

# HAPPY HANDS

Building An Endearing Home

## Making Waves in marine conservation



“ How much longer we will be able to marvel at the wonders of the sea depends on how concerned we are with protecting it. ”



Picking up tips and techniques for great storytelling at MND Volunteer Leaders Workshop 2017

Catch up with the Yeo siblings who volunteer together at Gardens by the Bay

Find out what it took to design Singapore's first community-built playground



Stephen Beng, Chairperson of the Friends of Marine Park Community (front) with (from left to right) Marissa Mercado, Koh Kwan Siong, Yusri Ramli and Dr Karenne Tun

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## 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](mailto: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](mailto:happyhands@mnd.gov.sg)!



*Chairman of MND Family Volunteer and Alumni Network, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee, with young participants at NParks' Community Garden Festival held at HortPark on 3 November 2017.*

Dear Friends of the MND Family,

It has been another exciting year of partnerships and collaborations! As 2017 draws to a close, I would like to thank our MND Family volunteers and partners for your strong support and dedication in making Singapore a special home for all of us.

Our Friends of the Parks Community has expanded to Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park and the Rail Corridor, bringing together diverse members of the community to drive programmes that cater to the interests of different park users. The communities are led by passionate Volunteer Leaders such as Stephen Beng. Stephen chairs our Friends of Marine Park community. He shares his experience in this issue of Happy Hands.

It is amazing what can blossom when communities come together to drive meaningful initiatives. For example, the upcoming *Adventure Playground @ Canberra* will be Singapore's first heartland playground designed and built by residents and volunteers. I am also glad to see more young people stepping forward to be involved in initiatives that can shape the future of our city. For instance, students from the Singapore University of Technology and Design have helped to meticulously document historical architectural features of the conserved Bukit Timah Railway Station along the Rail Corridor.

Behind the scenes of many MND Family programmes and initiatives, our volunteers and partners work closely with us, from conception to implementation. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all of you for your tireless dedication and inspiring passion.

Season's greetings to one and all!

Yours sincerely,

Desmond Lee  
Minister for Social and Family Development  
and Second Minister for National Development  
Chairman of the MND Family Volunteer and Alumni Network

## SPECIAL FEATURE

# The Art of Storytelling

Exploring the timeless art of storytelling at the MND Volunteer Leaders Workshop on 29 July 2017.

47 volunteer leaders from across MND Family came together on 29 July 2017 to learn about the art of storytelling from the “Godmother of Singapore Storytelling”, professional storyteller Sheila Wee. Gallery docents, nature and heritage guides and Community In Bloom Ambassadors were among the workshop participants.

Through interactive sharing activities, participants learned and practised techniques for crafting and sharing stories to connect and communicate effectively with other volunteers and members of the public.



Group photo of MND Volunteer Leaders Workshop participants

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*I learned some storytelling tips that I can apply when I share with visitors to my community garden. It has also been a good opportunity to meet and catch up with other volunteers!*

**Ismail Bin Haji Suratman**  
**NParks Community In Bloom Ambassador**



Workshop facilitator Sheila Wee with participants

Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee joined the volunteer leaders for a lunch reception before the participants headed out for a guided walk of Telok Ayer Heritage Trail.



Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee meeting participants



Watch a video of the workshop and learning journey [here](#)

“

*My favourite part was exchanging stories and getting suggestions to improve them. I learnt a lot from Sheila about techniques for storytelling.*

**Quak Wan Ling**  
*NParks Volunteer Guide*

After the workshop, URA volunteer guide Doris Lee and conservation officer Lee Yan Chang led participants on a tour of the oldest part of Chinatown, along the Telok Ayer Heritage Trail.

The guides shared fascinating stories about the way of life of early settlers in the area. Participants learned the rich multi-cultural history of Telok Ayer Steet and the heritage of the conserved buildings and shophouses that line it.

