

The Student Voice of  
Ngee Ann Polytechnic  
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OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2009

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Students bored with the usual hangout places now have a reason to rejoice. npTribune gets the lowdown on the newly opened Studio27.

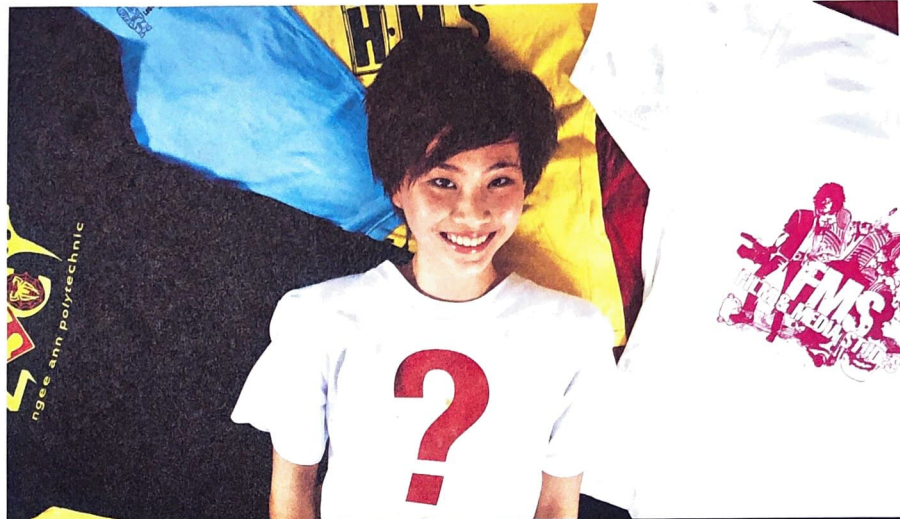
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### ESCAPING FROM THE CROWD

You need a conducive environment urgently to rush for a project; every single corner seems to be overcrowded.

Where do you go?

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**THIS IS IT:** After years of not having a common school shirt, NP will finally unveil an official design in mid-December.

## A CASE OF LOST IDENTITY

A school identity is forged through the various elements that we share, but these are "disappearing" over time

**Brandon Era, Dewi Sriwahyuto, Joshua Tan, Matthew Lee, Patrick Chew & Shannon Rezel**

When you were in secondary school, there were many things that identify you with your school, such as a uniform or a school song.

Fast-forward a few years, and the liberated environment of a polytechnic sees no need to enforce such practices. The dress code is free and easy, and a school song, even if one exists, is not sung.

In addition, the idea of a school identity seems to only depend on a

**What element contributes the most to an NP identity?**



distinctive school crest.

So, what exactly makes up our NP identity? In a poll of 100 students, about a third of those polled felt that the orientation T-shirt contributes most to an NP identity.

This is followed by 18 percent who chose orientation

camp and 17 percent who chose the polytechnic's Sports and Wellness (S&W) module, the only one of its kind among polytechnics.

According to Khairul Mohamad, 25, president of the NP Students' Union (NPSU), the fact that the design of the S&W shirt changes each year shows that the supposed common identity among the students of different years is unalike. This may not be as strong an idea as compared to if they have a common school T-shirt.

In fact, the NPSU has "been planning to introduce a NP T-shirt since early June". This

shirt is slated for distribution by early December. It will be made available to any student who wishes to purchase it, and costs will be kept as low as possible.

Even still, there are many, like final-year Electronic & Computer Engineering student Nicolette Peck, who prefer a larger variety of goods.

The 19-year-old says, "I would like to see NP produce a whole array of NP-specific merchandise - Shirts, shorts, cardigans, bags, and whatever you can think of."

"Perhaps, [the merchandise] could even carry some witty slogans," she adds.

**CONTINUED ON PAGE 2 & 3**

## JUST FOR YOUTH

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## TALK



**"I've seen students come in and go out for 16 years and I believe that they have all displayed a level of maturity beyond their years. They have a passion and desire and they know what they want to do and how to do it. ...For me, that's what makes NP students who they are."**

- Mr Paul Ramani, a lecturer in the School of Film & Media Studies, who has been teaching since 1993, believes our school spirit is something that you cannot put a finger on.



**"I have always regarded NP as my foster parent - she gave me the education, the scholarship and the opportunities. I am thankful to NP and the only way to show my appreciation is to give back or pay it forward."**

- Mr Raymond Chua Soo Nam, 57, Course Manager of Mechanical Engineering who graduated in 1974 from NP, previously known as Ngee Ann Technical College.



**"I've been teaching for three years and I remember my first impression of the students was that of boundless energy and a fundamental willingness to learn. They are driven, and not afraid of stepping up to the challenges of a dynamic learning environment in NP."**

- Ms Kan Siew Mun, lecturer in the School of Life Sciences & Chemical Technology, thinks the keen display of enthusiasm and energy of the students makes her teaching a joy.



MYRIAD OF COLOURS: RED Campers eagerly waiting for the mass dance to start.

## More to camping

If camps are an indication of a school spirit, certainly NP has it.

Currently, there are four different camps targeted at freshmen and prospective students - the Freshman Orientation Camp (FOC), the Sports Camp, RED Camp and the various Academic Schools' camps. Most see an overwhelming turnout of more than 500 students each year.

The aim of these camps, according to NPSU President, Khairul Mohamad, 25, is to help new students settle in the campus and hopefully, create a sense of belonging to the school from thereon.

To achieve this, the freshmen

are taught the "NP Cheer". Khairul says, "The cheer is actually one of the first few things we teach the students at FOC."

"And from what I see, most of them show signs that they look upon themselves as part of NP, judging from the way they immerse themselves in the cheer," he added.

According to a poll of 50 students, these supposed stepping-stones do not seem to be serving their purpose, with 60 percent claiming that they do not walk away from it with any form of school pride.

Although many added that these camps reaffirmed their choice of NP, a majority felt

indifferent towards these camps as effective tools in fostering student-school relationships.

Liu Xian Kai, 21, is one such person. When asked whether he feels attached to the school, the final-year Accountancy student replied, "I felt more bonded to the friends I made during the camp than to the school."

However, Khairul feels that the fellowship between friends and with the school should not be looked upon as separate issues.

He says, "When students bond with each other at these camps, they create memories with one another in the school, which ultimately goes towards attaching them to the school."

### WHEN PHYSICS MEETS ART

Two teams of Engineering students took part in the Kinetic Art sculpture competition from May to September.

Kinetic art refers to an art piece that relies on moving parts and motion for effect.

Ian Lim, 21, a final-year Mechanical Engineering student, led a team in the competition, where they won second place, earning \$5,000.

He says, "We came across this video of a dolphin swimming across the water while chasing a bubble ring, and it gave us an idea for our kinetic art sculpture."

The other team of second and final-year Electronic & Computer Engineering students came in fourth place with a motor-controlled globe that would display 3D holographic images.

Ian adds, "There are ways and means of bringing your creativity to life using electronics and mechanics, and that's where engineering meets art."

- NUR SHAKYLLA

### MORE YOUTH GAMBLERS

On Nov 6, a "Gambling addiction" talk was held at NP's convention centre.

Organised by the Student Services Office, it was held in conjunction with the recent "Know The Line" campaign, which was initiated by the National Council on Problem Gambling.

A rising trend among youth gamblers is soccer gambling. Despite having peers whose pockets got burnt, students still believe they are in good control.

Justin Chang, 19, a final-year Audio Visual Technology student, says, "I think they are just unlucky. I only gamble during the soccer season so it should be fine."

Although there is no significant increase in the number of youth gamblers, the organisers believe that it is important to "educate the students now because gambling is becoming more prevalent" and are currently planning more talks to inform youths about the dangers of gambling addictions.

- DAWN LOO

### BLOOD DONATION DRIVE

Over three days, 483 packs of blood were collected, which is an increase of 60 percent over the previous blood donation drive which garnered 300 packs.

The second blood donation drive of the year at OurSpace@72 organised by the Red Cross Humanitarian Network NP Chapter (RCHN NP Chapter) and NP Students' Union (NPSU) also marked the first time members of the public were included.

Lynette Lee Kah Leng, 19, chairperson of the drive, says, "From the sum of blood packs collected, I deem it a huge success as compared to around 300 packs from the last internal blood donation drive in April. Months before the event, we targeted only 350 to 400 packs."

Even though for every 10 donors, only two were from the public, the organisers are still glad as their primary focus is to encourage donors from NP.

- TAY SHWU YUEH

### PADDLING FOR GOLD

The NP Regatta '09, which is organised biannually by the S21 Sub-Committee saw a turnout of over 600 participants and supporters from all over the polytechnic.

Even a slight drizzle could not dampen the spirits of the Admin The-One dragonboat team as they exchanged congratulations after clinching gold for the staff finals.

Staff and students from the School of InfoComm Technology were also exuberant over their win in the student finals.

Leonard Chua, 18, a second-year Multimedia Animation student and team captain, says, "It feels great to accomplish something like this as a team. Everyone did remarkably well!"

Everyone gradually dispersed after the awards were given. Some headed home for a well-deserved rest, others for a celebratory dinner, and once again Kallang River returned to its former peaceful state.

