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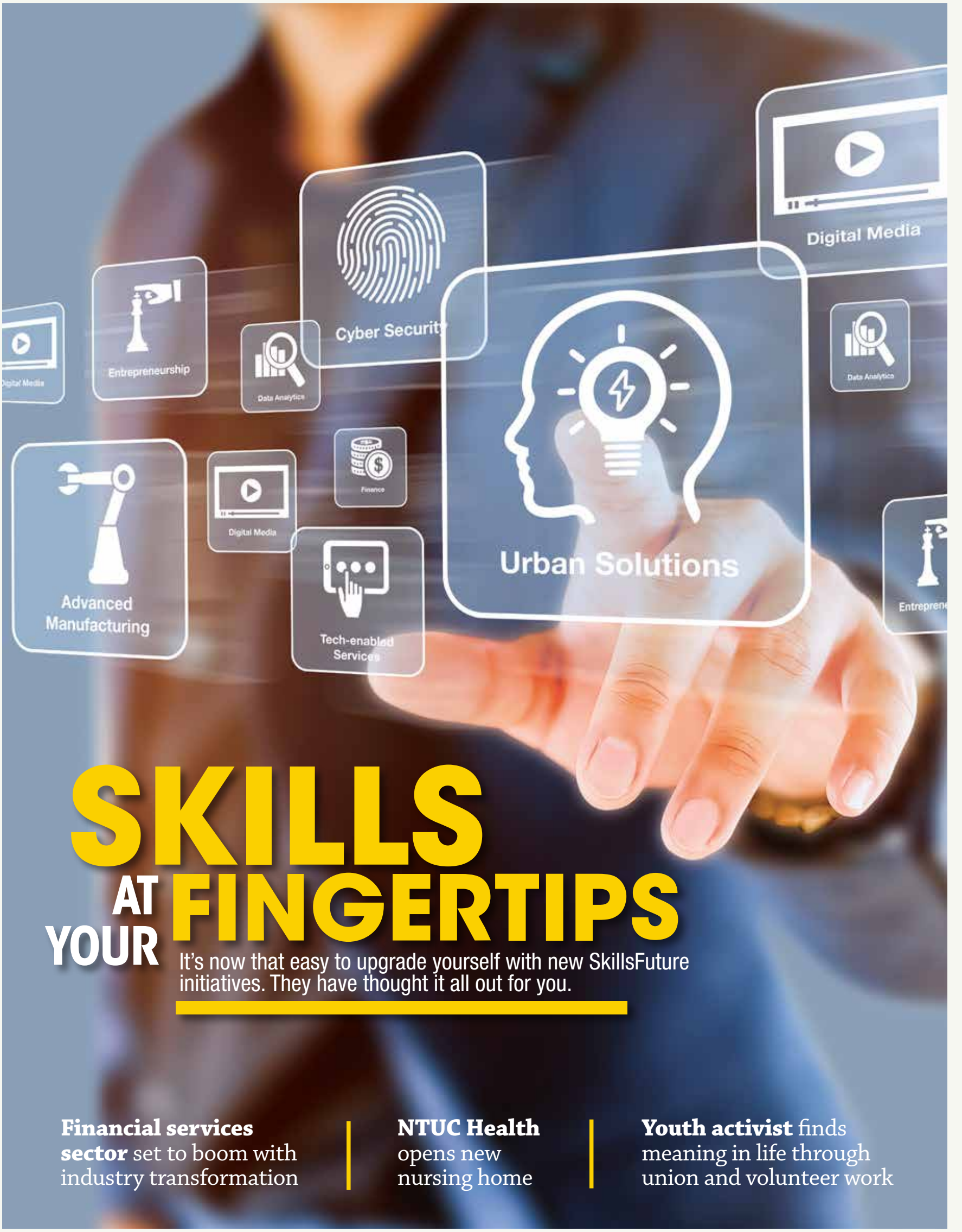


SKILLS AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

It's now that easy to upgrade yourself with new SkillsFuture initiatives. They have thought it all out for you.

Financial services sector set to boom with industry transformation

NTUC Health opens new nursing home

Youth activist finds meaning in life through union and volunteer work

Skills Upgrading 101

Want to fly high in your career but have no idea where to find time or money for training? The new SkillsFuture series may just be the answer.

By **Avelyn Ng**

Singaporeans aged 25 and above, do you know that you have $500 worth of training credits to gain new skills? They are called SkillsFuture Credits and you can use them for courses that interest you or can help you climb the career ladder. Simply check out the over 18,000 courses by over 700 training providers on a newly launched portal called MySkillsFuture *(story on facing page)*.

Thing is, only one in 20 people have utilised them so far. Most Singaporeans juggling work and family responsibilities today will probably tell you they have no time, money or both. But since training is important, which course should you take?

WHAT AND WHERE

Fret no more, the good folks at SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG) have launched a series of over 400 courses in eight growth sectors that should have your career rising in no time.

You will be pleased to know that training providers are names you are familiar with such as universities and polytechnics. There will also be courses from private providers like NTUC LearningHub.

Still worried about the quality and whether the courses are truly tailored to you? Our Education Minister Ong Ye Kung assured that the schools and providers will be building the experience and expertise in designing programmes for adult workers.

