# HAPPY HANDS Building An Endearing Home

GOING THE DISTANCE FOR A WORTHY CAUSE

" It is more useful to engage and participate than be an armchair critic. "

Recognising volunteers and honouring our pioneers at the MND Huddle 2014

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Singapore turns 50 this year! In this issue, we celebrate our country's golden jubilee with a special feature on the MND Huddle 2014 and the MND Awards, which recognise the significant contributions of our volunteers as well as the dedication of our pioneers. These are the people who helped turn the dream of a young nation into the reality that generations of Singaporeans enjoy today.

The spirit of selfless volunteerism and a passion to actively contribute to our society and living environment form the very heart and soul of the Singapore story. To our volunteers and pioneers, we salute you! Thank you for being an important part of the Singapore story. We look forward to working together with you to create an even better future for the generations to come.

As SG50 celebrations get into full swing, we are happy to bring you highlights of upcoming events and contests - do look out for more updates and join in the festivities! After all, it isn't every year that we turn 50!

Happily yours The Editorial Team



# **EDITORIAL TEAM**

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Chan Hui Hoon (HDB) Lim Mui Choo (HDB) **Denise Chen (NParks)** Gina Leong (NParks) Cherie Thio (URA)

# **SHARE A STORY**

Share with us a story today! We would love to hear your inspiring stories and personal journeys about volunteering with the MND Family. Whether it is in the form of an article, an illustration or a photograph, we welcome your contributions. Do drop us a note at happyhands@mnd.gov.sg!

# FEEDBACK

Tell us how we are doing! Did we meet your expectations? Do you have suggestions that could help us make this newsletter interesting and relevant to you? Let us know via happyhands@mnd.gov.sg!



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### **SPECIAL FEATURE**

# **MND Huddle 2014** Recognising our valued volunteers, Honouring our pioneers

At the MND Huddle 2014 held on 21 November 2014, the Ministry of National Development honoured 39 MND volunteers for their outstanding commitment and contributions, and paid tribute to the Pioneer Generation for their dedication in shaping Singapore into what it is today.



Volunteers from diverse backgrounds and domains gathered at Gardens by the Bay for the annual MND Huddle hosted by Minister for National Development Mr Khaw Boon Wan.

#### Appreciating our volunteers, partners and pioneers

Guests included partners and volunteers who have served on MND's 49 boards, committees and advisory panels. This year's event also paid tribute to the Pioneer Generation, honouring their contributions and dedication in shaping Singapore since our early years.

As the evening began, some participants enjoyed an exclusive audio tour where they viewed the Outdoor Gardens from aboard the Garden Cruiser tram. Others embarked on a guided tour of the Flower Dome conservatory, where they strolled through a glistening wintry wonderland beautifully decked out for the festive season. Flower Field Hall, where dinner was held, was soon abuzz with conversation and good cheer as everyone caught up with old friends and networked with new ones.



MND Huddle 2014 participants enjoying the floral displays during a guided tour of the Flower Dome conservatory at Gardens by the Bay.

#### Musical performances & video tributes

The evening's programme unfolded with a musical performance by Guangyang Primary's *A# Handbell Ensemble*. The young performers certainly charmed everyone in the room with their delightful performance. Participants continued to be serenaded throughout dinner with jazz tunes and evergreens from local talents, *The Summertimes Hotshots*.

As a tribute to all pioneers, a video featuring MND Family pioneers and their invaluable contributions to Singapore's development was screened. The inspiring stories truly reflected the passion, hard work and spirit of dedication embodied by each of the pioneers in their various domains to shape Singapore into what it is today. A video commemorating a milestone 50 years of homeownership in Singapore, entitled 'The Promise', was also screened. The heartwarming video featured how HDB's home ownership programme helped a couple to start a family and go on to build wonderful memories along the journey of their lives.

#### Presentation of MND Medallion & MND Dedicated Service Award

The highlight of the evening was the MND Awards presentation ceremony. This year, we honoured 39 outstanding volunteers from the MND Family. The first award presented was the distinguished MND Medallion, which recognises the sterling contributions of volunteers including board members, advisory panel and committee members who stepped down in the past year, as well as retired staff. This was followed by the MND Dedicated Service Award, which recognises the unwavering commitment and contributions of our volunteers who have rendered at least 10 years of service across the MND Family.