- ERICA RAE CHONG

### A WHIRRING GOOD TIME

On Oct 22, NP played host to the 6th Annual Bull's Eye Robotics Competition, a flagship event catered to secondary school students.

The aim was to give the students a feel of programming their own machine, and to showcase the technologies of the Mechanical Engineering Department.

The objective of the competition was simple: To get their team's robot as close as possible to the bull's eye target on the floor.

Sixteen schools took part in this year's competition which was divided into two categories, with each team having a maximum of three members.

Even though team buses arrived late, the organisers quickly aided the registrations to bring the event back on schedule.

Jing Wei, 19, a final-year Mechatronic Engineering student and also the student leader in charge of the organising committee says that the competition was "a good learning experience".

- BRANDON ERA



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# Getting to the crux

With all that has been said about T-shirts and camps, it seems that though there may be to some who recognise what can be useful in strengthening the school identity, many still remain oblivious. Big events may have huge turn-outs but students need to participate, on an individual level, to make all the efforts a success. npTribune highlights some students' views on the school spirit

**"We should mix the IS classes more, because currently engineering students are still mixed with engineering students, media students with media students and so on."**

- Kenney Leng, 18, Second-year Marine & Offshore Technology student

**"Unlike secondary schools where students are required to wear uniforms and assemble at 7 a.m., NP is a place where students go for classes and group meetings, then go home."**

- Yvelyn Tey, 19, Second-year Business Studies student

**"To me school identity is about having pride in your school. When I represent my institution in a tournament, I feel that sense of pride."**

- Reuben Lopez, 18, Second-year Mass Communication student

**"There really isn't a particular set of beliefs all NP students share, but IS modules and places such as Makan Place and OurSpace@72 are what students would look [forward] to inter-faculty bonding."**

- Toh Hui Xuan, 19, Final-year Pharmacy Science student

**"If NP wants its students to have school spirit and to be more united, they should organise events, state the objectives clearly and publicise extensively so that students will be aware of what's going on."**

- Ng Wei Sheng, 20, Final-year Electrical Engineering student

**"Each level, let alone faculty, is so isolated; the final-years don't know the second-years, who don't know the first-years. Students should make an effort to organise events and bonding activities within their faculties and even with other faculties."**

- Joseph Lee, 18, Second-year Multimedia & Animation student

## SCHOOL SPIRIT SIGNS?

### NGEE ANN SCHOOL SONG

NP's school song has been around for more than 40 years, but many are unaware of it.

First composed in 1968, two alumni students from the Song Composing Club did a new version in August 2007.

In a poll carried out by npTribune, 30 out of 200 students chose the school song among other options to help instill a sense of belonging and pride in students.

That means that 15 percent of students polled are unaware that a school song already exists.

The school song seems to be serving its purpose as a symbolic keepsake, rather than as a part of our school identity.

You can find the song at: <http://www.np.edu.sg/ss/handbook/aboutnp/Pages/aboutnp.aspx>

### NGEE ANN ALUMNI CLUB

Poll findings also show that 81 percent of students see themselves returning to school for activities such as class or school reunions, while 56 percent were aware of the facilities available for them at the alumni.

Built in 2006, the Ngee Ann Alumni Clubhouse offers a variety of facilities that are available at most country clubs, such as function rooms, a gymnasium, a café, and a jackpot room, for a fraction of the price.

Furthermore, you don't have to break your bank to become a member. All you need to pay is \$500 for a lifetime membership.

For an even cheaper alternative, it is only \$15 for a one-month membership.

The clubhouse operates daily from 9am to 10pm.

### SCHOOL SHIRT

Joseph Lee, James Soh and Ong Zhi Qiang are three second-year students who came up with the "I love NP" T-shirt.

According to Joseph, 18, a second-year Multimedia & Animation student, the idea was inspired by their I&E in Action: Entrepreneurship module.

The t-shirt is only a soft launch for their plan to come up with more NP-themed T-shirts.

Their goal is to see "everyone in the school wearing the shirt", and so they are coming up with new designs to appeal to more people.

Currently, the shirts are available in four different sizes, and come in unisex cuttings. Sold at \$12 per piece, discounts are available for bulk orders.

For more information, check out their site at: <http://snake-eaters.blogspot.com>



FASHION FIX: One shirt to rule them all?



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## NOW ENTERING SCHOOL ZONE

While NP is one of the most well-equipped educational institutions, how well do we fare in terms of safety?

**Crystal Huang, Dawn Loo,  
Fiona Lim & Germaine Ann**

The annual NP Safety Week saw the addition of a health element for the first time.

Dr Lim Choo Min, 57, Chairman of NP Workplace, Safety and Health Committee says, "Health goes hand-in-hand with safety and wellness in campus."

Held from Nov 9 to 13, NP Safety & Health Week 2009 aims to cultivate a safe and healthy lifestyle in students, and

to test the readiness of emergency building response plans.

This was done through talks held in various locations around school, by the Workplace Safety & Health Council (WSHC), Health Promotion Board (HPB) and the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF).

These included a seminar on making informed lifestyle decisions, and an interactive talk on the various methods of Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) on an adult.

Apart from these conferences, the school also organised fire suppression demonstrations, poster design competitions, and a Safety and Health exhibition at the Atrium.

In conjunction with NP Safety & Health Week, npTribune polled 380 students to find out what they thought of the school's safety issues.

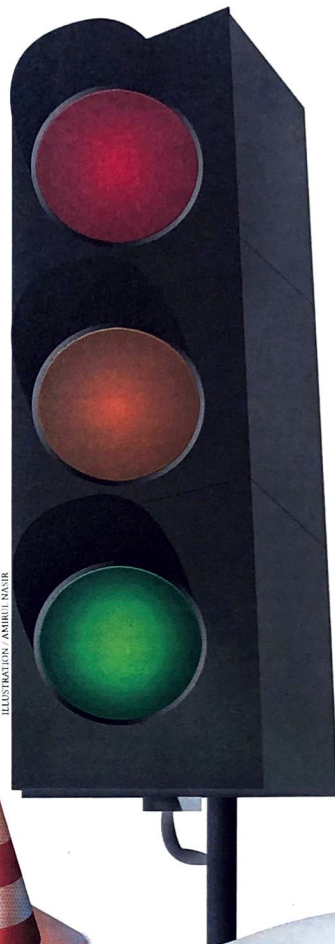
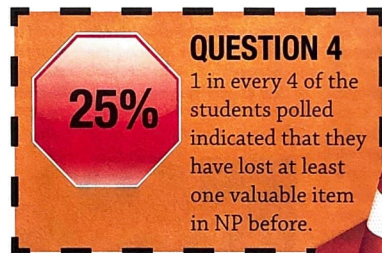
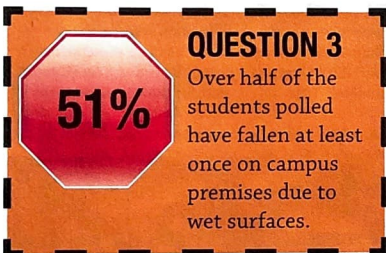


ILLUSTRATION: AMBULI NAKIR



## TOP 3 DANGER SPOTS IN NP

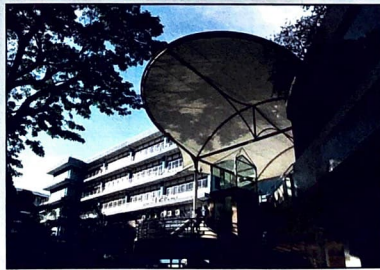
### 1. ROAD FROM BLOCK 56 TO THE ATRIUM



The Student Services Office (SSO) noted that students tend to dash across the road without paying attention to approaching vehicles, often causing near-misses. Students do not wait for the traffic light signals to change before crossing the road either.

Students attribute their behaviour to the fact that it is a waste of time to use the traffic light to cross such a short distance, claiming that drivers travelling along that road would usually give way to students.

### 2. FLIGHT OF STAIRS FROM ATRIUM TO LIBRARY



The spiral flight of stairs that leads up to the Library from the Atrium is a spot that students should watch out for, as the rain can get in, making steps very slippery during rainy days.

According to the SSO, there have been many cases where students slip and fall due to the wet weather. Although there have been no reports of serious injuries, students are urged to be cautious while using the stairs, especially when wearing footwear with less grip.

### 3. MAIN ENTRANCE OF NP



npTribune observes that a number of students ignore the zebra crossing that is located at the main entrance and even expect drivers to give way to them. This is despite the sign situated at the middle of the road that reads "Please give way to vehicles".

While it is likely that drivers leaving the school would give way to students, it is difficult for them to decelerate when they are turning in as the crossing is situated very close to the main road.



# NEWS

## Taking RED and paying it forward



**FUN AND GAMES:** RED campers build bonds and a sense of unity through various activities.

Rebecca Quek

Records were set at the annual RED Camp as some 1,800 RED Campers gathered at the Convention Centre to dance the Hokey Pokey dance for an entire five minutes.

Immediately after the campers celebrated their success in earning a spot in the Singapore Book of Records for the most number of people dancing the Hokey Pokey dance together, they set yet another one for the most number of people sucking lollipops at the same time.

