

HAPPY HANDS

Building An Endearing Home

ON A QUEST FOR THE
purr-fect
SOLUTION 

Promoting kindness and responsible behaviour
for a more harmonious living environment.

Laura Ann Meranda
Executive Director, Cat Welfare Society



Visualising our ideal city and home
at the inaugural *MND Family Youth
Leaders Create*

Building confidence in public
speaking at the *MND Volunteer
Leaders Workshop*

Catch up on this year's Biodiversity
Week celebration of our rich natural
heritage

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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!

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!

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



Chairman of MND Family Volunteer and Alumni Network, Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee (standing, second from right) with youth volunteer leaders and partners at MND Youth Leaders Create on 7 July 2018.

Dear Friends of the MND Family,

We started the MND Family Volunteer Network three years ago for all volunteers and partners of our MND agencies. We wanted to see how we could better support, upskill and offer a wide range of programmes and opportunities for citizens to work together with us in making a difference for our communities, our environment, and future generations.

For example, in this issue we share how Laura Ann Meranda and the Cat Welfare Society work closely with AVA to address cat-related disputes through mediation. We also saw the passion and dedication of MND Family volunteers and partners as we commemorated NParks Biodiversity Week, celebrated the heartland community spirit at HDB Community Week, and came together to recognise horticultural achievements at the Singapore Garden Festival. Through these and many other events and programmes, we work together to encourage more Singaporeans to get actively involved in shaping our shared living environment.

Thank you to all of you for taking this journey with us and stepping up to create and drive meaningful initiatives; and for sharing your valuable time, skills and energy towards our shared vision of a better Singapore for everyone. As our Network grows from strength to strength, I look forward to our continued strong partnership and to achieve even more, together.

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

MND Youth Leaders Create

Visualising our ideal city and home at the inaugural appreciation event for MND Family youth volunteer leaders and partners

‘What would your ideal city and home look like?’

This was the question posed to 39 enthusiastic young MND Family volunteer leaders and partners who participated in the inaugural MND Create appreciation event on 7 July 2018.

Hailing from diverse volunteering backgrounds, from conserving Singapore’s biodiversity to advancing animal welfare, encouraging eco-friendly living in the heartlands and shaping a sustainable built environment, participants put on their thinking caps and exchanged ideas on the various needs of a city.

Then they set about the challenging task of trying to ensure adequate space for a city’s needs - housing, industries, transportation networks, greenery - within a limited land area; much like the work of our planners! Using 3D drawing pens and Tapigami techniques, participants built a model of their ideal city and home.

What is Tapigami?

Tapigami is an artform created by Sacramento-based artist Danny Scheible, where one uses tape to create structures, installations or exhibits.



3D model of participants’ ideal city and home, designed to meet diverse needs of a small sovereign city-state like Singapore



Youth volunteer leaders and partners with Chairman of MND Family Volunteer and Alumni Network, Minister for Social and Family Development & Second Minister for National Development Mr Desmond Lee.

“

I found the Makerspace city planning activity very interesting because I got to see things from other stakeholders’ points of view and learn about various considerations involved in planning, especially for a land-scarce country like Singapore.

”

Sankar Ananthanarayanan,
Co-founder of Herpetological Society
Singapore and NParks partner

“

I got to meet and interact with other people outside my usual circle of friends. I like the fact that we can build on each other’s ideas.

”

Billy, URA volunteer guide

Amazing Race: MND Family Sentosa edition

Sentosa is synonymous with fun in the sun, so after lunch the teams collected clues and raced across Sentosa to explore some lesser-known aspects of the island.



Discussing the allocation of various land uses



Chairman of MND Family Volunteer and Alumni Network, Minister Desmond Lee, meeting participants

“

Adults tend to be more pragmatic. Sometimes, it is good to dream and hear what young people have in mind. Through this event, I got to learn diverse perspectives of young people working with various agencies and exchange ideas.

Yina Chua, BCA Young Leader

”

“

I enjoyed this programme because it brings youth from the different groups together, for us to bounce ideas off each other to see how we can build a sustainable Singapore.

