

"thisweek

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60 CENTS
MCI (P) 102/12/2016



Administrator



Patient Transport Assistant



Gym Associate



Security Supervisor



Dementia Coordinator



Cleaning Supervisor

*Attaining
A Better Life*

Earning low-wages is not keeping these men and women from taking their future into their own hands. Read their stories inside (pages 4 to 6).

TOP STORIES



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Hear how the Youth Career Network inspired one mentor to take up career coaching courses to be more effective in her role.



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Public Utilities Board Employees' Union General Treasurer brings us through how he has been pushing the training agenda forward and walking the talk.

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TIME TO STEP UP TO KEEP UP



While low-wage workers have seen their lives steadily improve through various initiatives, can more be done by the workers and their organisations to take ownership of their collective future? We speak to ASG Zainal Sapari to find out.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

Low-wage workers are not immune to the disruption and changes in technology, and they must be willing to upgrade themselves to make sure they continue to be relevant in the workforce, said NTUC Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) Zainal Sapari in an exclusive interview with *NTUC This Week*.

"We have been trying hard to push for workers to upskill and reskill to keep themselves relevant. The moment they stop, they will become irrelevant and be replaced by technology, and they will find themselves in a worse off position," said ASG Zainal.

NTUC has been making sure that support is given to these workers through entities such as NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) and NTUC LearningHub, where union members workers are eligible for training subsidies with the Union Training Assistance Programme on top of utilising their SkillsFuture Credit.

However, ASG Zainal noticed that there are still many low-wage workers who are not going for training because they are bogged down with their jobs or are unwilling to attend training during their non-working days.

"Therefore, it is important that the employers have an open mind and encourage workers to upskill themselves during working hours [where possible]," he said.

THE WAGE ISSUE

Fewer low-wage workers received pay rises last year. The Report on Wage Practices 2016 released by the Manpower Ministry recently showed that 59.8 per cent of companies said they did not give wage increases to low-wage workers earning a basic monthly salary of \$1,100 and below in 2016. This is compared to the 53.5 per cent in 2015.

Many cited poor business performance or that they are already paying the market rate.

ASG Zainal said companies that do not give annual increments to workers will risk losing them to other industries that are doing so.

"Personally, I think it is just an excuse to not be paying these workers an increment. Typically, when the companies are doing well, they will always cite uncertain business prospects to exercise wage restraints. However, it is heartening to see that bigger unionised companies are still open to giving wage increments to low-wage workers.

"I notice many SMEs [small- and medium-sized enterprises] are giving this excuse. I urge them to adopt new technologies and business models to improve productivity and employ skilled workers. Hopefully, this will allow their low-wage workers to earn a better living," he said.

SELECTIVE GIVING

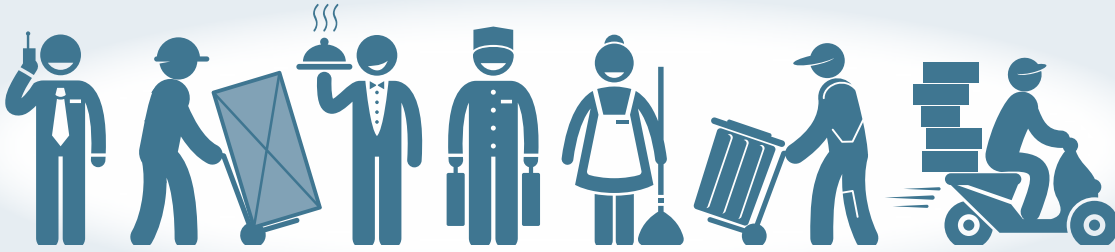
ASG Zainal also said although the Report on Wage Practices showed that 49 per cent of companies with outsourced workers earning up to \$1,100 stated that they adopted the National Wages Council (NWC) recommended quantum of \$50 in 2016, all is not what it seems.

"During our ground engagement, we noticed that NWC recommendations are not given to all workers in the company. Many companies give the recommended quantum to retain their workers rather than follow the intent and spirit of the NWC and giving to everyone," he said.

With this, he encouraged companies to give the recommended quantum to all workers instead of only those they wished to retain.

ASG Zainal also echoed the NWC recommendations that urged service buyers in outsourced sectors to allow contract values to be adjusted when necessary as this will allow service providers to give the recommended quantum to its employees.

From this year, cleaners will benefit from changes to the Progressive Wage Model (PWM) that makes it mandatory for employers to give wage increments. NTUC and its tripartite partners are also looking to include a compulsory annual wage increase and bonuses for workers in outsourced sectors such as security and landscape where the PWM has been introduced.



HELP FOR THOSE EARNING LESS



The centre guides low-wage workers on work-related issues and ways to earn a better living.

Visit www.ntuc.org.sg/ucarecentre for more information.



Want to stay relevant and employable in a changing and challenging landscape? NTUC LearningHub provides quality, innovative and affordable learning, with over 600 programmes and courses such as:

- ✓ Infocomm Technology
- ✓ Soft Skills and Literacy
- ✓ Workplace Safety and Health
- ✓ Employability Skills System
- ✓ Customer Service
- ✓ Environmental Cleaning
- ✓ Security and Manufacturing
- ✓ Human Resources Management

For more information on NTUC LearningHub and its programmes, visit www.ntuclearninghub.com.

Faced with a workplace problem, could do with some training to upgrade or in need of other assistance? Maybe you know someone who does. The Labour Movement has got these workers on its mind. Here are a few useful resources to get some help.



Better Jobs For Life
Employment and Employability Institute

Head to e2i to try for a job placement, seek out opportunities to reskill or upskill, get career guidance and sign up for the job matching services.

For more information on e2i and its initiatives, visit www.e2i.com.sg.



The NTUC-U Care Fund looks after the welfare of low-income union members and their families through various initiatives and programmes:

- ✓ U Stretch Vouchers
- ✓ U Care Back to School Vouchers
- ✓ Family Recreation & Fun Carnivals
- ✓ NTUC GIFT (group insurance for trade union members)
- ✓ SLF Hardship Grant
- ✓ Donation to Eldercare Trust
- ✓ Donation to Bright Horizons Fund

For more information on the NTUC-U Care Fund, visit www.ntuc.org.sg/ucare.

Changes in Low-Wage Workers' Income

- ▶ **2012:** NWC introduces quantitative guidelines for low-wage workers. Full-time resident employees earning a basic monthly wage of \$1,000 decreases from 10.6 per cent in 2011 to 4.7 per cent in 2016.
- ▶ **2015:** Threshold increases to \$1,100. Percentage of resident employees earning up to \$1,100 decreases from 8.2 per cent in 2014 to 5.7 per cent in 2016. Some 92,400 workers are covered. *Source: Manpower Ministry*
- ▶ **2016:** NWC recommends a flexible built-in wage increase of \$50 to \$65. Number of companies adopting the guidelines increase from 18 per cent in 2015 to 21 per cent as of December 2016.
- ▶ **2017:** The income ceiling increases to \$1,200 this year, to cover an additional 40,700 local full-time employees.