Mr Adrian Phuah, 36, Manager

of NP Corporate Communications, says, "We wanted [to do] something that the RED Campers could feel proud about."

"Last year, we had a 'freeze mob', and all the campers had to 'freeze' for five minutes," he adds.

Silly as it may sound, it is activities like these that make RED Camp special.

The camp, which is now into its sixth year, also gave students a chance to meet with the stars.

Cast members from Channel 5 television series Polo Boys and First Class dropped by for a quick meet-and-greet session.

In addition, popular local

singing duo Jack and Rai also took to the stage to perform for the campers.

"The best part about the camp was definitely Jack and Rai! They were out of this world," says Awall Udin, 17, a Kranji Secondary School student.

Aside from the usual tours and talks, the campers were also treated to other activities that included skits and performances put up by the NP Ambassadors.

The camp ended off with a customary Hop Nite, which saw the RED campers dancing the night away.

One camper who was all fun

and laughter is Karen Chin, 16, a student from Kent Ridge Secondary School.

"I wasn't expecting this much fun. I was just expecting a normal camp," she says.

Cheryl Gan, 16, a Henderson Secondary School student, agrees with Karen, saying, "I will definitely recommend RED Camp to my juniors."

From the responses, it is no surprise that some NP students, who once went for RED Camp, loved the experience.

After enrolling into NP, they decided to join RED Camp as student leaders (SLs).

For Cheryl Yeo, 18, a first-year Child Psychology & Early Education student, the one thing that made RED Camp 5 in 2008 memorable was the immense dedication and huge sense of responsibility that the SLs displayed.

She says, "When I was a RED Camper, a group of us were trapped in the underpass because of the strong rain. But despite the storm, the SLs came and sheltered us to a bus."

"I had so much fun, so I want to do my part and share my joy with others," she adds.

The same goes for Natalie Kang, 17, who also joined RED Camp 5 as a camper. She was pleasantly surprised and was determined that if she ever made it to NP, she would sign up as an SL too.

"The SLs were a very fun bunch, so I wanted the experience of being an SL," says the first-year Early Childhood Education student.

She adds, "I thought that it would be fun if I could do my part for the school."

## Celebrating diversity

The first-ever International Fair was held over a period of three days for the purpose of creating greater cross-cultural exchange among students through various events that happened all around the campus.

Themed "Many Voices One World", the festival was held from Oct 28 to 30. The fiesta housed many events, from a food fiesta to a bazaar and even an international idol competition. Many who walked on by the various

locations were treated to a melange of ethnic diversity.

Mr Andrew Sabaratnam, 49, event organiser and Director of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), stressed that this occasion "acts as part of NP's mission to provide students with a holistic learning experience" and "was designed with the aim to expand the awareness of, and interest in global issues among students".

FLORENCE GRUNDY-WARR



**DRESSED TO IMPRESS:** Mr Andrew, Director of the School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS), poses with a group of Cosplayers at the first ever International Fair.



**FOOD DELIGHT:** An array of delectable food from various cultures were introduced at the fair.



**THE FINER DETAILS:** The elaborately drawn henna designs were a crowd pleaser at the fair.



**KIMCHI CRAZE:** Many learnt to better appreciate the Korean culture by learning how to make kimchi.



## When relationships turn ugly

The School of Interdisciplinary Studies (IS) goes the extra mile to raise awareness about the increasing trend of relationship abuse



**WOMEN WORTHY OF POWER:** (From left) Priscilla Su, Dr Kanwaljit Soin, Ms Dana Lam and Ms Pang Kee Tai.

**Dawn Loo**

In an attempt to take their first step towards stopping domestic violence, a group of 23 students organised "A Woman's Worth Conference".

Domestic violence is a term used to describe abusive behaviours by one partner to another in relationships such as dating, marriage and even friends, usually by men against women.

On Nov 9, more than 800 students and several members of the public gathered at the Convention Centre for "A Woman's Worth Conference".

The conference hosted an interesting panel of reputable speakers, including Dr Kanwaljit Soin from Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully (WINGS), Ms Pang Kee Tai from Promoting Alternatives To Violence (PAVe), Ms Dana Lam from Association of Women for Action and Research (AWARE) and Ms Nguyen Thi Kim Anh from Oxfam Quebec (a dynamic organisation that aims to abolish poverty and inequality).

The programme line-up featured many speeches.

Topics touched on included relationship-based violence, gender equality and trafficking of foreign women into Singapore.

Facilitated by Daniel Martin of 938LIVE Hour CampusLive programme, a heated discussion titled "A Woman's Worth in a Globalised World" took place between the panel of speakers and the audience.

"A Woman's Worth Conference" is part of the S.T.O.P! Campaign initiated by the School of IS. The team of 23 students, led by Mr Chong Ching Liang, a lecturer from School of IS, was inspired to raise awareness about domestic violence after visiting Vietnam where the group found the problem to be very prevalent in their society.

Serene Yap, 19, a second-year Mass Communication student and a member of the organising committee felt that "the trip to Vietnam was an invaluable experience that made her see through the façade of the beautiful country".

When the team came back from the trip, they found out that the problem is also present in Singapore.

According to PAVe, date violence is on the rise. After much research, the team also found that many youths were actually unaware of it.

Through the campaign, the organisers hoped to educate NP students about relationship-based violence.

Priscilla Su, 19, a second-year Mass Communication student and leader of the organising committee, says, "The more we learnt about people around us, the more we wanted to try and make a difference in our society, or if not our society, at least in our immediate environment."

During the event, Mr Chong also repeatedly reminded students to "open" their minds to world issues such as human trafficking.

The event not only opened the audience's minds about relationship violence, it also changed Ms Nguyen's opinion about youths.

"I have [previously] turned down student offers but I am so impressed [with what I saw today] - that students can actually manage such a huge event to raise awareness," said Ms Nguyen.

## Voice for the voiceless

**Crystal Huang**

For the first time in NP, a group of students have expressed support for HIV/AIDS patients in the most unlikely of ways - by keeping quiet about it.

This inaugural fund-raising campaign, which was held on Oct 30, is initiated by Action for Aids (AFA) and executed by the Leo Club of NP. With an initial target of 200 participants, the organisers were pleased with the more-than-expected turn out.

The aim of this campaign is to expose students to the difficulty HIV/AIDS patients face when sharing about their condition. This is personified through the pledge of silence that each participant takes. Besides that, they were issued with donation cards.

"We hope that through this campaign, youths [are able] to reflect on the predicament of people living with HIV/AIDS, and use their silence as a voice for the voiceless," says the project director, Li Jia Yi, 18, a second-year Early Childhood Education student.

Jia Yi and her team started organising the Pledge of Silence since June. They wanted to create a higher level of awareness among students and garner their support for this cause.

Elizabeth Chin, 18, a second-year Early Childhood Education student who took part in the

campaign with her friends, described Pledge of Silence as an "innovative and different way" to show her support for charity.

Pledgers had to also exercise integrity when it came down to keeping mum. Participant Darren Liew, 16, a first-year Psychology and Community Services student says, "It's a demonstration of self-control."

He adds, "Compared to the HIV/AIDS patients, it was only eight hours of silence that we went through."

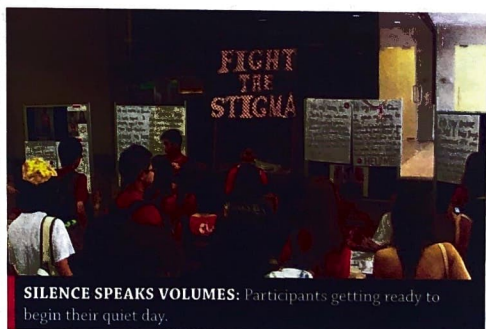
Elizabeth, however, did not like the experience entirely. "It's horrible [and] completely awful not to speak for eight hours. I have millions of thoughts in my head, but I just cannot share [them] with anyone."

Despite the high turn out, the attendance for such campaigns may not necessarily be a good indicator of sincere support as suggested by Jia Yi.

Malcolm Ang, 17, a first-year Accountancy student, who participated in the campaign out of curiosity, said he would only feel the need to be concerned about issues that affect him directly.

He says, "I don't have any friends with HIV/AIDS. I just thought it was rather cool to be keeping quiet for eight hours. It's like a challenge to myself."

Such an attitude really questions if the hype about an event precedes the real need to care.



**SILENCE SPEAKS VOLUMES:** Participants getting ready to begin their quiet day.

## Parents' polytechnic queries answered

**Mary Koh**

With the release date of 'O' level results inching closer, NP organised its annual parents' seminar Parenteen Made-Easy on Nov 21.

Mr Chia Mia Chiang, Principal of NP says, "We have two key objectives... to give parents useful information about the polytechnic and advise about

parenting so they can relate to teenagers."

He also added that it is important to visit the various faculties after the seminar as it will allow them to gain more information about the courses.

The speakers at the seminar did not disappoint the 1,500 parents and teenagers present.

Mr Chia started by introducing NP to the audience, enticing them with academic incentives like scholarships. His amiable

personality immediately lightened the serious atmosphere in the Convention Centre and people laughed at his jokes.