MONEY MATTERS

Still not convinced? Well, SSG will be pumping in more than $70 million over the first three years so many of the basic level courses will cost less than $500 for Singapore Citizens and Permanent Residents after the subsidy.

SkillsFuture Credits will cover the balance of the course fees, so you might end up paying next to nothing.

What's the catch? According to Minister Ong, the courses may need to be prioritised due to limited budget. Therefore, the Ministry Of Education will review the funding and delivery of Masters' programmes at the independent universities. These changes will kick in "no earlier than 2019".

SKILLSFUTURE SERIES: WHAT TO KNOW

- **What's Available**: Some 400 courses across basic, intermediate and advanced levels are available. Course list will be expanded by up to three times over the next few years.
- **For Busy Professionals**: Courses are modular and short, averaging just 25 training hours.
- **For Those on a Tight Budget**: Check if you qualify for the Enhanced Training Support for SMEs or SkillsFuture Mid-Career Enhanced Subsidy. If you do, you are looking at less than $200 for the majority of the basic level courses! You can also use your SkillsFuture Credit to cover the balance of the course fees.

Focus area	Data Analytics	Finance	Tech-Enabled Services	Digital Media
Led by	National University of Singapore	Singapore Management University	Republic Polytechnic and Singapore University of Social Sciences	Nanyang Polytechnic

Focus area	Cybersecurity	Entrepreneurship	Advanced Manufacturing	Urban Solutions
Led by	Temasek Polytechnic and Singapore University of Technology and Design	Ngee Ann Polytechnic	Singapore Polytechnic and Nanyang Technological University	Singapore Institute of Technology and Institute of Technical Education

Steps to Get Started

- Log in with your SingPass at **www.myskillsfuture.sg.**
- Browse the **Categories > SkillsFuture Series.**
- Decide on the course of your choice using the bookmark and compare functions.
- Sign up for alerts on new course dates, if current dates do not fit your schedule.
- Submit an enquiry to the training provider or a SkillsFuture Credit claim through the portal's simplified forms.
- Still considering? You can read up on the SkillsFuture Series at **www.skillsfuture.sg/series.**

New Portal, Workshops for Better Career Planning

Singaporeans from Primary Five to working adults will get access to more resources for learning and employment.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

Calling all Singaporeans, do you know that there is now a one-stop portal for your learning and career needs? Employers and training providers may find it useful too.

Called MySkillsFuture portal, it was announced on 29 October 2017 by Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Tharman Shanmugaratnam during a visit to a SkillsFuture event at Heartbeat@ Bedok and Bedok Town Square.

Every Singaporean from Primary Five onwards will have a personalised account to make learning and career choices at every stage of their lives.

SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG), Workforce Singapore (WSG) and the Ministry of Education developed the portal in consultation with government agencies and industry partners such as Linkedin, SingTel, and BreadTalk.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Schools have had access to MySkillsFuture since August 2017 and feedback was positive, according to the developers. They added that there are plans to enhance the portal and expand resources available to improve the overall user experience. According to SSG, there are now about 150,000 users since MySkillsFuture went live on 2 Oct 2017.

What are some features of MySkillsFuture?

Under MySkillsFuture, features such as the Self-Assessment Tool, Industry Insights and ePortfolio are available to help users make informed decisions towards career planning.

1. **For Students:** A resource to support education and career guidance, through interactive tools they can use to explore different industry sectors. Every student will receive an account to access the portal.
2. **For Adults and Tertiary Students:** To discover careers, obtain industry information, apply for courses and jobs. Users will have access to the SkillsFuture course directory and jobs listings under the National Jobs Bank.
3. **For Employers:** To identify suitable programmes and resources to deepen their employees' capabilities.
4. **For Training Providers:** To reach out to a broader audience for their programmes.

SKILLS ADVICE

DPM Tharman also officially launched an initiative called SkillsFuture Advice for Individuals to help Singaporeans understand the importance of skills upgrading and career planning.

The initiative is led by SSG and various Community Development Councils (CDCs), with support from WSG, Peoples' Association and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute).

The initiative consists of free workshops to learn about MySkillsFuture, held in all four official languages at community clubs and centres. Participants will also receive information on work trends and the skills required for the workplace.

Some 1,000 Singaporeans have attended the workshops since the pilot run in July this year. SSG and the CDCs expect to reach out to 80,000 Singaporeans over the next three years.

GOOD TO KNOW

- *For more information on the SkillsFuture Series or to surf the portal, log on to **MySkillsFuture.sg**. Singaporeans can log into the MySkillsFuture portal using their Singpass. Also available as a mobile app.*
- *To find out more about the SkillsFuture Advice for Individuals or to participate, contact SkillsFuture Singapore at **6785 5785** or visit **www.skillsfuture.sg/advice**.*

Launch of Financial Services ITM

Plans include creating 4,000 jobs and building world-class skills.

By **Ramesh Subbaraman**

The Industry Transformation Map (ITM) for the financial services sector was launched on 30 October 2017 at the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS).

The ITM outlines growth strategies in the sector, programmes for upgrading skills and an agenda for continuous innovation and technology adoption.

The ITM was drawn up by MAS, in close consultation with the financial industry and tripartite partners.

Minister for Education (Higher Education & Skills) and MAS Board Member, Mr Ong Ye Kung launched the ITM at the MAS Penthouse.

