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STAYING BALANCED THROUGH CHALLENGES

You are a mature PME and suddenly find yourself out of a job. What can you do? Try the Career Activation Programme at NTUC's U PME Centre. We are here to help you get back up and running into the career race.

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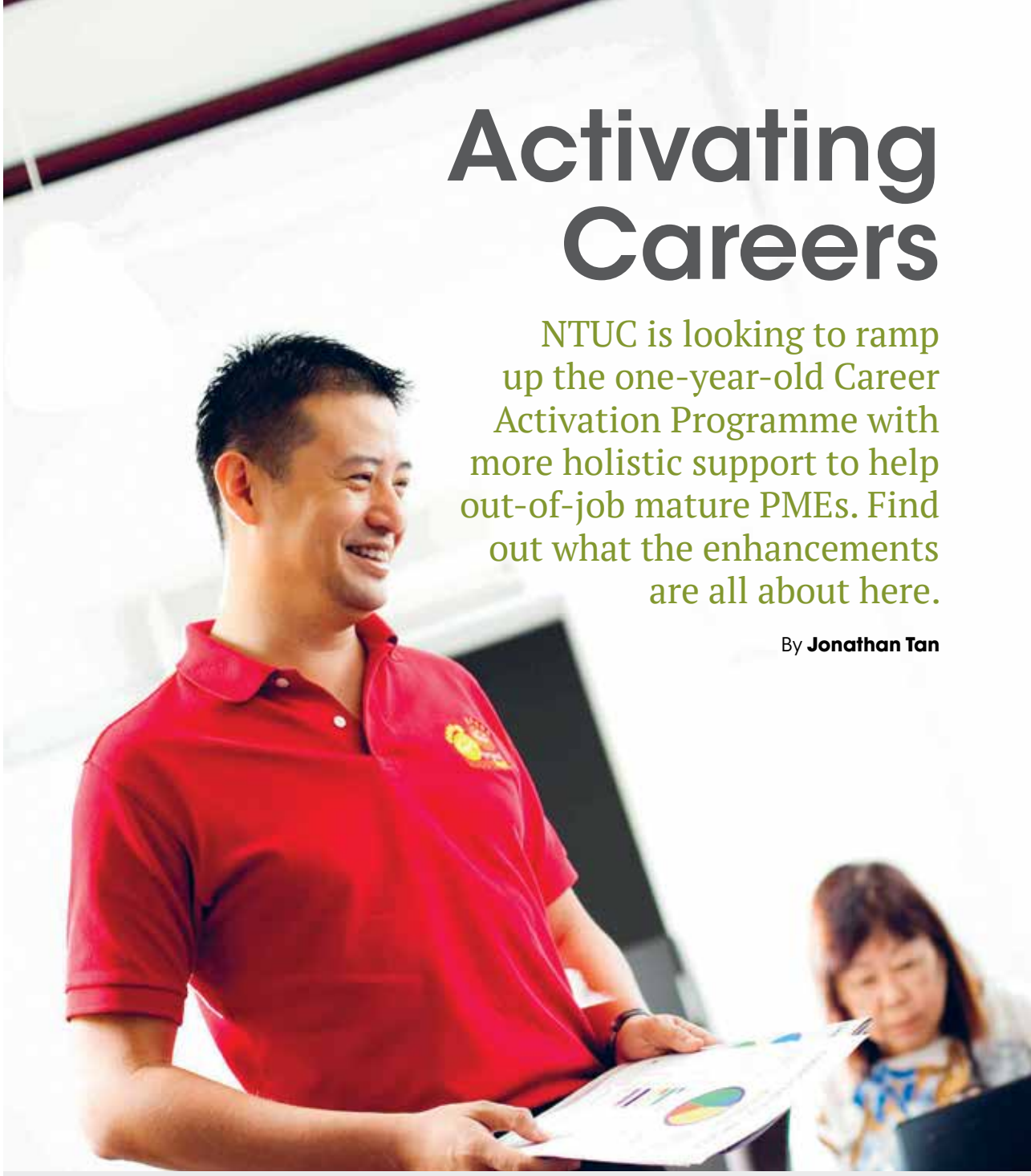


Activating Careers

NTUC is looking to ramp up the one-year-old Career Activation Programme with more holistic support to help out-of-job mature PMEs. Find out what the enhancements are all about here.

By **Jonathan Tan**

Statistics from the Ministry of Manpower's Labour Market Advance Release Q2 2016 on 28 July 2016 revealed that unemployment in Singapore had increased from 1.9 per cent in March 2016 to 2.1 per cent in June 2016. Unemployment rates among Singapore citizens had risen to 3.1 per cent, up from 2.6 per cent last quarter.

The release attributed the slower employment growth to subdued economic conditions and highlighted how the Ministry will work with tripartite partners to help displaced workers find new jobs.

LABOUR MOVEMENT'S EFFORTS

One avenue where displaced workers can get support is through NTUC's U PME Centre.

At a media briefing on 27 July 2016, NTUC Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) and Director PME Unit Patrick Tay shared that the Career Activation Programme (CAP) will be enhanced to help unemployed PMEs.

The CAP was piloted in July 2015 in partnership with professional services social enterprise GioCareers to offer out-of-job mature PMEs community-based peer support via a network of career activists who function like facilitators.

Having been through similar predicaments in their own personal lives, these career activists are better able to relate to the participants and guide them through their challenges.

AN ENCOURAGING START

The key thing is the journey from the job loss, to them (the CAP participants) gaining employment, said ASG Tay, adding that besides helping displaced PMEs with job searches and employability training, the area of emotional support is a gap that the CAP hopes to bridge.

He also shared that the number of career activists have also increased from an initial team of three to 30 today.