Taking Charge of Her Career

“I want to set a positive example for my children that we must always embrace learning and improve ourselves,” says NTUC Health Silver Circle Dementia Care Coordinator Sharon Kwek.

Story and Photo by **Jonathan Tan**

Formerly a fashion designer, 50-year-old Sharon Kwek traded a job of glitz and glamour for one in the healthcare industry three years ago when her late mother suffered a bad fall and fractured her hip.

“My main concern was caring for my mother and I was very stressed about it. I wanted to go into this trade to know about the best way to care for my mother,” she recalled.

After two months of serious consideration, Sharon took a leap of faith and a 50 per cent pay cut to join the healthcare industry as a therapy assistant with NTUC Health’s Silver Circle senior care centre. She has been based at the centre in the NTUC Health Nursing Home in Jurong West since it opened in 2016.

“When I decided to make the career switch, I didn’t look back. It was a tough transition, but I managed,” said the single mother of two.

WORKING HARD FOR PROGRESS

Attending to the needs of over 70 seniors, many of them suffering from dementia, is no easy task, but Sharon can count on her own support network.

“I have a very supportive family and my two kids have no complaints about our situation. To us, bonding is very important. We don’t live luxuriously, but we live happily. At work, I have a very supportive network of bosses and peers.

“Bringing happiness to the seniors I work with is my main priority. Many of them suffer from dementia and I want to do all I can to slow down their deterioration,” she explained.

A desire to gain more knowledge, better engage the seniors, and even develop her own programmes to help them led Sharon to take on a series of specialised training courses in areas like dementia care and geriatric psychiatry. To widen her skillsets, she even attended a music appreciation course in her free time to find a way to use music to help seniors with dementia.

Sharon’s effort in upgrading saw her recently promoted to the role of dementia care coordinator.

“Taking the courses has also enabled me to handle even the most difficult clients here in the centre. The best thing I can do for myself is prove how well I can work, cope with the stress, and from there, do better for myself,” she said.



Changing for the Better

Technology is enabling patient transport assistants like Ganthi Mathy Balakrishnan to be more productive at work and receive a better pay.

Story and Photo by **Jonathan Tan**



When Ganthi Mathy Balakrishnan first joined KK Women’s and Children’s Hospital (KKH) as a patient transport assistant (commonly known as a porter) back in 1998, her job involved working shifts and manually logging down her assignments into a logbook.

While her day-to-day work still sees her shuttle patients to-and-from clinics, collect samples from laboratories and do the occasional document pick-up or drop-off, her job process and working hours changed significantly. She now works five and a half a week from 8.30am to 5.30pm.

“Now we have an E-Portering system which has made the job easier. Previously, we would have a controller whom we would call and ask about our tasks and then log it down onto a paper or book. With this E-Portering system, the tasks will come through an app on our smartphone (iPhone 6 Plus), and we will be able to know where to go next,” shared Mdm Ganthi.

A collaboration between the hospital’s Human Resource and Patient Transport Services departments, this E-Portering system resulted from an initiative to review the job scope of patient transport assistants and give them more opportunities for career development.

TANGIBLE BENEFITS

Admittedly, picking up the new system did not come easily to Mdm Ganthi, a 57-year-old mother of two and grandmother to eight.

“When the E-Portering system came, it was quite difficult for me to learn how to use it. But I asked my colleagues and bosses and they taught me. I took about three months to learn, and now it is very easy, much faster and I don’t have to write in a book anymore,” she said.

With an enhanced job scope, Mdm Ganthi enjoyed a salary adjustment in July 2016.

“The pay is now much better and I’m happy with it... Whenever I got my bonus from the company, I would save it. Although if there are important needs, I would use it,” she said.

Over the years, she has also attended courses such as Service From The Heart and Corporate Grooming that have enabled her to perform better.

“The courses are very good because it teaches us how to do our jobs better, especially in communicating with patients, their families and other people... I like working here in KKH because of the people here. It’s like a family, a very good family,” she said.



Staying Healthy at Work

With an ageing workforce, one company has tapped on WorkPro to keep its employees like Sabariah Salim in the pink of health.

Story and Photo by **Shukry Rashid**

If you think that low-wage workers (LWWs) have it tough in Singapore, spare a thought for the mature LWWs who may have it tougher, with the added worry of health problems.

Take for example 57-year-old administrator Sabariah Salim, who currently earns a monthly salary of \$1,850. She has been working for local company Drillcut & Jet (DCJ) Tools Pte Ltd for the past 28 years while her husband works as a part-time taxi driver.

Her current health conditions include obesity and high cholesterol.

HEALTH INITIATIVE

The company tapped on WorkPro – a grant for companies to implement age-friendly workplaces to benefit Singaporeans through job redesign and age management practices for older workers – and received \$20,000 to implement various schemes to better the lives of its five mature workers.

NTUC is an official programme partners for WorkPro, and it is administered by NTUC's U Live @ Work department.

One of these initiatives was a health and wellness workshop.

Mdm Sabariah said: "I now know that I need to be more cautious of my weight and cholesterol level. I also learnt what activities and diet I should have to enjoy a healthier lifestyle."

DCJ representative Christie Yeo said: "Our workers need to be very hands-on and have to move things around. Even our administrators have to go out of the office into the storage space and see if everything is in place, look for the inventory to sign off and do physical stock check. These are all very physical and manual tasks, and we are blessed to have healthy mature workers."

AGE MANAGEMENT

With the funding, DCJ also purchased a water filtration system to enable staff to have access to clean water straight from the tap.

This saves Mdm Sabariah the time and trouble to boil water every day with a thermos water heater for everyone in the office.

Mdm Sabariah added that the age management initiatives are good to have at the workplace, especially for mature workers who feel they are well cared for.

CONTINUED EMPLOYMENT

Mdm Sabariah plans to work for as long as she can if she remains healthy. DCJ introduced the tripartite's fair employment practices to its employees to build awareness of re-employment when they turn 62.

Even before the enforcement of the amended re-employment age from 65 to 67 on 1 July 2017, DCJ has already incorporated into its employee handbook that employees can continue working beyond 65 as long as they remain fit.

Ms Yeo said: "If you look at our company profile, both Mdm Sabariah and our supervisor Mr Khor are our longest serving staff of 28 years. We are looking forward to retaining them past 65 and beyond."