VISION FOR THE ITM

The ITM aims to annually achieve a 4.3 per cent growth in the financial sector with productivity growth of 2.4 per cent. It also aims to create 4,000 finance jobs.

MAS emphasised that while the prospects for the financial sector are good, it is going through a period of significant change.

"With technology transforming the way financial services are produced, delivered, and consumed, it is critical that Singapore's financial sector also transforms to stay relevant and competitive,",said MAS.

STRATEGIES AND JOBS

MAS has listed six key business strategies under the ITM. These include developing Singapore into a leading international wealth management hub and the global capital for Asian insurance and risk transfer.

To achieve these goals, a key focus of the ITM will be to facilitate innovation in the financial sector and encourage the adoption of technology.

To promote innovation and the use of technology, MAS will develop an active SkillsFuture programme to help financial-sector workrs build world-class skills.

"With digitalisation and automation, job roles will evolve, and existing professionals must be equipped with new skills and competencies," emphasised MAS.

MAS will continue to collaborate with financial institutions, tripartite partners and institutes of higher learning to build a strong local pipeline of specialised talent, particularly in information technology (IT).

It will also work towards reskilling and redeploying professionals into jobs in growing sectors through professional conversion programmes. The ITM will also facilitate job placements through enhanced career advisory services.

NTUC PARTNERS MAS

Responding to the launch of the ITM on his Facebook page, NTUC Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) Patrick Tay said the Labour Movement will partner MAS and the various stakeholders for the initiatives mentioned earlier..

ASG Tay, who is also the co-chairman of the Financial Sector Tripartite Committee, added: "We will double our current efforts to assist and support those affected by job losses and face job obsolescence due to the churn in the financial services industry."

DBS Employees to Enjoy Better Careers

The bank embarks on a transformation of its own to upgrade its staff to take on better jobs.

DBS Bank announced that it will transform the careers of 1,500 employees in the next 18 months through a new programme.

It has planned eight job roles to help the employees obtain the necessary knowledge to take on new or enhanced roles within the bank. These include back-end operations in consumer and institutional banking, and client-facing ones in branches.

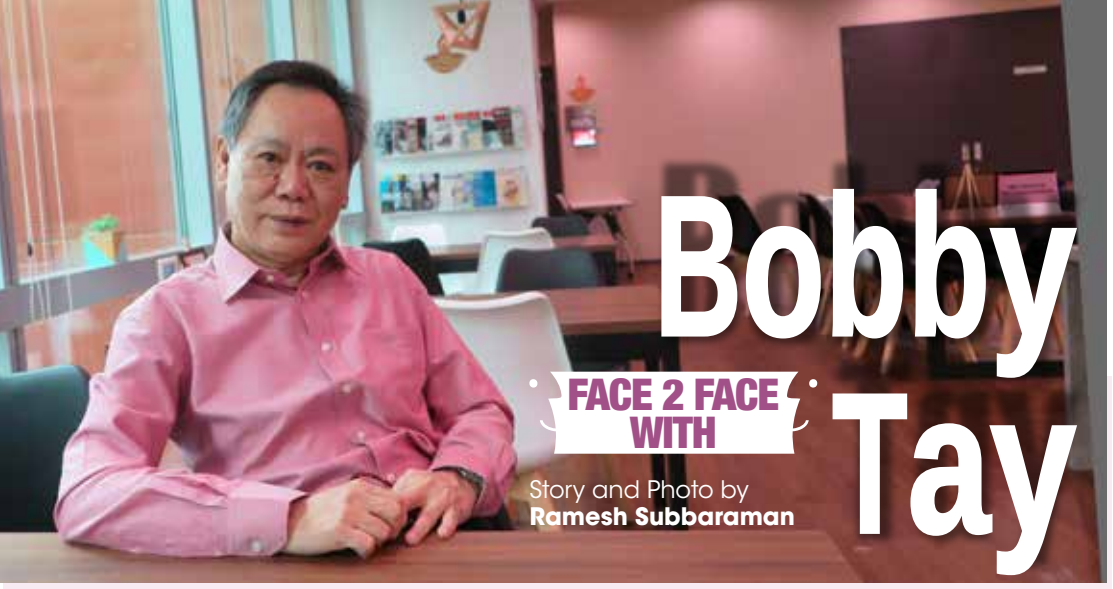
Employees will undergo classroom training ranging from five days to a month followed by a six month on-the-job training.

To run the programme, DBS will receive partial funding from Workforce Singapore.

Nahariah Mohd Nor, 45, a service executive, takes care of customers' banking needs over the counter.

DBS said she had wanted to try out a new role in something related to technology and banking. After six weeks of classroom training, she started her on-the-job training at the DBS Customer Service Centre as a customer service officer to answer customers' queries with the help of technology.

"...I now feel more confident to face the future where technology is changing the way customers bank and transact," said Nahariah.



Bobby Tay

FACE 2 FACE WITH

Story and Photo by
Ramesh Subbaraman

He is a battle-hardened union leader, having seen the Singapore Bank Employees' Union (SBEU) through two major recessions in Singapore.

Today, with the financial services sector poised to grow over the next few years, SBEU General Secretary Bobby Tay, 62, is getting ready to battle something new – transformation. He is confident that transformation will create just as many job opportunities for support staff in the banking industry, giving them more opportunities to move up the skills ladder.