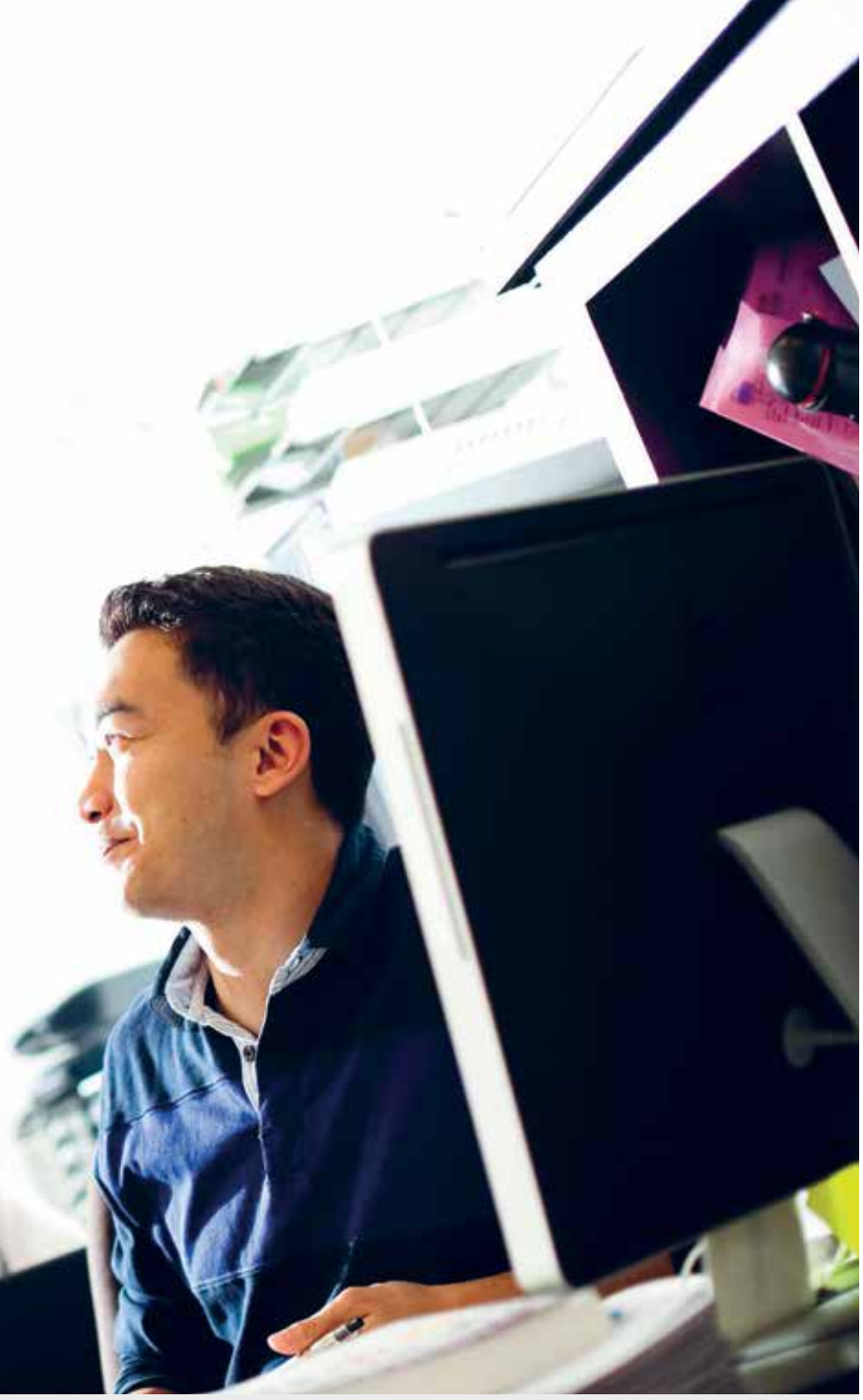
DOING MORE FOR PMEs

"I think we have the capacity to double or even triple the number of people we can help, if the need arises. It's not target based, but on a needs basis for people who can benefit from it," said ASG Tay.

He added that there are plans to expand and deepen the programme on two levels.

To increase the quality of the support rendered to CAP participants, career activists will undergo a structured training programme with certification that is pegged to requirements such as having strong interpersonal skills and experience in overcoming career challenges. This will be developed with NTUC LearningHub and GioCareers.

For participants, deeper engagement will come in the form of a Career-Life Planning and Management workshop to help them learn more about themselves, understand their goals and chart out constructive steps to achieve them. This will be in addition to the networking and dialogue sessions with the career activists.



> "I'm grateful I found peer support through the CAP. The programme helped to remind me that I was not alone in this journey. Now, I am happy to say that I have found a new job in a new industry and function, and I will continue to remain positive as I am now learning new things every day."
>
> *Miss Zhong, a CAP beneficiary*

> "It was the exposure and sharing sessions which helped me understand that I was not the only one in such a situation. That moral support helped me become a lot more positive. That, and the emphasis on the network that we needed to maintain and continue building made a difference. "
>
> *Calvin Wee, a CAP beneficiary*

Additionally, participants will continue to receive support throughout their career transition via a digital forum on the CAP community website. This will help build a network in which they can remotely interact and connect with their fellow peers and career activists. Consultants from the U PME Centre will also continue to reach out to them even after they have been placed in new jobs.

AT A GLANCE

CAREER ACTIVATION PROGRAMME

What is it?

- The peer-to-peer support programme aims to deepen the assistance rendered to unemployed PMEs who are age 40 and above.

How does it work?

- CAP sessions offer PMEs an opportunity to interact and network with each other to gain support.
- PMEs can also count on the support of a career activist who can provide emotional support for these PMEs during difficult times and encourage, motivate and inspire them.
- Participants will also be able to remain in touch with their peers and career activists throughout their transition journey.

What is new?

- Participants will now get to partake in a more holistic Career-Life Planning and Management workshop that will let them rediscover themselves and aid them in the construction of steps to attain career goals.
- There will also be post placement support whereby consultants from the U PME Centre and GioCareers will follow-up with CAP participants to check in on how they are settling into their new roles.
- Participants can look forward to greater community support in the form of digital forums for increased interaction and sharing with career activists.
- Career activists will undergo a certification and training programme to equip them with the relevant skills to help their charges.

Mentoring Others Back on Track

Mentor Dennis Chan believes he can help others get back on their feet, having experienced the downs of being out of a job.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

"The interview is going well," said Dennis Chan to himself, as he sat across the table from the human resource (HR) manager.

With the power to hire or reject Dennis' application, the bespectacled HR manager scrutinised every detail in the resume, occasionally nodding his head as if in approval. With more than 14 years of experience in the IT sector then, Dennis knew he had a good chance of securing the job.

"So you are 41 years old this year?" asked the HR manager.

Dennis responded in the positive. And just as abruptly, the HR manager extended his hand and said: "Your resume looks good. Thank you for your time to come down today. Don't worry, you don't have to call us, we will call you."

Like the dozens of interviews Dennis had gone for prior to that one, the call never came.

FIGHTING SPIRIT

Back in 2008, Dennis left his job as an IT professional to become a trainer for more than two years. But when he decided to return to the industry, he found himself having to overcome obstacles he had not expected.

"I really struggled to look for a job. After every job interview, I was met with disappointment. I was frustrated and almost lost hope, but I forced myself to think positively and went on to network," said Dennis.

More than two hundred – that was the number of job applications Dennis, now 47 years old, sent out in his months of trying to get a new job, before landing one as a senior IT manager in 2010.

HELPING OTHERS

For eight months now, Dennis has volunteered as a mentor in the Career Activation Programme to share his struggles and experiences with mature professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) who are trying to find a job.

He volunteered as a mentor as he thought the CAP was a great idea to help mature PMEs get back on their feet; something he wished was available when he was looking for a job.

He also believes the CAP gives hope to these individuals. "It's not only about money, but hope as well. Hope is what will keep them going," he said.

Staying Positive

We meet up with one mature PME who got back into the career track with some help from the Career Activation Programme.

Story and Photo by **Shukry Rashid**

A relationship manager for a social enterprise for one and a half years, Chong Kum Hong decided to resign from his job due to personal reasons.

The 54-year-old family man suddenly found out that securing a new job as a mature PME was not going to be easy. He also wondered if his skills were still relevant for the job market.