Going for Job Satisfaction

One young gym associate has his mind set on carving out a long-term career in his chosen industry.

Story and Photo by **Fawwaz Baktee**



A job that pays a handsome salary or one that satisfies a passion? If presented with only one choice, many millennials will pick the latter no matter how low the pay is.

For Vinz Tan, 24, his job as a gym associate at local company Gymmboxx gives him a chance to indulge in his passion for fitness and customer service. This is his first full-time job and he has been on it for four months.

His daily responsibilities include handling clients' enquiries, membership registration, payment and ensuring the gym and its equipment are in good working condition.

"It was my first choice of work, no matter the pay. I first became interested in fitness when I was still in secondary school. That was when I started working out.

"I'm also very interested in customer service. I consider myself lucky because this is the best combination for me. Sometimes it doesn't feel like I'm working because I enjoy the environment very much," said Vinz.

Gymmboxx, which is also a U SME partner, consistently follows the National Wages Council guidelines for low-wage workers and gives annual pay increments to operations staff like gym associates.

TAKING CARE OF CUSTOMERS

Vinz takes a serious view of safety for people using the gym.

"I always keep a lookout for things that can be considered a safety hazard. These can be ropes on the ground that may cause someone to trip and fall, equipment placed where they shouldn't be, and the proper use of equipment. I believe pre-emptive measures are better than reactive measures," he said.

On customer service, Vinz said that the most rewarding thing about his job is when he is able to put a smile on a client's face. Being new to customer service when he first started, he found it a challenge to be able to effectively interact with the customers at first.

With the guidance of his supervisors, he found his skills improving as the months went by. He hopes to improve on his customer service skills further by taking up a course soon.

Vinz has two other hopes – to gain more experience in the industry and also for more people in Singapore to be health conscious.

"People need to remember that health is one of the most important things in life. I hope to educate more people on keeping themselves fit and healthy. As for my career, I see myself in this industry in the long term and I want to manage my own gym one day," he said.

Climbing the Ladder

Motivated and proud of his work, one security supervisor is taking charge of his own upgrading journey to get an edge in his career.

Story and Photo by **Fawwaz Baktee**



Since he stepped into the security industry four and a half years ago, security supervisor Foo Chay Hui has been proactive in arming himself with Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) courses to climb the ranks. This is even before the security Progressive Wage Model (PWM) kicked in last year.

"I already found it important to upgrade and upskill myself at the time. It was not because I thought I would get promoted faster with the certificates, but I found the knowledge useful in doing my job well," said the 44-year-old, who used to run a money changer business before becoming a security officer.

Mr Foo was one of those who made the cut to remain a security supervisor with the enforcement of the PWM.

"Some of my colleagues under me faced difficulties in fulfilling the requirements under PWM. So I took my time to train them on the job. As a supervisor, it was my duty to make sure they qualified. I also made sure I monitored my men in their progress," he said.

He also said that the PWM is a good effort in helping to standardise the jobs in the security industry.

"Last time, the pay can be different between officers even though they were doing the same job. However, now it is clear that to receive a certain amount, to be qualified to do certain tasks, or to hold a certain rank, you must be qualified," he said.

BETTER CAREER

Mr Foo's employer, Soverus, gives officers two wage increments a year. Based on the security officer's performance, the increment can range from \$25 to \$75 each time.

Mr Foo is currently taking up advance module certificates to qualify for a senior security supervisor promotion, which will see his basic pay go up to at least \$1,700 in accordance with the PWM wage ladder. He hopes to complete all the modules within three months.

He also has plans to take additional courses to widen his security skillsets.

"I like the challenge of my job, especially when you get to handle different situations. The best part is that with each challenge, there is a different solution. So this is where my training comes in handy," said Mr Foo.



Making Life Better for Cleaners

The Progressive Wage Model is helping cleaners to upskill and earn better wages. We meet up with out-of-retirement Dicky Ong to hear his story.

Story and Photo by **Shukry Rashid**

It is not easy to be paid a modest wage, especially if you have been living with a comfortable salary your whole life. For 68-year-old Dicky Ong, he takes it in his stride. He has been working as a cleaning supervisor for Weishen Industrial Services for the past two years on a \$1,700-a-month salary.

Formerly with Singapore Power for 45 years before retiring as a principal technical officer, his salary then was \$3,800, excluding allowances.

Mr Ong considers himself lucky as he is financially stable, with a working wife and grown-up children.

He dabbled with retirement for a month but decided it was not for him and joined Weishen to try out work in an unfamiliar industry. The one thing he knew he could bring over to his new employer was his experience in supervising a team, while doing cleaning.

He is currently supervising 13 cleaners at Geylang Methodist Primary School.

PROGRESSIVE WAGE MODEL

Mr Ong is one of the cleaners benefiting from the Progressive Wage Model (PWM) in the cleaning sector. Enforced in September 2015, the PWM is mandatory before cleaning service providers can be licensed by the National Environment Agency.

Weishen Head of Operations Thomas Ang said the PWM has uplifted the wages of cleaners compared to when he first started in the sector 15 years ago.

He said: "Back then, entry-level cleaners were paid \$700-\$800. There was a time it even went down to \$600. That was the nature of outsourcing. Service providers want to win the contract by offering the lowest cost but at the expense of workers."

Currently, entry-level cleaners are paid \$1,000-\$1,200, depending on their working environment.

PWM consists of four ladders – skills, productivity, career and wage. Mr Ang said that he has seen cleaners and the sector improving on the whole. With skills upgrading mandatory, and the help of technology, Mr Ang said that Weishen had promoted many cleaners to supervisors and increased wages for all workers in the company. He added that productivity levels have also increased about 20-30 per cent since the PWM was implemented.

Since Mr Ong joined Weishen, he has attended two Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications courses.

Next in his career ladder will be operations supervisor. He plans to work for as long as he can, and if the conditions are favourable, he is more than happy to be promoted and assume more responsibilities.

Support Schemes for Seafarers

There's more help for the seafaring community in medical, training and accommodation.

Story and Photo by **Singapore Organisation of Seamen**

The Singapore Organisation of Seamen (SOS) has set aside an additional S\$3 million to help seafarers in the areas of medical, training and accommodation during the global shipping slowdown.

SOS General Secretary Kam Soon Huat recently shared this with members of the seafaring community, including shipping companies that have collective agreements with the union.

The top up spreads equally across SOS existing schemes: Seacare Medical Scheme (SMS), Seacare Maritime Training Scheme (SMTS) and Seacare Sailors' Home Scheme (SSS). These form part of the collective agreements with shipping companies.

Starting from 1 April 2017 and over two years, seafaring members can enjoy up to S\$1 million worth of subsidised medical consultation and health screening from appointed clinics in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and China (Shanghai).