The principal also stressed that teenagers should make the best choice that is most suitable for them, and not succumb to peer pressure.

Dr Adrian Wang, a consultant psychiatrist at Gleneagles Medical Centre and Adjunct Professor at the NUS Dept of Psychological Medicine, was

once again invited to be the keynote speaker. His engaging personality drew the attention of audience and parents could be seen taking down pointers as he spoke.

The seminar ended off with a short panel discussion. The speakers, together with guest parent speaker, Mr Wong Lok Oon, answered questions asked by the audience. Topics addressed included guiding teenagers in making right choices and even

Facebook addiction.

After the seminar, parents and teenagers headed to the faculty of their choice for a school tour.

Mrs Aw, 45, was one of the parents that enjoyed the whole parents seminar.

"Mr Chia's and Mr Wang's segments were interesting. It was also good that we are able to communicate with the lecturers during the school tour, as they helped answer my questions," she says.



# SPECIAL REPORT

[npTribune Social Experiment]

## When minding your own business is

Famed American singer-songwriter Jimmy Buffett echoed the thoughts of many students when he remarked, "Is it ignorance or apathy? Hey, I don't know and I don't care." npTribune finds out with a social experiment to what extent students would mind their own business, with the most important issue to be answered: Are we a generation of emotionally apathetic youths?

**Kenneth Chan, Ong Li Yan  
& Sandy Goh**

### A LOVERS' SPAT

It is just another day in NP and just another another lunch crowd at the popular Makan Place, a couple begins shouting at each other. With each passing minute, the boy continues to intensify his verbal abuse and his volume; the girl in visible emotional distress and almost on the verge of tears. The crowd in the area stops and stares. Some merely walk on as though they had seen nothing.

If you find the description familiar, it is because you probably witnessed the drama on Nov 2 at Makan Place. npTribune had placed two actors right at the entrance to the food court to stage a quarrel that turned loud and ugly, while observing from the sidelines the reactions of other students in the vicinity.

For a whole five minutes, the commotion drew quite an audience - students, stall vendors and even staff of NP - who turned their attention to the "fighting couple". The most startling part, then, was that no one offered to stop the fight, even when the actor shouted at the top of his voice and the actress began to tear.

The same experiment was repeated on the next day at the school's bus stop at 6pm, except that this time, the actor was told to "slap" the actress as well.

Again, the crowd either stopped to stare, or pretended not to have seen it. There were even others who moved away from the actors, and resumed with what they were doing previously.

When some of the students who lingered

on after the "fight" were interviewed, majority of them asserts that they "do not want to interfere with the personal affairs of others".

Second-year Mechatronic Engineering student Yan Jie Hao, 19, who was having a lunch break with five friends and remained seated near the actors' performance at Makan Place, says, "We were trying to listen to them before deciding what we should do."

"When a couple quarrels, you don't want to disturb. What if you get into more trouble?" adds Jie Hao's friend, second-year Banking & Financial Services student Bing Guang, 18.

However, when the roles are reversed and the situation happens to the student personally, most say that they want others to help.

Final-year Electronic & Computer Engineering student Travis Ng, 19, adds, "I mean, who doesn't want to be helped?" But the apathy is not the case all the time, as it varies with the kind of help, effort and time required.

Travis recalls an incident in April this year where nine other students and himself stopped a stranger who had turned violent on his ex-girlfriend who is an NP student, threatening to call police if he did not leave the premise immediately.

He says, "Once there's violence, I will definitely go forth and help, especially if I'm with my friends, because I know that if anything falls, my friends will be there to help too."

Second-year Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering student Juliana Goh, 19, adds, "I will help if I'm with a group of students."



**COULDN'T CARE LESS:** Although the staged fight between the actors drew quite a crowd, either stopped to stare or walked off as though nothing happened. When interviewed, the consensus that the "matter is none of their business".

### THE BYSTANDERS EFFECT

Second-year Product Design & Innovation student Huang Mingxuan Ashley, 18, who once witnessed a real fight between a stall vendor and a cleaner at Makan Place, reasons that the reactions of the passersby can be attributed to the 'Bystanders Effect', where everyone thinks that someone else will eventually offer their help or stop the fight. This rationale would then absolve one of any responsibility or moral obligation to intervene.

In fact, some of the results from the social experiment corresponds with the results of an online campus survey conducted by npTribune, out of 900 respondents, 56 percent would "wait for some time before deciding if I should offer my help" to another NP student

who is in visible emotional distress.

Moreover, the majority says that they would call the authorities if they see a man publicly hitting or pushing a lady while about 27 percent says that they would "stop and stare".

The most interesting find from the survey is that while almost 33 percent gave themselves four out of five in a question that asked them to rate their willingness to help others in need (one being totally unhelpful and five being extremely helpful), only 19.5 percent of the same respondents gave the same score of four when asked to rate other NP students.

### NATIONAL CULTURE?

Although violent, nasty or serious situations like the ones staged by

## A different perspective

*Lecturers and foreign students share their points of view regarding the issue*

**Ms Sylvia Ler, 51**

Deputy Director of the School of Business & Accountancy (BA)

Mrs Lim, who also manages BA students on industrial internships, holds that she has had good experiences with students thus far.

She says, "When I was teaching one or two years back and had some tutorial groups to handle, yes definitely, if I dropped something, the students would help me. If they saw me carrying heavy loads, they would offer to help too."

On top of being helpful in school, Mrs Lim feels that the generosity of NP

students extends to the community around them as well. "Generally NP students are compassionate people. That's my view."

"Whenever we have community service projects, be it local or overseas, we'd always get an overwhelming response from students," she adds.

"They are trying to help the needy and they are going all out on top of their heavy study schedules. So, I'm very happy to report on this."

**Mrs Tay Pui Fen**  
NP student counsellor

Mrs Tay recalls when she once saw a group of five students who were carrying cartons of bottled mineral water off a lorry and due to a lack of time, they approached a nearby group of students playing basketball for help.

"The whole [basketball] gang came over and finished moving the cartons of water very quickly," she says. Mrs Tay believes that the key lies in communication, adding that "students have to communicate. If they ask, others are sure to help".



# SPECIAL REPORT

## It's not right anymore



**FIGHT CLUB:** The actor (centre) was told to shout at the actress (right) in increasing volume so as to draw the attention of those passing by.

**"When a couple quarrels, you don't want to disturb. What if you get into more trouble?"**

Bing Guang, 18, Second-year Banking & Financial Services student

NP Tribune and the anecdote brought up Travis do not occur on a daily basis in NP, more trivial issues that range from helping a stranger pick up something that he has dropped to offering help to someone in emotional distress still calls for deliberation: Are students becoming increasingly apathetic to the needs of others?

Second-year Business Studies student Alexander Benedict Yan, 18, observes, "Most people still believe in minding their own business. It's reflective of not just us, but Singapore as a whole."

Perhaps then, a short term remedy would be to raise awareness and generate public discussion on the matter.

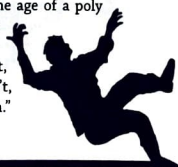
Referring to the kindness campaign that Singapore runs at a national level, Mr Lim suggests, "We can also have

something like that in NP to promote graciousness among all the students - basically to raise awareness and to acknowledge role models."

Nonetheless, the long term advantages of the NP kindness week remains questionable.

It would be unwise to assume that students would turn into model neighbouring citizens who are ever willing to lend a helping hand just because of a yearly kindness campaign.

Lecturer for the compulsory Sports & Wellness module Mr Ong Eng Kwang, 29, says, "At the age of a poly student, the initiative to help is already in-built. If you have it, you have it. If you don't, it will take time to learn."



**Adèle Xu, 20**  
Zhejiang University City College Student

back in Zhejiang University City College, Hangzhou, China, students are only helpful to their close friends or when they are in a good mood. Other than that, help that is rendered to strangers is dependent on who the person is and what the situation calls for.

Despite being told time and again to show kindness since we were young, people, especially the younger ones, are becoming more selfish and they tend to keep their distance from others.

### [Key Survey Findings]

☒ Top three responses to "If I see a man hitting a lady, I would..."



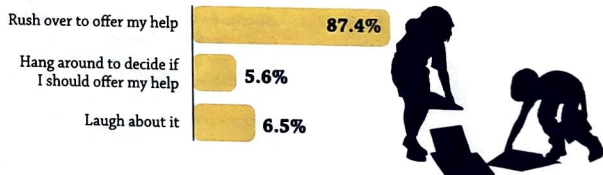
☒ Of the 900 respondents, 51 percent are first-year students, while second-years make up 30 percent and the remaining 19 percent are final-years.

☒ About 55 percent of the respondents would "rush over to offer my help" if they saw a lecturer drop whatever they were carrying. The number rockets to 61 percent and 87 percent when it comes to helping another student and a friend respectively. Some of the quirky responses that we got were "Walk over and ask: Are you okay? Need help?" and "Depends on what he/she's carrying. If it is a barrel of spiders, yikes. I'll run."