"I was surprised the job market was so challenging, especially when it came to my age. I felt there was some form of age discrimination. During my interviews, I also found out that many of the employers found me overqualified," he said.

His search turned out for the better after six months – he landed a position as a community director at GioCareers with some help from NTUC's U PME Centre's Career Activation Programme (CAP). GioCareers is a community-centric social enterprise dedicated to helping workers tide over challenges in their career journey.

STAYING POSITIVE

He realised that, though times were tough, mature PMEs like himself have a choice – to continue being negative or be positive. He was also glad that the CAP instilled positivity and provided peer support to mature PMEs like himself.

Through the CAP, he was advised to utilise the unemployment period to pursue his interests. That was when he enrolled himself for the WSQ Advanced Certificate in Training and Assessment (ACTA).

He also got himself a security officer's license just in case he could not find a job in a certain time frame.

NTUC THIS WEEK

MANAGING EDITOR
SHONA TAN-JAMES shonatan@ntuc.org.sg

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR
GOY KAE LIP kaelip@ntuc.org.sg

EDITOR
NICOLETTE YEO nicolette_yeo@ntuc.org.sg

SUB EDITOR
GURMEET SINGH gurmeet_singh@ntuc.org.sg

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR
RAMESH SUBBARAMAN rameshr@ntuc.org.sg

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT
LIM LI YIN liyin@ntuc.org.sg

SENIOR JOURNALIST/NEW MEDIA MANAGER
JONATHAN TAN jonathan_tan@ntuc.org.sg

SENIOR JOURNALIST
FAWWAZ BAKTEE fawwazf@ntuc.org.sg

JOURNALISTS
SHUKRY RASHID shukryr@ntuc.org.sg
RYAN CHAN ryan_chan@ntuc.org.sg

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
DANIEL GOH daniel_goh@ntuc.org.sg

SENIOR DESIGNER
MOHAMED NASUHAR SOEYOETI nasuhar@ntuc.org.sg

DESIGNERS
TAY EE WEE eewee.tay@ntuc.org.sg
IVAN TIMOTHY PRASETYA ivan_prasetya@ntuc.org.sg

SUBSCRIPTION
JENNY LIAU jennyliau@majoritymedia.com.sg

ADVERTISING BOOKINGS/QUERIES
PHONE 6622 7009
EMAIL sales@majoritymedia.com.sg

PUBLISHER
MAJORITY MEDIA PTE LTD
ADDRESS 73 Bras Basah Road, NTUC Trade Union House #06-01 Singapore 189556
PHONE +65 6622 7098 FAX +65 6327 5640
EMAIL LMNewsroom@ntuc.org.sg

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ANDROID

Check-in to the U PME Centre

Have you been wondering how NTUC's U PME Centre at One Marina Boulevard helps match PMEs with suitable jobs and offer advice on workplace issues? We drop by to find out.

Story and Photo by **Jonathan Tan**

Making An Enquiry

- Designed as a one-stop centre, the U PME Centre was set up specifically to support the needs of professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) in the areas of workplace advisory, career progression, job placement, and membership privileges.
- Depending on your needs, the centre's electronic queue system will ensure that the right staff will attend to you.

Career Coaching

To help you secure your new job, the career coach will first assess where you stand in your professional life, and outline what you may need to do to prepare for new employment opportunities. The same career coach will also support you throughout your job search journey.

1 ASSESSMENT

To better understand your needs and aspirations, the career coach will first review details such as employment status, qualifications, skillsets and interest.

2 COURSE OF ACTION

With that information, the coach will be able to either link you with potential employers with jobs that match your interest, or share tips on what can be done to enable you to secure that next job. This may include advice on courses or programmes to register for so as to bridge any gaps in skills with the needs of your intended job.

3 JOB PLACEMENT

Once you're ready to make the transition, the career coach will then help you with your job search. Depending on the opportunities available at the time, this could be in the form of direct referrals or formal introductions at one of the many networking sessions and career fairs organised by the U PME Centre and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute).

Where possible, you may even be encouraged to register for the Singapore Workforce Development Agency's Professional Conversion Programme which will secure you a job while you undergo training and gain experience in the new role.

4 CASE MANAGEMENT

Making sure that you receive support throughout, your career coach or mentor will be keeping in touch with you through emails or phone calls.

Workplace Advisory

- A consultant is always at hand to address any issues you may be facing at the workplace and offer general advice on your rights.
- Ordinary Branch members who require additional support can tap on the expertise of their respective unions as intermediaries for workplace matters. General Branch members, on the other hand, can count on the U PME Centre's consultants for detailed workplace advisory and even tripartite mediation.

GOOD TO KNOW

NTUC U PME Centres

- Website: **www.ntuc.org.sg/pme**
- **One Marina Boulevard (OMB) NTUC Centre**
  1 Marina Boulevard #B1-01 S(018989)
  Operating Hours:
  Mon - Fri: 9.00am to 6.00pm
  Sat: 9.00am to 2.00pm
  Closed on Sun & PH

- **Devan Nair Institute for Employment and Employability**
  e2i Career Services Centre (Level 2)
  80 Jurong East Street 21 S(609607)
  Operating Hours:
  Mon - Fri: 9.00am to 6.00pm
  Sat: 9.00am to 1.00pm
  Closed on Sun & PH

Labour Market Q2 Advance Release

Amid subdued global economic conditions, this year's second quarter saw slow employment growth and a rise in unemployment rate.

By **Ryan Chan**

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) released their key preliminary labour market findings for the second quarter of 2016 on 28 July 2016, showing a rise in unemployment and redundancies, and slowed employment growth.

During this period, unemployment rate among residents grew from 2.7 per cent to 3 per cent, with the rate for citizens also increasing from 2.6 per cent to 3.1 per cent, leading to a rise in overall unemployment rate from 1.9 per cent to 2.1 per cent.

The number of redundancies has been growing in the past five years, a trend which shows no signs of stopping. The number of workers made redundant in Q2 2016 is estimated at 5,500, the highest since figures posted during the same period of the global financial crisis of 2009. This is also higher than Q1 2016 (4,710) and Q2 2015 (3,250).

SLOWED EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

Employment grew by 5,500, a drop from the 13,000 in the first quarter of 2016, and lower than the 9,700 for the same period in 2015. Much of this growth was due in part to the services sector, but the decline in the manufacturing sector continued.

This left the total employment figure for June 2016 at 3,674,000. This is 1.3 per cent higher than 2015, and similar to the 1.4 per cent growth achieved in March 2016.

HELPING AFFECTED WORKERS

NTUC Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) Cham Hui Fong said that there is a growing number of workers getting retrenched as more firms opt for a shorter work week and temporary shut-downs in a bid to reduce cost.

ASG Cham said: "In the unionised sectors, we also note a steady rise in the number of retrenched workers as more firms, particularly in the manufacturing sector, opt for shorter work weeks and temporary shut downs. Some 2,329 workers were laid off in the first half of 2016 compared to 492 workers in the same period last year.