"The top up will allow a wider and more



routine medical coverage for seamen of different age groups, who have different medical needs at different stages of their career," said Mr Kam.

Subsidised training will also help members stay relevant and competitive. The funding will reduce training expenditures borne by companies.

Since January 2017, SOS has been issuing multipurpose vouchers of the SOS-owned Seacare Hotel to shipping companies under the SSS.

Valued at S\$1 million, the vouchers defray

accommodation cost and can be used to book venues for crew seminars and gatherings in Singapore.

"The enhanced schemes will help ship owners and managers to save some cost pertaining to crewing operation, which is the biggest portion of the vessel operating cost," said Captain Lim Swee Aun, Head of Ship Management, Wallenius Marine Singapore.



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Finding a New Passion



One Youth Career Network (YCN) mentor was so inspired by guiding youths in their careers that she has taken up professional coach certification to be more effective in dispensing advice.

Story and Photo by **Jonathan Tan**

She may be one of the pioneer mentors in Young NTUC's Youth Career Network (YCN) career mentorship programme, but 37-year-old Juliana Tay's involvement with the programme began entirely by chance.

According to the senior manager for sales training who is an active NTUC member, she had chanced upon an email sent by NTUC that called for volunteer career mentors and promptly responded.

"I'm fortunate to have had good bosses in my career who enabled me to develop my potential. It's my way of paying it forward because I realise that youths are not as strong in developing professional relationships. The work and career landscape in Singapore has changed drastically in the last couple of years and the influences that these youths today have are very different from before.

"This YCN is where we can connect and relate to them, to be a bridge that can help them and share our experiences to help them," she explained.

PERSONAL TOUCH

Given her professional expertise in the finance sector, Juliana has since worked with five youths through the YCN. She has supported them by sharing her tips on how they can get a headstart in the finance sector and approach their career development in the industry.

The biggest challenges she faces is when youths have unrealistic expectations about what the work entails and their expected salary packages.

Sharing her approach, she said: "I would share my own career experiences, how I built up my professional relationships and how I've grown from being a bank teller without a degree to a senior manager in skills training within a short span of 10 years. I feel that when I share details of the different career decisions that I

made, it is like experiential learning for them, where they just need to talk to someone who is just a few steps ahead of them."

Juliana added that this approach helps her mentees gain insights into what to expect in the workplace and bridge the mismatch in expectations between school and actual work.

"I learn from these youths as much as they are able to learn from me. When they reciprocate the effort by sharing their thoughts and experiences, I am able to pick up new perspectives. This is where it is very satisfying, and it excites and fuels me," she added.

DISCOVERING PASSION

Mentoring these youths also sparked Juliana's latent passion for career coaching.

"Getting to interact with other veteran career coaches got me interested in a Career Development Facilitator programme. I thought that if I enjoy mentoring youths, I might as well

“This YCN is where we can connect and relate to them, to be a bridge that can help them and share our experiences to help them.”

do it well. I have the passion; and I want to be a better career guide who can more effectively help others," she shared.

Upon completing the required assignments, Juliana will be certified as a career coach in July 2017.

Mentoring others has also helped her better frame her own career development.

"It has definitely given me a different perspective on how I communicate in my workplace. I feel younger and better able to relate to the youths I work with. It has helped me identify new potential job opportunities for myself as I am better able to navigate my own career," explained Juliana, adding that becoming a professional career coach one day is a prospect that she is considering.

But until then, Juliana is focusing on mentoring the youths and pursuing a passion project with some friends – funding a technology startup that is a final-year project by a group of Singapore Management University students.

TAKEAWAYS FROM A MENTEE

Recalling how she benefitted from Juliana's mentorship, 25-year-old researcher Goh Xi Hsien said: "Juliana helped me realise that the thought process in decision making is important. I also picked up some of the social skills that Juliana possesses. Be it talking to strangers or people you already know, they will probably have something you can learn from, which I believe is an important skill for the workplace, and life in general."

She also recounted how Juliana's sharing of real world experiences left an impression on her and how she will be able to use the skills to better communicate with colleagues and superiors, and be more open to learning from them.

i As part of the Youth Career Network, Young NTUC will be organising a Career Discovery and Mentorship Programme on 4 July 2017 at the NTUC Centre. For more information, visit www.youngntuc.org.sg.

Virtually Securing A Job

Julia Loo shares how she managed to successfully find work through NTUC's e2i's (Employment and Employability Institute) virtual career fair.

By **Jonathan Tan**

After more than a month of applying for jobs without any responses, 22-year-old Julia Loo decided to try something new, and took a chance with NTUC's e2i's (Employment and Employability Institute) HR e-Career Fair.

Any initial scepticism was soon allayed when she found out just how simple the platform was, and how it allowed her to browse the available jobs at her own pace. Unlike other online job portals, she did not have to upload her resume individually for each job listing she applied for.

"I was surprised at how fast and easy it was to navigate the site. I really liked the fact that I did not even have to create an account to upload my resume, neither did I have to keep uploading my resume multiple times for different job listings – I just had to do it once," she shared.



Photo: e2i

A COMFORTABLE PACE

The other draw for Julia was how she could browse for jobs at her own pace.

"When my resume was shortlisted, I felt 'more ready' because there was time for me to prepare in advance for the interview, compared to a physical career fair where we would have to face multiple prospective employers within a short span of time for on-site interviews. In those situations, I only had limited knowledge about the companies and little time to make a lasting impression during the interview," she said.

As the process was virtual, Julia described how important it was for her to make her resume stand out by keeping it as concise as possible. She also added value by detailing her character traits, projects she embarked on and by sharing examples of how she overcame personal challenges.

Through e2i's virtual career fair, Julia secured a full-time job as a HR assistant with Samwoh Corporation Pte Ltd within a month of her submitting her resume.

