



Editor's Note

What does home mean to you?

Beyond where you live and wake up each morning, perhaps home is where you find a bowl of piping hot *lor mee* or a quiet sanctuary where you take evening walks with your loved ones or your pet? Maybe home is a harmonious community where you grew up as a child and go on to raise your own children. To others, it is that 100-year old building that they love to visit because it brings them a slice of history.

Regardless of what our personal notions of home are, we cherish our home because we love it. In the MND Family, our passionate volunteers and partner organisations embark on a fulfilling journey as a volunteer community, with a single purpose of building an endearing home and liveable city for all Singaporeans.

Are you part of the MND volunteer community yet?

Happily yours
Editor, HAPPY HANDS



Building and Construction



CEA Council for Estate Agencies



board of architects singapore

professional engineers board singapore



Special Feature



Volunteer Spotlight



Partnership (AVA)



Programme (BCA)



Programme (HDB)



In the News



MND Family Volunteer Leadership Seminar

Valuing our volunteers, inspiring future leaders



One veteran with more than 20 years of experience in developing volunteer programmes, two captivating speakers possessing a wealth of knowledge on all things volunteer, and more than 100 participants - leaders of organisations, volunteer managers and volunteers. All gathered for a candid exchange of ideas to improve the volunteering experience.

A voluntary exchange of ideas

To provide a space for ideas and free exchanges, MND organised the inaugural MND Volunteer Leadership Seminar on 4 Apr 2014. It covered topics such as the volunteer's journey and best practices in volunteer engagement and management. Mr Francis Lim, MND's Director of Corporate Development opened the seminar with an overview of volunteer initiatives within the MND family, and MND's efforts to enhance the volunteer experience. Miss Ang Bee Lian, Director of Social Welfare at the Ministry of Social and Family Development, lending her 35 years of experience in the areas of children and youth, eldercare and statutory social services, shared on what makes volunteers tick and how we can work with them to achieve the greater goal of providing better value-added services to citizens. Her candid but insightful sharing often drew laughter from the appreciative audience.

“

*The seminar was a very good way to **share about what MND does and why volunteers are important**. It helps volunteers and partners **understand the big picture in MND's work**.*

”

—Galvin Tay, Senior Executive, NVPC

Mr Eugene Heng, Chairman and Founder of the Waterways Watch Society (WWS), delivered an inspiring sharing on how his passion for the environment led to the creation of WWS, which together with the help of volunteers, exhorts everyone to do their part to keep our waterways litter-free.

The dialogue session was moderated by Mr Wong Tuan Wah, Director of Conservation at the National Parks Board (NParks), himself a 20-year veteran in developing and managing NParks' volunteer programmes. There was a lively exchange between the guest speakers and the audience which carried on into the networking lunch.



- 1 Ms Ang Bee Lian delivering a presentation on how to engage volunteers
- 2 Mr Eugene Heng shares his passion for the environment
- 3 The volunteer community gathers for a shot: (Left to right) Gardens by the Bay volunteer manager Ms Woon Ling Ling, NParks volunteer Mr Tham Pui San and Director of Social Welfare at the Ministry of Social & Family Development Ms Ang Bee Lian
- 4 Participants networking during lunch

“

It's definitely a good start! Having decision makers in one room to hear, discuss and share about their volunteer schemes is something very powerful and can lead to progress in this area.

”

—Sunshine Sim, AD (Coastal Parks), NParks

Walking the talk


A Volunteer Leadership Seminar would not be complete without a volunteering experience, since the volunteer community is, by nature, hands-on. After lunch, the seminar rounded off with a learning journey organised by WWS. Having the option of either a bike or boat patrol, participants got down to doing their bit for the environment by cleaning the waterfront along Kallang river stretching to the Singapore River. Guided by the WWS volunteers, the participants learnt about the often unseen yet adverse impact of litter on the environment. The learning journey also provided them the opportunity to draw in the sights and sounds that the surrounding nature offered. While the litter picking activity drew curious stares from the public, it was also a way to raise awareness that everyone has a role in keeping our environment clean. For the volunteer managers, it was also about witnessing first-hand how another organisation manages and engages its volunteers as well as the roles and tasks they are entrusted with.