Ms Rita Soh, President of the Board of Architects, and Professor Leo Tan, Chairman of the Garden City Fund, were amongst MND's dedicated volunteers who were recognised for 10 and 15 years of outstanding service within the MND cluster respectively.

To all our volunteers and pioneers, we thank you for your invaluable contributions and look forward to working even closer with you to make Singapore a liveable and endearing home.



Musical performance by Guangyang Primary's *A# Handbell Ensemble*.



Professor Phang Sock Yong receiving the MND Medallion for Distinguished Service from Minister for her contributions as member of the CLC Advisory Board and the URA Board.



Professor Leo Tan, Chairman of the Garden City Fund, receiving the MND Dedicated Service Award from Minister for 15 years of service with the MND Family.

### **VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**

## Going the distance for a worthy cause

Han Jok Kwang shares his experience working with NParks and URA to advocate a safer and more conducive environment for cycling in Singapore



I take the view that it is more useful to engage and participate than be an armchair critic ... Active participation offers an avenue to influence and shape outcomes.

Han Jok Kwang Cycling Enthusiast

# What sparked your passion for cycling?

I grew up on Pulau Bukom and Bukom Kechil, where I cycled to school and delivered bread to customers on the island. Cycling, back then, was the fastest and most convenient way to get around.



What motivated you to become an advocate for safer cycling?

Life is precious. On the road, a cyclist is the most vulnerable party in relation to other road users. So any accident on the road, no matter which party is in the wrong, is potentially life-threatening for cyclists.

#### You rallied your cycling buddies to team up with the National Parks Board (NParks) in setting up the PCN Enhancement Works Fund. Could you share more about this?

As frequent users of the Park Connector Network (PCN), I guess we are more discerning in terms of users' expectations and safety conditions along the routes.

So we noted a few gaps and subsequently held discussions with NParks. We were pleased that NParks readily accepted our proposal of dollarto-dollar donation matching, and the result was the setting up of a PCN Enhancement Works Fund. We passed the hat around, collected thousands of dollars, and started work ticking items off our collective checklist. Today, it gives us immense satisfaction to enjoy these improvements each time we pass through specific locations on the park connectors. This effort continues to be work-in-progress and we are planning future touch-ups.

#### Tell us about the 'Discovering Singapore Ride' which you organise regularly.

Three years ago, at the encouragement of CEO of the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) Ng Lang and Minister for National Development Khaw Boon Wan, I started the Discovering Singapore Ride (DSR). Each time, I would invite 30 to 40 C-level officers from both the private and public sectors. The objectives are two-fold.

Firstly, to demonstrate that cycling is an efficient mode of transport to get from point A to point B. Over time, when better infrastructure and safety measures are in place, cycling will become an attractive transport option beyond the MRT and buses.

Secondly, there are many gems to be discovered on our island despite our limited physical size. Some of these

Image credit to NParks

interesting places are more accessible on bicycles. When various routes are strung together, we will eventually be able to offer a complete round-island-route for locals and tourists alike.

# Could you share with us a memorable experience from these rides?

Many people have the misconception that our island is boringly flat. An example of a gem we discovered was the PCN within Zheng Hua Park which runs along the BKE. Participants were surprised by the terrain – undulating, narrow and winding. Some even had to dismount and push their bikes up the slopes. It was tough; many struggled, and two didn't manage to complete the route. For the fitter participants, it was a high adrenaline workout with slopes, twists and turns, much like an F1 circuit.

# What has been the feedback from participants?

Often, the reaction is one of revelation. Once you are on a bike, there's this feeling that you are liberated, with the wind against your face and the smell of nature in the air.

One person who walks the talk, and I have high respect for him, is URA Chief Planner Lim Eng Hwee. He is a regular participant in the DSRs and has recently decided to cycle to work a few times a week instead of driving!