GOOD TO KNOW



UPCOMING e2i CAREER FAIRS

15 Jun: Heartland Job Fair @ CDAC Tampines

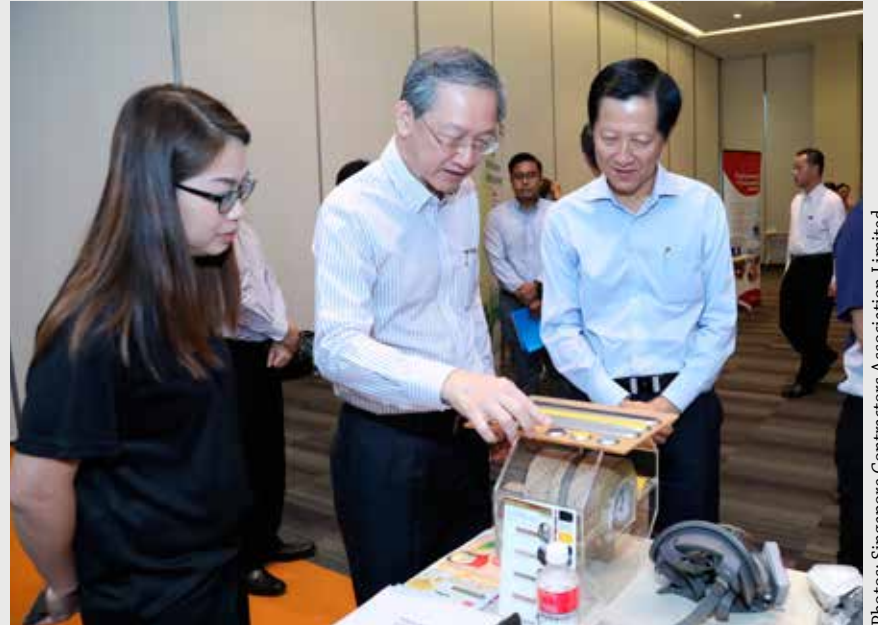
20-21 Jun: e2i Job Fair @ Fengshan

21 Jun: Mini Job Fair @ e2i central

30 Jun: Jobs Connect 2017 @ West Coast GRC and Pioneer SMC

i For more details on upcoming e2i career fairs and events, visit <https://e2i.com.sg/event/>.

Minister of State for Manpower Sam Tan (centre) was guest of honour at the Singapore Contractors Association Limited's Construction, Safety, Health and Security Seminar 2017.



Photos: Singapore Contractors Association Limited

Making Safety a Priority

More proactive efforts should be directed at upholding safety at the workplace, says the Singapore Contractors Association Limited.

By **Jonathan Tan**

The construction sector is leaving nothing to chance when it comes to maintaining workplace safety and health (WSH) standards. The Singapore Contractors Association Limited (SCAL) detailed a three-pronged approach to enhance construction safety during the second edition of its annual Construction, Safety, Health and Security Seminar 2017 at the Devan Nair Institute for Employment and Employability on 6 June 2017.

The seminar was co-organised with NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) and attended by more than 220 industry practitioners.

SCAL hopes that the leaders in the construction industry can take a proactive stance towards ensuring safety at their worksites, enhance the knowledge and capabilities of their respective workforces through training and adopt new building methods and systems that prioritise safety.

SCAL will be collaborating with government agencies and industry partners to organise a range of activities such as safety site visits and sharing of best practices. The association is also developing a safety mobile app which site supervisors can use as a training resource.

"WSH is the responsibility of all, and the management should actively encourage all workers to take ownership of WSH issues, uphold good workplace safety practices and identify WSH risks early to create an incident-free work environment," said SCAL President Kenneth Loo.

The seminar also included the first career fair organised by SCAL and e2i that saw six construction firms offering some 70 positions from operational to executive roles.

"Workers will benefit and be able to work with a better peace of mind when the management places a big focus on WSH and dedicates effort to create and maintain a safe work environment for their staff. We will continue our partnership with SCAL and industry partners to elevate the appeal of the construction sector and draw more locals to the vast range of good career opportunities that the sector has to offer," said e2i CEO Gilbert Tan.



i Visit www.scal.com.sg to find out more about the various WSH initiatives organised by SCAL.

A Global Champion for Labour



A brilliant example of a trade unionist, Noriyuki Suzuki has consistently worked closely with NTUC to deepen industrial relationships, promote Singapore's form of collaborative tripartism, and develop young trade unionists.

As the general secretary of International Trade Union Confederation – Asia Pacific (ITUC-AP) which has its headquarters in Singapore, he forged a deep bond with NTUC in his 18 years in the role. Mr Suzuki retired from his position in ITUC-AP at the end of April this year.

In recognition of his work with the Labour Movement, Mr Suzuki was awarded the Friend of Labour Award at the recent May Day Awards 2017.

From his home in Japan, Mr Suzuki recently penned his fondest memories of working in ITUC-AP and with NTUC. *Here it is in full:*

I was privileged to be given the opportunity to work with distinguished leaders of trade unions in Asia and the Pacific since 1999. It was a rather busy and eventful life for me and indeed rewarding to have served this truly democratic organisation in pursuit of “Bread, Freedom and Peace” for all working people in the region – the most challenging region in terms of the scale of problems in its enormous economic dynamism and potentiality.

My 18-year term of office was indeed eventful amidst many challenges – the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis, SARS Crisis, unification of the ICFTU (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions) and the WCL (World Confederation of Labour), Lehman Shock, formation of the Arab Trade Union Confederation, to name a few.

In such a challenging trade union situation in the region, I want to place on record the significant membership growth of the ITUC-AP as a whole. ITUC-AP now represents effectively 60 million members of 59 national trade union organisations in 34 countries, up from 28 million members of 45 organisations in 29 countries in 1999.

The growth of unions and unity in many countries is indeed remarkable such as in India, Nepal, Myanmar, Indonesia, Pakistan, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Palestine, Bangladesh, and Oman. The power of a union comes only from its membership and unity. We have built strong ties with unions in China, Vietnam and Laos.

I congratulate NTUC on its successful organising strategy and result with its nearly 30 per cent union density, one of the highest in the region. You have now strong women and youth wings within NTUC. I thank NTUC for its 25-year cooperation in conducting the ITUC-AP/Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute/JILAF Youth Leadership Course that has made a significant impact on the youth trade union development in the region.

The ITUC-AP promotes constructive industrial relations. This can only be built with full recognition and operation of trade unions in a stable political climate for social partners; and sharing of common interests in labour standards, performance of businesses, conditions of the national economy, industries and labour market, in pursuit of fair distribution of output to stakeholders. Tripartism in Singapore is one of the most successful in the region, verified by its significant economic growth and improvement in living standards in the past decades.

The Asia Pacific secretariat of the confederation has been in operation since 1989. I would like to thank the past and current leadership of NTUC, led by Secretaries-General Brother Lim Boon Heng, Brother Lim Swee Say, Brother Chan Chun Sing, President Sister Mary Liew and President Emeritus Brother John De Payva, for always extending their kind cooperation and support to me in various ways. I enjoyed friendships with many colleagues of the NTUC and people in Singapore.

I thank the NTUC Central Committee for awarding me the Friend of Labour on the occasion of May Day Awards 2017. Grateful memories of our valued friendship will remain with me throughout my life.

Majulah NTUC, Majulah Singapore.

Noriyuki Suzuki
Executive Advisor to the JTUC President
Special Advisor to the JILAF President
Visiting Professor at Hosei University, Institute for Solidarity-based Society

**This article has been edited for clarity.*

May Day Awardees 2017

In our ongoing series, we shine the spotlight on recipients from various categories.

