



Editor's Note

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are." – Theodore Roosevelt

It is only natural that we lean towards things we like. Having found the suitable environment to play a role in, the volunteers in this issue all have a niche area in which they contribute to the MND family.

Some blend their passion with their work, like Prof Yeo Kang Shua who dedicated his time to restore Singapore's oldest Teochew temple, and Mr Chan Soo Khian who contributes his architectural expertise to bring about better public housing designs. Other volunteers such as Mr Bian Tan and Ms Felicia Jin share their green passion and knowledge with those they meet – one for plants and the other for environmentally-friendly practices. Then there are those tireless volunteers – the invisible helping and happy hands – who work hard behind the scenes to assist the agencies to run programmes, welcome and guide visitors, and inform the public. To all our passionate volunteers who selflessly contribute your time and skills – Thank you!

Happily yours
Editor, HAPPY HANDS



board of architects singapore

professional engineers board singapore



Volunteer Spotlight



Programme (NParks)



Picture courtesy of MCI

Volunteer Spotlight



Programme (GB)



Partnership (HDB)



In the News



Picture courtesy of NParks

The Monuments Man

Meet the academic who explains the intricacies of preserving Singapore's past and maintaining Singapore's rojak architectural flavour.

Professor Yeo Kang Shua knows more than a thing or two about mixing architectural styles; he holds a PhD in Architecture and is keenly involved in the local architecture scene. Among other posts, Prof Yeo is the Honorary Secretary of the Singapore Heritage Society, a member of the Society of Architectural Historians and former head of the Monuments Inspectorate at the Preservation of Monuments Board.

A melting pot of styles

Referring to a photograph of a centuries-old local church in his office, he points out that it is a good example of the mish-mash nature of buildings here, where design styles from different cultures have blended. "It's actually a Chinese church. The building itself is rather European, with European-style windows," he reveals. He directs our attention to the Malay-style eave boards, the Latin-style cross transept and the Chinese swallowtail roof. A building like this, he feels, is Singapore in a nutshell.



Prof Yeo in his office (Picture courtesy of URA)



“

The reason I'm so passionate about conservation is that I believe it has a role to play in creating memories (what came before us) and our identity

”

Prof Yeo Kang Shua

Architecture and Sustainable Design, SUTD

“Singapore is a migrant society, where people came from all over, including Asia and Europe, bringing with them familiar materials from their homelands to build. Financial ability and scarcity of material also affected how they built. So if I can’t find a mason from my hometown, I’ll go to another. And by going with a slightly different masonry tradition, the work will be slightly different. There will be an inherent mix of styles.”

Not everyone loves that melting-pot flair, Prof Yeo reveals. “In the past, a lot of people criticised the fact that there is no pure Singapore-style architecture; that everything is blended and *rojak*. But I think that’s something we should be proud of,” he insists. “It explains certain historical circumstances that led to an eclectic mix of styles. What’s wrong with *rojak*? It’s delicious!” he laughs.

The strategy of restoration

Prof Yeo was recently involved in a restoration project. He was one of five consultants overseeing the entire restoration effort of the Yueh Hai Ching temple, Singapore's oldest Teochew temple. One of the challenges that the consultants faced were the inherent mix of styles which Prof Yeo highlighted - different architectural trades and crafts were used during the temple’s construction. The temple re-opened on 31 Mar 2014, having been restored to its original 1895 splendour.

“Before we do any physical restoration work, we need to understand the building intimately,” he says. “Pre-restoration work can involve about two years of discussion with the owner and collecting documentation. I then try to imagine, with all the historic evidence gathered, how the building would have looked in the past and what the atmosphere was like.” Preserving history, it seems, may not be as straightforward as one might think.



Yueh Hai Ching temple after restoration works

This is an abridged version of the story first published on Going Places Singapore. Visit www.goingplacessingapore.sg for more stories. 🏠

Greening from year to year

Felicia Jin's green passion leads to her volunteering in different green events and activities each year.