"When retrenchment is inevitable, we urge companies to conduct it in a fair and sensitive way. For unionised companies, our unions will work closely with management to provide affected workers assistance from NTUC's e2i such as skills training, career coaching and job matching, among others.

"Whilst the unemployment rate of Singaporeans has crept up, there are still job vacancies that need to be filled. We need to focus on reskilling working people to meet evolving industry needs so that they are able to find jobs in the shortest possible time."

NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) CEO Gilbert Tan also said the institute will work closely with unions and companies to offer assistance to affected workers.

"Our officers provide career guidance support, training advisory and employment facilitation services to help the displaced workers transit to their next jobs."

"But overall, workers would also need to align their skill sets and attitude with the available job positions to ensure a successful job match," he added.

GOOD TO KNOW

Affected workers can approach NTUC at the following venues for assistance on job placement and professional development:

e2i Career Services Centre
Level 2, 80 Jurong East Street 21
Singapore 609607

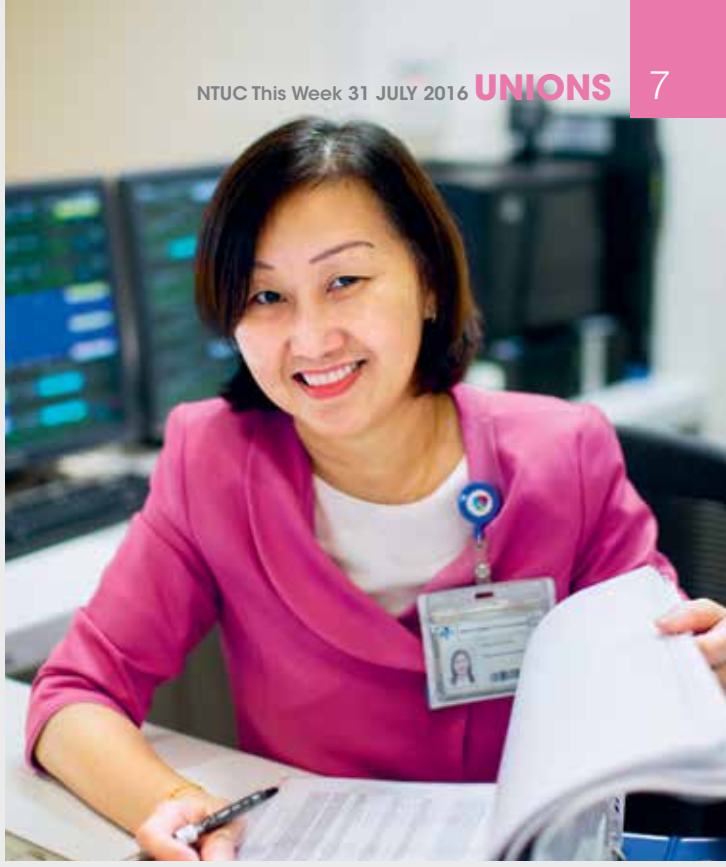
Mon to Fri: 9am – 6pm
Sat: 9am – 1pm
Sun & PH: Closed
Website: **www.e2i.com.sg**
Contact: **6474 0606**

U PME Centre
1 Marina Boulevard #B1-01
Singapore 018989

Mon to Fri: 9am – 6pm
Sat: 9am – 2pm
Sun & PH: Closed
Website: **www.ntuc.org.sg/wps/portal/pme/home**
Contact: **6213 8008**

U Care Centre
Level 2, 80 Jurong East Street 21
Singapore 609607

Mon to Fri: 9am – 6pm
Sat: 9am – 1pm
Sun & PH: Closed
UCC website: **www.ntuc.org.sg/wps/portal/ucarecentre/home**
UCC contact: **1800 255 2828**



New Collective Agreements to Benefit Workers

More than 50,000 employees stand to benefit from harmonised collective agreements.

By **Ramesh Subbaraman**

Thanks to the efforts of the Healthcare Services Employees' Union (HSEU), nearly 50,000 public healthcare sector employees are going to benefit from updated collective agreements (CAs) across six healthcare clusters.

This comes after HSEU signed memoranda of understanding with the individual healthcare clusters on some common provisions in an effort to harmonise the CAs.

It took about one-and-a-half years to complete the discussions and exercise and the signing ceremony took place on 3 June 2016.

HSEU President K Thanaletchimi (pictured right) said the move helps to level-up some of the benefits. They will also lead to greater productivity and efficiency, added MOH Holdings, the holding company of the clusters.

The process started in February 2015 and involved discussions with both MOH Holdings and the various healthcare clusters comprising National University Health System, National Healthcare Group, Singapore Health Services (SingHealth), Alexandra Health System, Jurong Health Services and Eastern Health Alliance.

THE BENEFITS

Some of the key benefits from the harmonised CAs include:

- Salary ranges for administrative, ancillary, allied health and pharmacist job groups have been revised upwards from 1 July 2016.
- The re-employment age for older employees has gone up to 67 from 1 July this year, one year ahead of the legislation and implementation in July 2017.
- The CAs include career development opportunities, flexible work arrangements and adoption of the Progressive Wage Model.

"We are extremely delighted that the six clusters have agreed to extend the re-employment age to 67 as well as adopt the revised Employment Assistance Payment before the national implementation date," said Ms Thanaletchimi.

> "This [updated collective agreements] will surely benefit many of our mature employees reaching retirement and re-employment age. They will continue to enjoy annual increment and performance bonus too."
>
> *HSEU President K Thanaletchimi*

BENEFITING WORKERS

Sixty-four-year-old Senior Patient Associate P Nilaveni from Tan Tock Seng Hospital is happy to hear the re-employment age at 67 policy will take effect immediately on 1 July 2016.

"The union has done a good job. We have the experience and this sector needs it. We are on the ground and we can also multitask by doing both administration and clinic duties.

"I continue to serve my patients with care. You must have the heart when you work in a hospital environment," said Mdm Nilaveni, who has been in the healthcare sector for 24 years.

Another worker who is benefiting is 55-year-old Sandra Chia Kuan Kuan (pictured above, right) who started off as a ward assistant at Changi General Hospital, providing limited administrative support.

The hospital realised that the role overlapped with that of the patient service associate.

The harmonised CA now provides for the ward assistant's job scope to be expanded and she was promoted to become a patient service associate.

"As a patient service associate, I can now understand the needs of the patient better. I now also help to sort out the patient's case notes, print out the appointment details and help with the bills," said Madam Chia.

WORKING WITH MANAGEMENT

Ms Thanaletchimi added that bipartism between union and management has been key towards a win-win outcome.

The National Healthcare Group's Chief Human Resource Officer Olivia Tay explained that during the negotiations, both sides were willing to see each other's point of view.

Engage Companies Early

Take action now by engaging companies to address issues of re-employment, shares ASG Cham in a dialogue with SISEU branch delegates.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

Branch officials should start engaging their companies early to offer re-employment to workers turning 65 before the raising of the re-employment age to 67 comes into effect on 1 July 2017.