PARTNERS AWARD



INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH (IMH)

Selected health attendants at IMH were upgraded to healthcare assistants by reducing their manual, time-consuming and routine tasks, upskilling them and redesigning their jobs.

To do so, IMH worked with NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) and the Healthcare Services Employees' Union (HSEU).

In 2016, IMH outsourced ward-based cleaning chores to a cleaning company and mechanised the kitchen operations, which relieved health attendants of these mundane tasks.

IMH also put in place a Skills Upgrading Programme to upskill them to become healthcare assistants, which are of a higher job grade. They learnt to identify different illness types, find the right methods of handling them and how to administer care to patients with mental health issues. About 20 staff went through the course. On their part, e2i and HSEU played the role of sharing with IMH recommendations to recognise the health attendant's efforts to contribute more, and in doing so, encourage more of them to follow suit. Ten of them have completed the first session and were promoted to the next grade on their job with a salary increase.

MEDAL OF COMMENDATION (GOLD)

GAN SEOW KEE

A collective agreement that had previously taken 56 meetings to complete, was done up in less than half the time under the reins of Gan Seow Kee, the chairman and managing director of ExxonMobil Asia Pacific.

Over the past three years as the country lead, Seow Kee has already demonstrated great cooperation and commitment towards improving labour management relations.

He engaged his management representatives and union constructively to increase efficiency and expedite processes. NTUC's suite of benefits was extended at no cost to its 2,200 professionals, managers and executives. ExxonMobil, as part of the Singapore Chemical Industries Council, has also co-created the Permit-To-Work Guidelines with tripartite partners, bringing greater clarity to required roles and enhancing safety practices for the sector.



PLAQUE OF COMMENDATION



NTUC HEALTH CO-OPERATIVE LIMITED

With its forward-looking management and commitment to its employees, NTUC Health is a valued partner of Healthcare Services Employees' Union (HSEU). Over the years, NTUC Health has been making progressive reviews to the lower wage employees' salary ranges, in line with the National Wages Council recommendations. It has also extended the scope of coverage in the collective agreement to cover executives. In creating a more conducive working environment for its employees, NTUC Health has committed to working closely with HSEU to develop frameworks for career development along with wage progression. In addition, NTUC Health provides flexible work arrangements to encourage work-life harmony.



Delivering Star Service

Passion and dedication in his job is an everyday thing for this PUB worker. Meet Salim, who continues to be recognised for all his efforts.

By **Shukry Rashid** Photo by **PUB, Singapore's National Water Agency**

Public Utilities Board (PUB) Senior Assistant Engineer (SAE) Abdul Salim Fazal Karim, 40, believes in persevering until the job is done. Since the first day he joined PUB 17 years ago, he has been delivering excellent service to thousands of residents.

It is not surprising then that Salim gets plenty of compliments, not only for his looks but for his exemplary service.

Salim's passion and dedication have garnered significant recognition. Throughout his career, he received many awards from PUB, as well as the Public Service Division's (PSD) PS21 Star Service Award in 2010.

Salim can now add another award to his tally – the PS21 Distinguished Star Service Award by PSD. He received it during the recent annual Excellence in Public Service Awards Ceremony. He was one of the 279 public officers, agencies and members of the public to be awarded for their significant contributions.

Salim said: "I am very delighted as my dedication and hard work are being appreciated. This makes me more motivated to maintain the standards of delivering excellent service to PUB's customers."

BEING THOROUGH

As an SAE, Salim's daily work involves planning and deploying resources to carry out site investigations and attending to customer feedback. The cases include pipe leakages and water supply interruptions.

Salim, who is also a member of the PUB Employees' Union (PUBEU), said: "I have to meet customers almost every day to attend to their feedback, and usually I will keep in contact with them until the issue is completely resolved. I will also follow up with all the customers about one week after the case is resolved to ensure that everything is working fine."

"Together with my service crew, we ensure these cases are resolved in accordance with standard operating procedures and service standards."

PERSEVERANCE

One case that stood out happened in November 2015 when a resident reported a noisy pipe case to PUB. The problem had been bothering her for half a year and she was unable to pinpoint the source of the noise despite numerous efforts.

After doing an assessment, Salim found out the noise came from other units.

He proceeded with house-to-house checks. It was a tedious process, having to enter many units to trace the source of the noise while calling the complainant each time to verify if the noise persisted whenever he toggled with different taps.

Finally, his perseverance paid off when he managed to discover the source of the noise – a faulty storage heater in another resident's unit. With Salim's advice, the homeowner took immediate action to repair his heater.

PUBEU is also proud of Salim. PUBEU General Treasurer George Sim said: "Salim is helpful and very responsible. He will go all the way to help to those in need. As a former PUBEU delegate, he was also very approachable – and that is something every unionist needs."

"He deserves the award. He has shown to the rest of the PUB employees that delivery service can be provided at the personal level without compromising the operational efficiency of the organisation."

Future Outlook: Start Imagining Today!

New age pest control, paper thin audio devices and robots that help you park your car. Get ready, there's a whole new world waiting out there. *Look out for more in this regular column.*

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

Pest Control with Wi-Fi

We think this may one day be how insects take photos of themselves and let you know they are home!

Delta Five, a pest management company, has developed the Automated Insect Monitoring (AIM) device which is a small, three-inch box that hooks up to Wi-Fi to continuously monitor the space around it with internal cameras.

The insects are lured into the device using heat, vapours, pheromones or other substances that are odourless and harmless to humans.

The system detects the motion and snaps a photo of the bug when it enters. It then alerts you by sending the selfie of your new unwelcomed guest to your mobile device or email, showing you the type of infestation you're dealing with.

Source: deltafive.com



Paper Thin Audio Device

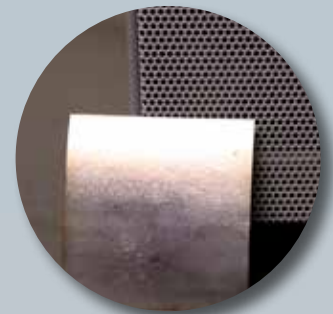
Welcome to the next generation of audio tech. Scientists from the Michigan State University in the United States recently developed a flexible, paper-thin device that changes things into a loudspeaker.

According to the scientists, the device converts the electrical energy from an iPod or music player into sound.

Calling it a ferroelectret nanogenerator or FENG for short, the scientists recently did a demonstration by connecting the device to an iPod through Wi-Fi and then sticking it on their university flag to turn it into a loudspeaker.

Well, apart from some serious uses, we can think of a lot of pranks to play with this one!