He shares with *NTUC This Week* his union journey and what SBEU has been doing for its mainly 6,900 rank-and-file members.

NTUC This Week: What would you say is your biggest achievement in union work?

Bobby Tay: A personal achievement was being elected as the secretary of the ASEAN Banking Union Council (ABUC) at its first meeting held in Jakarta, Indonesia in 1999. I served in the position for three years till 2002 and took up the position again from 2006 till 2015. ABUC is a group of 12 national banking unions from the ASEAN region. This achievement was itself a milestone for SBEU, and for a Singaporean union official to hold an international position. It was the first time SBEU had an official elected to an regional union movement with a direct role to influence decisions concerning workers in the Asean banking industry.

You've been through two big financial crises, what were the lessons learnt?

During the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997, SBEU lost almost 2,000 members through retrenchment when the banks collapsed and local banks embarked on mergers and acquisitions. History repeated itself in 2008 with the global financial crisis. A few hundred members were lost through retrenchment.

In 1997 during the first downturn, SBEU negotiated and secured a training grant of between $1,000 to $1,200 for union members affected by the merger of Keppel Bank of Singapore with Tat Lee Bank. The training grant became a permanent feature in all later retrenchments in the unionised banks in Singapore. When the next downturn came, SBEU was already battle hardened and ready to face numerous rounds of negotiation concerning the retrenchment of its members.

What are your thoughts on the transformation ahead for the financial services sector?

As the Industry Transformation Map aims to create 3,000 jobs in the financial services sector, and an additional 1,000 jobs in the fintech sector annually, SBEU is heartened and optimistic. There will be just as many jobs created for support staff who form the majority of SBEU members. SBEU will work closely with the Singapore Bank Officers' Association, the union representing executives in the banking industry to ride on the employment growth.

What are some of the things that worry you now?

It is about getting union members to step forward to take up leadership roles. Union work is perceived as holding back career advancement. I am always on the lookout for branch leaders to invite them into the executive council to take on a greater role, and for ordinary members to be inducted into leadership roles in the respective branches that they are working with. I am constantly on the look out for a younger person to hand over my duties in SBEU. That would be my proudest moment and achievement.

INSIDER'S GUIDE

Singapore Bank Employees' Union

Date of Registration: 18 November 1954

Date of Affiliation to NTUC: 1959

Membership: 6,900 members.

History: On November 18,1954, a team of individuals sought the support of employees of seven banks to set up a union.This number was necessary as seven signatories were required before a new trade union could be registered. SBEU was officially registered that year with 1,000 members.Today, it represents employees across 36 banks in Singapore.

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Reasons to download now!

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   A special feature, just for U – Download and redeem exclusive giveaways and discounts online or in-store.
2. **Exclusive Privileges**
   Membership certainly comes with perks – look out for birthday treats, special offers and promotions, brought to you on the go.
3. **eTickets for Events**
   Register and purchase tickets for events anytime, anywhere and save them in your eWallet for simple and fast retrieval!
4. **Exclusive News**
   Catch up on the latest Labour Movement-related news, on an enhanced interface.
5. **eWallet**
   Other useful features – Check LinkPoints and UTAP balances.
6. **Workplace Advisory**
   Union members, get advice and assistance on workplace issues and employment-related matters.

Coming Soon!

Look out for more exciting new features in our next upgrade!

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"I'm Really Happy to be Independent Again"

No one wants to place their elderly loved ones in an old-age home. But at NTUC Health's nursing homes, there is a real chance for them to regain their lives. Here's Mdm Ang's story.

By **Jonathan Tan**

Admission to a nursing home does not have to be a permanent arrangement for our loved ones to receive professional care. Neither does it have to be the end point for an elderly person's life.

Just ask former NTUC Health Nursing Home (Chai Chee) resident Ang Cheh Eng.

"Having been diagnosed with an advanced stage of cancer, my treatment had affected my ability to move around and I was stuck in a wheelchair and unable to do the things I used to do," said the 63-year-old, who lives with her husband.

With her husband working six days a week as a driver and no children to assist in her day-to-day care, Mdm Ang was admitted to the nursing home earlier this year.

Following an operation and treatment which kept her cancer under control, she received intensive rehabilitation with the support of the nursing home's team of doctors, nurses, and various care staff.

Within five months, Mdm Ang was able to move around and care for herself, and she was discharged.

Sharing the experience, she said: "I'm really happy to be independent again, and be able to move about on my own and care for myself. I had been very motivated [to get rehabilitated] as being unable to move about had affected me more than my cancer!

"I appreciate the efforts of the NTUC Health nursing home team as they were very encouraging and professional. I am so glad that they have helped me to return home to be with my husband again."

TRUSTED CARE

Mdm Ang's story reflects the mission of NTUC Health's nursing homes. This goal was repeated on 2 November 2017 with the official opening of NTUC Health Nursing Home (Chai Chee).

"NTUC Health's purpose is to bring happiness and peace of mind to individuals and their families by delivering trusted care that is good enough for ourselves and our loved ones," said NTUC Health Chairman Tan Hwee Bin.

Ms Tan also stressed the company's focus on helping seniors like Mdm Ang regain their independence and ability to move around and return to the comfort of their homes and loved ones.

PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENTS

The event also saw NTUC Health sign two partnership agreements with the Singapore Institute of Technology (SIT) and Changi General Hospital (CGH) respectively.