Isabelle Lee,
Member of Nature Society
(Singapore) and NParks partner

”

#1 Tanjong Rimau

The race kicked off at Sentosa's last natural reef, Tanjong Rimau - home to marine life such as corals, crabs, octopuses and even eels. Rimau is also home to seagrass meadows, which play a crucial role in maintaining the balance of our coastal habitats.



#2 Bench project

Made from salvaged wooden planks from the old National Stadium, participants followed the clues to “(The) Coil” near Beach Station - a public bench designed as part of URA's Bench design competition to enliven public spaces for people to enjoy.

#3 Tanjong Tree

Passers-by at Sentosa's Images of Singapore might not notice this, but the Tanjong Tree nearby is one of 261 mature trees in Singapore that are conserved under the NParks Heritage Tree Scheme.

#4 Equarius Hotel

Rounding back to the final pit stop, Green Mark (Gold Plus) certified Resorts World Sentosa Equarius Hotel, and prizes for the winning teams!



Image: NParks



Watch the event video [here](#) and see more photos from the day [here](#).

SPECIAL FEATURE

Ready, Set, Speak!

Building confidence in public speaking at the 2018 MND Volunteer Leaders Workshop



MND Family volunteer leaders with Chairman of MND Family Volunteer and Alumni Network, Minister for Social and Family Development & Second Minister for National Development Mr Desmond Lee, at Singapore Botanic Gardens on 5 May 2018.

On 5 May 2018, 60 volunteer leaders from across the MND Family of agencies came together at the Singapore Botanic Gardens for the MND Volunteer Leaders Workshop.

Participants included a diverse array of volunteer leaders from National Parks Board (NParks) parks and conservation programmes, the Housing & Development Board (HDB) Friends of Our Heartlands network, Building and Construction Authority's (BCA) Build it Green Club Executive Council and Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) Singapore City Gallery docents.

Engaging and Speaking to Your Audience

Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, the topic that got everyone talking this year was 'Engaging and Speaking to Your Audience'.

Public speaking can be a nerve-wrecking experience. "Stage fright", "lack of engaging content", and "fear of losing the audience's attention"

were some of the concerns that participants shared at the start of the workshop.



Guided by Hazriq Idrus from The Speaking Factory, participants learned strategies such as visualisation, facial exercises, and (over) preparation.

By the end of the morning, participants had unlocked a “Yes, and ...” mindset and gained communication techniques for engaging audiences confidently.

Guided Tour of Learning Forest

After lunch, our high-spirited participants set off on a guided tour of the Learning Forest.

Opened in April 2017, the Learning Forest is located in the new Tyersall-Gallop conservation core of the Singapore Botanic Gardens. A network of boardwalks and elevated walkways brought participants on a fascinating exploration of various habitats, from the wetlands to the rainforest. In recognition of

its ecological significance, the Learning Forest’s 10 hectares of secondary forest and 4 hectares surrounding the forest area are a designated Nature Area.

Watch the event video [here](#) and view more photos from the day [here](#).

The Singapore Botanic Gardens Learning Forest is open from 5 am to midnight daily. The SPH Walk of Giants and Keppel Discovery Wetlands are closed from 7 am to 7 pm to maintain a conducive habitat for wildlife. Admission is free. Click [here](#) for more details.

Chairman of MND Family Volunteer and Alumni Network, Minister Desmond Lee, meeting participants



From a freshwater forest wetland to a lowland rainforest, our volunteer leaders explored various habitats in the Learning Forest guided by friendly and knowledgeable NParks guides.

What our volunteer leaders had to say:

“Before today I did not know that there were so many volunteering opportunities across MND’s agencies. It’s inspiring to see so many volunteer leaders and know that there are different ways that we can contribute.”

*Bernard Seah,
NParks Volunteer Leader
(Sungei Buloh Wetland Reserve)*

“From today’s workshop, I learnt useful communication techniques for public speaking.”

*Tan Yi Yin,
HDB Volunteer Leader
(Friends of Our Heartlands)*

“I found the public speaking tips and techniques that we learnt useful for my role as a guide, and beyond.”