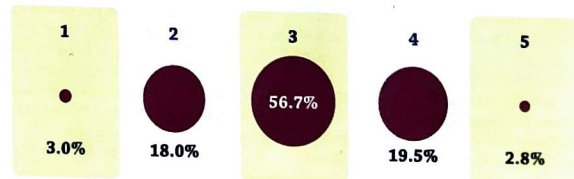
☒ Only 33 percent said that they would "call the authorities" if they saw a man publicly hitting/pushing a lady, while 27 percent would "stop and stare". 15 percent admitted that they would "ignore and walk away". One student quipped that he would "take the opportunity to be a hero and tackle him to the floor".

☒ Similarly, 38 percent would "call the authorities" if they saw two men publicly fighting with one another. However, 30 percent said that this time, they would "ignore and walk away". One respondent answered frankly that she "wouldn't want to get caught in fight involving two guys".

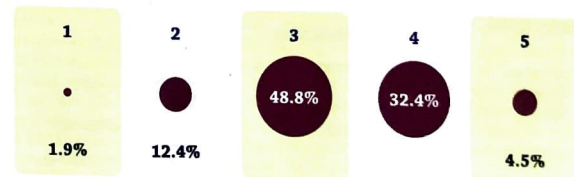
☒ Top three responses to "If I see a friend drop something, I would..."



☒ On a scale of 1 - 5, how would you rate NP students as a whole in terms of their willingness to help strangers in need? (1 being totally unhelpful and 5 being extremely helpful)



☒ On a scale of 1 - 5, how would you rate yourself in terms of your willingness to help strangers in need? (1 being totally unhelpful and 5 being extremely helpful)



If a teacher accidentally trips, we will definitely go forward to offer our help. This simple act does not result in anyone getting hurt, which is quite different from stopping a fight.

However, if students see a man hitting a lady, they will gather around to watch and do nothing because their mentality is that it is none of their business.

Sometimes, it is ridiculous because even though we claim to be educated, our actions show otherwise.



# VIEWS



Email your letters (in no longer than 300 words) to [nptribune@gmail.com](mailto:nptribune@gmail.com)

## [editorial]



GUEST ILLUSTRATION / CHELANN LIA

**Lin Zicheng**  
Editor

That was the key question behind the cover article, which tried to piece together the parts that make up a school spirit.

While this topic may seem rather irrelevant to most, understanding NP's identity as a school is definitely of interest to the editorial team, simply because we produce npTribune that aims to represent the voice of the student population and personify NP.

So, other than the campus paper and a few campus-wide events, is there anything else that binds the school together to create a particular sense of belonging and identity with this 46-year-old institution?

While uniforms are commonly the first characteristic of any school, it would be naïve to suggest that a piece of clothing defines a group and what it stands for.

For those who caught the rugby finals between Raffles Institution (Junior College) and Anglo-Chinese Junior College this year, you would have felt what it is like to be part of a larger purpose. From the green-black-white flags to the red-blue-gold banners, those supporters came prepared to scream their lungs out as a show of camaraderie.

The biggest battle was certainly not on the field or between the opposing ruggers, but within the crowds by the stands. Each school came armed with their student population and alumni, and ages ranged from 17 to a whopping 50 years old.

The situation is hardly the same at any NP sporting event, as our CCAs would tell you. It leads one to wonder: Could the "magic" of a uniform really be the reason behind a spectacular showing of esprit de corps and affection for your school? Or is it something more intangible and deeper than that?

Just like how you would grow closer to your friends and family by taking the time and effort to better understand them, a student's sense of belonging to his school is largely dependent on the willingness of both parties to make something out of the relationship.

The school cannot be producing more campus newspapers or printing newer school shirts and the students cannot be cuddling up to one another just so that we may have something that is uniquely NP.

It has to be a compromise between the mechanisms set by the administration and the open-mindedness of every individual in NP to eventually create a flavour that we may all enjoy and call our own.

So, what will it take to feel like you belong today?

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

### Independence at internship

Internships are an integral part of our educational journey and yet, some students take these opportunities for granted. To them, internships signal the prospect of graduation and the thought of leaving school. Internships help to bridge the gap between graduation and embarking on a whole new experience when we start to work. Sadly, most students fail to realise this.

A friend who recently graduated from a local university once told me, "The people on the outside are not as forgiving." Many fail to realise that one's actions in an external environment warrants serious consequences when a mistake is made. In the workforce, a couple of late days or forgery can lead to termination. With the lackadaisical attitude of students today, are they making full use of the prospects presented to them or spending time in the pantry, taking extended coffee breaks?

Overseas internships are a

whole different ball game and for many, it is their first taste of independence. Some may think that going overseas signifies freedom so it is an option worth considering. However, without a safety blanket made up of friends and family, students who are sent abroad not only have to deal with the prospect of a new work environment but at the end of the day, you are returning back to a place where your safety blanket isn't there and this process is then repeated for the next five months or so.

Even though my internship experience will only begin in another three semesters, I hope that by the time I get there, my schoolmates will think of internships in a more positive light, rather than lament the fact that they have to wake up at an early hour everyday.

**Fanny Koh**

First-year Mass Communication student

### Recent flood – fun or fuss?

The recent flood in NP on Nov 19 was truly a sight to behold.

This rare incident even had certain students making the most out of the situation in an innovative and interesting way – folding paper boats and allowing them to float around the Atrium.

Despite the initial fun the flood brought, I felt that the aftermath of the flood only served to portray NP in a slightly negative light.

Students had to remove their shoes and socks to wade through the flooded Atrium.

I even saw a guy chasing after his slipper, which had been washed away by the flood.

Of course, credit must be given to the fast reaction of the cleaners and the Estates Management Office as the damage and inconvenience caused by the flood was minimised.

However, while nobody

was ready for the flash flood, the school could have been better prepared.

The drainage system in NP leaves much to be desired. Apparently, one of the worst hit parts of the school was the underpass that links the Atrium and the covered walkway to the bus stop.

The water level was so high that it reached the knees. How are students supposed to cross from the Atrium to the bus stop when the only sheltered route they have is flooded?

Ultimately, this begs the question: if this flood had not happened, would we have upgraded our drainage system, or do we really need a disaster to prompt us to act?

**Eugene Ang**

Final-year Engineering Informatic student

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# IEWS

In a small and crammed school hall, thousands of screaming fans turn up to cheer passionately for their school team. Even as most of the heat in the arena radiates from the many spectators, these enthusiasts simply disregard their personal comfort for the sake of the pride and glory of their institute.

What a wonderful atmosphere it must be for both fans and athletes.

Unfortunately, this is probably a picture that is hardly ever seen and experienced at any NP sporting events.

At the polytechnic level, there are two major sports events that are held annually - the Institute Varsity Polytechnic (IVP) games, and the Polytechnic-Institute of Technical Education (POL-ITE) games.

As with all competitions, upholding the school's name and securing the bragging rights for a year is always a motivation for every team. Besides that, it is also an honour to be able to represent the entire institute.

However, a simple fact remains that regardless of the prestige tagged to the responsibility, it is evident that the rest of the NP world is not too bothered.

By observing the "multitude", it is an easy for any layman

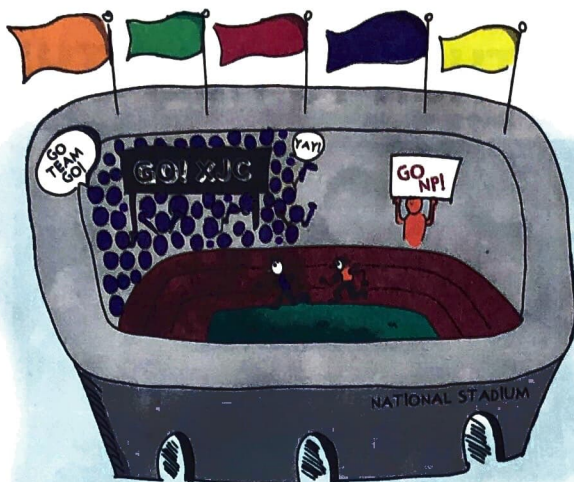


ILLUSTRATION / GRACE YEOH

## OH, FOR THE LOVE OF SPORT

The absence of NP supporters at inter-polytechnic sports events leads GRACE YEOH to ponder about the strength of the sports culture in our school

to gauge if the fan base of a particular team is small or large. A lack of proper support can very well cause a team to not perform at its optimum. Furthermore, the lack of support only reflects poorly on our school spirit.

We see the Junior Colleges

rallying their students by the thousands to support their school teams at competitions. They proudly wear their school T-shirts, with their school logo emblazoned across their chest, cheering their hearts out for the school team.

Another reason for lacklustre support at games could be because most students do not even know about them.

Perhaps the lack of posters around campus publicising these games is to blame. Sometimes the only way one gets to find

out about these events is if they know someone on the team.

Last but not least, we might be too caught up in the hectic pace of school life to find the time to go and support our school teams.

For most of us, schoolwork is our top priority. Sadly, this only means that even if we want to show our support, we simply have no time to do so.

Nonetheless, constant analysing and lamenting about the situation will do no good if it is merely all talk and no action. I have learnt that the best way to get things done is to set an example.

So, with our very own polypmics around the corner what better time to start showing your support for NP's school teams than now?