Source: www.ieemitsb.org



Valet Parking Robot

There may come a day when you will literally say goodbye to waiting for parking lots.

Let us introduce you to valet robot Stan. Conceived and created by Stanley Robotics, Stan works by slipping under the tires of your car, lifting your car up gently and pulling it into an empty parking lot.

To avoid any damage, Stan scans the dimensions of your car to adjust itself to the correct size. Talking about Stan the Man, this fella can even pull up to five cars in a single line at the same time.

Source: www.stanley-robotics.com



Helping Returners get Back on their Feet

With the promise of job trials and flexible work arrangements, back-to-work women may just find their dream jobs under a new programme by the U Women's Network.

By **Avelyn Ng**

U Women's Network, a NTUC U Family initiative, co-organised a Returner & Employer Networking Session with social recruiting platform Wantedly on 7 June 2017. The event sought to connect back-to-work women or returners with potential employers. A total of 36 returners and eight companies participated.

The event is part of U Women's Network's pilot Returners Programme, which was developed after Labour Member of Parliament Desmond Choo called for a programme to leverage this latent talent pool. If recruited by a participating company under the programme, returners get a paid job trial lasting three to six months, which will include training and mentoring. If successful, they will be offered a permanent position with full salary and flexible work arrangements.

Breakout focus groups were also held with the returners at the event to understand their challenges, expectations and needs.



A Chat with the Returners...

Back-to-work mum Priyanka Agarwal, 37, has sent out some 50 job applications over the past three months to no avail.

With a Diploma in Business Administration and Finance, she had spent three years at a multinational company in the finance industry. In 2006, she decided to stay home to support her children's growing-up years.

Now, with a full-time helper and supportive husband to take care of her daughters, aged six and 10, she is ready to re-enter the workforce again.

Her situation is similar to majority of the returners who found U Women's Network Returner & Employer Networking Session helpful.

"From resumes, all employers see are words and figures. Through this platform, they can get a sense of our energy and how we communicate. We can also understand the company better and see if we are a mutual fit. The employers I've met today are pro-family and empowering," said Elin Chua, 42, a double degree holder who is starting her own business and looking for a secondary source of income to realise her dream.

"I hope employers can keep an open mind and not judge us by our age or the huge career gap. "For example, I may not have worked in an events company but I've helped out with a lot of events in the school that I have been volunteering for. We are still working in our own lives, just without any money. Many back-to-work women also forget to include these experiences in their resumes."



Elin Chua (left) talking to Founder of Hegen Yvon Bock (right) about possible job positions for her.

A Chat with an Employer...

Yvon Bock, 38, is the founder and managing director of Hegen, which sells breastfeeding lifestyle products in nine markets internationally. A back-to-work woman herself, the mother of four left the workforce in 2004 to take care of her young children. She only re-entered the workforce when her father proposed that she worked part-time in his manufacturing company.

With a background in banking and finance, it was not easy for her at first. However, she eventually took up the challenge to create and design baby products, and that was when she found her calling to help working mothers around the world.

It comes as no surprise that progressive practices are integrated into the company's policies. Parents working at Hegen are allowed time-off, flexible working hours, eldercare leave and part-time arrangements.

PERSONAL ADVICE

Encouraging women to be more open to switching industries, she said: "Be optimistic about the change in industry and just do it. There's always room for improvement and new skills. Be willing to learn from both your seniors and juniors."

Additionally, returners should discuss concerns and deliverables with their potential employers upfront to avoid conflicts of interest down the road. While employers should give them time to learn the ropes, she explained that returners have to give employers time to be convinced of their abilities and adjust their expectations.

With plans to expand to new markets, Yvon aims to double her team of 10 over the next two years and is looking to fill roles in marketing, communications and sales.

"It is important that the candidates' attitude aligns to the company's ethos. I think they need to have two elements – team spirit and empathy. We will try to understand them but they must also do their part," she said.

Snapshots

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

Compiled by **Avelyn Ng**

Double the Fun

To kick-start the Seeing Double campaign, Downtown East invited members of the public to set the Singapore Book of Records for the "Largest Gathering of Dress Alike Duos" on 4 June 2017.

The 111 duos who participated received certificates for the record-setting attempt and enjoyed complimentary access to Wild Wild Wet.

They were also among the first to experience The Woosh, Singapore's longest inflatable freestyle water slide. The temporary attraction is open to the public in June and July.

The Seeing Double campaign, which runs till 31 July 2017, is in celebration of Wild Wild Wet's successful expansion to double its original size.

Under the promotion, members of the public dressed identically with a friend can get a 50 per cent discount at Downtown East's four key offerings – Wild Wild Wet, D'Resort, Orchid Bowl and eXplorerkid.

There is also an Instagram competition where participants can upload a selfie anywhere with their 'twin' and hashtag #SeeingDoubleSG to stand a chance to win a 2D1N staycation package at D'Resort.

i For more information, visit www.downtowneast.com.sg/seeingdouble.



New NTUC Foodfare Hawker Centre

Kampung Admiralty Hawker Centre (KAHC), the second of two new centres to be managed by NTUC Foodfare in 2017 is slated to open in September. It is expected to house 43 food stalls and accommodate up to 900 people.

Stall applications for KAHC are currently open for Singaporeans and Permanent Residents till 16 June 2017.

The centre has several unique selling points. For one, it will be divided into several food zones, each designed to encapsulate a provincial or regional culture.

Cashless transactions will be encouraged in this centre via two modes of payment – Plus! Cards and DBS PayLah!. Diners using their Plus! Cards can earn LinkPoints to redeem purchases at the hawker centre across more than 100 retail points.

A bulk purchase programme, centralised dishwashing, as well as food waste management and common crockery systems are some productivity initiatives hawkers can enjoy to help streamline their businesses for operational efficiency and provide improved hygiene for patrons.

While use of healthier oil and provision of healthier choices are compulsory for hawkers, self-service tray and crockery return will be mandatory for diners.

i For more information, visit www.foodfare.com.sg.

Faster and Better Claims Experience

In a bid to automate and improve its pre- and post-hospitalisation claims process, NTUC Income is incorporating two of IBM's technologies – Watson Explorer and Datacap – into the process. It is the first insurer in Singapore to be doing so.

IBM Datacap will save a significant number of man-hours spent on data entry to process an average of 14,000 hard copies of IncomeShield pre- and post-hospitalisation claims monthly. It makes use of advanced imaging and machine-learning algorithms to automatically classify and extract information in real-time from most types of documents.

For the processing of data, Income will be using the IBM Watson Explorer, a cognitive search and content analysis platform at different stages of the insurance lifecycle. It can read and analyse structured and unstructured data such as medical certificates and bills. The length of hospital stays, medical histories, surgical procedures and other contributing factors are then taken into consideration by the system before it makes claims recommendations and calculates the payouts to policyholders.