“

*It was an eye-opening experience to learn about the historical landmarks that we had the opportunity to visit today.*

**George Tan**  
*HDB Heartland Ambassador*



Volunteer guide Doris Lee leading participants on a learning journey of the Telok Ayer Heritage Trail

“

*The biggest lesson for me was learning to connect with people using emotional and sensory details in our stories, instead of relying solely on facts.*

**Veron Lau**  
*Cat Welfare Society committee member*

Visit [this website](#) to sign up for URA's upcoming guided walks and events.



Group photo at the end of a fruitful day

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### Making waves in marine conservation

Stephen Beng, chairperson of the Friends of Marine Park community, envisions turning the tide on threats to our oceans by working together.



Image: Stephen Beng



**We want to go a step further by helping stakeholders understand and be a part of the planning process – this is one of the tasks of our Friends of Marine Park community.**

**Stephen Beng**  
**Chairperson, Friends of Marine Park community & Marine Conservation Group of Nature Society (Singapore)**



*Stephen Beng's love for the ocean since his formative years helped shape who he is today - director of scuba diving centre Sea Hounds and a steadfast advocate for our marine environment. As chairperson of the Friends of Marine Park community for Singapore's first marine park, Sisters' Islands Marine Park, Stephen is hopeful that collaboration among all stakeholders can restore life on our reefs and shores and make them even better than before.*

#### **How did marine conservation become a part of your life?**

I grew up in a family that spent a lot of time on the beaches of Changi, Port Dickson, Pulau Besar and Terengganu. I also grew up with a natural affinity for animals. This led me to what I do for a living, which is teach scuba instructors and foster responsible diving. As a business owner, I incorporate conservation ethics in all aspects of my work. In 2004, we were appointed a PADI National Geographic Dive Centre, which enables us to run effective citizen science programmes for divers in Singapore.

#### **What motivates your passion for our marine biodiversity?**

Seeing a child's eyes light up upon their first encounter with ocean life, and continuous discoveries of new species in Singapore's waters! As our marine and coastal habitats face multiple anthropogenic threats, i.e. threats arising from human activity, how much longer we would be able to marvel at the wonders of the sea depends on how concerned we are with protecting it. The more natural spaces we protect, the more biodiversity flourishes.

#### **Some meaningful experiences in this journey so far?**

To me, witnessing the renewal of life on our reefs makes for the most lasting memories. Experiencing the annual festivities of coral spawning on our reefs, the recent sea turtle nesting season with hundreds of hatchlings scampering into our sea, rediscovery of the Neptune's Cup Sponge - these are some memorable moments!

I have had the pleasure of working with like-minded individuals and

celebrating the birth of Singapore's first marine park together. Countless meetings with Dr Karenne Tun and her NParks team exemplifies that, with passion and dedication for the cause, our reefs can recover. We were also encouraged by then-Minister Tan Chuan-Jin's support. Amidst his busy schedule, he volunteered to join our working dives to relocate corals, work on the dive trails, and record coral spawning.

I believe animals show their appreciation in their own way. On 5 August 2016, I had an unforgettable experience after working on the dive trails for the



Image: Stephen Beng

*Family time at the beach fostered Stephen's love for the marine environment. He is pictured here as a young boy at Changi Beach.*

*(Leftmost) A sea turtle hatchling*

*(Centre, top) Coral spawning - an encouraging sign of good reef health*

*(Centre, bottom) Reefs support an extraordinary diversity of marine life including seahorses*

*(Rightmost) Neptune's Cup Sponge - rediscovered off the southern coast of Singapore in 2011, more than 100 years after it was last seen*



*Images: Stephen Beng*

marine park. As we boarded our vessel, a family of Indo-Pacific humpbacked dolphins surfaced next to us. For half an hour, two adults and a calf swam around the trails. That is the only gratitude a conservationist ever needs!

**How did you come to chair the Friends of Marine Park community?**

As Chair of the Marine Conservation Group at Nature Society (Singapore) (NSS), I worked with NParks during the planning and implementation stages for Sisters' Islands Marine Park (SIMP). I journeyed with the team through various milestones and I am familiar with the history of the Marine Park, as well as individuals like Francis Lee and Prof. Chou Loke Ming who were instrumental in shaping the plans for SIMP over the past 30 years.