A few months back, we invited the volunteer community to MND's Volunteer Leadership Seminar. Among the familiar faces at the seminar was 22-year-old Felicia Jin, a volunteer with BCA's Build it Green (BiG) Club. We caught up with Felicia, who is into her final year at the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT), after the seminar to find out her journey so far on the green front.

How long have you been volunteering with BiG Club?

I joined BiG Club after my final year in polytechnic to keep myself involved in green events even after graduation. That was in 2012 so it's been over 2 years now.

Sounds like you are really keen on such green activities.

Being involved in these activities, such as educating and encouraging the public and even my friends and family to be eco-friendly, is my way of contributing back to society. In fact, just last year, I encouraged my university friends to join the CDL E-Generation Challenge with me. It was an Amazing Race where we travelled around Singapore using green modes of transport to complete various eco-challenges. In BiG Club, I interact with like-minded friends who are also passionate about the built environment. Together, we keep ourselves updated with eco-friendly news and technologies and engage the public through various events organised by BiG Club.

What are some of the opportunities and activities available in BiG Club?

I volunteered for BCA's Green Building Exhibition at Lot One Shoppers' Mall (2012) and ION Orchard (2013). We introduced eco-friendly appliances to the residents and shoppers and encouraged them to install the appliances such as LED light bulbs in their homes. It was a good opportunity to exchange eco-friendly tips with them too! While I recently missed the chance to volunteer at the BCA Green Building Exhibition and launch of the BiG Junior Club, I keep myself updated on BiG news through its emails, website and Facebook page.

How would you like to translate your passion into your work in the future?

I am pursuing a Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Management at SIT (final year) and also work part time in the F&B industry. With the knowledge and experienced gained during my studies and at the various green events, I feel there are many opportunities where I can contribute. I also strongly believe it is important for the public to know more about green building features so that they, too, can play an active role in saving the environment. This is also where my interactions with the public at the Green Building Exhibition can help. [H+](#)



Being involved in green activities is my way of contributing back to the society



Felicia Jin

Build it Green Club volunteer

Raising public housing design to newer heights

The Architectural Design Panel, working with HDB, keeps public housing design current.

Improving designs to meet evolving needs

In the 1960s, the Housing Development Board's (HDB) priority was to build basic and functional, low-cost housing for a rapidly increasing population. Through the decades, designs of public housing and its surrounding environment have also evolved. In the 1970s, more attention was paid to the quality of the living environment. The emphasis in the 1980s was to provide regional facilities to serve several towns, and a more conducive setting for community interaction. In the following decade, the focus shifted to community development, architectural and environmental quality. The 21st century welcomed new housing typologies and residential concepts – in response to rising aspirations of flat buyers – by providing a quality living environment and distinctive building designs with character and identity.

Moving beyond the groove

Seeking new ideas on public housing designs, HDB went beyond its own pool of architects and turned to the private sector. HDB's then Deputy Director in Design and Development Mr Chong Chung Nee explains, "If the same architects and designers work on the same projects over a long period of time, we might end up in a groove, and do the same things the same way. The private sector architects have a lot of ideas and concepts, different from what we're doing in public housing; we hope by involving them, they will be able to inject new ideas and new creative energy to bring our housing designs to the next level of excellence."

The Architectural Design Panel (ADP), set up in 2006, comprises distinguished private architects and academics who review selected HDB projects in relation to design, social and community responsiveness, and environmental sustainability. Ms Cheng Ya Ling, Principal Architect in HDB's Development & Procurement Group, who was tasked to set up the panel, recalls, "At that time, there was no internal precedence to take reference from but fortunately, we were able to link up with external organisations to learn from their experience in setting up advisory panels. We approached professionals in the architectural industry to be part of this panel, and were heartened by those who accepted our invitation." For nearly a decade, this panel of volunteers introduced ideas to keep public housing designs current, and also helped HDB evaluate and select winners of the HDB Design and Construction Awards. Some of these include Casa Clementi, Skyline I & II at Bukit Batok and selected Punggol projects along the Waterway.