Set aside a day to go and watch your school team play, and lend them some support. It might even end up with you picking up a new sport.

Admittedly, I have never been to a game to support NP, and neither am I a sporty person.

But for all you know, before the semester ends, you might just see me on the stands, enthusiastically cheering and egging on our teams that demand our pride.

## A society of couch critics

Shannon Rezel

I am no expert on public trends, but if recent happenings are anything to go by, it appears that Singaporeans are up in arms a little too often.

Letters to Forum pages of newspapers and blog entries seem to either criticise something or lambast someone. From the lack of talent in this season's Singapore Idol to the actual Singapore Idol belting out one wrong word in our national anthem, there has been an increase in public mockery.

To boot, a recent much-publicised Internet video sent the Singaporean lynch mob from common criticism to head-on hysteria.

From the response, you would think that tolerance, forgiveness and compassion has hit an all-time low. Ms Ris Low to be exact.

The recently dethroned Miss Singapore World 2009 incited a nationwide uproar because the video showcased her bad grammar and poor diction. The

clip started making its rounds in cyberspace and soon enough, she became a household name.

While some laughed it off as a joke, others were not as forgiving. Many, horrified at her weak command of the English language, labelled her a major disgrace to our nation.

This incident, coupled with others like the Taufik Batisah "Don't Forget The Lyrics" fiasco, brought the tally of nation-wide condemned issues to more than five in just two short months.

This begs the question: Why are Singaporeans so quick to condemn our own?

Is it really our strong sense of national pride that makes us come to Singapore's defence? Or are we just too caught up with the desire to be the best and have only the best representing us?

Maybe. However, what many fail to see is that only a very thin line divides wanting the best and plain nitpicking. How can one truly say that one has the interest of the nation at heart when one scrutinises and

magnifies every flaw?

Perhaps justification for ridicule is the fact that, because they are public figures, they represent Singapore on the international stage automatically subjecting them to a higher level of expectation.

Be that as it may, how can one give good reason to criticise, when as individuals, one cannot say the least to being flawless where their imperfections are concerned?

Perhaps critics dare to be bold because of the anonymity the Internet provides; with a simple Internet connection and a pseudonym, anyone can be a critic.

Being couch critics have led to many behaving in a manner that is just as disappointing as the major boo-boos that public figures are criticised for.

I cannot help but consider that regardless of their mistakes, by jumping the gun and judging them, perhaps we are the ones committing moral sin.

In the case of Ris Low, our quick-to-judge attitude has also

blinded us to her strengths. For the months that Ris had been our nation's talking point, she has had to contend with having the public eye etched on her back. But through it all, she had managed to remain steadfast in her beliefs, while focusing on correcting her flaws.

Ris had shown dedication and willpower to work on her spoken English, while simultaneously displaying spunk and entrepreneurial spirit by

walking through every media door that has opened for her.

The result?

A new and more mature Ris Low, who is able to control her tongue and watch her pronunciation.

Taking cue from this episode, it is now perhaps our turn as Singaporeans to learn a potentially valuable lesson from Ris: Let us not be too quick to criticise, because what starts out as a Low, could just very well end on a High.





# NPEOPLE

## WORKING TOGETHER TO HELP THE DISABLED

The recent passing of IT graduate Zaki Bin Juraini tells a touching story of a struggle against worsening physical conditions to complete his diploma. He eventually did so with flying colours with the help of those around him, who rallied together to help a friend fulfil his dying wish

**Kenneth Chan**

Finally, he was satisfied.

After a three-year battle with muscular dystrophy that rendered him wheelchair-bound and fighting for his life, Zaki Bin Juraini finally graduated in 2008 – triumphant in defeating the odds and finishing the race.

"He was very passionate about his course and was very determined to finish it," says Mr Lim Fang How, 50, lecturer at the School of Infocomm Technology (ICT) and mentor for Zaki's first year in NP and final-year project.

Director of the School of ICT and winner of the 2008 "Most Supportive Teacher Award" from the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) Ms Angela Wee, adds, "I see a lot of passion, enthusiasm, bravery, courage and resilience in him and his life that a lot of us should learn from."

Because of his illness, Zaki was already unable to walk when he entered NP in 2005, relying on a remote-controlled wheelchair and his friends to move around.

"His classmates took the initiative to arrange a duty roster to pick him up everyday from one point in school and send him back when his classes ended,"



**LENDING A HAND:** Although Zaki (centre) faced numerous difficulties in completing his curriculum and getting around campus, his classmates, lecturers, family and School, chipped in to help the determined boy make it to graduation day.

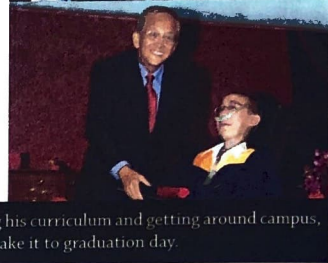


PHOTO COURTESY OF MR LIM FANG HOW & THE SCHOOL OF ICT

describes Mr Lim.

To reduce the distance he had to travel in school, ICT personalised Zaki's timetable so his classes were only on select days and conducted in ground-floor classrooms, which are more handicap-friendly.

During later semesters when his condition worsened, the School set up e-learning materials so that Zaki could complete his curriculum from home.

"Credit also goes to all his tutors who painstakingly coached Zaki on a one-to-one basis, ensuring Zaki's good learning outcome without compromising his health condition," adds Ms Wee.

It was the collaborative effort that made the difference, concurs Mr Lim. Concerning this, the Estates Management Office also ensured there were facilities

like ramps to facilitate Zaki's movement.

So what more can be done for students with physical disabilities? Lecturer at the School of Business & Accountancy and winner of the 2004 "Most Supportive Teacher Award" by AWWA Mr Jonas Lee, 44, suggests equipping selected lecture theatres with "a headphone or earpiece that allows hearing-impaired students to control the volume of the lecture".

"Other than that, treat these students as you would treat your peers, simply because they are normal. The only difference is that they are physically disabled. So, lend them a hand when they need the help, otherwise, treat them normally," he adds.

Lim Lulong, 27, alumni of ICT and ex-classmate of Zaki, remembers him as "a

very cheerful person who was very good at his studies" and no different from the rest.

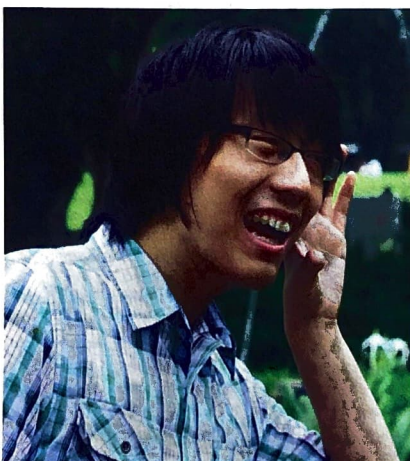
Mr Lim says, "To a lot of people, it would seem like Zaki was having a really hard time. But everyone – the School, his tutors, his family and friends – tried their best to make his stay in NP more comfortable."

"In the end, all the barriers and obstacles that were initially there, turned out to become opportunities for Zaki to pursue his ambition."

Although Zaki is no longer with us, his time at NP forms the best memories of those privileged enough to have experienced his optimism and tenacity.

As Ms Wee aptly sums it up, "Though he has left the world, he will always be in our hearts and mind, as the pride of NP and the School of ICT."

## First NP Microsoft scholar



**LISTEN UP:** Jeremiah aspires to be a web developer one day.

**Dewi Sriwahyuto**

Despite struggling with hearing impairment, second-year Information Technology (IT) student Jeremiah Oon, 20, became the first NP student to receive the Microsoft Unlimited Potential Scholarship.

The scholarship is part of Microsoft's million-dollar pledge to support Singapore's disabled community by funding technology training for people with special needs.

He says, "I am very happy and appreciative to have been awarded this scholarship because I worked really hard and was hoping that an organisation or a company would support me."

The aspiring web developer was also motivated because the grant "would lessen the financial burden" for his family.

The award will fully cover his course and examination fees, capped at a maximum of \$6,500 per annum. It also includes an annual allowance of \$750 for the purchase of study materials.

The continuation of this scholarship hinges mainly on the recipients' grades. The review panel may revoke the scholarship if the recipients are deemed unsatisfactory. Other clauses include having "commitment to serve the

disabled community" upon completion of their course.

Ms Lee Ching Yun, Jeremiah's lecturer-cum-mentor, has confidence that her student will be able to keep up with his excellent academic results.

She says, "Jeremiah's results has been consistent. He is a very conscientious student and I feel that he sets a good example for others."

In order to assist Jeremiah in learning, his lecturers use visual learning materials such as Powerpoint presentations and conduct discussions on the whiteboard. In addition, his fellow classmates would also support wherever they can.

Aaron Wang, 18, who has been Jeremiah's classmate since the first year, says, "The both of us sit beside each other in class and I would explain to him the important points of what the lecturer is saying by typing it out."

"If [Jeremiah] doesn't understand anything, he'll arrange a meeting with the lecturer after class to clarify his questions and doubts," adds Aaron.

Inevitably, Jeremiah's handicap puts him at a disadvantage when it comes to academia.