When asked to chair the community, my first reaction was to ask if there were more capable and experienced candidates for the job. After discussions with Minister Desmond Lee, I felt encouraged by his shared vision for the marine park and his willingness to listen and work together. I had confidence in the management team led by Dr Karenne Tun and I am blessed with the unwavering support of Dr Shawn Lum, Leong Kwok Peng and other leaders in NSS. I decided to step forward as I felt a sense of duty to serve, as a steward for our reefs, and as a representative for those who have worked tirelessly to get us to where we are today.

**The Friends of the Parks communities typically bring together individuals with diverse interests. How has this experience been for you?**

I approach each conversation with an open mind and respect for all parties. I also engage each stakeholder purposefully and try to remain neutral in my views. Everyone has different ideas of what a marine park should be, so one of the first things

we did was to seek mutual understanding. Naturally, people would have their personal interests at heart. So we explored alternative ways for users to continue their activities in more responsible ways that would be less harmful for the environment.

Conversations often continue beyond the meetings,



*Image: Stephen Beng*

*Stephen (rightmost) with then-Minister Tan Chuan-Jin (in a mask) and members of the NParks team (from left) Collin, Karenne and Kwan Siong at Sisters' Islands Marine Park*



*Image: Stephen Beng*

*Stephen (rightmost) with members of the Friends of Marine Park community*



Artist impressions of Singapore's first turtle hatchery at Small Sister's Island (left) and boardwalk at Big Sister's Island (right)

allowing us to better understand each other's perspectives. Initially, there was some impatience, but we felt it was important to establish foundational relationships with all stakeholders. Now, many of us see one another as friends, which motivates the group to work better and achieve things together. I am also grateful for constructive conversations with other Chairs in the Friends of the Parks community like N. Sivasothi.

### How could recreational uses be balanced against the need for biodiversity conservation?

To balance between ecological, economic and social benefits in the ocean space, multi-sectoral stakeholder conversations must continue. Based on science and public consultation, marine spatial planning can help to allocate space for human activities and inform policy. For SIMP, management mechanisms such as zonation of the marine park helps to de-conflict uses of the space. But we want to go a step further by helping stakeholders understand and be a part of the planning process. This is one of the tasks of our Friends of Marine Park community. Ultimately, all activities should be underpinned by care for the area's biodiversity and a goal to leave the park better than when they arrived.

### What is your vision for Sisters' Islands Marine Park?

The islands, picturesque and abound with natural and cultural heritage, can win the hearts of Singaporeans. I

hope our first marine park will become a place for people to appreciate what our reefs could be like, rich in biodiversity and sheltered from disturbances. A lot has been accomplished for SIMP and we hope to do more, such as additional moorings for boaters, camping grounds for kayakers and training sites for divers.

I know it can be a place of learning how to co-exist peacefully with nature. The dive trails, sea turtle hatchery, education centre and coastal trails on St John's Island are wonderful avenues for outreach, research and education. I would look forward to visiting every weekend – one week for diving with friends, the other for kayaking with family. I see it as a place for enjoyable experiences that children cherish and share with their friends. I hope everyone will treat the marine park like their own home, to safekeep, to keep clean and to fix what's broken.

### How has the landscape of local marine conservation changed?

There is much more understanding among decision-makers across multiple sectors today – government, business, academia and civil society – on the urgent need to address threats facing our marine environment through collaboration. There has never been such a large concerted effort in marine conservation than there is today.

### What more could be done?

Businesses could integrate the United Nations Sustainable Development

Goals in their business plans, especially actionable sub-goals of Goal 14 and 15 on protection of marine resources and terrestrial ecosystems. Policy makers could consider laws on known oceanic threats such as plastic pollution, habitat destruction and contributors to climate change. Environmental impact assessments of coastal and offshore development work need to consider short and long term effects to the marine ecosystem.

There are also many opportunities for individuals to contribute. NParks, Nature Society (Singapore) and many other groups have volunteer-based programmes to benefit the marine environment and work towards the long-term survival of our marine species. For example, NSS's coastal clean-ups provide volunteers with the opportunity to collect useful data that contributes to marine debris surveys that aim to battle plastic pollution and marine trash. Volunteers can also help out in the areas of communications, programme development and administration.