The award-winning Casa Clementi (Pictures courtesy of HDB)



The award-winning Skyline I & II @ Bukit Batok (Picture courtesy of HDB)

Better quality of living for Singaporeans

At a broader level, the ADP's role in promoting design excellence and innovation help contribute to MND's mission of developing a world class infrastructure for Singaporeans. On why this is important, panel member Mr Chan Soo Khian, founding principal and design director of SCDA Architects, says, "Public housing traditionally has been a test bed for ideas for modern architects. A large population of Singaporeans live in public housing and as such design and innovation for this particular building type affects the quality of living for the residents." A panel member since 2010, Mr Chan describes his experience at the ADP as a platform which allows for a lively and free exchange on design and planning issues. "As an architect in private practice, I bring a different perspective for discussion and in turn better understand the constraints and challenges on public housing issues." 

Where can you find 10,000 trees in Orchard Road?

Discover greenery right in the heart of town.

Many are familiar with Tampines Town, but that its name is derived from the Tempinis tree still surprises a few people. Or that a climbing shrub commonly known as Bread Flower is a favourite of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his late wife because of its *pandan* scent.

These were some of the interesting anecdotes which visitors were treated to at the new *Nature Guided Walk at the Istana* on 1 Feb and 1 May 2014. It was jointly organised by the National Parks Boards (NParks) and the President's Office for the public to learn more about the rich biodiversity and heritage the Istana offers.

Spanning 40ha – the size of almost 60 football fields – the Istana ground is home to about 10,000 trees including a 150-year-old Tembusu tree, more than 200 plant species and resident birds such as the Oriental Pied Hornbill and Lesser Whistling Duck (it whistles instead of quacks, hence its name!).

The hour-long tour was led by about 14 NParks volunteer guides. One of the volunteer guides, Mr Bian Tan spoke with marvel of the Istana: "(It) is a green oasis of biodiversity in the heart of downtown Singapore. It continues to play an important part in national conservation efforts of endangered flora and fauna such as hornbills, butterflies, and orchids. On top of that, the grounds are rich with heritage and history, gorgeously landscaped, and a delight to behold."

Proceeds from the sale of souvenirs and entrance fees collected were donated to the Community Chest. The upcoming walks are scheduled on Istana Open House Days (2 Aug and 23 Oct). Read more about the tour at <http://nparks.eventshub.sg>. 



*Volunteer guide, Bian Tan, introducing flowers on the lawn to visitors
(Picture courtesy of Ministry of Communications and Information)*

The people's garden

Varied volunteer programmes at Gardens by the Bay give everyone a chance to play a role.

Mention “Gardens by the Bay” and the image of plant life and tree species nestled in wide open spaces for everyone to enjoy, intuitively comes to mind. Gardens by the Bay (GB) was unveiled to the public in June 2012 and welcomed its millionth visitor in less than two months of opening. With such a strong and overwhelming response, one wonders: How does GB make sure that all its visitors have a good experience at the Gardens?

Right from the start, GB recognised the importance of the roles volunteers play in shaping visitors' experience. In its volunteer programme vision, GB views volunteers as its “key partners and ambassadors in fulfilling the vision and mission of the Gardens.” In playing an integral and dynamic role in supporting GB's programmes, volunteers help to inspire and engage the community to know, enjoy and cherish the Gardens by sharing their skills and knowledge.

In the opening festival alone, more than 300 volunteers were involved – a testament to their passion in greenery and the pride they take in the Gardens. To date, there are about 500 active volunteers. They come from all walks of life, lending their time, knowledge and expertise to enrich visitors' experience.