"I will try my very best to maintain the good academic results. However, that is not my main worry. Communicating with people is something that I've been struggling with most of my life," says Jeremiah.

Besides studying, Jeremiah also makes time for his CCA Hearing Impaired Club and the InfoComm Technology Student Society.



✉ Tell us about someone who is different. Email [nptribune@gmail.com](mailto:nptribune@gmail.com)

# NPEOPLE



**THE PERFECT CUPPA:** Smooch Café owners Ernest (first from left) and Samantha (second from left) with their three student helpers. The pair sunk in an additional \$21,000 to make their dream a reality.

## BREWING UP A STORM

No, it is not Starbucks, but the owners of 'Smooch Café' are determined to give them a run for their money, one latte at a time

**Cheong Jiahui, Valerie Wang & Florence Grundy-Warr**

On top of demanding school deadlines, two students are more than happy to take up the added responsibility of running their own café.

Their charming little deli, Smooch Café, located at OurSpace@72, sold its first caramel frappe on Oct 28. It has been doing very well ever since, to the delight of their young owners, Ernest Tan, 20, and Samantha Quek, 20, who are final-year Business Studies students.

Samantha has always aspired to own her own café business, while Ernest was just going along for the ride.

Samantha says, "We like to hang out at coffee places such as Starbucks and Coffee

Bean. Then we thought to ourselves: why don't we start our very own café, and make our own coffee while profiting at the same time?"

"She asked me if I would like to help her with it, and I said yes," adds Ernest.

Their plans came to fruition when a lecturer told them about the EnterpriZe! scheme set up in 2002 by Entrepreneurs-Connect@NP (EC@NP), a department commissioned by the school to nurture and support entrepreneurship amongst students.

In order to fulfill their ambitions, the pair invested \$21,000 from their own pockets to start up Smooch Café, which is the first long-term student venture in NP. This does not include additional funding that they received from the scheme.

According to Mr Liang Wee Kok, 34,

**"...Once satisfied with our proposal, they got back to us within the next few days to inform us that we got the funding worth \$3,000."**

**Samantha Quek, 20**  
Final-year Business Studies student

the manager for EC@NP, "The scope of the scheme is to provide funding to support students with enterprising proposals during their term in NP and the emphasis would be on the learning process by the students and not purely economic gain."

Students are required to come up with a feasible business plan, which will be assessed based on "innovation and commercial viability."

This might sound very intimidating to the average student, but to Samantha the end result was worth it even though the process of getting their proposal approved was intimidating at times.

She says, "You have to know your business plan like the back of your hand when you face the panel. They wanted to know more about our market, and why we thought that our business appeals to students here. Once satisfied with our proposal, they got back to us within the next few days to inform us that we got the funding worth \$3,000."

The pair also encountered other problems along the way, such as going through a hygiene course from the National Environment Agency, and securing the location of the café as a student lounge from the Urban Redevelopment Authority.

Of course, the pair is very grateful to all the help that the school has rendered them. "The school lowered the rental costs and helped us out with the renovation of the café. If we were actually left to our own devices, we would not know the first thing about contacting contractors and arranging for the renovation," says Samantha.

Since then, student response have been "very encouraging", with people saying that a number of their items are "unique and different".

### FOR THE BUDDING ENTREPRENEUR:

#### ■ EnterpriZe! Scheme

**WHAT** it is: A funding to aid students in starting their business

**WHO** is eligible: All full-time NP students who have not received corporate funding

**FUNDING:** Co-funding of 70 percent, maximum of \$3,000 per project

#### ■ Young Entrepreneurs Scheme for Startups (YES! Startups)

**WHAT** it is: A grant by the government

**WHO** is eligible: All part-time, full-time and graduate NP students below the age of 26

**FUNDING:** Maximum \$50,000 per venture

#### ■ ASME Venture Incubator Programme

**WHAT** it is: A mentorship scheme to develop business ideas and plan

**WHO** is eligible: All NP students and alumni who graduated not more than five years ago

#### ■ Cheers - NP Student Entrepreneurship Scheme

**WHAT** it is: A scheme for students to manage the Cheers outlet in NP

**WHO** is eligible: First-year NP students

For more information, check out the EC@NP office at the School of Business & Accountancy, or visit <http://www.np.edu.sg/entrepreneurs/aboutus>

Smith Chew, 19, a final-year Business Studies student and regular at the café, attributes his frequenting the café to "the taste of their products, which has improved a lot since their first week in NP."

Funding per annum for the EnterpriZe! scheme is about \$36,000 from Ngee Ann Kongsi's donations and their own funds. Students will be funded up to 70 percent of their start-up capital, up to a maximum of \$3,000 per project.

## Grooming tomorrow's leaders

Say the word "entrepreneur" and many will think of Bill Gates, Donald Trump or Steve Jobs. However, Singapore's colleges and schools are increasingly creating new 'hands-on' courses to bring that perception down to scale and help their students envision themselves as today's budding entrepreneurs.

"Learning entrepreneurship acquaints young people with the realities and opportunities of small-business leadership and ownership," says Ms Anna Yeow, 40, Deputy Director of the School of Business & Accountancy.

Ms Yeow believes that learning entrepreneurship "can be fun and rewarding, and is a good stepping stone into the working world."

Other goals of introducing entrepreneurship are to develop students' creative thinking skills and enhance cross-curriculum understanding by letting students "overcome their weaknesses and improve their technical skills."

"The classes provide students with the chance to work with real money and being able to do it in a polytechnic environment, with the help of lecturers, is an awesome

opportunity," says Poh Mun Teng, 17, a first-year Multimedia & Animation student.

Entrepreneurship and business classes in NP equip students with the confidence and tools to transform an idea into a business, says Janarthanan Sowjanya, 17, a first-year Business Studies (BS) student. "Entrepreneurship classes help me be creative and open to business opportunities. Why wait ten years when you can do it now?"

Sowjanya believes that entrepreneurs will turn the economy around. "Entrepreneurship is the way of the future, one of the tools that will get us out of the recession and keep the economy booming," she says.

Agreeing with her is Seah Hua Xiang,

18, a first-year Business Studies student, who says, "In today's economy, to have entrepreneurship skills are very important. You never know where life is going to bring you," he says. Adaptability and flexibility are needed to cope with economic fluctuations.

"Learning by doing" is a dynamic methodology that is helping to foster a new wave of young entrepreneurs in Singapore.

"We challenge students to develop their own business plans and have their presentations critiqued by fellow classmates or actual practicing entrepreneurs," says Ms Yeow.

"What we have done is to provide an environment to facilitate their entrepreneurial spirit."



# ZEST . REVIEWS



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

## SERIOUS FUN @ STUDIO 27

**Cheong Jiahui**

Rivaling facilities in school, Studio27 is the answer to every student's entertainment woes.

Opened on Oct 19 this year, the site includes music studio JAMwerkz, film production suite Dreamwerkz, entertainment hub Gamerz Arena, and study corner Peer2Peer-space.

Alvin Andrean, 18, a second-year Multimedia & Animation (MMA) student, is delighted with Dreamwerkz, which is equipped with high-definition cameras, lights, and a green screen.

"Now that we have a soundproof room bigger than our recording studio at The Dot (a media centre for MMA students), we can finally get some action going on," he says.

Students who wish to utilise the film studio facilities are required to have basic filming knowledge, or are entailed to receive training by Studio27's staff.

The Gamerz Arena, a high-tech gaming area, is furnished with 10 computers for local-area-network gaming, Sony PlayStation 3s, and other consoles. Students are also allowed to bring their own games.

The Arena will also be used to train students in the production of web design content, applications and e-learning.

With such luxuries, it is not surprising that students are

rushing to book available slots.

First-year Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering student Dennis Eng, 17, who often goes jamming, says, "When news about [the opening of] Studio27 spread, it became hard to book slots."

The prime reason for its popularity is because the facilities provided are free-of-charge. Hafiz Bacon, 17, a first-year Pharmacy Science student, says, "The [JAMwerkz] room is

very big and looks much nicer [than studios outside]. Plus, it's free to use, which helps a lot because jamming outside costs \$15 to \$20 an hour and \$50 or more per hour for recording."

Studio27 also arranges free workshops for students to learn skills such as how to develop iPhone applications basic video production. Some perks in store also include gaming tournaments, a live band competition and a Cosplay event.

Opens 9am-8pm  
from Monday  
to Friday  
Closed on  
Weekends &  
Public Holidays

[www.np.edu.sg/  
studio27](http://www.np.edu.sg/studio27)



**STATE-OF-THE-ART:** Equipment for recording and jamming all for no charge.



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### Two Baby Hands

Gilbert Koh

Available at Kinokuniya, Select Books & Books Actually

Disappointment.

That is what comes to mind when one finishes the 99-page book all too soon and reluctantly puts it down, still reeling from the after-effects of having picked up such a good find.

Two Baby Hands encompasses the enthralling poems of Gilbert Koh, which touches on the issues of life, love, and everything in between.

A lawyer by profession, Gilbert Koh is a prominent poet in Singapore's literary scene. In 2005, he won first prize in the National Arts Council Golden Points Awards. His poems have been published both locally and elsewhere, in journals including the Atlanta Review. Two Baby Hands is his first book.