#### You also organise rides to raise funds for charity. What motivates you to do so?

When I was in secondary school, I was active in the Interact Club, which is mentored by the Rotary Club, where we

were taught to contribute to society in different ways. Helping the less fortunate through an activity I enjoy is gratifying. So far, I have completed eight bicycle charity rides over the years with monies donated to the Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund, Japan Earthquake and Tsunami Relief Fund, Assisi Hospice and St Luke's Hospital.

# What tips would you like to share with budding cyclists in Singapore?

If you are on the roads, be alert at all times and pay particular attention to heavy goods vehicles. At traffic junctions, be extra careful and do not insist on 'right of way'. Always maintain line of sight between yourself and motorists before crossing. Finally, I would recommend a helmet, hand gloves and lights (when it gets dark).



Three years ago, Jok Kwang initiated the Discovering Singapore Rides which offers participants the opportunity to view a new perspective of Singapore – from riding a bike!

# **VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**

# T(h)ree passions Christopher Koh does his part for the community while reaping the benefits of greenery

#### **Three partners**

As a nature lover, trail runner and photography enthusiast, Christopher Koh finds volunteering with the National Parks Board (NParks) a natural fit. For the Nature Cares programme, his company Singapura Finance partnered with Chung Cheng High and Metta School, which offers special education to students with mild intellectual disability and/or mild autism spectrum disorders. This was the first time all three parties were involved in the programme.

"I was worried that the three parties would not be able to get along with one another, but the icebreakers really helped to put everyone at ease. The students from Metta School and Chung Cheng High were so friendly that the corporate volunteers immediately felt welcomed." he shared.

"The one-to-one grouping, whereby a beneficiary, student and corporate volunteer work together during an activity, is a good change from typical volunteer programmes which only involve two parties."

#### Three memorable moments

"It's hard to say which session was my favourite as each had its own unique points. Off the top of my head – learning to create a terrarium, spotting a Malayan Colugo at MacRitchie and marvelling at the beautiful flower displays at the Singapore Garden Festival rank in the top three."



A nature lover, trail runner and photography enthusiast, Christopher finds that volunteering with the Nature Cares programme allows him to do his part for the community while also indulging in some of his favourite pastimes.



Participants from Chung Cheng High and Metta School marvelling at a Malayan Colugo, spotted during their MacRitchie TreeTop walk.

#### Three reasons to volunteer

Christopher feels that there are countless reasons why everyone should contribute to the community, but there are three things he hopes the students from Chung Cheng High will remember when they grow up:

#### 1. Volunteering is easy.

"People think volunteering requires a lot of time and effort, like flying off to another country to build houses for the homeless. That's not true – volunteering comes in different forms and can be as simple as taking part in a park clean-up."

#### 2. Volunteering cultivates empathy in us.

"When the students start working, it's natural for them to focus on their careers and themselves. Volunteering encourages them to view things from someone else's perspective, which in turn will teach them to respect people who may be different from them."

#### 3. Volunteering benefits all.

"It's not wise to only focus on how we can benefit from our surroundings. A little goes a long way – everything we do to give back to the community plants the seeds to a brighter future, both for Mother Nature and society."

We couldn't have said it better ourselves!

This is an abridged version of the story first published at My Green Space.

The Nature Cares programme is a community engagement project initiated by NParks to encourage corporations and students to serve the needs of the community together through nature-based activities. Find out more about the programme or sign up <u>here.</u>

# **PARTNERSHIPS (BCA)**

# Building partnerships for a friendlier built environment BCA works with organisations from the private and public sectors to achieve a more inclusive built environment for all

What is Universal Design (UD)? In its broadest sense, UD refers to "design for all". For a built environment like Singapore, it means a focus on creating an inclusive society where the young, the elderly and persons with limited mobility can access their surroundings with ease.

#### Championing "Design for All"

The Building and Construction Authority (BCA) champions UD by working with its partners to promote and facilitate the building of an accessible built environment. One key effort is building capabilities of industry stakeholders through seminars, workshops, exhibitions, dialogue sessions and learning journeys with industry participants.

A recent partnership was the formation of the Accessibility Code Review Committee. Comprising representatives from industry associations, Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) and public agencies, the committee conducted a review of the Code on Accessibility of the Built Environment to enhance provisions for families, the elderly, and persons with disabilities.