5 Bike patrol participants cleaning at one of the pit stops along the waterway



6 Participants on boat patrol surveying the waterway for litter

The learning journey and presentations have certainly given the participants food for thought. Judging from the engaging chatter and active participation, many new insights were gained and friendships forged. Learning from this positive experience, we will certainly organise more volunteer gatherings to continue this exchange of ideas amongst members of the MND volunteer community. Stay tuned! 

“

*It is very **meaningful and a rare chance** to have such a seminar held for volunteers. I feel that **we are valued** and I can meet fellow passionate volunteers and share our views.*

”

— Felicia Jin, Volunteer, Build it Green Club

**Special thanks to Felicia Jin for her contribution to the article’s sub-header*

Protecting consumers' interests




Dennis Tay on raising the professionalism of real estate salespersons

Mdm Ng had bought a flat with her brother, Mr Ng, under the now-defunct HDB Sibling Scheme. She met two salespersons who agreed to assist her to sell the flat. During the process of the sale, Mdm Ng wanted the salespersons to replace Mr Ng's ownership of the property with that of her husband's without informing Mr Ng. Knowing that such a request is illegal, the salespersons rejected it. They also alerted Mr Ng when Mdm Ng lied to them that she and her husband were owners of the flat while her brother was only the occupant. The salespersons mediated the dispute between the siblings and facilitated the sale. Through their actions, they had prevented an illegal transaction from taking place, and were commended by Mr Ng for their ethical behaviour and mediation services.

Such advice, knowledge and professionalism by the salespersons are critical to buyers and sellers because engaging in a property transaction is a life big decision. Recognising this, a workgroup led by the Council for Estate Agencies (CEA) conceived the Professional Service Manual (PSM) in 2012. The PSM sets out the dos and don'ts to guide salespersons in their work and the professional practices expected of them.

The PSM, developed over 18 months, draws from collective and active contributions of the real estate industry, industry and consumer associations and relevant Government agencies. It is only through their countless hours of discussion and tireless dedication that the PSM was made possible. On its objective, Mr Dennis Tay, CEO of the SAEA Ltd (formerly known as Singapore Accredited Estate Agencies) said, "We want to elevate the professionalism of the estate agency and salespersons (so as to) build up competency and delivery of the service toward –our clients." He hopes that over time, as the industry's competency is increased, "the consumer will be able to trust them more and more."

An insider with years of industry experience, Mr Tay is well-placed to share his insights on the real estate agency industry with consumers. When CEA and the Consumer Association of Singapore (CASE) combined with the industry associations – Institute of Estate Agents, SAEA Ltd and Singapore Institute of Surveyors & Valuers – to run a quarterly series of consumer education seminars titled "Get It Right!", Mr Tay delivered a presentation at the inaugural seminar in Aug 2013 on "Engaging a Real Estate Salesperson – What can he do for you?" Such voluntary contributions from him and others serve to protect consumers' interests, especially against wilful salespersons.

Mr Tay, like many other MND volunteers in the real estate industry and consumer associations, has definitely played a part in building a more trustworthy real estate environment for the consumers. 

“

We want to elevate the professionalism of the estate agency and salespersons (so as to) build up competency and delivery of the service toward the clients.

”


Dennis Tay
CEO, SAEA Ltd

A Natural Ambassador

To protect the nature he loves, Choo Yi Feng shares it with others

Among the army of volunteers who go beyond the extra mile to do what they love, 17-year-old NParks volunteer Choo Yi Feng also shows that age is not a barrier to volunteering. Indeed, it might even surprise some, as he was invited by the National Parks Board (NParks) to be a guide at the Chek Jawa Wetlands on Pulau Ubin in 2008, when he was only 11. A “nervous and trembling” guide then, his father had to be a chaperone. Six years on, the youngest guide in Chek Jawa stands confident in front of a crowd of 15, unfazed by the torrent of questions that come his way.