Different oaks for different folks

Opportunities to volunteer are plenty. One can get involved in horticulture work, biodiversity surveys, conducting public educational programmes, serving as guides or facilitators, or assisting in the area of Visitor Services. For example, volunteers share information and passion as ‘Knowledge Aiders’ in the Conservatories, with the aim to inspire and engage young visitors in learning journeys. Volunteers with a keen eye for gardening can also contribute in the ‘Green Thumbs’ programme, helping GB to tend to its valuable plant specimens in the Flower Dome and outdoor gardens. In “Fauna Explorer”, volunteers help the Gardens to conduct biodiversity surveys as the Gardens also welcomes visitors of a different kind – birds, butterflies, dragonflies and even otters. More information on the various volunteering opportunities available at GB can be found on the Gardens' website (www.gardensbythebay.com.sg). GB also welcomes those who would like to contribute through other specialised skills, such as design, multimedia, visual arts or editing. Feel inspired to volunteer? Simply register your interest by filling in the form found on the Gardens' website, under the "Join Us" section, or drop an email to friends.volunteers@gardensbythebay.com.sg. 



Knowledge Aider programme
(All pictures courtesy of GB)



Green Thumbs programme



Fauna Explorer programme

Singapore Garden Festival blooms for the fifth time

Singapore's biennial premier tropical garden and flower show will be held from 16 to 24 August 2014, and for the first time, at Gardens by the Bay (GB). Organised by National Parks Board (NParks) and GB, the Singapore Garden Festival (SGF) will bring together local and overseas award-winning designers to showcase their masterpieces. Volunteers, who are known as Festival Officials, will be on hand to serve as guides and help in the various events and programmes during the Festival.



To celebrate the Festival's first show at Gardens by the Bay, SGF tickets have been specially priced for local residents to visit both the Festival and the Flower Dome Conservatory for the same price as previous shows. Singaporean senior citizens aged 60 years and above will also be entitled to an additional discount, in recognition of the Pioneer Generation's contributions to Singapore's nation-building. Tickets are on sale now. For more information on SGF 2014, log onto www.singaporegardenfestival.com or visit www.facebook.com/SGGardenFest. 

Are You Getting It Right?

As with the previous series, the May 2014 run of the "Get it Right! CEA-CASE Consumer Seminar Series" provided a good mix of topics targeted at different groups of audience. The Seminar covered three key areas: key considerations for purchasing new developments, rent out properties, and how to avoid potential pitfalls in these transactions. They were presented by Mr Chris Koh, Key Executive Officer of Chris International, Dr Tan Tee Khoon, Key Executive Officer of KF Property Network Pte Ltd and Mr Yeap Soon Teck, CEA's Deputy Director (Licensing) respectively. The speakers explained key concepts using easy-to-understand terms and also illustrated the key concepts with real-life examples.



Mr Soh Kee Hean, Deputy Executive Director of CEA (third from left), Mr Seah Seng Choon, CASE Executive Director (fourth from left) and the panel taking questions at the seminar (Picture courtesy of CEA)

The seminar wrapped up with a Q&A session with the speakers, who were joined by Mr Soh Kee Hean, CEA's Deputy Executive Director and Mr Seah Seng Choon, CASE Executive Director. Participants gave their thumbs-up to the seminar. "It was very well presented and informative, and value for money too. The speakers were interesting and knowledgeable and I was happy to attend the seminar." 

Distinguished Professional Engineer Award 2014

Introduced by the Professional Engineers Board (PEB) in Apr 2014, the Distinguished Professional Engineer Award is given to a professional engineer (PE) who is widely recognised as a distinguished member of the profession. The PE is also one who has attained high standards in professional competence and expertise, and inspires other members of the profession. The award recipient is thus a role model for fellow PEs and an icon to attract present and future engineers to achieve excellence in engineering. The deadline for nomination was 15 May 2014.

Nominators who have been informed that their nominations have been accepted for further consideration will need to submit a detailed nomination. The nominee will be assessed in relation to work-related achievements, service to the profession and to society and the community. An Award Committee will review the nominations and PEB will decide on the choice of award recipient. Results will be announced in Nov 2014. Please refer to PEB's website at http://app.peb.gov.sg/pe_awards.aspx for more details. 



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!



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