This was urged on 17 July 2016 by NTUC Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) Cham Hui Fong who was part of the Singapore Industrial & Services Employees' Union's (SISEU) Pre-Quadrennial Delegates' Conference dialogue between the union's council of advisors and branch officials.

"We are already seeing cases where workers are turning 65 and companies are telling us that they will only implement it when the law comes into effect and that there's no need to re-employ now. And that is why we need to engage the companies early," said ASG Cham.

The panel at the dialogue included Senior Minister of State (SMS) at the Prime Minister's Office Josephine Teo, SISEU Council of Advisors Vice-Chairman Matthias Yao, SISEU General Secretary Lim Kuang Beng, SISEU Executive Secretary Sylvia Choo, SISEU General Treasurer Phillip Lee and former SISEU President Tan Peng Heng.

WORKING TOGETHER

ASG Cham also encouraged branch officials to work with the companies to identify workers who are reaching the age of 62, the kinds of jobs available, and to see if the workers need training and upgrading.

"In fact you should do this much earlier before the worker turns 62. Some companies take years to prepare a worker for a new job role. It is also easier for a worker to have a mindset change at 55 than at 62, which can be a bit challenging," said ASG Cham.

But if the company is not doing well, NTUC will encourage companies to look for alternative jobs for the worker eligible for re-employment. The worker however needs to be prepared to work in a different job environment, she added.

TAKING OWNERSHIP

SMS Teo also urged workers to invest in their skills and keep them relevant.

"If you are in a company that looks shaky, you cannot wait for the company to tell you to leave. It is important for you to invest in your skills, do something about it and when the time comes, you are ready. Put yourself in a position where you are able to do something else," she said, adding that this was the intention behind the SkillsFuture initiative.

"The SkillsFuture credit has been put in your hands. It does not go to the employer but to you. You need to take ownership of your skills upgrading and look after your own interests," she said.

Being Resourceful Amid Change

In a work arena that is fast changing with the onset of new technologies, what can workers do? The answer – take care of your skills gap to stay relevant.

By **Shukry Rashid**

Job security and how continuous learning can ensure employability are on the minds of workers, especially with evolving technologies and the future economy.

Many unionists raised these concerns to Acting Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) Ong Ye Kung during a dialogue organised by the Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute on 21 July 2016 at the NTUC Centre. The event was attended by some 250 people from various unions.

One topic that came up was how the future economy will affect workers' jobs. Minister Ong said that jobs may be affected with technological advancements but added: "As long as the person is resourceful, other jobs are created."

FILLING UP SKILLS GAP

Even though the spirit of continuous learning is important, Minister Ong said that it does not mean workers must get a diploma or a degree. Instead, he urged workers to move away from that mindset and fill up on their skills gap.

"I don't think getting a Master's Degree makes me a better worker, based on what I'm doing. What will make my work better is to really identify what are my skills gap now," he said.

He gave himself as an example where he acknowledged that filling the skills gap of conversing in Malay and improving his social media skills will help him be a better politician and minister.

Giving Everyone a Fair Chance

"Our efforts are so that every Singaporean has the best chance to succeed in life, regardless of what happened in the past," says NTUC Secretary-General Chan Chun Sing at SCORE's awards ceremony.

By **Ryan Chan**

The necessary skills, a supportive environment and the correct attitude – these were the three fundamentals that NTUC Secretary-General (SG) Chan Chun Sing highlighted at the Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE) Appreciation Awards on 20 July 2016 for ex-offenders to succeed in life.

"It is not just about equipping ex-offenders with a certain skillset. It's about equipping them with the skill to acquire new skillsets and continuously acquire fresh capabilities even as they go on in their journey in life. It is, as they say, learning to learn," he elaborated.

A supportive environment is also necessary. Society is more accepting of ex-offenders reintegrating back into the community now, and SG Chan said NTUC and government agencies will constantly reach out to more community partners to help in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

Lastly, a good attitude is required in order to succeed.

SG Chan said: "We can equip a person with the best skills, have the most supporting environment, but it is the resilience of an individual to cross the last mile that is so important in the rehabilitation of ex-offenders.

"Our efforts is so that every Singaporean has the best chance to succeed in life, regardless of what happened in the past."

RE-INTEGRATING INTO SOCIETY

At the ceremony, SCORE gave out awards to 94 partners and individuals for their contributions towards helping ex-offenders re-enter into the community. These organisations have supported SCORE's projects for about 20 years.

SCORE offers work programmes in prison, giving inmates a chance to pick up vital skills while serving their sentences. These skills include cooking, kitchen operations and food hygiene practices – all in a bid to boost their employability. SCORE then helps match them with potential employers to secure jobs before their release.

SCORE gave out 94 awards to partners and individuals who have helped ex-offenders to reintegrate into the community.

NO DISCRIMINATION

To date, there are more than 4,700 employers willing to hire ex-offenders. One of these companies is RedMart Limited, an online grocery delivery service, where 38-year-old Desmond Koh works as a warehouse associate.

"There is no discrimination working here, and people are treated the same. The transition stage was challenging, because the company is continuously growing, but that also means there are opportunities to grow and learn," he said.

SCORE offers job retention support, and follow-ups with ex-offenders to ensure they have reintegrated well into the job. This year, SCORE will extend its support to 12 months after placement, up from the previous six months.

RedMart is also currently working with SCORE to implement specially-tailored work programmes for inmates to make the reintegration smoother.

RedMart vice-president of operations Jamil Khan said: "SCORE does a good job of ensuring the people that come in are well trained … we are working with them to implement programmes so they will be even more ready when they come to work with us.

"We don't differentiate between an ex-offender and a regular employee, because we believe in second chances."

Growing Associations

NTUC's U Associate programme continues to grow with the latest addition of four new names to its list.

By **Jonathan Tan**

Building up a steady momentum of growth, NTUC's U Associate programme welcomed four new partners into its network of professional guilds over the last two months.

Four separate Memoranda of Understanding were signed between 1 June 2016 and 22 July 2016. The new U Associates include The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, Market Research Society of Singapore, Singapore Psychological Society and IT Service Management Forum, Singapore Chapter.

To date, the U Associate programme has 36 professional guilds spanning 22 sectors such as finance, IT, engineering, human resources and logistics.

MORE OPTIONS FOR PMES

As part of the new agreement, NTUC and the new U Associates will co-develop new programmes and networking opportunities that will help develop and enhance the careers of working professionals, managers and executives.

There are also plans in the pipeline to develop professional standards within these sectors so working professionals can enjoy better recognition.

> "The rapid growth of the ecosystem is a testament to the value of the U Associate programme we bring to our working professionals. We're excited to have 36 professional guilds across 22 sectors on board the Labour Movement family now. Our members can leverage on the numerous programmes and cross-sectoral initiatives developed with these industry experts to stay relevant in their jobs and resilient in the future economy."
>
> *Vivek Kumar, director of NTUC U Associate and U Future Leaders*

UPCOMING U ASSOCIATE PROGRAMMES

Keen on giving your career a boost and broadening your horizons? Here are a few programmes across various industries taking place in August you may be interested in.

