“Doing good should begin from the heart, but it has to be further developed by applying the mind and the will.”

MR HSIEH FU HUA (BUSINESS '74), CHAIRMAN, NUS BOARD OF TRUSTEES

A GOLDEN DREAM COMES TRUE
Senior alumni play a key role in an initiative on assisted living for the elderly

THE MAKER MAKES HIS MARK
MR VEERAPPAN SWAMINATHAN
(ENGINEERING + USP '11)

A GRACIOUS SOCIETY: ARE WE THERE YET?
A discussion on just how ‘state of the heart’ Singapore is

COMING TOGETHER FOR GOOD
The NUS family rethinks its approach to contributing to the community in a COVID-19 world

THE ALUMNI MAGAZINE OF THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
nus.edu.sg/alumnet/TheAlumNUS
Climate Change: Are Tomorrow’s Needs more Important than Today’s Reality?

The climate change and sustainable development debate is very much defined by the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report. The key thrust of the Report is about the dilemma of “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

The spirit of this Report lives on in the latest supranational climate change agreements and agendas, including the Paris Agreement, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.

Yet, adaptation and mitigation to climate change are highly costly endeavours. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) estimates that adapting to climate change would cost $500 billion per year, by 2050. These costs will pose a financial strain for countries around the world. This is especially so for countries that are just emerging from the clasp of poverty, and beginning to see improvement in their population’s quality of life.

Can countries, and the world, find that critical balance – in the climate change debate – between addressing today’s realities and the needs of tomorrow? This means taking into account issues of parity, ethics and accountability to future generations.
NUS Prof-Chancellor Professor S Jayakumar (Law '83) headed this year’s National Day Awards, receiving the country’s highest civilian award – the Order of Temasek (With High Distinction) – for his sustained and invaluable contributions to the nation.

Prof Jayakumar’s illustrious public service career spans decades. He was Singapore’s Permanent Representative to the United Nations and High Commissioner to Canada from 1971 to 1974. From 1980, he held many portfolios including Minister for Law, Home Affairs, Labour, and Foreign Affairs, and also served as Deputy Prime Minister, Senior Minister, and Coordinating Minister for National Security, until retiring from politics in 2011. He is now Senior Legal Advisor to the Minister for Foreign Affairs. In these roles, he has helped the country tackle complicated diplomatic issues, defending Singapore’s legal interests while maintaining good relations with other countries.

Professor Wang Gungwu (Arts ’80), University Professor and a faculty member of NUS Arts and Social Sciences, was conferred the Distinguished Service Order. Prof Wang was the founding Chairman of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at NUS, and the former Chairman of the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. He played a key role in building up the three institutes and strengthening their research capabilities to foster a strong culture of excellence. Under his leadership, the three institutes have grown into internationally reputable research institutes and think-tanks, strengthening Singapore’s position as an independent base for leading research on China and East Asia, and enhancing research and academic exchanges between Singaporean and overseas scholars.

“I have enjoyed all the work I have been able to do and learnt a great deal while doing it. This is an honour I share with my wife Margaret, whose deep feelings for Singapore have made my work here all the more satisfying,” said Prof Wang on 7 August. Prof Wang’s wife, Mrs Margaret Wang, passed away later that day. The University extends its deepest condolences to Prof Wang and his family.

Associate Professor Benjamin (Medicine ’81), NUS Senior Vice President (Health Education & Resources) and Immediate Past Director of Medical Services at the Ministry of Health, was conferred the Meritorious Service Medal.

“Assoc Prof Ong had been the Chief Executive of the National University Health System. He made significant contributions in the areas of electronic health records, patient safety, quality, and care models. He developed the NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health and nurtured nursing, medical, and allied health professionals.

The Order of Temasek (With High Distinction) went to NUS Pro-Chancellor Professor S Jayakumar.

ALUMNI RECOGNISED FOR LONGSTANDING SERVICE TO SINGAPORE

Several distinguished individuals with strong ties to NUS were honoured at this year’s National Day Awards ceremony.

University Professor Wang Gungwu received the Distinguished Service Order.

NUS alumni comprise almost half of 14th Singapore Parliament

NUS alumni comprise almost half of the 14th Singapore Parliament.

ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR BENJAMIN ONG, NUS SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT (HEALTH EDUCATION & RESOURCES) AND IMMEDIATE PAST DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES AT THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH, WAS CONFERRED THE MERITORIOUS SERVICE MEDAL.