Yi Feng, a student from Dunman High School, usually leads tours up to four times a month during holidays and shares his love and knowledge of Chek Jawa with visitors, “They learn more about the biodiversity, and for me I have the satisfaction of knowing that I have shared what I know with them and spread the word about Chek Jawa.” He also counts President Tony Tan Keng Yam as one of the more illustrious visitors among his tour group, when President Tan visited the Chek Jawa Wetlands for a first-hand look at its unique biodiversity in 2011.

On his contributions, Yi Feng sees it as a win-win outcome, “I get to share what I know about sea shore life and at the same time, I'm also very interested in sea shore life myself. It does good for me, it does good for the people I'm guiding, and it also does good for the environment.” 



“

It (sharing about Chek Jawa) does good for me, it does good for the people I'm guiding and it also does good for the environment.”

”

Choo Yi Feng
NParks volunteer
guide



Yi Feng with President Tony Tan, his wife and grandson at Chek Jawa (Picture credit: NParks)

Putting our eggs in different baskets

Agri-Food Business Clusters, working with AVA, help put food on our tables

Did you know that in 2012 the average Singaporean consumed nearly 100kg of vegetables? Or more than 80kg of meat and fish? Multiply that by 5.3 million people and one is left wondering where all the food comes from. While local farms produce 12% of the leafy vegetables, 6% of fish and 25% of the eggs in 2012, more than 90% of our food is imported. Being a non-food producer and a price-taker, Singapore is directly affected by global food trends, food disease outbreaks and disruptions. While we know we cannot depend on a single source for our food, the deeper question is: how do we diversify our food sources?

Food diversification is one of the strategies that the Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority (AVA) puts in place to ensure that Singapore has a stable and safe food supply. From nearby Malaysia to far-flung countries such as Brazil, Singapore has 12 major sources of food supply. AVA organises food sourcing trips to different countries to identify new sources. This is also where the vast expertise and networks of AVA's partners come in very handy.

As members of the Agri-Food Business Clusters – set up by AVA – for food fish, vegetable and fruit, meat and egg businesses, they meet regularly to identify and address challenges in food supply, develop diversification strategies and explore new food sources. They also plan trade missions and explore investment opportunities in food production. Using their industry knowledge, experience and network, they share information on trade statistics, food quality and safety practices, and developments in the agriculture and food industry. AVA then ensures that the food imported is safe for consumption.




Mr Mesah Tarigan (Director of International Market Development, Ministry of Agriculture of Indonesia) introducing the Indonesian mango fruit to Ms Catherine Liew (Business Support Executive, Aries Fresh Pte Ltd) during a promotion event at Pasir Panjang Wholesale Centre (Picture credit: AVA)



A fish landing site in Indonesia, which participants on the sourcing mission visited (Picture credit: AVA)

These efforts are beginning to bear fruit. For example, in 2012, the import of vegetables from Indonesia spiked 18% from 2011, the first positive change year-on-year since 2006. In 2013, the import of vegetables from Indonesia increased 0.5% from 2012. AVA also led a group of fish and seafood traders to Central Java and South Sulawesi in Apr 2013 to raise Indonesia's import of seafood to Singapore, which currently stands at 26%. Participants found the sourcing trip useful as it "deepened my understanding of the changes and improvements in Indonesia's fisheries industry."

Another participant added: "Mission trips like these are very useful for enterprises to survey market trends and demands." More than sourcing for more food options, these trips are also about securing safe food at competitive prices. As one cluster member puts it: "As part of this industry, I get a sense of satisfaction when consumers can enjoy better health through the quality products that we bring in. Being able to find good products and thereby contribute to our consumers' health makes me very happy." 