Sustainable Energy Development Programme

Designed as a sampler of what the sustainable energy industry is all about, this six-day-over-six-month course will introduce the key aspects of the sector such as climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, and cost-effective and energy-efficient solutions. The programme aims to give PMEs a better idea of what to expect from a career here.

For more information or to register, visit ***seas.org.sg***.

Young Logistics Leaders Programme

From trends and developments to technology and applications, young executives keen on carving a niche in the field of logistics will be able to gain an in-depth perspective of the industry through a combination of classroom lessons, project-based learning, and interaction with mentors over the course of the two-month-long programme.

For more information or to register, visit ***supplychainasia.org/young-logistics-leadership-programme-yl2p/***.

Advanced Engineers Leadership Programme

As a follow up from the Young Engineers Leadership Programme, the six modules and mentorship opportunities in this programme will impart more advanced technology management and leadership skills that can prepare you for the complex challenges of tomorrow.

For more information or to register, visit ***www.ies.org.sg*** *or email* ***ies.yelp@ies.org.sg***.

The 36 U Associates span 22 different sectors. These include logistics, sustainable energy, human resources, real estate, IT, and finance, among others.

Working Smart Through Productivity

With the Pool Cleaning Robot, Ibis Styles' swimming pool can now be cleaned without the need of any human supervision.

With the productivity beds, Ibis Styles' room attendants no longer have to lift heavy mattresses to change bedsheets.

Newly opened hotel implements clever solutions to old challenges to make work lighter, faster and easier.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

Before Hotel Ibis Styles at Macpherson opened its doors in April this year, its management identified potential challenges the property was likely to face. To tackle the hotel industry's labour shortage, the hotel decided to adopt automation and simple ideas to improve productivity and make processes more manpower lean.

The management engaged NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) to tap on the Inclusive Growth Programme (IGP) and through it, the hotel acquired productivity initiatives such as the Pool Cleaning Robot and customised beds (see photo above, top).

POOL CLEANING ROBOT

It is common practice in the hotel industry for workers to be tasked to clean swimming pools, on top of doing general cleaning. This task can take anywhere from three to four hours each night during the pool's closing hours.

"Running hotels with pools, you need to task workers to clean the pools every night and this can be really labour intensive," said Ibis Styles General Manager Shamila Rolfe, who has more than 25 years of experience in running hotels.

With the Pool Cleaning Robot, a worker only needs to plug the robot in and place it in the pool. The robot then does the job of cleaning the pool without any human supervision.

As it is equipped with an enhanced cleaning technology, the robot sizes the pool up and then chooses a suitable cleaning cycle for maximum efficiency. With this, the hotel saves about 112 man-hours a month.

"On top of that, any hotel would require two staff members to be at the pool to ensure safety. With the robot, we don't have to worry about the staff who is working at night. It saves time and cost. This benefits both the hotel and the workers under our employment," added Ms Rolfe.

PRODUCTIVITY BEDS

To help its mature workers in the housekeeping department, the hotel also customised its beds for its 293 rooms so that bedsheets can be changed without any heavy lifting.

An additional thin layer of mattress, called a topper, is placed on top of the normal heavy mattress. The room attendant now only needs to lift the topper and tuck the excess bedsheet cloth underneath it.

Without the topper, the average room attendant would have accumulated an estimate of two hours of lifting the heavy mattresses each day, which can be labour intensive and run the risk of causing back injuries.

One room attendant who has benefited from this initiative is 59-year-old room attendant Wang Sow Hwa (photo above).

"Without this topper, of course I would take a longer time. I think we would even need two people to do the bed changing as the mattresses can be quite heavy to lift. The initiative is better for older workers like myself. I can finish doing up the beds on my own and even cut the time it takes to make up the room," said Mr Wang.

IGP

The productivity measures have led to a gains sharing of at least 10% for the workers.

POOL CLEANING ROBOT

Without	With
Workers would take more than 3-4 hours each night to clean the pool.	Hotel saves an estimate of 112 man hours a month.

PRODUCTIVITY BEDS

Without	With
Room attendants would spend about 2 hours lifting heavy mattresses each day.	The room attendant reduces the time needed to make up the beds by 5-6 minutes per room.
More than one room attendant may be required with the changing of bedsheets.	Only one room attendant is required to make up the rooms. Mature workers can do their work without the risk of injury.

NTUC National Day Parade contingent commanders Yeo Chun Fing (extreme left) and Evlyn Chan with the parade commanders.

NTUC parade contingent anticipating the arrival of the NTUC Central Committee members.

Leo Sequeira (in green), 72, longest serving participant for the NTUC NDP contingent.

Thank You NTUC NDP Contingent!

NTUC President Mary Liew and fellow Central Committee members drop by the Sports Hub to show their appreciation to the NTUC NDP contingent on 16 July 2016.

NTUC President (in red) showing appreciation to the participants.

The NTUC Central Committee members together with the NTUC NDP working committee.

> "It's been so encouraging to see our members on the ground volunteering to be part of the NTUC contingent. Many of them have even been faithfully representing us for many years. I can see their passion and commitment that demonstrate their love for our nation as well as their passion for the Labour Movement."
>
> *NTUC President Mary Liew*

New Support Centre for Seniors in Bukit Merah

With the opening of a new cluster support office, senior residents in Bukit Merah can expect better connection to community support.

By **Ryan Chan**

Seniors residing in Bukit Merah will be receiving better care with the opening of the NTUC Health Cluster Support office on 21 July 2016.

FOCUS ON OPERATIONS

NTUC Health currently has existing initiatives in the area, with five senior activity centres, a senior group home, a sheltered home and a senior day care centre. The opening of the new office will be a single point of contact to connect residents with other services they require, such as financial assistance and medical services.

For instance, the social enterprise works closely with government agencies like the Agency for Integrated Care, which provides mental health support. NTUC Health was appointed in 2013 by the Ministry of Social and Family Development as the cluster operator for Bukit Merah and Taman Jurong. The latter has its own Cluster Support office that was launched in November last year.

The various support services come about with a growing ageing population. Two years ago, 12.4 per cent of the population in Singapore was above 65, with the number projected to increase to 19 per cent by 2030.

Member of Parliament for Tanjong Pagar Group Representation Constituency and advisor to Henderson-Dawson Grassroots Organisation Joan Pereira said: "As we continue to improve our policies and infrastructure to meet the growing needs of our ageing population, the role of community organisations and volunteers remains pivotal in providing quality care to our seniors."

UNISIM PARTNERSHIP

NTUC Health also inked a memorandum of understanding with SIM University (UniSIM) that will benefit both students and NTUC Health staff.

NTUC Health Chairman Tan Hwee Bin said: "The partnership will see internship opportunities for UniSIM students in the counselling, social work and gerontology programmes at NTUC Health's senior activity centres, nursing homes, cluster support and home care services.

"The partnership will subsequently extend to volunteering and research opportunities for the students. NTUC Health staff will be able to take up SkillsFuture courses and training at UniSIM to be better equipped in caring for our seniors."

The opening of the new Cluster Support office will see seniors receiving more care and better connection to various assistance.