FOLLOWING SINGAPORE’S GENERAL ELECTION, the 14th Singapore Parliament saw 45 NUS alumni among 95 Members of Parliament (MPs) and Non-constituency Members of Parliament (NCMPs). Singapore’s Parliament is tasked with making laws, taking up a critical role in building up the three institutes and strengthening their research capabilities to foster a strong culture of excellence. Under his leadership, the three institutes have grown into internationally reputable research institutes and think-tanks, strengthening Singapore’s position as an independent base for leading research on China and East Asia, and enhancing research and academic exchanges between Singaporean and overseas scholars.

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Associate Professor Benjamin (Medicine ’81), NUS Senior Vice President (Health Education & Resources) and Immediate Past Director of Medical Services at the Ministry of Health, was conferred the Meritorious Service Medal.

Assoc Prof Ong then served as Director of Medical Services in the Ministry of Health from 2014 to 2020. He put in place a system to better manage capacity across the public healthcare system, developed roadmaps for the long-term transformation of care models to meet the needs of an ageing population, and enhanced postgraduate medical training. He oversaw the formation and expansion of the Agency for Cares Effectiveness, and pushed for treatments that are both clinically and cost-effective. During his tenure, the Ministry established regulatory sandboxes to enable new and innovative healthcare models and services.

This article was first published on 29 July in NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/nus-alumni-comprise-almost-half-14th-singapore-parliament.

NOT PLAYING GAMES: VR FOR MEDICAL TRAINING

This third-year medical students experiencing immersive, experiential learning through PASS-IT.

MEDICAL STUDENTS FROM THE NUS YONG LIO LIM SCHOOL OF MEDICINE are experiencing the process of patient safety and immersion in operating theatre procedures – all through the magic of virtual reality (VR).

Drawn into a simulated world through VR headsets and hand-held controllers, the students are able to learn about the entire flow of the peri-operative setting – from dental clearance to anaesthesia evaluation, to the handling of sharps during surgery and the safe conduct of operations. The system, called PAInt Safety all Inter Professional Training (PASS-IT), is a digital gamified environment that allows students to learn about hands-on techniques in the operating theatre. Due to COVID-19, access to the operating theatre is restricted, which means medical educators must balance practical learning experiences while ensuring the safety of their students. The VR environment enhances the teaching and learning of situational patient management, letting students observe the role that each healthcare worker performs and allowing them to gain a greater appreciation of each role.

To enter the virtual training world, medical students don VR headsets and wield hand-held controllers to interact with one another in real time. Their physical movements and actions are also tracked and displayed in real time for visualisation and evaluation. “With the COVID-19 situation, students have been removed from practical learning settings due to the risk of exposure to aerosol-generating procedures. This VR system is a good tool to help the students consolidate their learning despite increased clinical restrictions,” said Associate Professor Alfred Raw (Medicine ’03), Assistant Dean (Education) of NUS Medicine, who is one of the educators spearheading the initiative.

This article was first published on 11 August in NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg/highlights/not-playing-games-vr-medical-training.
AN ENGAGING E-REUNION

Not to be undone in this era of social distancing, this year’s Bukit Timah Homecoming harnessed the power of technology to reunite alumni virtually.

IN LIGHT OF THE ONGOING PANDEMIC, BUKIT TIMAH HOMECOMING 2020	took to cyberspace to bring alumni together in a brand-new reunion format themed “Blast from the Past”. Co-hosted by the Faculty of Law and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, the Bukit Timah Homecoming on 4 July celebrated the 115th Anniversary of NUS and the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, 65th Anniversary of the Faculty of Engineering, 55th Anniversary of the NUS Business School, and 50th Anniversary of the Class of 1970.

Kicking off the virtual celebrations was a plethora of activities such as “Memories@BTC” — where alumni shared stories and photos of their student life at the cherished campus and relived memories of their campus days and of fellow alumni — and “On This Day”, which was a collection of historical events that shaped each day leading up to celebration day. Other activities on the Bukit Timah Homecoming subsite included “SG Day”, a series of videos that led viewers on a walk down memory lane with scenes of Singapore from the past; and an Online Quiz covering the history of Bukit Timah Campus. During a dialogue hosted by Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture ’84), Director of Alumni Relations.