*Toh Chay Hoon,
NParks Volunteer Leader
(Friends of the Marine Park)*

“The learning journey enabled us to better appreciate people’s connection with nature.”

*Tan Yen Fong,
URA Volunteer Leader
(Singapore City Gallery)*

PEOPLE

On a quest for the purr-fect solution

Laura Ann Meranda, Executive Director of the Cat Welfare Society (CWS), shares how CWS works to create a safe and harmonious environment for cats in our community.



“

We hope to promote a humane, responsible and informed society where pet cats are cared for responsibly and community cats are treated with kindness.

”

Laura Ann Meranda
Executive Director, Cat Welfare Society

Community cats are a common sight across Singapore. Yet most of us are unaware of the hard work, love and perseverance that goes on behind the scenes in helping to shape a safe environment for cats to live harmoniously with people in the community. Laura Ann Meranda, Executive Director of the Cat Welfare Society, shares with us her quest for humane management of cats.

How did you get started being involved in the Cat Welfare Society (CWS)?

It started off with an adoption of a cat in 2014. From there, I began to empathize with stray cats and shortly after, I became a mediator with CWS. I have three cats of my own and have rescued, fostered and rehomed countless cats in the course of my work. As a passionate animal lover, I try to walk the talk

and have also become vegan after being involved in promoting animal welfare.

CWS has been appointed as the official mediator for the Agri-food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) on cat-related issues. How did this come about?

CWS is happy to partner with AVA and we support them in their response to cat-related issues in Singapore. This partnership is an acknowledgement of the work that we do and reaffirms that mediation is a preferred means to resolve cat-related disputes in the community!

What does mediation entail?

Mediation is a painstaking process which involves constant communication and engagement with the various stakeholders such as feedback providers, cat owners, community feeders and officers from various government agencies in order to come up with the most

amicable solutions to cat-related issues.

Through mediation, we educate and advise community cat feeders and cat owners to practise responsible cat feeding and responsible pet ownership.

What are some challenges you face in your job?

We often have to deal with angry feedback providers who insist on having the cats removed to solve the problem. However, relocation is not a sustainable solution. In such cases, we have to work with them to find an alternative solution that does not require relocating the cat.

We also frequently encounter cat feeders and owners who continually do not heed our advice, to the detriment of the poor cat.



Laura with volunteers from NCS after conducting door-to-door visits to promote CWS's Low Income Pet Cat Sterilisation Scheme.



Laura with AVA officers at a CWS outreach event held at Seletar Mall.



Outreach events are an important way to raise awareness about CWS's work.

In many cases, it is the actions of people, not the cat, that are directly causing the problem. We hope that people will learn to understand this and practise responsible and considerate behaviour instead.

What do you wish more people understood about cat welfare?

Not many people understand why sterilisation is so important. Sterilisation is the most effective way to humanely control the existing stray cat population, to prevent unnecessary killing of cats and unwanted litters.

The main reason is that it helps prevent unwanted pregnancy

and kitten litters. Many kittens are born every day, and the unfortunate reality is that not every one of them is able to find a home. The fittest survive to adulthood, becoming stray cats. Unless they are sterilised, they will reproduce more young and the cycle repeats itself. This leads to overpopulation and a host of other problems.

In addition, sterilisation prevents many undesirable reproductive problems in both female and tom cats and helps curb anti-social behaviour such as fights and intense scent-marking.

Overall, if feeders practise

responsible feeding and owners are responsible, keeping their cats strictly indoors, there would be fewer cat welfare issues to grapple with.

What is your vision for cat welfare in Singapore?

We hope to promote a humane, responsible and informed society where pet cats are cared for responsibly and community cats are treated with kindness.

Laura was also featured in AVA's corporate publication, AVA Vision. Read it [here](#).

All images courtesy of Cat Welfare Society

PARTNERSHIP

Celebrating Biodiversity Week

An annual commemoration of Singapore's rich native flora and fauna.

Is there nature in a city like Singapore?

The answer is a resounding “Yes!”, as members of the nature community shared about our native flora and fauna with visitors at the Festival of Biodiversity held on 2 – 3 June 2018 at the open space next to Tampines Mall.