MP for Tanjong Pagar GRC Joan Pereira at the official opening of the NTUC Health Cluster Support office.

FACE 2 FACE WITH

Shafari Baharawi

By **Jonathan Tan**

"I've been a union member since 1986 when I joined the then Public Utilities Board, but I only became a union delegate in 1999 when our late General-Secretary Ronald Ng approached me and asked if I would be interested in serving as a union delegate as we lacked representatives at my depot in Dunearn.

"I said why not, gave it a try, and I have never looked back since then," shared General Secretary of Public Utilities Board Employees' Union Shafari Baharawi, 52.

Taking time off his hectic schedule, the engineer spoke to us about serving the needs of his members in the PUBEU.

NTUC This Week: What has kept you going all these years?

Shafari Baharawi: Frankly speaking, I had no interest in the unions, or serving in one – until I made the step in. That's when I realised that being able to make a difference and help our members through their difficulties gave me a real sense of satisfaction and happiness. This is what keeps me going as I continue on with this journey.

What are some of the challenges you encounter as a unionist?

There will always be challenges on the job. Many times, when we deal with grievances from our members and meet up with their managers, they (the latter) always have the perception that we are coming after them, and automatically, they become very defensive and tense.

How do you approach such challenges?

I will always educate them (the managers) that when the union comes in, it does not have to mean that there is a problem. Our role is actually to help the management solve problems, and not be viewed as the troublemaker. It is never about complaining against anyone, but about settling issues and changing for the better.

Being diplomatic, my style is to always try to come to a win-win resolution. As a union leader, I try to be tactful, reason the problem, and propose a solution to mitigate the situation. Getting angry and aggressive with the use of strong language is unnecessary.

Share with us some of the takeaways from your union work?

I've learnt that to keep on doing what I do, and do it well, I have to be knowledgeable, which is why I value training and upgrading opportunities. Experience too, is something that's very important in life. The most important though is building up a good rapport, especially with management and HR. This good relationship we have with PUB's management is the result of having built up a strong network. Problems can be solved much more easily when you have a good relationship.

How would you encourage younger members to come forward and serve as leaders?

This is a noble cause that we are undertaking, where we're working to help our fellow workers. You'll never know how your passion to help others will come to life, so do come forward, and experience for yourself on what goes on behind the scenes in ensuring good labour management relations, and the satisfaction of helping your fellow workers.

INSIDER'S GUIDE

pubEU

Public Utilities Board Employees' Union

Established: 9 September 1999

Why: PUBEU is the house union representing workers employed by PUB, Singapore's national water agency. It also looks after their welfare and interests.

Membership: 2,900 members

Did You Know: Before the PUBEU was formed, union members belonged to the Public Utilities Board Staff Union, which also included workers from the power and gas departments. Today, PUBEU enjoys a strong labour management relationship with PUB.

Snapshots

A quick round-up of what went on in and around the Labour Movement recently.

Compiled by ***NTUC This Week*** team

Bringing Cheer @ Bendemeer

In the spirit of giving back, the Housing and Development Board Staff Union (HDBSU) and Housing and Development Board (HDB) embarked on a community project to refresh the homes of low income families in the Bendemeer area.

In collaboration with Young NTUC's U Heart initiative and real estate developer City Developments Limited, the event saw more than 150 volunteers helping to clean and paint the homes of 27 beneficiaries on 18 July 2016.

They were joined by NTUC Deputy Secretary-General, Grassroots Advisor and Member of Parliament for Jalan Besar GRC (Whampoa) Heng Chee How, who gave out 60 grocery hampers worth $80 each to low income families in the area.

Employment Pass Qualifying Salary Raised

From 1 January 2017, the qualifying salary for Employment Pass (EP) applications will be raised from $3,300 to $3,600.

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) said the change is part of its regular updating of the EP qualifying salary to keep pace with rising local wages, maintain the quality of the foreign workforce and enhance their complementarity to the local workforce.

Responding to the announcement on his Facebook page, NTUC Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) Patrick Tay described the move as a positive one.

"This, together with the series of other measures such as the Fair Consideration Framework, 'Triple Weak' Scrutiny, Jobs Bank and also tightening/scrutiny of conditions/criteria for EP will help level the playing field for our local PMEs and also build a stronger Singaporean core," he said.

ASG Tay urged MOM to be watchful of companies and employers who through 'creative means' artificially blow up the wages of foreign PMEs to meet the new criteria.

The bottom line, he added, was that local PMEs should be better off and not worse off.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

NTUC VP Edwin Lye to Join SNEF

NTUC Vice-President and General Secretary of the Singapore Teachers' Union (STU) Edwin Lye will be leaving the Labour Movement and relinquishing both positions on 31 July 2016.

He will join the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) on 1 August 2016 and take care of industrial relations and tripartism.

Current STU Vice President Cherry Chacko will take over as the new General Secretary of STU.

Mr Lye is one of three recipients of the SNEF-Stephen Lee award which aims to develop senior executives who can provide leadership for the secretariat of SNEF in representing the collective interests of employers in industrial relations. Mr Lye will be placed on a 24-month staff development programme that will see him attached to the Manpower Ministry and NTUC and their agencies to be exposed to all areas of tripartite work.

He will eventually be placed in an important position in the SNEF, according to SNEF President Robert Yap.

Thanking Mr Lye for his contributions to the Labour Movement, NTUC President Mary Liew said that in the 20 years or more that he was a unionist, he helped to boost union membership and strengthen industrial and international relations.

She added: "While Mr Lye will be leaving the Labour Movement, we are confident that his move to SNEF signals a win for tripartism. No doubt, Mr Lye will be able to leverage his extensive experience and knowledge in his new role. We look forward to working with him in a different capacity and wish him all the best in his new endeavours."

Look out for a special interview with Edwin Lye in next week's edition.

Celebrating Hari Raya

The Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS), National Taxi Association (NTA) and Singapore Malay Teachers' Union (SMTU) celebrated Hari Raya recently to spread the joy with its members.

SOS and Seacare celebrated its event on 15 July 2016 at Mandarin Orchard Singapore. The event was graced by Environment and Water Resources Minister Masagos Zulkifli and was attended by some 400 guests, including 80 residents from four welfare homes. Green packets worth $50 were also given out to the residents.

NTA held its event on 22 July 2016 at DPelangi restaurant and was attended by 200 NTA Muslim members and their families, including NTA Executive Advisor Ang Hin Kee.

SMTU celebrated its annual Salam Aidilfitri event on 23 July 2016 at NTUC Club. Graced by Associate Prof Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, SMTU also invited 50 orphans from Pertapis to join in the celebration.

Membership Drive

The National Private Hire Vehicles Association's (NPHVA) first membership event last month saw 27 new members joining its ranks.

Held at the Lagun Sari Restaurant in Joo Chiat and to coincide with the Hari Raya festivities, the *Iftar* Gathering 2016 saw more than 60 members and friends from the driving community engaging the association's representatives and protemp committee members in informal discussions to learn more about the new association.