#### Singapore Universal Design Week 2014

From 5 to 9 November 2014, BCA organised the inaugural Singapore Universal Design Week across several locations in the Marina Bay area. The events during the week aimed to highlight the importance of UD to industry stakeholders, VWOs and the public.

The anchor event was the Conference and Product Showcase entitled 'Universal Design in Architecture and Urban Spaces'. It was attended by over 300 representatives from the public, private and people sectors. Foreign and local speakers shared their ideas and visions, projects, and models of best UD practices. Various public sector agencies also discussed policies and plans to improve ageing in place at home and in the community.

The YooDee Town Exhibition was also held at Suntec City Mall. This exhibition allowed visitors to experience how homes, toilets, parks and other facilities can be friendly for people of all ages and physical abilities.



Senior Minister of State for National Development Mr Lee Yi Shyan trying the knee restrictor at the Product Showcase during the inaugural Singapore Universal Design Week 2014.



Visitors to the YooDee Town exhibition held at Suntec City Mall get hands-on experience on how UD can create a friendlier built environment.



Senior Minister of State for Health and Manpower Dr Amy Khor meeting participants of the "A Walk in the Park" event at Gardens by the Bay on 8 Nov 2014. - - -

Our journey towards Universal Design requires the collaboration of all sectors of our community. It is through meaningful interaction with different users and developing empathy towards their needs, that we can develop innovative and practical design solutions.

Senior Minister of State for Health and Manpower Dr Amy Khor at "A Walk in a Park" at Gardens by the Bay, 8 Nov 2014



#### More than just a walk in the park

"A Walk in the Park" was another event held during Singapore Universal Design Week 2014 and organised by BCA, the National Council of Social Services and Gardens by the Bay. On 8 November 2014, about 300 participants were brought on a walk around the Gardens as a show of support for persons with disabilities and to raise awareness among members of the public and industry.

The event provided an opportunity for participants from industry and the public to mingle with participants from various VWOs, and truly understand the needs of people of different ages and abilities.

VWO partners involved in the event include the Handicaps Welfare Association, The Singapore Association for the Deaf, Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped, Silver ACE and Society for the Physically Disabled.

#### Building expertise through social enterprise

In another key milestone for UD, BCA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Handicaps Welfare Association and the Singapore Institute of Architects to provide training for the disabled in 3D Building Information Modelling (BIM). BIM is an internationally-recognised enabling technology for integrating the construction value chain and improve productivity in the industry.

The MOU marks Singapore's first tri-partite partnership in the area of UD social enterprise.

Visit the <u>Friendly Built Environment Portal</u> to find out more about UD and how you can play a part to create a friendlier built environment. Support the UD movement on <u>Facebook</u> today!

### **MEET OUR VOLUNTEER MANAGER**

# Nurturing our youth into champions for gracious heartland living

Chan Hui Hoon enjoys the positive energy of her young volunteers



I hope the students realise that no individual is too small, young or insignificant to make a positive change to the community we live in.

Chan Hui Hoon Volunteer Manager HDB's Heartland Ambassador Programme

Tell us more about what you do as volunteer manager of the Housing and Development Board's (HDB) Heartland Ambassador Programme (HAP).

I oversee my team in planning the structure and the training and outreach programmes for our Heartland Ambassadors. I also coordinate training details with schools, teachers and vendors as well as operationalise the heartland visits where ambassadors go out to share tips on responsible heartland living with residents.

#### How many volunteers have you worked with, and how has your experience been?

We've trained over 2,000 Heartland Ambassadors from Primary, Secondary and Post-Secondary Institutions since the programme started in 2010. It has been an absolutely fulfilling and eye-opening experience. Through the process, I've learnt more about engaging stakeholders and youths of different age groups.

I'm always impressed by the level of creativity, commitment, enthusiasm and energy that they have towards the different tasks we give them. These qualities are quite infectious and they push me and my team to continuously think out of the box to improve the programme.

#### What do you hope the student ambassadors take away from their volunteering experience?

Through their volunteering stint with us, I hope the students see the importance of community bonding in the heartlands and understand the impact their actions have on others. I hope they realise that no individual is too small, young or insignificant to make a positive change to the community we live in. I hope that the programme has enabled and inspired them to step up and take ownership, lead in making positive changes in their community, and be the catalyst for more good things to come.