Organised by the National Parks Board (NParks) and the Biodiversity Roundtable, this year's festival was bigger and better than ever. For the entire Biodiversity Week from 18 May to 3 June, individuals and communities joined in a suite of events and activities as stewards of our natural heritage.

Communities play an important role in achieving our vision of being a City in a Garden. From increasing our awareness of Singapore's rich native flora and fauna, to taking part in citizen science surveys to gather valuable information about native biodiversity in our parks, gardens and reserves, everyone can play a part in helping to keep our natural heritage alive.

Festival of Biodiversity 2018



Members of the Singapore Pangolin Working Group with Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for National Development Desmond Lee (second from left) and Mayor for North East CDC Desmond Choo (third from left).



Image: Lim Yi Hee



Image: Lim Yi Hee

44 partners set up booths and organised activities to share fascinating information about our natural heritage and how everyone can play a part in nature conservation.



Image: Paige Lee

Sharing about the critically endangered Sunda Pangolin and conservation efforts in Singapore.



Image: NParks



Image: Youth Corps Singapore

Two marine-themed Escape Rooms were set up and run by Roots & Vines youth volunteer leaders from Youth Corps Singapore to raise awareness of local marine biodiversity.

Nature Guided Walks



Image: John Lim



Image: NParks

Members of our nature community led informative guided walks for members of the public to learn and appreciate the variety of ecosystems in our City in a Garden. Left: Bishan-Ang Mo Kio Park; right: Kranji Marshes.

Nationwide BioBlitz & Habitat Enhancements



Image: NParks



Image: NParks

Left: Volunteers lent their helping hands in habitat enhancement works for Chestnut Nature Park (left) and Springleaf Nature Park (right).

Below: Citizens became citizen scientists at 33 parks and gardens across Singapore during the Nationwide BioBlitz held from 18 to 30 May 2018. From left to right: Dairy Farm Nature Park, Jurong Lake Gardens and the Rail Corridor.



Image: NParks



Image: NParks



Image: Khew Sin Khoon

Marine BioBlitz



Image: Stephen Pang



Image: Audrey Pang



Image: Ng Juat Ying

Experienced scuba divers helped document Singapore's marine biodiversity through underwater surveys around our Southern Islands.

Community Garden Tours



Image: NParks



Image: NParks

Mayor for North West CDC Dr Teo Ho Pin released native butterflies and heard from volunteers about various species of caterpillars and butterflies found in Bukit Panjang Butterfly Garden.

IN THE NEWS

A Heartland Hurrah!

This year's edition of the HDB Community Week started with a bang with the official opening of the newly-minted Yishun Town Square on 20 May 2018. Following successes in Punggol and Bedok, this communal town plaza in the northern part of Singapore was designed to encourage community bonding and inject vibrancy into the Nee Soon estate.

This year, activities peppered across two weekends featured performances, workshops and exhibitions at Yishun Town Square and Tampines, for residents to enjoy with their families and neighbours.



Minister for National Development and Second Minister for Finance Mr Lawrence Wong announced enhancements to the HDB Friendly Faces, Lively Places Fund for residents, merchants and businesses to tap on to organise community projects in HDB estates. Click [here](#) to find out how.



Mr Lawrence Wong with MPs for Nee Soon GRC, Minister for Home Affairs and Minister for Law Mr K Shanmugam, Assoc. Prof. Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Mr Louis Ng, Er. Dr. Lee Bee Wah and Mr Henry Kwek and HDB CEO Dr Cheong Koon Hean, marking the official opening of Yishun Town Square.



120 residents and students competed in a fun-filled popiah-making competition 'Good Neighbours, Let's Roll!', scoring ingredients by solving puzzles and other tasks as a team.



Residents got the chance to give the neighbourhood a 'virtual makeover' using Virtual Reality headsets.



MPs for Tampines GRC, including Minister for Finance Mr Heng Sweet Keat, presented certificates of appreciation to over 400 HDB Friends of Our Heartlands volunteers.

Find out more about HDB Community Week 2018 in Life Storeys, HDB's community publication. Read the full article [here](#).