The day of celebrations began with a message from the Guest-of-Honour, President Halimah Yacob (Law ’67), NUS Chancellor, alongside greeting messages from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, the Bukit Timah Campus. During a dialogue hosted by Mr Bernard Toh titled “Bukit Timah Conversations”, Mr Navtej Singh (Arts and Social Sciences ’72), and Ms Trisha Suresh (Business ’72), Mr Ho Jun Yi (Law & Social Sciences ’72), Mrs Noor Quek (Arts and Social Sciences ’68) reminisced about their school life at Bukit Timah Campus.

The day ended with an e-Toast Ceremony, where alumni and staff gathered virtually to toast to another successful homecoming.

Check out alumnet.events/BT20 for the activities and recordings of the day’s celebrations.

NUS Business School’s Dean, Prof Andrew Ross, embracing the theme of “Blast from the Past” at the e-Toast.

NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85) with volunteers from the NUS Office of University Communications at the Willing Hearts soup kitchen.

The NUS Alumni Xiamen Chapter visited an orphanage in Yong Chun County.

Morris Engineering Alumni Singapore worked with Man Full Tong Welfare Society to gift dry rations to beneficiaries.

Wondering where to start and what you can do? Visit nus.edu.sg/alumnet/events/DOS/find-an-opportunity and find an opportunity today!

NUS Alumni in Yangon donated food and other essentials to Buddhist monasteries in Mingaladon Township.

NUS Day of Service 2020

WITH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ONGOING, the fifth NUS Day of Service went back to its fundamentals, and encouraged the NUS community to give back whenever and however they can. While making sure to observe safe distancing measures, alumni, students, and staff came together on 5 September to do their part this year.

In Bangladesh, the LKYSPP Alumni Bangladesh Chapter donated face masks to rickshaw-pullers.

In Yangon, the LKYSPP Alumni Myanmar Chapter donated food and other essentials to the NUS Alumni Yangon Chapter.

Mr Bernard Toh (Architecture ’84) (right), Director of NUS Alumni Relations, preparing meals at Willing Hearts.

Mr Johnny Tan (far left), Co-Chairman of the NUS Alumni Advisory Board; representatives of the NUS Alumni Business Club, and Faculty of Engineering Alumni visited a monastery in Bangladesh.

The NUS Alumni Xiamen Chapter visited an orphanage in Yong Chun County.

Engineering Alumni Singapore worked with Man Full Tong Welfare Society to gift dry rations to beneficiaries.
CELEBRATIONS GO ‘CYBER’

With myriad engaging and interactive activities available online throughout the day, this year’s Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day put a Twist on the annual homecoming tradition.

Instead of performances and booths around university town, alumni, students, and staff were treated to a full day of fun programming that took place on the NUS Alumni Relations’ website, Zoom, and Facebook Live. With the event moving to an online platform, over 7,000 participants were able to tune in and enjoy the day’s activities and reconnect with their alma mater.

Various performances and workshops were broadcast ‘live’ throughout the day. These included a swing jazz performance by The NUS Alumni Indian Ensemble and the band @Project — a band formed by alumni Ms Teresa Teng (Arts and Social Sciences ‘08) and Mr Royston Loh (Arts and Social Sciences ’13), who started a series of kopi-talkshows called “Life, Love & Lipidemia” during the Circuit Breaker.

Senior Minister of State for Sustainability and the Environment, and Transport, Dr Amy Khor (Design and Environment ‘81) also gave the Opening Address at a session on sustainable urban farming that was co-organized by NUS Environmental Sustainability and featured Citiponics co-founder Ms Danielle Chan (Arts and Social Sciences ‘18).

The full day’s programme closed with an ‘Ask Us Anything’ session where alumni had the opportunity to get their queries answered by NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85), NUS Senior Deputy President and Provost Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering ’85), and NUS Vice-Provost (Masters’ Programmes & Lifelong Education) Professor Susanna Leong (Law ’89). The lively session was moderated by Ms Akanksha Batura (Arts and Social Sciences ’18).

Missed out on the fun? All recordings are available at alumnet.events/KR20 or facebook.com/NUSoar!

Celebrations with Pharmacy Alumni Group

Although they were not able to gather physically for this year’s Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day, the NUS Department of Pharmacy held a Facebook Live session to celebrate the occasion. To begin, Mr Michael Ker (‘01) presented a live demonstration of papiah-skin making and wrapping while explaining the origins and culture behind the local delicacy. Thereafter was a “Kopi-talk” with Mr Sean Ang (‘10), who started a series of kopi-talkshows called “Life, Love & Lipidemia” during the Circuit Breaker.