Natural ecosystems have a degree of resiliency against natural threats, but the multiple anthropogenic threats to our seas do not allow them to recover in many cases. Together, I believe that we can make our natural world better than how we found it.

To find out more about volunteering opportunities with NParks, visit [this website](#).

## VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

### A family affair

Meet the trio of siblings volunteering together at Gardens by the Bay.

The first time that Limin and Zuosheng joined their eldest brother Zuoheng at Gardens by the Bay as volunteers, the younger Yeo siblings were not sure what to expect. In a way, they were familiar with the Gardens as family outings often brought them here. Today, the trio regularly volunteer together at the Gardens. Zuoheng shares his experiences.

#### How did the three of you start volunteering at Gardens by the Bay?

I first signed up to volunteer at Gardens by the Bay (GB) in 2013 to fulfill my Community Involvement Programme (CIP) requirements in secondary school. The GB volunteer team is very welcoming and enthusiastic, and I enjoyed the experience of meeting both local and foreign visitors. So I decided to continue volunteering after completing my CIP hours. I shared my experiences with Zuosheng and Limin. Soon, they too joined me on the GB volunteer team!

#### What do you do as Gardens volunteers?

We are here most first and third Saturdays of each month for outdoor gardening sessions, breaking once in a while to study for our exams. We remove weeds and do some pruning of the trees and bushes. Sometimes, the horticulturalist will get us to do mulching, which is to fertilise the ground with compost.

I also volunteer as a Garden Chaperone in the Flower Dome conservatory. This involves conducting free guided tours of the display for visitors. We also provide guided tours for participants or organisations as part of the Gift of the Gardens programme, where beneficiaries can sign up to organise events at GB for their members.

Occasionally, we help out for seasonal activities. For example, Limin helped out with the Lantern Making activity with Voluntary Welfare Organisations earlier this year. The lanterns were hung up as decorations during the last flower showcase, 'Autumn Harvest'.



(From left) Yeo siblings Limin, 14, Zuoheng, 18, and Zuosheng, 16



**We are trying to grow a community of young volunteers here at Gardens by the Bay and would encourage more youths to join us!**

**Yeo Zuoheng  
Gardens by the Bay Volunteer**



Images: Gardens by the Bay  
Zuoheng (left) and Limin (right) volunteering at Gardens by the Bay

#### Would you encourage other youths to volunteer?

Definitely! Volunteering instils a sense of purpose in contributing to something meaningful. We are trying to grow a community of young volunteers here at GB and would encourage more youths to join us!

Visit the [Gardens by the Bay website](#) for more information..

## PROGRAMME (HDB)

### A playground of their own

Residents and volunteers came together at Canberra (Sembawang) to design Singapore's first-ever community-built playground.

Build A Playground, one of the winning ideas of the HDB Build-a-thon 2014 challenge, is the first-ever community-built playground within our HDB estates.

With support from HDB, Sembawang Town Council, People's Association, Canberra Zone 1 Residents' Committee and student volunteer facilitators from the National University of Singapore Architecture Department, some 300 Canberra residents got the chance to design their very own play space.



*The kelong-inspired treehouse playground design was one of the winning ideas to emerge from HDB's Build-a-thon challenge in May 2014*

Residents participated in design workshops and handpicked their preferred play equipment to incorporate in the new playground. Proudly named *Adventure Playground @ Canberra* by residents themselves, the space was envisioned to bring back fun and adventure through a unique treehouse/*kelong* design.

Students from neighbouring schools like Sembawang Secondary School also got involved and expressed their creativity by submitting designs for the surface of the playground through the Rubber Flooring Design Competition. The students will also be designing and painting one of the playground's footpaths.

And that's not all - come January 2018, Canberra (Sembawang) residents will come together in the co-building of the new playground, with professional guidance.



*Residents discussing enthusiastically with neighbours on their choice play components for the playground*

*All images by HDB.*

*Join as a volunteer to shape positive and endearing heartland living experiences or start your own ground-up projects to enliven HDB spaces. Find out more information [here](#).*

*Read about more community projects in our heartlands [here](#).*

## PARTNERSHIP (URA)

### Destination: heritage

Young generations of students get the chance to help preserve the Rail Corridor's rich heritage.