# Which part of your job do you enjoy most?

The most enjoyable part of the job is definitely the interaction with the people who matter – the student ambassadors, the residents as well as the team who works hard to make everything come



Hui Hoon is often impressed by the creativity and enthusiasm of her volunteers

together. The positive energy from everyone involved, together with the aim of reliving the old 'Kampung Spirit' motivates me to push my boundaries in the work I do.

Often, we may not see the immediate results of our efforts but it is important not to feel discouraged. Instead, we have to look beyond and be more sensitive towards the little changes that may be working their magic.

Once, I bumped into a resident at an exhibition who happened to be the parent of our Heartland Ambassador. She didn't know that I was part of the HAP team and shared wonderful stories of how her son tried to make the family practise responsible living at home, and how her neighbours' children were also roped in. That really made my day and helped me understand the importance of what we do.



On 25 Oct 2014, Heartland Ambassadors shared tips on neighbourliness with a Punggol Damai resident



# Could you share with us a memorable experience working with volunteers?

One of my most memorable experiences was when our team organised and coordinated the Heartland Ambassador Visits and the Ambassador's Outreach Project as students set up DIY Eco-Craft booths at the Punggol Waterway Opening. Heartland Ambassadors from all levels were present to help out at the event, sharing tips with residents, getting the community to make eco-pledges and teaching residents to do eco-crafts.

As there were many ambassador activities taking place together, we were initially worried that we would not be able to do a good job. However, the Heartland Ambassadors rose to the challenge and performed fabulously at the event - engaging residents, standing in the sweltering heat, yet full of enthusiasm and energy while waiting for the arrival of the Guest-of-Honour. The feeling of camaradarie and joy at that moment was simply indescribable.



An enthusiastic group of Heartland Ambassadors visited the Sembawang Riverlodge Welcome Party



Young Heartland Ambassadors engaged the residents of Cashew Zone 1 during a block visit

Image credits to HDB

The Heartland Ambassador Programme nurtures students as champions of gracious and responsible living in the heartlands. The students are trained through fun-filled experiential workshops. These young ambassadors then take the lead to encourage and inspire residents in the heartlands to play a more active role in caring for the community and the environment. Through participation in this programme, youths are encouraged to adopt an active stance in co-creating harmonious heartland communities with the residents. Find out more information on the programme <u>here</u>.

# **IN THE NEWS**



NParks volunteers received long service awards from Minister of State for National Development Mr Desmond Lee (5th from left) at the annual NParks Volunteer Appreciation Day on 6 Dec 2014



Image credits to URA



An adorable pair of sisters join in the family fun volunteering at their community garden

Image credit to Marine Crescent Ville Community Garden

#### Celebrating volunteers at Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve

On 6 December 2014, Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve (SBWR) celebrated its 21st birthday. Minister of State for National Development Mr Desmond Lee officiated the opening of a 31-hectare extension which offers new recreational and educational activities for visitors, in addition to those available at the Neo Tiew area of SBWR.

SBWR has grown over the years through the contributions of many volunteers, including a group of about 50 SBWR pioneer volunteers who tirelessly dedicated their time and effort to conservation of the area. At the opening of the SBWR extension, NParks also held its annual Volunteer Appreciation Day to acknowledge the contributions of more than 1,500 NParks volunteers who actively devote their time and energy to spreading their love for nature. In recognition of their long-term commitment, 14 NParks volunteers were presented with long service awards.

Do find out more about NParks' volunteer programme and opportunities if you too are passionate about greenery and nature.

#### Parking lots transformed into creative spaces on PARK(ing) Day 2014

On 19 September 2014, 88 parking lots across Singapore were transformed into innovative and inspiring spaces as part of the worldwide PARK(ing) Day event. PARK(ing) Day began in 2005 as a project by Rebar, a San Francisco art and design studio, and has since caught on globally.

The Singapore edition of PARK(ing) Day 2014 was supported by the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) as a PubliCity project in partnership with private, public and student organisations including Sutdio, COLOURS, ECO Singapore, Uber and the Housing and Development Board.