Green shoots

When it comes to protecting the environment, no effort is too small

There was a wise man who had a habit of walking on the beach before he began his work. One day, as he was walking along the shore, he saw a boy picking up starfish and throwing them into the ocean. The startled wise man asked, "Why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" The boy replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die." Upon hearing this, the wise man commented, "But do you not realise that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!" At this, the boy bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said, "It made a difference for that one."

The boy is far from being alone in having this noble aspiration of making a difference to the environment. Many students, too, share this passion and have stepped forward to do their part to mitigate the effects of climate change. Their passion has not gone unnoticed.

In Aug 2011, the Building and Construction Authority (BCA) set up the Build It Green (BiG) Club to nurture green building advocates. Targeted at students aged between 15 to 24 years old, BiG Club also hopes to inculcate a strong green culture among the budding engineers, architects, quantity surveyors and other professionals in the building and construction industry. To do this, BCA organises roadshows, exhibitions, talks and tours to green buildings, to provide platforms for the green warriors to learn from each other and share knowledge on the latest development on the green front.



Budding green members of the Build it Green Club (Picture credit: BCA)



BiG Club student ambassadors introducing green technologies (Picture credit: BCA)

With a membership 600-strong, opportunities are aplenty for the students to interact with peers who are equally, if not more, passionate about the environment. At the BiG Club, every individual believes that every building has the potential to be green. Technologies aside, the green advocates are convinced that having a right mindset is as important in bringing about the next green revolution in the building sector. They are firmly persuaded that, each of them, through his or her own actions, plays a part in making green even more pervasive in the environment we live, work and play in.

Just like how the boy made a difference to each starfish he saved from the beach. 🌱

Sphere of influence

The young and elderly benefit from one another under Project SPHERE

78 schools. 103 rental blocks. 327 activities involving more than 6,000 students carried out each year. 21,810 elderly beneficiaries.

This is the reach of Project SPHERE (**S**tudents, **S**ingapore **P**ools and **H**DB **E**nriching and **R**eaching out to the **E**lderly), now into its 12th year since its inception in 2002. The community project promotes the spirit of volunteerism among the younger generation, and through the activities, encourages community bonding and bridges the gap between the older and younger generations.

Project SPHERE is initiated by the Housing & Development Board (HDB), with support from the Ministry of Education, Tote Board and Singapore Pools. HDB matches schools and their students to elderly beneficiaries, and through this process, schools “adopt” rental blocks with a high number of elderly residents in their neighbourhood. Tote Board and Singapore Pools provides funding for schools to carry out activities in their adopted block.

As the students may face initial challenges communicating with the elderly, HDB provides training through workshops to ease them into their volunteering journey. The student volunteers organise activities such as art and craft workshops as opportunities for the elderly to interact with others in their community.




Students engaging in light exercises with the elderly (Picture credit: HDB)

Project SPHERE had humble beginnings: five schools adopting three rental blocks in 2002. Yet, the sustained engagement and reach of Project SPHERE is a testament to how well-received this volunteer programme is. In fact, it has been so popular among the students that HDB set up Friends of SPHERE in October 2012.

Friends of SPHERE

Under Friends of SPHERE, students who have been participating in Project SPHERE can now volunteer outside of their school’s Project SPHERE activities. The youth volunteers pay regular home visits to the elderly, befriending and sharing stories with them. They help them with housekeeping chores, simple household repairs and even personal grooming.

Since its formation, 100 students have joined Friends of SPHERE. Led by motivated and caring leaders and supported by enthusiastic volunteers, it has benefited a total of 1,230 elderly living in over 21 rental blocks.

To learn more about Project SPHERE and Friends of SPHERE, please visit HDB’s website or email your enquiries to: programmes@mailbox.hdb.gov.sg 



Other than household chores, students also keep company and chit-chat with the elderly (Picture credit: HDB)

You are never too green to go green

Recognising an upward trend and calls for green building and technologies, BCA has been encouraging the construction industry to adopt greener technologies and more sustainable construction methods. Simultaneously, it also wants to start young, by inculcating a strong green building culture among future professionals in this industry.