From May to August 2017, 31 Architecture and Sustainable Design students from the Singapore University of Technology and Design (SUTD) worked on a study of a historic landmark, the conserved Bukit Timah Railway Station building. This was as part of SUTD's Conservation Theories and Approaches of Built Heritage course by Assistant Professor Yeo Kang Shua.

Features of the old railway station building including the roof, windows, doors, furniture, signages, railway

tracks, train platform tiles, railway track control levers, and other equipment were meticulously investigated and documented.

After examining their findings, the students crafted proposals to guide the restoration of the conserved building and its eventual adaptive re-use as a heritage gallery for the Rail Corridor. Their recommendations aim to capture the rich history of the building and retain the sense of place and memories of the site.



*Under the guidance of Architectural Conservator Dr Yeo Kang Shua (leftmost, bottom row), 31 students from the Singapore University of Technology and Design worked on investigating, documenting and proposing recommendations for the restoration of the 85-year-old Bukit Timah Railway Station, now a conserved building and landmark along the Rail Corridor.*



*(Left) The conserved Bukit Timah Railway Station today and (right) an artist's impression of it as a heritage gallery and visitor centre*

This is the first time a group of students have been directly involved in shaping the restoration of a conserved building. Their proposals will be presented to URA's appointed consultants for further consideration when restoration works begin. More students can look forward to being involved in later stages of the process as well, for instance, in restoring selected finishing features and elements of the 85-year-old building. Truly a history lesson come to life, the students gain valuable lessons on a landmark of national significance and first-hand experience as part of an important architectural conservation project.

The 24 km Rail Corridor stretches from Woodlands Checkpoint to the Tanjong Pagar Railway Station. It was formerly a railway line used for commuting and transporting goods between Singapore and the rest of the Malay peninsula in the 20th century. The Keretapi

Tanah Melayu ("KTM") railway service ceased operations along this route on 1 July 2011 with the return of the railway land to Singapore. Following many sessions of ideation, workshops and exhibitions with Singaporeans to collectively shape plans for the historic area, the preliminary design for Rail Corridor (Central) was released on 21 Oct 2017. The 4 km signature stretch that makes up Rail Corridor (Central) will retain its rustic vibe even as it is sensitively enhanced into a more inclusive community space. Works are scheduled to begin in 2018 and complete in 2021.

*All images by URA.*

*Join in efforts to make our Rail Corridor a vibrant and exciting space for nature and people by signing up [here](#).*

## IN THE NEWS

### Partners in catalysing change

MND and the Council for Estate Agencies (CEA) are continuing efforts to engage industry stakeholders to co-develop the Real Estate Industry Transformation Map (ITM). More than 100 representatives from across the real estate value chain have met this year to discuss proposals that would chart the future of our real estate industry. Among other topics, discussions included proposals on paperless transactions, streamlining of property transaction processes, enhancements to the Continuous Professional Development framework, and initiatives to allow property agents to better market themselves and promote their niches. The Real Estate ITM is one of 23 integrated roadmaps being developed to help industries meet future challenges in a fast-evolving operating environment.

*This is an abridged version of an article first published in CEA's newsletter. Read the full article [here](#).*



*Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee (image above) and Senior Minister of State Dr Koh Poh Koon (image below) discussing the future of the real estate industry with a spectrum of stakeholders.*

### Designing buildings of the future

As part of this year's [International Building Information Modelling \(BIM\) competition](#) organised by the Building and Construction Authority (BCA), students got the chance to develop concept designs for two blocks of up to 23,500 sqm Gross Floor of the BCA Academy.

Over 4 months, 66 teams from 9 countries worked with industry practitioners to hone their skills in the computational approaches of BIM and Virtual Design and Construction (VDC). Their resulting designs aim to enable the use of productive construction methods.

As the built environment sector moves towards more efficient and integrated building processes like Design for Manufacturing Assembly, BIM and VDC are set to become standard design approaches in the built environment sector.