As written in the synopsis, the book "gives a voice to all those essential yet silent aspects of our everyday lives that might otherwise slip away and pass unnoticed".

If you think that all poems hide a complicated message and that they only serve to confuse you, then this book will be a pleasant surprise. The topics that Two Baby Hands covers are easy to comprehend and do not leave you scratching your head.

A few of the poems that left a lasting impression are 'My Father Growing Old' (that tells of the painful, growing distance between father and child as both age), 'Accident' (of experiencing unrequited love), and 'The Schoolgirl Kills Herself After Failing an Exam' (of a possible tragedy that follows in the wake of the high standards of education in Singapore).

Despite its stark and simple language, Two Baby Hands has the amazing ability to affect you deeply, and leave you in a reflective state of mind.

Contentment.

That is the lingering feeling that Two Baby Hands leaves one with, long after the last page is turned.

Grace Yeoh



### Soft Sift in an Hourglass

Rosalie Shaw

Available at the  
Lien Ying Chow Library

At first glance, the title may seem obscure, but as you go a mere two pages into the book, the meaning and significance of 'Soft Sift in an Hourglass' will most certainly captivate you.

The title was lifted right off a poem written by Gerard Manley Hopkins where he waxed lyrical about sand slowly slipping through the neck of the hourglass. The author, Rosalie Shaw, likened this to the patients she had encountered in her past two decades of hospice care in Singapore. For most of them, time is simply running out.

Born and raised in Australia, Rosalie Shaw tried her hand at teaching and nursing before becoming a doctor specialising in palliative care. She came to Singapore in 1992 to take up the position of Medical Director of the Hospice Care Association.

In this collection of short stories, readers will get an insight into her experiences as a doctor in a field, which many people might consider severely depressing.

The author's words evoke strong feelings of compassion and empathy in readers with stories like the one titled 'I Am Afraid' - a short narrative that portrays how a terminally ill young mother, with three young children, deals with the fear of death.

The subtitle of the book sums it up best, describing this reservoir of encounters as, not stories of sadness, grief and tragedy, but rather, stories of "hope and resilience at the end of life".

Valerie Wang

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**ZEST**

# From chunk to hunk

Shannon Rezel

Five years ago, Edwin Thia would have laughed out loud if you had told him he would go on to become a bodybuilder one day.

So would you, if you knew him back then. Standing at 1.64m and weighing a chubby 68 kg at the age of 14, bespectacled Edwin considered himself short and overweight and preferred keeping to himself. To him, bulging muscles were disgusting.

Fate has a weird sense of humour. Today, Edwin, 19, stands proud – a bodybuilder with trophies that are a testimony to his grit, passion and determination.

Edwin clinched second place in both the 47th National Bodybuilding Competition Juniors "Under 60kg" category and the "Up to 170 cm" category of the Muscle and Fitness War 2009 held earlier this year.

Edwin's inspiring journey from fat to fit began when he became convinced he needed to lose some weight.

"I was at the Toa Payoh Swimming Complex with a few friends, and we were walking past the gym, and something just drew me in," says the final-year Banking and Financial Services student. From then on, Edwin was hooked. "Once I began working out and started noticing my muscle growth, I didn't want to stop," he says.

Bodybuilding has given Edwin more than just muscles. He thinks that regular exercise has given him the energy to improve his grades. His cumulative grade point average is a healthy 3.58 now.

"I believe due to the high nutrition intake I get from my special diet, I find myself absorbing much more from lessons than I did before, and

I definitely stay awake more often too," says Edwin with a laugh.

The new Edwin also admits that he is more sociable now.

"I would say bodybuilding forced me to become more outgoing, because it can be quite daunting to go up on stage in front of a crowd and pose if you are shy."

Edwin also spends a good portion of his day working on enhancing his muscles. With a hectic school schedule as well, his social activities have taken a backseat.

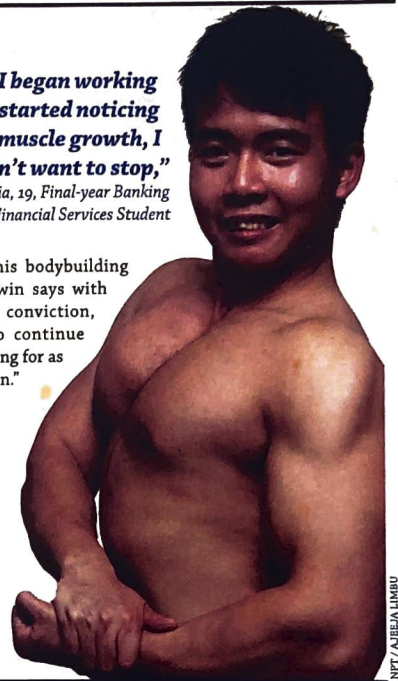
"At one point, I was going to the gym very often and things got really bad. My friends just stopped asking me out altogether because of my constant rejection. That was a very, very lonely period for me."

He adds, "That was when I first started managing my time properly, making sure I fit different aspects of my life, like my friends and family, into my timetable

**"Once I began working out and started noticing my muscle growth, I didn't want to stop,"**

- Edwin Thia, 19, Final-year Banking & Financial Services Student

As for his bodybuilding plans, Edwin says with a look of conviction, "I plan to continue bodybuilding for as long as I can."



NPT/AJELIA LIMBU

**WINNING MOMENT** Edwin Thia showing off the muscles that have won him numerous accolades in bodybuilding tournaments.

# ESCAPING FROM THE CROWD

No idea where to go when OurSpace@72 and the library are full? **JOSHUA TAN** uncovers some gems far from the madding crowd

It is a scenario that students are all too familiar with.

You need a quiet, comfortable place to study or do work in, and the first spot that pops into your head is either OurSpace@72 or the library. Happily, you trot off, only to realise when you arrive, that there is not an empty seat in sight.

As npTribune found out in the previous issue, 60 percent of students polled felt the "designated" study areas were too noisy. Many saw the need for an alternative location as OurSpace@72 tends to be filled with people playing computer games.

What do you do? A trip around school to uncover some of these "hidden jewels" was definitely in order.

## BLOCK 6 (NEAR BLOCK 5 CO-OP STORE)

This location is not easily spotted from the beaten path between the Atrium and Canteen 2 that most students would be familiar with.

The collection of four tables is situated a distance away from the hustle and bustle of students shuffling along the main corridor, making it conducive for those who want to get down to work.

Better yet, each table has power points to ensure your laptop has enough battery throughout the duration of your stay. The area is kept cool and well ventilated with two overhead fans, a fitting substitute to the library.

For first-year Biomedical Engineering student Li Cai Qin, the choice to study



**BLOCK 6** (Near block 5 co-op store)



**GREEN MALL** (Near the School of ICT at Block 31)

here is an obvious one. "I like to study here because it is convenient," the 18-year-old says.

## GREEN MALL (NEAR THE SCHOOL OF ICT AT BLOCK 31)

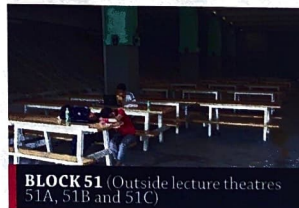
Here lies a treasure trove of generally unused benches, complete with shade to shield you from the weather and constant power supply.

In fact, this spot is so conducive that post-graduate Information Technology student Deepashini Palanisamy still goes there to study.

The 22-year-old, who is currently enrolled in Business Management at the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM), says, "There are not many people



**BLOCK 72** (Next to the carpark)



**BLOCK 51** (Outside lecture theatres 51A, 51B and 51C)

who walk past here so it's quite quiet and peaceful. You can study properly over here. There are few distractions."

Together with food available from nearby Canteen 3, benches at the Green Mall present a complete solution for those looking to spend long periods of time at any one place. You probably want to look out for rain though.

## BLOCK 51 (OUTSIDE LECTURE THEATRES 51A, 51B AND 51C)

Over here, there is shelter from rain and shine. The biggest draw here would be its proximity to the popular Makan Place, and considering its location, it is the best alternative should OurSpace@72 fail to

provide you a seat.

The problem with the spot, however, is that groups of students who attend lectures in the four theatres nearby will be moving in and out of the area from time to time.

Says first-year Marine & Offshore Technology student See Bai Yi, 23, "It's quite a cooling place to study, [except that] during lunch time it's quite busy."

Take heart though, that it is probably one of the largest bench clusters in school, so finding a seat is hardly a problem.

## BLOCK 72 (NEXT TO THE CARPARK)

Here is a group of three tables and although there are so few tables, the corridor acts as a wind channel, ensuring that the area remains breezy despite not having any fans.

So attractive is this location that National University of Singapore (NUS) staff member Mr Jie Yu, 27, rides in on his electric scooter from his home nearby to use it as a workspace.

The Chinese national, who was preparing for a presentation when approached by npTribune, says, "It's quiet for me to rehearse my presentation."

So the next time you run out of places to get some work done, look for your own unknown spots around school. You never know what you might discover.

**Let us know if you discover another gem of a study spot and stand to win a prize! E-mail us at nptribune@gmail.com**

NPT/JOSHUA TAN



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