The University Scholars Programme (USP) Class of 2018 had a mini e-gathering over Zoom during the USP e-Homecoming 2020 instead of the usual physical gathering. Though it was a short one-hour catch-up session, the group managed to learn more about how everyone was coping, had an online drawing game, and collaboratively drew a doodle “art piece” which they dedicated to USP Director and Cinnamon College Master Associate Professor Kang Hway Chuan.
CELEBRATING WOMEN AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENTS

Over 300 alumni, students, and staff attended the inaugural WoW: In Conversation to hear from female alumni leaders as they discussed their leadership challenges and experiences and how to effect impactful change in society.

Singapore’s President and NUS Chancellor, Madam Halimah Yacob (Law ’78) — who is the Republic’s first female Head of State — opened the event with a speech that reminded attendees how both women and men have a role to play in shaping a gender-equal world, and that gender parity is very much still a work in progress. She noted NUS’ commitment to nurture successful women leaders, and encouraged more female alumni to step up and take the lead.

During the discussion, which was themed ‘Women Leading in Times of Crisis’, the panellists candidly shared their own experiences starting out in their careers, and brought up various issues such as the impact of COVID-19 on businesses and how to make effective decisions. Ms Chew emphasised the importance of looking for and learning from mentors, while Ms Foo underscored the crucial roles that adaptability and learning from one’s mistakes play in the workplace — especially for young female alumni.

Also in attendance that evening were guests such as NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’80), NUS Alumni Advisory Board Member Ms Janet Ang (Business ’82), and United Women Singapore President Ms Georgette Tan Adamopoulos (Arts and Social Sciences ’92).

I also encourage more women to step up, take the lead, and inspire others. It is through inclusivity and the diversity of expertise and experiences that we can learn from one another. The road ahead may seem uncertain, especially in the context of COVID-19, but take heart that we are not alone. Many others have paved the way to ensure that we now have the resources and opportunities. So, let’s support one another on this important journey.

Excerpt from President Halimah Yacob’s Opening Remarks

After the session, the panellists took on more questions via e-mail:

What advice would you give your younger self regarding charting your career progress — are there areas you wish you had focused more on? What can companies do to support the development of younger staff?

MS CHEW: I was very lucky, in that I was in the right place at the right time. I learnt about corporate finance when it was nascent in Singapore’s economic development. I think that young people today should learn about developments in the world around us, particularly in science. They should learn to understand how finance, politics, and technology work and how they are changing our lives. We should also be mindful of the fast-changing geopolitical environment that we live in. Companies should invest in training, and the reality is most companies do. The challenge for companies is how to ensure that the training is effective, and to set up structures whereby there is good feedback between subordinate and superior so that one can learn both formally and informally.

Do you have advice for women who want to grow their family and have a successful career? What should women do to ensure that they can rise in the workforce but not have to sacrifice their time with their family?

MS FOO: As Chair of BoardAgender, I remember that we collaborated with the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP) a number of years back and interviewed 25 successful women. We found that organisations can enable women to carve out a successful career. Apart from family support, organisations that intentionally groom talent, provide flexi-work arrangements, or are more accommodating can help on this front. There will be times where a woman has to spend more time at work because of her job requirements but she must also be disciplined to take a step back when the family requires attention. Another important point is to share caregiving duties with the spouse. The woman does not always have to ferry the children to classes or take them to the doctor.

Leading a company is a highly stressful endeavour — what do you do to relax, and to remain energised and focused throughout the day?

MS CHEW: The truth is I do not remain energised and focused throughout the day! The idea of a CEO who is never tired and stays energetic 24/7, 365 days a year is nonsense. We all need to recharge, and I do so by walking, reading, meeting up with friends, attending plays and concerts (before the circuit breaker), and exercising.

MS FOO: When I know I am getting too stressed, I will hit the pause button. I paint and listen to music. Be still and reflect.

For the full Q&A feature, please go to nus.edu.sg/alumni/thealumnus/issue-123/community/oar-highlights.
THE FUTURE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

Traditionally, the biennial ALF brings together alumni leaders and volunteers to share and brainstorm new ideas and best practices in alumni relations and volunteer engagement. This year’s discussions centred around three key areas—Alumni Relations, Disruptions in Technology, and Lifelong Learning. Attendees had breakout discussions on issues such as succession planning practices, the needs of NUS alumni, digital transformation during and beyond COVID-19, and lifelong learning goals.