The first will see NTUC Health work with SIT to develop a talent pool of healthcare workers in Singapore through knowledge and skills sharing. There will also be opportunities for SIT students to gain hands-on working experience at NTUC Health.

The second collaboration between NTUC Health and CGH will see both parties work together to enhance the quality of care for nursing home residents as well as training and development of staff in various areas.

About NTUC Health's Nursing Homes

The brand new 11-storey NTUC Health Nursing Home (Chai Chee) can serve over 350 residents. There is a Silver Circle Senior Care Centre located in the nursing home that can provide day care services to 100 clients.

Together with its other nursing homes in Jurong East and Geylang East, NTUC Health is one of the largest nursing home providers in Singapore with close to 1,000 beds.

DID YOU KNOW?

To sweeten the life of its residents, especially those suffering from dementia, the Chai Chee nursing home is designed with 3D paintings and related furnishings to refresh memories.

Familiar scenes such as a HDB void deck and Tanjong Pagar Railway Station, and elements such as an actual traditional barber shop (*pictured left*) were included to uplift their mood and encourage them to talk to fellow residents, staff and family members.

Embracing Fatherhood

A flexible work arrangement at NTUC FairPrice enables one young father to enjoy quality family life.

Story and Photo by **Jonathan Tan**

Thanks to a flexible work arrangements at NTUC FairPrice, Software Engineer Jonas Chu has been able to juggle the demands of work while taking on a bigger role in caring for his newborn daughter.

By adjusting his working hours from 8am to 5.30pm, Jonas is able to drop off his 4-month-old daughter with the nanny on his way to work and pick her up on his way home.

"This flexible work arrangement gives me more time to spend with my baby and wife. I can even prepare dinner at home for the family. This has been very helpful and I'm very happy," he said.

The 32-year-old shared that while working from home was also an available option, flexible work hours was the more viable one given the nature of his work. Jonas does software development for the FairPrice mobile application used to support stores in ordering stock, so he is needed in the office to maintain the internal IT network.

POSITIVE AND SUPPORTIVE WORKPLACE

The availability of flexible work arrangements such as flexible hours, compressed work weeks and time off for meals with their families at NTUC FairPrice stem from the social enterprise's commitment to being a leading employer who can attract, retain and engage their employees.

While aligning the needs of employees with the company's business and operational needs were some of the teething challenges, NTUC FairPrice Deputy Director, Human Resources (Head of HR Business Partnering) Tan Ying said that the outcome has been win-win because it has resulted in a more satisfied and engaged workforce.

"FairPrice believes that by creating a positive and supportive environment, staff can have peace of mind and flexibility so they are able to give their best at work knowing that their familial responsibilities have been taken care of," he added.

Healthcare Industry: Be Prepared for Change

Healthcare workers get a peek into what to expect from the upcoming changes in the industry.

Story and Photo by **Jonathan Tan**

The healthcare industry will be undergoing a transformation to improve jobs and skills.

To prepare workers for the changes ahead, the Healthcare Services Employees' Union (HSEU) worked with the Ong Teng Cheong Labour Leadership Institute to organise an engagement workshop for members on 30 October 2017.

"We need to engage our members early and be transparent about the challenges the healthcare industry will face. We need to share with them the ideas that have been adopted as a result of past engagement, feedback and discussion," said HSEU President K Thanaletchimi.

UPCOMING CHANGES

Attended by some 90 union leaders, the workshop saw representatives from the Ministry of Health highlight how the changes will be relevant to workers across the healthcare industry. Areas of focus include developing jobs and skills, enhancing productivity and innovation through technology and new ways of doing things.

"With so many union leaders coming to attend this workshop, it is a positive sign that people are interested in the changes in healthcare. What we need is for many to be spokespersons and lead by example in overcoming these changes," added HSEU General Secretary Diana Chia.

> "I think this session was very good. As a union leader, this was a good chance to gain awareness of the upcoming changes so that we can go back and prepare our members. As leaders, we have to be the ones to lead the transformation."
>
> *HSEU Assistant General Treasurer Michelle Teo*

> "The session was a good eye-opener. Many people often resist changes because of fear, but we can see more different ways where we can work together with employers to help our members manage transition."
>
> *NTUC Health Silver Circle Branch Representative Jason Koh*

In a Class of Their Own

Congratulations to 4 STU members who received the Inspiring Teacher of English 2017 award!

Story by **Shukry Rashid**
Photos by **The Speak Good English Movement**

They perform one of the toughest yet most noble jobs around – shaping and building the next generation of Singaporeans into persons of character.

We step into the classroom with four Singapore Teachers' Union (STU) members who were among the nine who received this the Inspiring Teacher of English award recently.

Mumtaj-Menon Ibrahim, 40
English Language Teacher
Huamin Primary School

With 17 years of teaching experience under her belt, Mumtaj hopes to develop students who understand and appreciate the beauty of the English language. She believes that the classroom environment should nurture confident and articulate speakers and writers. She often adopts a "Philosophy for Children" approach in her classroom to generate deeper student discussions and inculcate the importance of having mutual respect.

She said: "I believe that educating the heart is as important as educating the mind. I enjoy teaching the English language as it gives me an opportunity to develop confident learners who seek to learn beyond the classroom environment and who will eventually be able to contribute to the community in return."