*View the Singapore Polytechnic team's winning design 'Flickering Invictus' [here](#).*



*Singapore Polytechnic team "Flickering Invictus" received the top prize from Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee at the opening of Singapore Construction Productivity Week on 24 October 2017.*

## 'Tis the season for Architectural Heritage

In conjunction with URA's Architectural Heritage Awards (AHA), Architectural Heritage Season was held over the month of November 2017. Exhibitions, talks, and tours were lined up to celebrate our rich built heritage. For architects, professional visits of restored heritage buildings and a series of seminars were organised to share best practices in restoration. Members of the public also joined guided heritage tours of conservation areas.

It's never too early to foster appreciation of our heritage, as demonstrated by ten Primary 4 students from Teck Whye Primary School. As part of the school's Young

Authors Programme, in collaboration with URA, they published two story books for pre-schoolers - "A Wish Come True" and "Billie's Adventure in Joo Chiat".

Short films produced by students of NTU's Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information document memories and stories around some of our beloved heritage buildings. View them [here](#).

The Architectural Heritage Awards exhibition will run until 31 Dec 2017 at The URA Centre. Admission is free and members of the public are welcome. *All images by URA.*



**AHA 2017 winner R.C. Cathedral of the Good Shepherd.**  
*The oldest Catholic church in Singapore has been delicately restored and successfully rejuvenated its role in the community. Today, it is a sanctuary that welcomes people from all walks of life to learn about the Cathedral's history.*



**AHA 2017 winner The Warehouse Hotel.** *Thoughtful restoration and sensitive integration of the old and new have helped to safeguard the heritage value of the warehouse while adapting it to its new use as a hotel. Through subtle touches in interior design and hotel collateral, the building is reminiscent of its industrial past.*

## UPCOMING EVENTS & CONTESTS

### Volunteer opportunities in our parks

#### Coney Island Park

Get a chance to learn about horticulture and park management in a rustic setting rich in biodiversity and history - Coney Island Park!

#### Upcoming sessions:

**9 am to 11 am**

**6 January 2018 (Sat)**



#### Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park

##### Butterfly Habitat Enhancement

Play an active role in maintaining and enhancing the Butterfly Habitat at Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park and learn more about horticulture, flora and fauna.

#### Upcoming sessions:

**9 am to 11 am, every Wednesday**  
(except Public Holidays)

**20, 27 December 2017**

**3, 10, 17, 24, 31 January 2018**



##### Horticulture Maintenance

Participate in the horticulture maintenance of Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park and learn more about plants and landscape management.

#### Upcoming sessions:

**9 am to 11 am, every Saturday**  
(except Public Holidays and long weekends)

**16 December 2017**

**6, 13, 20, 27 January 2018**



Visit [NParks' website](#) for more information on NParks volunteer programmes.

Sign up as a NParks volunteer [here](#).

Volunteer sessions are free of charge!

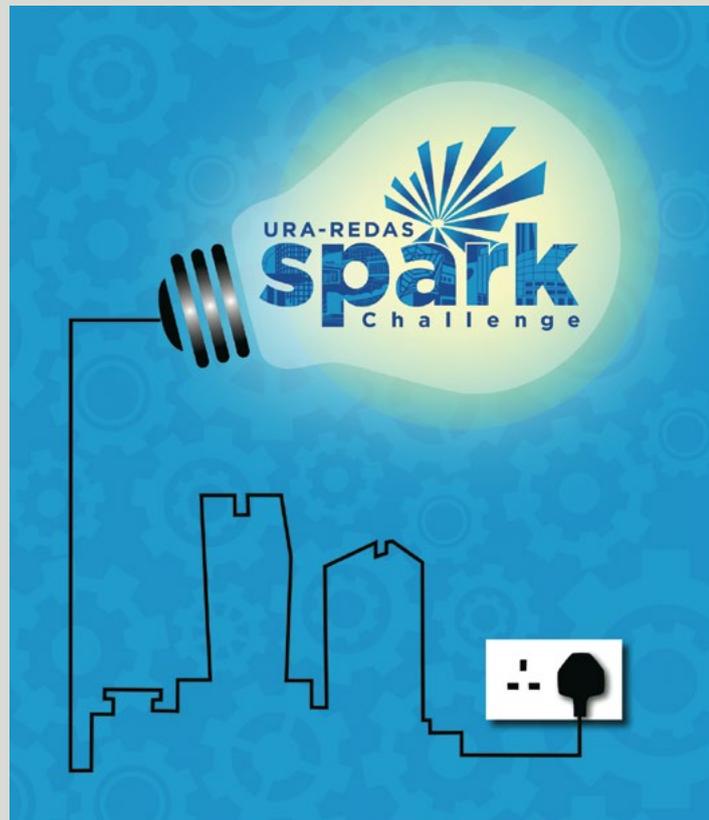
All images by NParks.