The need for alumni to unite anew as a social compact, particularly in this trying time, was also keenly felt by attendees. As NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85) highlighted in his keynote address, “In a time when complexities and the pressures of new demands threaten to tear us apart, it is not enough to be one thread thick — we must deepen to two if not three threads deep. In order to thrive in a complex and uncertain future, we must look at how we can effectively transform ourselves into a social compact.”

Overall, it was a morning of fruitful and meaningful conversations. Just before the closing plenary, NUS Senior Deputy President and Provost Professor Ho Teck Hua (Engineering ’85) launched the new AlumAPP—a mobile application to help the NUS alumni community remain engaged, connected, and informed.

FUTURE-READY WORKSHOPS

Tips to Being a High-Performing Remote Employee

Held in partnership with the NUS Centre for Future-Ready Graduates (CFG), the second iteration of Future-ready Workshops on 14 July was oversubscribed and well-received by alumni. Mr Jasbir Singh of CFG walked attendees through tips for setting up a home workstation, productivity hacks to help create a positive work-from-home experience, and how to continue building relationships with co-workers despite working remotely. In an interactive and engaging session, attendees interacted with Mr Singh over a Q&A session and participated actively via polls.

Virtual Networking: Building Bridges to Opportunities

Networking is the key that opens doors to hidden career opportunities. The best part? Networking skills can be learnt by anyone, whether you’re an introvert or extrovert. Join this session to learn the fundamentals of networking online, whether you are currently looking for a new job, or planning ahead.

This session will cover:
1. Creating a networking plan to expand your job search
2. Building your brand online to make a great impression
3. Putting your plan into action to make professional connections
4. Expanding your industry knowledge and network via informational interviewing

Speaker:
Ms Camilla Tam
Career Advisor & Learning & Development Manager,
NUS Centre for Future-ready Graduates

Date: 13 October 2020, Tuesday
Time: 7.30PM
Platform: Zoom

Join us online at: alumnet.events/Fredct20

THE FUTURE OF ALUMNI RELATIONS

Fortuitously themed “Alumni Relations in the Age of Disruption”, this year’s NUS Alumni Leaders Forum (ALF) was held on 18 July and saw over 100 alumni leaders come together virtually to discuss and explore how to shape Alumni Relations for the decade ahead.

Alumni leaders at ALF 2020.
OAR HIGHLIGHTS

IN THIS FAST-CHANGING DIGITAL LANDSCAPE, and especially with the changes brought about by COVID-19, scaling up digital capabilities has become a matter of survival. In this talk on 18 August by Ms Huong Tran (Business ’07), Executive Director of Payments and Platforms at DBS Consumer Banking Group, attendees gained insights into DBS’ digital transformation journey. Ms Huong used three case studies – smart buddy innovation, DBS Paylah!, and open banking – to demonstrate how DBS has leveraged on technologies to boost customer engagement and stay at the forefront of the banking industry.

ON 23 JULY, IN A SESSION ORGANISED IN PARTNERSHIP WITH FARRER PARK HOSPITAL, Dr Paul Mok (Medicine ’91) delivered an informative talk on Obstructive Sleep Apnea – what it is and how to manage it. Dr Mok, who is a Senior Consultant and Medical Director of My ENT Specialist Clinic at Farrer Park Medical Centre, actively addressed numerous inquiries and concerns posted by participants via the Q&A feature on Zoom. Overall, participants were better able to understand the main causes and possible treatments and solutions to resolve Obstructive Sleep Apnea.

Abdominal bloating, flatulence and irregular bowel habits are common symptoms of gastrointestinal (GI) problems. A simple dietary change can affect your bowel and change your gut microflora. Learn how your dietary patterns can affect your bowel and ways to keep your gut healthy.

Dr Loh Poh Yen
(Medicine ’07)
Specialist in Gastroenterology & Internal Medicine, Farrer Park Hospital, Gutcare Digestive.Liver.Endoscopy Associates

22 October 2020 (Thursday)
7.30pm - 9.00pm
Register at alumnet.events/HWOct20

Catch up on all our webinars at alumnet.events/webinars!
A HEART FOR LEARNING

On the decision to sign up for the NUS Executive MBA programme...

Besides being a cardiologist, I am also a medical advisor to WhiteCoat, one of the first telemedicine providers to work within the Ministry of Health Regulatory Sandbox back in 2018. Since then, we have seen dramatic changes in the healthcare landscape due to COVID-19. I believe an Executive MBA will equip me with the tools to create sustainable healthcare solutions in a post-pandemic, digitally-integrated world.