The creative installations included nostalgic throwbacks to childhood days, a barber shop, an outdoor yoga classroom, and even a gigantic tissue packet to "chope" the lot! Through a day of transforming parking lots into temporary public spaces, participants and visitors alike were encouraged to re-visualize our built environment in a fun and light-hearted way.

Read the full article and view more images from PARK(ing) Day 2014 at Going Places.

#### Spending quality time together as a family through volunteering

Would you like to make your next family outing even more meaningful? How about turning it into a volunteering experience? While volunteering may not be topmost on our minds when it comes to ideas for family outings, families who volunteer together often find it a heartening way to spend quality time with one another, while also giving back to the community. This can involve lending a helping hand at community events, raising awareness for various causes, or even turning an overseas family vacation into a volunteering experience!

In addition to bonding as a family and contributing to the community, parents find that cultivating a spirit of volunteerism from an early age helps their children to develop empathy and concern for the well-being of others.

So why not try something different with the family this year? Find out more about families who volunteer together in an article by the Straits Times.

### **UPCOMING EVENTS & CONTESTS**

#### Help create the map of our nation's endearing places!

SG Heart Map is an SG50 programme calling on all Singaporeans to jointly create a collective map of places that define Singapore as home. It could be the coffee shop where you have family dinners, the unique spot where you hang out with friends, or the park where you had your first date. From the stories collected, 50 places that hold special meaning for Singaporeans will be selected, and art works in the form of sketches, poetry, photographs and films will be co-created by artists and the community to showcase the stories.

Join Minister for National Development Mr Khaw Boon Wan and more than 37,000 Singaporeans in sharing the special place which you hold close to your heart via the SG Heart Map Portal today!

Follow SG Heart Map on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter for more updates!



You may also catch our SG Heart Map roving vans at the following locations:

Dates	Venue / Events
17 – 28 Feb	River Hongbao @ The Float at Marina Bay
20 – 25 Feb	Huayi Chinese Festival of Arts @ Esplanade

#### SG50 Concert Series in the Park

14 March 2015, Saturday 4.30pm to 10.00pm Bishan - Ang Mo Kio Park, Grand Lawn 1

Catch headline artistes Kit Chan & Olivia Ong live in concert.

#### Admission is free and open to all!



In celebration of Singapore's 50th birthday, free public concerts will be held in various parks and gardens from March until the end of the year, featuring home-grown talents and community performing groups. Catering to young and old, these concerts will bring nostalgic melodies to the parks with a wide repertoire of jazz, classical, contemporary and xinyao. Find out more about celebrating SG50 with NParks here.

#### Pet Expo 2015

20 – 22 March 2015, Friday – Sunday Singapore Expo Hall 8

Come join us with your paw friend at Singapore's largest PET-ducational fair!



It's V-Day every day when you're in love! If you aren't, fret not. Join "The Pawfect Match" speed-dating event organised by the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority at the Pet Expo 2015! One of the dogs may just be your perfect match. Also up for adoption will be cats, rabbits and small animals. Find out more information on Pet Expo 2015 and purchase your admission tickets here.

# Singapore Garden Photographer of the Year

**People and Nature** 

**Our BiodiverCITY** 

Submission by 29 Apr 2015

NEW! obile phone users!

in our Instagram contest



The 'Singapore Garden Photographer of the Year" photo competition aims to feature the extensive greenery and rich biodiversity that make Singapore a City in a Garden.

As we celebrate Singapore's 50th birthday in 2015, capture and share your interpretation of the themes and what it means to live in a City in a Garden through your lenses. If you are a mobile phone user, you can also compete in our Instagram category!

Send your entries now at www.nparks.gov.sg/SGPY for a chance to win attractive cash prizes and cameras!



If you love photography, here's an opportunity to show us what our City in a Garden means to you!

Submit your entries for the 'Singapore Garden Photographer of the Year' photo competition before the closing dates and stand to win attractive cash and camera prizes:

Theme	Submissions by
People and Nature	Wednesday, 8 April 15, before 12 noon
Our BiodiverCity	Wednesday, 29 April 15, before 12 noon

Find out more about the competition and submission details here.

We look forward to seeing your entries!