Shalini Thanakodi, 31
English Language Teacher
Boon Lay Secondary School

After teaching for seven years, Shalini believes that language lessons should prepare students for the real world so they can be effective users of the language. She always seeks to encourage creativity and self-expression, and often uses journal writing to help students improve their writing skills.

She said: "I also make it a point to create real-world tasks for teaching English, especially for my low-progress learners, so they see the importance of the English language. For example, I task my Normal Technical students to fill in booking forms for tours and write letters to share their travel experiences. To prepare them for this task, I show them a documentary about a tourist spot. This allows them to simultaneously visualise, build vocabulary as well as develop their listening skills."

Kogilavani Veerappan, 43
Head of Department for English Language and Literature
Bartley Secondary School

After amassing 18 years of teaching experience, Kogilavani believes that a school can and should provide a nurturing environment for students from all backgrounds to participate in exciting and enriching learning experiences. She also takes great interest in fellow teachers' personal development, and hopes to engage and share visible thinking and information and communications technology-driven lesson designs with teachers from the English language fraternity.

She said: "Through English language teaching, I bring into the classroom lessons that not only teach an appreciation for the language, but also provide experiences that allow students to grow as persons of character. The English language classroom should be a place where success engenders confidence, and setbacks spur greater effort and hope. My lessons always end with students cheering 'English for Life'. I share with my students the belief that achieving proficiency in the language will lead to meaningful relationships and ultimately, personal and professional fulfilment in life."

Sharon Chan Wei-Lynn, 43
English Language Teacher
Raffles Institution (Year 5–6)

Sharon believes in creating a lively and unthreatening learning environment for her students. She will challenge them to consider and suggest alternative ways of expressing a similar observation or argument to help them understand the symbiotic relationship between language and the environment in which it is used. She hopes to explore innovative ways to enhance language teaching for General Paper in the classroom.

She said: "I am privileged to be in this position of influence and that drives me to hone my craft, and give my best effort to every lesson and opportunity to impact my students. Despite teaching for 19 years, I am still discovering insights and new ways of teaching my subject. Opportunities to grow as a teacher and individual are precious to me because they drive me to be better at what I do."

GOOD TO KNOW

About the Award

The Inspiring Teacher of English Award was presented by the Speak Good English Movement and *The Straits Times*, with support from the Ministry of Education. To date, more than 80 teachers have been recognised for igniting a love for the English language in their students and inspiring them to think and communicate in English more effectively. Each winner received a trophy, certificate and cash award of $2,000.

New Programme to Help the Injured Return to Work

Return to Work Coordinators will assist workers through their journey.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

Were you recently injured at work or know of someone who might be in this situation?

Minister of State (MOS) for Manpower Sam Tan launched the Return to Work (RTW) Programme on 1 November 2017 to help injured workers recover and get back to work.

The programme includes the support of a coordinator to assist in the process. The coordinators will partner injured workers to speak with doctors to understand their medical conditions and find out the type of medical support they need. They will also talk to the employers to understand the workers' job duties and develop a plan for them to rejoin the workforce.

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) will be working with seven public hospitals to roll out the programme in the next 12 months.

Tan Tock Seng Hospital embarked on the initiative on 25 September 2017. The other hospitals will be following suit in 2018.

FUNDING

MOM and the Workplace Safety and Health Council (WSH) will also provide funding to hospitals to train about 40 healthcare professionals to become coordinators by 2020.

They will also set up a new grant worth $500,000 which allows employers to claim up to an additional $7,000 per worker for return to work services if the total medical expenses exceed the current limit of $36,000 under the law.

The grant also supports expenses related to workplace adjustments not claimable under the law. Employers can claim up to 90 per cent of total costs subject to a cap of $1,000 per worker.

ROLE OF PARTIES

MOS Tan called on all parties to make the programme a success.

"Doctors need to work with RTW Coordinators to formulate recovery and RTW plans. Employers need to create an inclusive environment for workers and be ready to accept and accommodate injured workers back to their workplaces.