LIFELONG LEARNERS HIGHLIGHT

On applying the new knowledge to her work...

While we have only been through the first segment, we have covered Marketing Strategy, Microeconomics, and Leadership, and I have loved learning about them all. Coming from a healthcare background, the new knowledge and diversity of thought have really lent a multifaceted lens to my practice, which involves the intersection of healthcare, technology, and business.

On learning from classmates who work in different industries...

Interacting with many talented people across industries gives me fresh perspectives on how the world runs, how problems can be solved, and even potential creative collaborations. Each of us has our unique experiences and a lot to bring to the table. I am sure the relationships we’re forging will endure long after we have graduated.

On the importance of lifelong learning...

Lifelong learning is as essential as breathing, if one wants to continue to grow and stay relevant in a fast-evolving world. Whether learning happens in a formal setting, or simply through conversations, reading, or attending a course, we should seek to continue to refine our knowledge. This will allow us to ask the right questions, think of sustainable solutions, and voice our thoughts, especially when it counts towards making constructive changes in tackling real problems that we witness every day.

“The strain, PM ... too much!” I replied.

“What strain?” he immediately demanded. “If anyone around here has strain, it’s me! But we have to carry on, not just give up like that. It’s for our very survival … and that of Singapore!”

Available at leading bookstores, nuspress.nus.edu.sg, kobo.com, and barnesandnoble.com.

China Film Festival 2020

Dates | 11 – 13 November 2020 (Wednesday – Friday)
Time | 7.30pm

Please register online at alumnet.events/CNFF-20

Chinese Film Festival 2020

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lifelonglearning@nus.edu.sg

nus-scale
LIKE SO MUCH ELSE IN THE COVID-19 ERA, NUS’ ANNUAL DAY OF SERVICE (DOS), which took place on 5 September 2020, looked different this year. DOS was inaugurated in 2016 as a day when NUS alumni, students, and staff around the world — together with their families and friends — give back to society through a variety of community activities. But how could they do so when the pandemic meant that volunteering en masse was out of the question?

Yet, ironically, the significance of DOS has arguably never mattered more. COVID-19 has affected countless lives and businesses. Marginalised and vulnerable groups, such as lonely seniors and low-income households, have been disproportionately affected; in Singapore, migrant workers have borne the brunt of the pandemic. So while COVID-19 may have complicated things for DOS organisers, it simply stiffened their resolve to come up with new and inventive ways to help those in need. It also offered a timely reminder of the true intention behind DOS: to inject the spirit of giving into the NUS community and encourage its members to do something beneficial for the wider society, not just on this one day, but all year round. This is an ideal that the University has always strived towards, whether in peacetime or during a pandemic.

CHANNELLING AWARENESS INTO ACTION

COVID-19 has disrupted global economic activity and everyday life, effectively knocking the world off its axis. As each of us scrambles to adjust to the impact of the coronavirus on our own lives, it can be easy to forget that others are also going through a difficult time, if not more so. “Even before COVID-19, there were many out there who needed help. The crisis just created an additional hurdle to help these groups, and it has also driven more people into similar circumstances,” says Mr Jeremy Ee (Engineering ’05), an NUS Alumni Advisory Board member and founding Chairperson of DOS. “There are always people in need. Even amid the crisis and its safety rules, we can still give back.”

To keep everyone safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19, DOS 2020 featured a scaled-down list of volunteering opportunities. Instead of letting individuals plan and implement their own community activities, efforts were directed towards supporting existing organisations that had approval to continue operating under COVID-19 restrictions such as maintaining safe distancing, wearing masks, and keeping to groups of five or fewer. “Our focus this year was to promote local causes by various non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that had activities with measures in place to reduce the chances of infection, and that do good for the community and rely on volunteers to be operational,” says Mr Ee.

For example, on 5 September, small groups of volunteers helped out at Willing Hearts’ soup kitchen, donated blood to the Singapore Red Cross, or headed over to The Food Bank Singapore to pack bags of staple food items for disadvantaged families. Moreover, activities were not confined to just one day — some even took place digitally. These included a months-long online fundraiser by NUS Students’ Community...
Service Club to help low-income families struggling to get through the pandemic, and also to provide care packs to healthcare workers in appreciation of their efforts during this period; a Zoom storytelling session on 4 September for underprivileged children from Beyond Social Services; and a virtual run for RunNUS (from 13 July to 27 September), with proceeds channelled to the Singapore Disability Sports Council and Disabled People’s Association.