## Call for ideas: URA-REDAS Spark Challenge

Have a design idea that could improve the everyday experience of the built environment? Take part in the new URA-REDAS Spark Challenge and see your ideas come to life!

Organised by the Urban Redevelopment Authority and Real Estate Developers' Association of Singapore, the theme for this year's challenge is *Enhancing the Health and Wellness of People within the Built Environment*. After the first round of submissions, 3 of the best ideas will be selected and given up to \$5,000 to be developed into prototypes for testing with the public at 6 shopping malls. The top idea stands to win a grand prize of \$10,000!

Find more information [here](#) and submit your design idea by 7 February 2018, 6 pm.



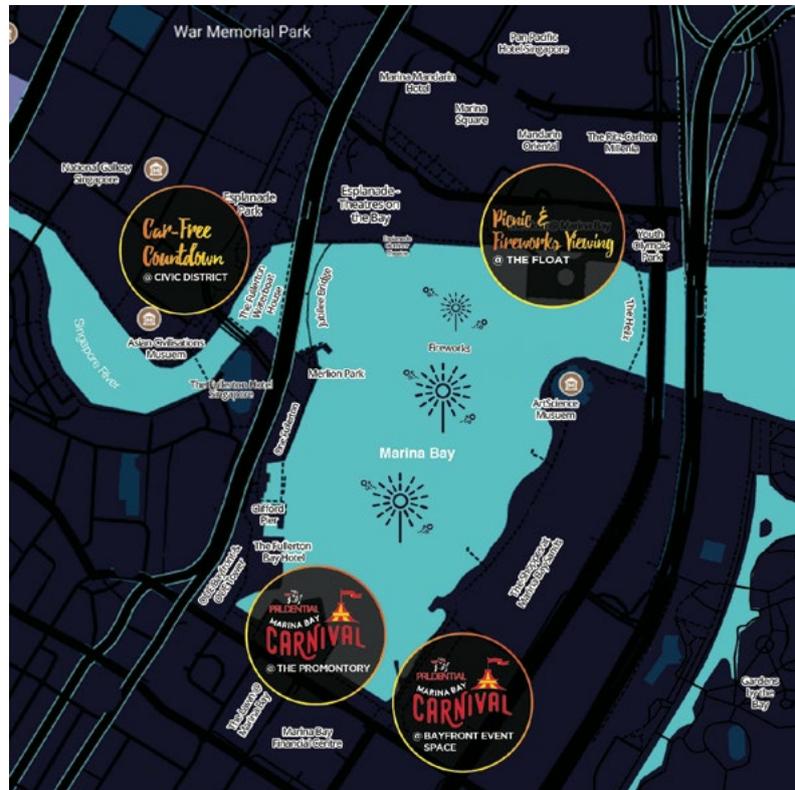
## Marina Bay Singapore Countdown 2018

8 to 31 December 2017

### Marina Bay and Civic District

Usher in the new year with Singapore's biggest year-end celebrations at Marina Bay! For the month of December, enjoy family-friendly carnival rides and games, a charity trail and gastronomical delights around the Marina Bay area. The Civic District will be transformed into a car-free zone on New Year's Eve and celebrations will culminate in spectacular crowd-favourite light projections and fireworks at midnight.

Find more information [here](#).



For more MND Family News:



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