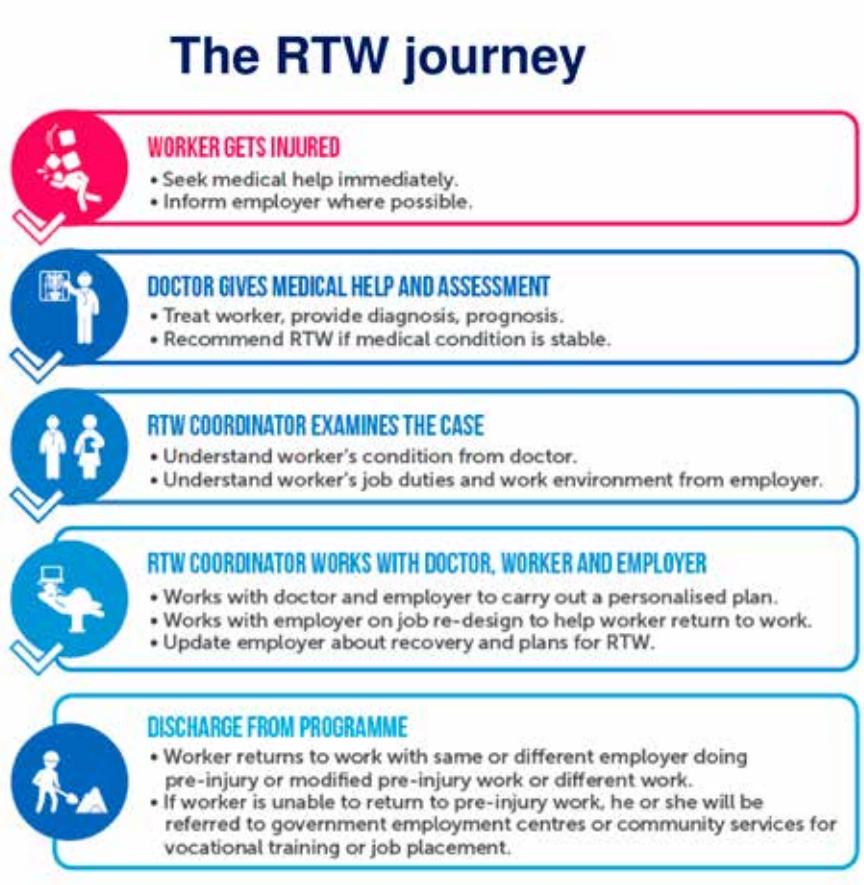
"Unions can play a role too by encouraging workers to be open to the changes in their job scope and be ready to adapt. Injured workers play a critical role. They need to stay positive and motivated, and be active participants in the return to work process," he said.

MOM first announced the programme at this year's Committee of Supply debate, following a call from Labour Member of Parliament Melvin Yong for a scheme to help injured workers back to work.

In a Facebook post, Mr Yong, who is also the secretary for the NTUC WSH Committee, said NTUC has been working closely with its tripartite partners on the initiative since its announcement.

"We will continue to enlighten, enable and engage our unions on the RTW programme so that they can effectively implement it on the ground. With the concerted efforts of all stakeholders, we can help our injured workers recover and reintegrate back to work quickly so that their livelihoods are not adversely affected," he said.

*For more information on the RTW Programme, visit **www.wshc.sg/returntowork**.*



Source: WSH Council

Shell Opens New Lubricants Plant in Tuas

We find out what it has to offer workers in terms of technology and higher productivity.

By **Jonathan Tan**

The launch of Shell's new lubricants plant in Tuas South on 1 November 2017 marks a milestone for the company in its plans to be a production hub for products that cater to customers around the world. It is Shell's third largest lubricants plant in the world.

PLANT OF THE FUTURE

As a standard for what advanced manufacturing could look like, Guest-of-Honour Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) S Iswaran highlighted the modern production technologies and automation used in the plant such as a line capable of producing 100 drums of lubricant per hour with a single worker.

"We encourage more companies to take advantage of advanced manufacturing technologies to raise their productivity and strengthen their competitiveness," he said.

Technology has been the key reason for this 50 per cent increase in capacity and six-time improvement in productivity over their old plant in Woodlands.

The new facility in Tuas is the size of 25 football pitches and is capable of producing 430 million litres of products a year. This is enough to service 12,000 cars per hour, 365 days in a year.

DEVELOPING WORKERS

Mr Iswaran also commended Shell for the company's commitment towards developing its workers and noted the government's commitment to work with industry partners to equip workers with the relevant skills for new jobs.

Sharing his thoughts, Singapore Shell Employees' Union delegate Clarence Lee, a senior operator at the plant, said the workers were excited about the shift to the new plant.

"In preparing for this, we went through guided job training to understand the automated processes. We have the knowledge, but we were used to a manual system, so we had to learn how the new automated systems work. I'm looking forward to more training by the union and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute)," he said.

Labour Report for July-Sept 2017: Highlights

Minor changes to unemployment, retrenchment and total unemployment rate.

By **Ramesh Subbaraman**

There has been a slight improvement in the number of citizens who could not find jobs in the July to September period of this year.

However, the number of workers let go were similar to the March to June period. The Manpower Ministry said the numbers have remained lower than 2016 since the first six months of 2017.

Overall, total employment declined, reflecting a continued decrease in the hiring of Work Permit Holders .

These details were released by the ministry on 27 October in its labour report for the July to September period of 2017.

Meanwhile, with the festive period coming up, more workers are likely to be hired in line with seasonal hiring as seen in previous years.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Unemployment: The rate declined slightly overall from 2.2 per cent in June to 2.1 per cent in September.

Total Employment: Total number of workers hired dropped by 2,500 due to a decrease in Work Permit Holders in the marine and construction industries and fewer construction activities.

Retrenchment : A similar number of workers were let go in the third quarter (3,600) compared to the previous quarter (3,640).

Job Placement: In the first half of 2017, more than 10,000 individuals were placed under the Adapt and Grow Initiative. Of these, more than 1,500 have undergone job conversion.

> "The Labour Movement will continue to work closely with our tripartite partners and industry stakeholders to endeavour in ensuring employers and workers embrace change, adopt the right mindset and stay able, agile and adaptable."
>
> *NTUC Assistant Secretary-General Patrick Tay on his Facebook page*

Snapshots

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

By ***NTUC This Week*** Team

Embracing Workplace Digitalisation

NTUC and StarHub signed a three-year partnership on 31 October 2017 to commit to helping all workers in Singapore be comfortable with new technology at the workplace and learn on-the-go.