Celebrating vibrant public spaces on PARK(ing) Day

Over 100 car park lots in the Bugis and Kampong Glam districts were transformed into vibrant public spaces on 22 September, at the sixth edition of PARK(ing) Day.

Participants showcased their creativity through interactive activities and installations for the community to enjoy. Liang Seah Street, Tan Quee Lan Street, Arab Street and Sultan Gate were also pedestrianised, creating a larger car-free area where visitors could experience the activities safely and in a more engaging way.



Images: URA

Managing our stray dogs humanely

Working closely with animal welfare groups and veterinarians, in December 2017 AVA announced plans for a five-year Trap-Neuter-Release-Manage programme to manage the stray dog population in Singapore.

The programme will involve humanely catching stray dogs and sterilising them before they are released or rehomed. Based on scientific literature and mathematical modelling, a sustained sterilisation rate of 70% is the key for stabilising stray populations.



Image: AVA

This will be the first nationwide effort of its kind and is strongly supported by the animal welfare community. 11 animal welfare groups have stepped forward to commit their assistance in implementing the programme.

Read the full article in AVA's corporate publication *AVA Vision* [here](#).

EVENTS

Car-Free Weekend

The first Car-Free Weekend in the city will take place from 26 to 28 October 2018!

Friday (26 October, 11am to 3pm) - Start off the Car-Free Weekend at Telok Ayer Street and Amoy Street, which will be closed to vehicular traffic. Lunchime stroll anyone?

Saturday (27 October, 5pm to 11pm) - Enjoy music performances, an arts and gardening bazaar, sketching tours around the Civic District, and more as part of the Parks Festival by NParks! Over at Telok Ayer, get a taste of heritage with cultural performances and guided tours of our national monuments.

Sunday (28 October, 8am to 12pm) - The fun continues at Car-Free Sunday SG. An annual dance carnival Got to Move will kick-start the fun along the car-free roads where a Farmers' Market featuring fresh local produce will be set up!

Follow the [Car-Free Sunday SG Facebook page](#) for more updates.



Images: URA

Join us as a Tester for a new Helpbuddy Mobile Application

BE INVOLVED! IT STARTS WITH YOU

Checking of
State Land for
Community Use
(SLA)



Trees in Bloom
(NParks)



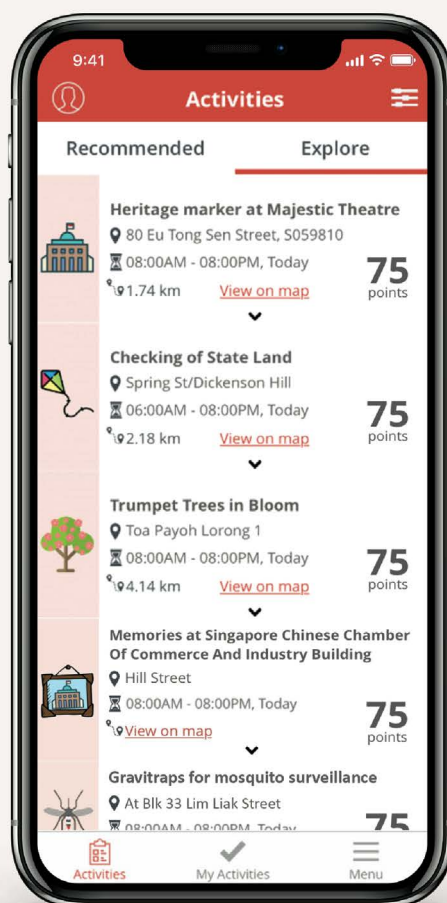
Find Lost Dogs
(Animal Welfare
Groups/AVA)



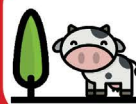
Volunteer Medical
Escort
(MCCY/SGCares)



Share Item
(MCCY/SGCares)



Memories of
Heritage Sites
(NHB)



Memories of
Dairy Farm
(NParks)



Checking of
EPS Gantry
(HDB)



Checking of
Gravitraps
(NEA)

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*WHILE STOCKS LAST

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