BCA started the Build it Green (BiG) Club in Aug 2011 to offer students aged 15 to 24 opportunities to learn more about green building policies and technologies through talks, workshops, visits and internships. Following the success of BiG Club, BCA saw the potential in secondary school students as well. The BiG Club Junior was officially launched at the BCA Green Building Exhibition opening ceremony at Compass Point on 4 April. It exposes these students to green design and technologies and even let them play a part in helping their school achieve a BCA Green Mark certification.

Students with a passion in environmental and sustainable issues can sign up to be a member of the BiG Junior Club. Simply download and complete the application form from http://www.greenmark.sg/builditgreen_junior and send it to builditgreen@star-horizon.com with the subject header "Build it Green Junior".



Minister of State Mr Desmond Lee (right) with BCA CEO Mr John Keung launching the BiG Club Junior (Picture credit: BCA)

Acquiring the right knowledge in property transactions



Mr Soh Kee Hean, Deputy Executive Director of CEA (second from right), Mr Seah Seng Choon, CASE Executive Director (third from right) and the panel taking questions at the seminar (Picture credit: CEA)

CEA and CASE, in collaboration with industry associations IEA, SISV and SAEA, held a seminar on 22 Feb at the NTUC Centre. The seminar is part of a series of "Get it Right!" Consumer Seminars that kicked off last August. The quarterly series is organised to equip consumers with the necessary knowledge for them to make informed decisions in their property transactions.

Mr Sebastian Quek, a central committee member of CASE, SingCapital CEO Mr Alfred Chia, and Mr Thomas Lee, Executive Vice-President of DTZ Property Network covered a range of topics including engaging a real estate salesperson, property financing, and investing in non-residential properties.

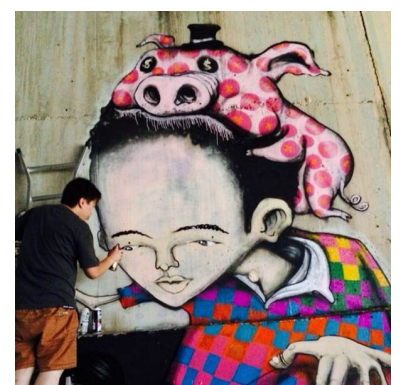
The next seminar will be on 24 May 2014 (Sat) from 10am to 1pm at NTUC Centre. Admission fee is \$10. Visit <http://www.cea.gov.sg/cea/content/consumer/consumerresources.html> for details of topics and speakers!

A Rail Piece of Artwork

In Dec 2013, it was announced that two walls underneath the Commonwealth Avenue viaduct along the Rail Corridor would become an interim art space for street artists to hone their skills and produce transient artwork.

This space was made possible by a partnership between the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) and the National Arts Council (NAC), and is in line with one of the initiatives under URA's Draft Master Plan 2013 to involve the community to design and programme open spaces into interesting public spaces.

The two walls, each measuring 40m by 5m, are available for the whole of 2014 and have showcased some interesting street art to date.



Street artist at work at the Commonwealth Avenue viaduct along the Rail Corridor (Picture credit: URA)



Share A Story

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



Feedback

We are keen to hear your thoughts on what we could do better. All suggestions are welcome as we strive to make this newsletter interesting and relevant to you. So keep them coming – contact us at happyhands@mnd.gov.sg!



Editorial Team

Editor

Yeon Wen Cong (MND)

Contributors

Joyce Lim (AVA)

Serena Kong (AVA)

Immanuel Lim (BCA)

Joelle Lee (CEA)

Nurdiyanah Kamsan (HDB)

Gina Leong (NParks)

Claire Chan (URA)

Mark Goh (MND)

Jeanine Tan (MND)

Kriss Neo (MND)

Michelle Soh (MND)