"While we continue to fulfil our members' lifestyle needs, we also place great emphasis on preparing them for their future careers through training and upgrading programmes," said NTUC Assistant Director-General Vivek Kumar.

StarHub will also do their part to help foreign maids stay connected to their loved ones back home by offering mobile top-up cards and top-up stations at all Centre for Domestic Employees locations.

24-Hour Helpline: 1800 2255 233 (1800 CALL CDE)

NTUC Income Start.Sure

New startups can now easily purchase and manage employee benefits insurance with an online website called Start.Sure.

Launched on 1 November 2017, NTUC Income designed the self-service platform for 1 to 5-year-old startup companies, employing between two and 15 full-time staff.

Start.Sure offers three insurance plans that cater to different stages of an employee's life. The plans cover pre- and post- hospitalisation and surgical expenses including kidney dialysis, cancer treatments and outpatient consultation by a general doctor.

NTUC Income will partner NTUC U Startup to reach out to entrepreneurs and raise awareness of the platform.

For more information on Start.Sure, visit ***www.startsure.com.sg.***

Creative and Media Jobs

Some 70 participants from the creative and media field and 12 employers gathered on 30 October 2017 for a networking night.

The event, which was organised by NTUC's PIVOT programme with support from the Creative Media and Publishing Union and Singapore Union of Broadcasting Employees, aims to help displaced professionals find job opportunities.

About 46 participants were unemployed or freelancing, including some of those recently retrenched by Singapore Press Holdings. Employers present spoke about their companies and job offerings.

All participants were invited to apply for any of the 116 job vacancies put together by PIVOT through the NTUC U PME Centre.

NTWU Responds to Workers Suspended Due to SMRT Flooding

The National Transport Workers' Union (NTWU) will ensure that any actions taken by SMRT against its workers are fair and appropriate.

NTWU Executive Secretary Melvin Yong said this in response to the announcement by SMRT on 31 October 2017 to suspend the manager and staff responsible for the maintenance of the Bishan station pump system, which caused an over-20-hour train delay on 8 October 2017.

Mr Yong urged SMRT to make training a focus for its workers. NTWU wants to ensure that the efforts of the many other SMRT workers who have been working hard to run the trains smoothly are recognised, he added.

MAINTENANCE FAILURE

According to SMRT, the quarterly maintenance works for December 2016, March 2017 and June 2017 were not properly conducted.

SMRT Corporation and SMRT Trains Chairman Seah Moon Ming said: "SMRT has zero tolerance for failures in supervision and diligence over maintenance tasks. We do not condone any acts of dishonesty and dereliction of responsibility, whether by management or staff. All who are accountable will be disciplined sternly, regardless of rank and position. Accordingly, the relevant management chain of command in SMRT must be held accountable."

Never Too Young to Care for the Old

We all have things we are passionate about. For Jason Sim, a Young NTUC activist, it is giving back to the elderly in society.

By **Shukry Rashid**

Jason Sim was just 14 years old when his grandfather suffered a stroke in 2004 and became paralysed on the right side of his body. With both his parents working and his sister too young for caregiving duties, Jason had no choice but to take up the responsibility.

After school, when most kids his age would be out with friends, Jason would buy food for his grandfather then head home to bathe and care for him.

Jason's grandfather passed away in 2010, but the experience stayed with him and moulded him into what he is today – a volunteer for the vulnerable in society.

While serving his National Service in 2011, he decided to volunteer with a non-profit community service agency serving the needs of children, youths, families and seniors in Singapore.

MEALS-ON-WHEELS

When the 27-year-old software engineer joined Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore (IRAS) and its union early last year, he was told by union leaders that he could also volunteer as an activist with Young NTUC.

Currently an assistant general secretary (AGS) with the Inland Revenue Authority of Singapore Staff Union (IRASSU), Jason has been a part of Young NTUC since November 2016.

His most memorable achievement to date is being part of the recent Meals-on-Wheels programme, which delivers daily meals to the elderly.

Jason and his team did everything themselves – from recruiting other volunteers to planning the roster and coordinating the deliveries.

He rallied over 70 other volunteers from IRAS, IRASSU and friends for 36 sessions between April and November 2017, and made deliveries to the elderly in the neighbourhoods of Toa Payoh and Ang Mo Kio. Over 60 seniors benefited from this programme.

"With the experience I had taking care of my late-grandfather, I can interact better with the elderly I am serving now.

"It gives me a warm feeling to be able to look after them. The elderly has done so much to build our country and society. When they are old, sometimes they have nobody to take care of them. I believe that we should do our part to give back to them. That is my principle."

MARRYING ACTIVISM WITH UNIONISM

For Jason, the work is not done yet. As IRASSU AGS, he plans to include activism as part of union work.

Currently, IRASSU volunteering projects with charity organisations are on an ad-hoc basis. Jason is in negotiations with TOUCH Community Services for IRAS staff and IRASSU members to participate in its activities but not just ones for the elderly.

He said: "We plan to sign an agreement with TOUCH so that we don't just stop here. We don't want to just do one event, we want to make this a long-term thing."

With IRAS committing to 2,500 hours of community work in conjunction with its 25th anniversary this year, IRASSU is seeing this as yet another opportunity to continue its good work.

Jason *(second from right)* with his fellow volunteers during the Meals-on-Wheels initiative.

NTUC THIS WEEK

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