These technologies are anticipated to improve the quality and speed of the decision-making process as well as the consistency of the claims for policyholders.



Health Marketplace App

Unity Pharmacy has partnered the Integrated Health Information Systems, a technology agency for Singapore's healthcare owned by MOH Holdings and the Home Nursing Foundation, to develop a health marketplace (HMP) mobile application. It was recently mentioned by Health Minister Gan Kim Yong at the ninth National Health IT Summit last month.

Unity's wholesale team contributed to the development of the HMP app by providing recommendations on ordering processes as well as product information and pricing of milk feeds, diaper and wound care products.

The app, "HMP-Consumable Products", is currently in beta pilot on iOS and Android app stores. Unity will be managing and processing orders of home care supplies to individuals eligible for the Seniors Mobility and Enabling Fund.

What's Happening Where

Compiled by **Shukry Rashid**

WTS Travel

You and your family deserve a retreat after toiling away at work and in school throughout the first half of 2017. Here's a deal you don't want to miss – a travel package to Shenzhen, China! With WTS Travel's Shenzhen Travel Package, NTUC members can bring their whole family at half the price!

- ❗ **1-for-1 3D2N Shenzhen Travel Package.** Includes Shenzhen Airlines tickets, 4-star hotel stay with breakfast, city tour and one lunch. Apply by 30 June 2017, travel by 30 Sept 2017. Present NTUC Card and printed/e-coupon at any outlet to enjoy the privileges. For more information, visit www.wtstravel.com.sg.



Eighteen Chefs

Eighteen Chefs has made a name for itself as the place to go to for an affordable and quality pasta fix. The deal just got better as NTUC members get 1-for-1 main course. It's only available for a limited time, so hurry down to the nearest outlet!

- ❗ **1-for-1 selected main course (Aglio Olio with Mushroom and Chicken, Beef Bolognese and Fresh Mushroom Pasta).** Valid till 30 June 2017. Present NTUC Card and printed/e-coupon at any outlet to enjoy the privilege. For more information, visit www.eightenchefs.com.

Adam Khoo Learning Centre

Thinking of how to keep your child busy this school holiday? Give him or her a chance to sharpen the mind with Adam Khoo Learning Centre's holiday workshops. With various holiday courses available – from the Direct School Admission Interview Workshop to the O Level Trigonometry Exam Revision Workshop, you can be sure your kid's holiday is well-spent. NTUC members pay one for two children!

- ❗ **1-for-1 holiday workshops.** All classes must be signed up and fully paid by 30 June 2017, and attended by 31 Aug 2017. Present NTUC Card and printed/e-coupon at any outlet to enjoy the privilege. Each paying parent is limited to a maximum of 3 sets of promotions. Not valid for PSLE Seminar and MYES classes. For more information, visit www.aklc.com.sg/school-holiday-programmes.



KADAM KHOO
LEARNING CENTRE



Sentosa 4D AdventureLand

The school holidays are here, so why not pamper the kids with a well-deserved break? Head out to Sentosa 4D AdventureLand for the high-tech interactive entertainment zone that is home to three exciting experiences, suitable for every age group. NTUC members, you'll have more reason not to miss this with a 1-for-1 promotion!

- ❗ **1-for-1 one-day adventure pass, valid till 30 June 2017.** Present NTUC Card and printed/e-coupon at ticketing counter to enjoy the privilege. Limited to 3 pairs of tickets per card member. 51B Imbiah Road, Sentosa. For more information, call **6274 5355**.

FACE 2 FACE
WITH

George Sim

Story and Photo by **Shukry Rashid**

Public Utilities Board Employees' Union (PUBEU) General Treasurer George Sim joined PUB as a corporate support officer when the then-Ministry of Environment's sewerage department was transferred to PUB in 2001. He subsequently joined PUBEU in 2002 and became a committee member for the sewerage department of the Admin and Clerical branch six months later. Today, he is an organisation development executive, supporting board secretariat matters. He shares with *NTUC This Week* his various roles and the importance of upgrading for unionists.

NTUC This Week: You have been championing upgrading for unionists. What has your own upgrading journey been like?

George Sim: After becoming a committee member, I took up the Diploma in Employment Relations (DER) with the Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute (OTCi) and graduated in 2005. I received the UOB Book Prize for being the top four students in that 9th intake. I also received the Ong Teng Cheong Education Trust Fund Study Award to enrol in a Bachelor of Business (Human Resources Management) degree programme.

It is important to upgrade myself as a unionist, at least with the DER, as it teaches me about the roles of unions, how much we've come since independence, and tripartism. During

my degree programme, it made me realise and appreciate the industrial peace we have in Singapore. It can easily be broken and cannot be taken for granted. After I attained my degree in 2007, I felt that I owed the union a great deal because they helped me attain my aspiration of obtaining a degree. Therefore I felt like I needed to assume more responsibilities in PUBEU.

What are your roles in the union?

When I first became general treasurer in 2012, besides taking care of the union's finances, I was also the chairperson of the union's leadership development. I was promoting training programmes that would help our PUBEU members to step up to serve the union, especially the younger ones. I have always championed for all new unionists to be certified with a minimum Basic Certificate in Industrial Relations within their first term in the executive council. When they serve the second term, they need to advance further.

You are also involved in membership growth, tell us more about that.

With the support of our Human Resources department, I will spend an hour during the induction programme for new workers, to tell them the advantages of being a union member. I'm proud to say that during the last three induction programmes, all of the new workers

signed up to be our members. Moving forward, I'm currently training two of our younger unionists – assistant general treasurer Mohamed Rezal Mohamed Yusof and assistant general secretary Mohd Rosman Mohd Sah – to take over the induction programme from me.

What is your proudest achievement as a unionist?

It was six years in the making. Before 2012, PUB employees had two different schemes – Corporate Support Officers (CSOs) and Management Support Officers (MSOs). MSOs were minimum diploma holders while CSOs were not. I had the idea of merging these two schemes as I foresaw that PUB would soon do away with CSOs. I already saw it happening in other ministries and statutory boards.

Our CSOs also remained stagnant in their jobs, with no training provided. I had to secure the jobs of our CSOs – 200 of them. A merged scheme would also allow CSOs to progress to become MSOs.

It was not easy to convince the CSOs of this merger. Many were mature workers and contented to be where they were. I had to conduct a series of briefings to help them understand and appreciate the merger. Finally, with the blessing of the management, the two schemes were merged to be a single MSO scheme in 2012. CSOs also had their salaries revised to a better one.

NTUC THIS WEEK

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ANDROID