Sharing future plans, NPHVA Executive Advisor S Thiagarajan said that more such outreach events will be organised to raise awareness and grow the association's membership.

What's Happening Where

Pulau Tioman Getaway

Been staring out the office window and wishing for a short break under the blue skies? Here's your chance to pack the travel bag for a short getaway. Head out to the sun-drenched beaches of Tioman for a chill-out time with the family or friends. Organised by Aranda Country Club, the 3D2N weekend escape will surely leave you refreshed.

*3–5 Sept 2016, 6am, Aranda Country Club, 60 Pasir Ris Drive 3. $275 (ACC members), $285 (NTUC members), $295 (public). To register, email full name and contact to **linda_yeo@arandaclub.org.sg** or call **6584 6811**. Registration closes 20 Aug 2016.*

Baby & Junior Race

Let them indulge in what comes naturally! Little ones will soon be able to gear up to start their running engines for the Baby & Junior Race 2016 happening a few months down the road. There are six categories catering to different age groups, from as young as eight months up to six years of age. Plus, the whole family can join in for a bit of a workout too! Attractive prizes are up for grabs, including a 3D2N trip to Phuket!

*10 Sept 2016, 10am–7pm, D'Marquee @ Downtown East, 1 Pasir Ris Close. $10 (eXplorerkid members), $30 (public). To register, visit **www.explorerkid.com**. Registration closes 31 Aug 2016.*

Little Chef @ Work

Stir up delicious flavour with the kids at the Little Chef @ Work class. Perfect for parent-child bonding, the class will teach children how to make, bake and decorate a cake. Parents are welcome to join their kids to whip up a Nutella steamed cake, which they can bring home to enjoy together.

*20 Aug 2016, 2–4pm, Kids' Room, Aranda Country Club, 60 Pasir Ris Drive 3. $10 (Aranda member's child), $15 (NTUC member's child), $20 (guest's child). For enquiries, call **6584 6811**. Registration closes 13 Aug 2016.*

Career Advancement Workshop

Master Coach Michelle Ayn Tessensohn

How can I leverage my unique strengths and build on my personal brand? Keen to learn how to improve your connection with others and how to break through personal limits? Then the Authenticity and Removing Limiting Beliefs workshop may just be the thing for you. The third in the series of Young NTUC's Career Advancement Workshop will teach you how to do all the above, with master coach Michelle Ayn Tessensohn taking you through each step to help you on your journey to self-improvement.

*18 and 25 Sept 2016, 9am–6pm, Downtown East, 1 Pasir Ris Close. Registration fees $20 (NTUC members) and $30 (public). Early bird passes at $38 for 2. Ticketing starts 23 July 2016. For enquiries, call **6582 3605**.*

“职总周报
2016年7月31日
售价 60c
MCI (P) 028/12/2015

拔锚起航找新工作

全国职工总会加大力度推动一年前展开的职总起航计划，以便全面协助失业的年长专经执人士就业。

人力部于2016年7月28日发布的2016年第二季度劳动市场报告显示，我国失业率从2016年3月份的1.9%上升至2016年6月份的2.1%。新加坡国民的失业率也从上一个季度的2.6%上升至如今的3.1%。

报告把就业增长缓慢归因于经济步伐放缓，并表示人力部将如何与劳资政伙伴协助失业者就业。

工运的努力

工运指出，职总U专经执中心可以作为失业工友寻求协助的途径之一。

在2016年7月27日举行的记者会上，职总助理秘书长兼专经执署署长郑德源透露，职总将加大力度推行职总起航计划，协助失业的专经执人士。

职总起航计划于2015年7月开始实行，合作伙伴是提供专业服务的社会企业卓悦。该企业的职业起航员将扮演计划协调员角色，向年长的专经执人士提供以社区为基础的同侪支援。

由于职业起航员过去曾经遭遇类似的职业困境，因此他们能感同身受，以过来人的身份分享经验，给如今失业的专经执人士指明迎接挑战的方向。

令人鼓舞的开端

职总助理秘书长郑德源表示，问题的关键在于专经执人士从失业那一天起到重新就业这段时期该如何面对生活？为此，职总起航计划除了协助专经执人士寻找工作及参加就业能力培训之外，还注重如何协助他们克服情绪上的失落和心理上的挫折感。

他透露，至今已有22名参与职总起航计划的专经执人士找到新工作，而负责协助专经执人士的职业起航员人数也从计划推出初期的3名增加到现有的30名

深入推广计划

助理秘书长郑德源指出：“即使需求增加，我们有足够的能力帮助一至三倍于现在的求助者。我们没有设定受援人数目标，而是根据求助的需求而定。”

他也透露将分两个层面深入推广职总起航计划。

为了提高施援品质，职业起航员都须参加结构化培训，掌握良好的沟通技巧，以及协助求助者克服职业困境的方法，并且要求他们通过考核，证实自己的能力。职总恒习中心和卓悦将负责这方面的工作。

对于参与职总起航计划的专经执人士，职总将邀请他们参加职业–生活规划和管理研讨会，以协助他们深入了解自己，明确自己的目标，从而制定实现目标的建设性步骤。职业起航员也将与计划参与者多做联系和对话。

此外，求助者在整个职业转换过程中都可以登录职总起航计划之社区网站论坛，以便从中获得相关支援。如此，他们便可以和境遇相同的同侪及职业起航员交流，而U专经执中心的辅导员还会在他们找到新工作之后与他们保持联系。

“我很感激得到境遇相同的同侪协助。职总起航计划帮我渡过难关，让我感到自己并不孤单。现在我想高兴地对你们说我在新行业找到了新工作，我将继续以积极的态度看待人生。现在我每一天都在学习新的东西。”

— 职总起航计划受益者钟小姐

“我在交流会上感受到自己并不是唯一陷入职业困境的人。职业起航员帮助我疏导情绪，指导我以积极的态度看待事物。除此之外，维系人际关系和扩大联系网也是帮助我们改变生活的一大要素，所以必须重视和坚持。”

— 职总起航计划受益者黄文俊

概览

职总起航计划

计划性质为何?

- 这是一种由过来人协助受困者的同侪支援计划，施援对象是40岁及以上而目前已失业的专经执人士。

计划如何运作?

- 参加职总起航计划安排的活动，专经执人士可以互相交流，建立关系，彼此关怀。
- 他们在陷入职业困境期间也得到职业起航员的关怀和鼓励，从而激励他们重拾信心，鼓起勇气开创未来。
- 在整个过渡时期，求助者都可以继续与境遇相似的同侪和职总起航员保持联系。

有何新动向?

- 求助者现在可以参加内容较全面的职业–生活规划与管理研讨会，让他们重新认识自己，进而在职业起航员的协助之下制定建设性步骤，实现自己的目标。
- 在求助者找到新工作之后，职总的U专经执中心及卓悦的辅导员也会跟进近况，为他们提供后续援助。
- 求助者还可以登录职总起航计划的数码论坛与职业起航员进一步交流与分享。
- 职业起航员将参加培训，学习相关技巧，并且须要通过考核，证实自己的能力。