In another departure from previous DOS installments, the personal stories of NUS alumni, students, and staff doing their part to uplift the community during the COVID-19 crisis were shared on the DOS website and on social media. The organising committee hoped that by spreading the word about these acts of kindness – such as making fun science kits for needy children and launching a neighbourhood buddy system to support vulnerable families and seniors – others in the NUS community would be inspired to make a difference.

Seva

NUS commitment to creating a more caring and gracious society received a shot in the arm last year through the launch of Good (SGO) initiative. Jointly launched by the Office of Student Affairs and the Office of Alumni Relations on 20 March 2019, SGO is a community development programme that empowers NUS students to collaborate with the community and engage in social causes. Students work in teams to initiate, plan, and execute projects with a community partner of their choice, so as to enhance community well-being.

The structure that SGO brings to acts of giving harnesses students’ sense of empathy and develops their “focus and clarity of purpose” – which are required to get projects off the ground and make a positive impact in society, notes Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (Business ’74), Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees and former President of the National Council of Social Service. “Doing good should begin from the heart – with a cause that resonates with you – but it has to be further developed by applying the mind and the will.”

More than 60 community projects have been seeded to date under SGO. In one completed project, a team of students conducted IT workshops for children and youths from AWWA Family Services during the December 2019 school holidays, to equip them with basic IT skills that will be useful for their future careers. In a more recent project, a team of students conducted IT workshops for migrant workers in Singapore. The structure that SGO brings to acts of giving harnesses students’ sense of empathy and develops their “focus and clarity of purpose” – which are required to get projects off the ground and make a positive impact in society, notes Mr Hsieh Fu Hua (Business ’74), Chairman of the NUS Board of Trustees and former President of the National Council of Social Service. “Doing good should begin from the heart – with a cause that resonates with you – but it has to be further developed by applying the mind and the will.”

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I want these ideas to help advance research thinking, change our teaching narrative, and raise people’s wellbeing in an enduring, sustainable way.

Prof Danny Quah, Dean, LKY SSKP and Li Sheng Huan Professor in Economics

I became a community leader in a corporate environment, by understanding the perspectives of the ‘client’ or ‘beneficiary’ in question. Now that I have started my new job as a Communications Executive at MOHT, I hope to work closely with communities rather than for them. I aim to remain close to the ground to understand the community’s voices, and translate these insights into solutions that can improve their well-being. It encouraged me to identify the community not as beneficiaries, but as empowered people who have various skills and resources which can be tapped on.

Ms Raudhah Bte Razali (Arts and Social Sciences ‘20), 23, tells The AlumNUS how it has shaped her career aspirations.

"Joining CTPCLC and collaborating on social research projects with community partners – namely, Fei Yue Community Services and the Minister of Health’s Office for Healthcare Transformation (MOHT) – made me realise the importance of understanding the community’s experiences in creating solutions that can improve their well-being. It encouraged me to identify the community not as beneficiaries, but as empowered people who have various skills and resources which can be tapped on.

My experience at CTPCLC showed me that it is possible to be a community leader in a corporate environment, by understanding the perspectives of the ‘client’ or ‘beneficiary’ in question. Now that I have started my new job as a Communications Executive at MOHT, I hope to work closely with communities rather than for them. I aim to remain close to the ground to understand the community’s voices, and translate these insights into solutions that can improve their well-being. It encouraged me to identify the community not as beneficiaries, but as empowered people who have various skills and resources which can be tapped on.

My motivation for joining the Board is to champion stronger coordination with NUS faculties and offices as well as student groups. From my past involvement in the NUS Students’ Union (NUSSU), the earlier the University establishes a strong connection with existing students, the more likely they will become active alumni eager to contribute to the NUS community,”

Mr Ho Jun Yi (Law & Public Policy '05), Partner, Dentons SL-personal connection

"Many brilliant ideas emerged from the NUS Alumni Leaders Forum 2020, which I had the privilege of participating in. Fellow alumni shared insights on transforming alumni activities in the digital age. This year’s Bukit Timah Homecoming was one example of what we can expect in the future. I aspire to be part of the driving force behind this digital transformation.”

Mr Ok Rui Tze (Art & Social Sciences ‘11), Co-Founder and Chief Investment Officer, NUS Flourish
**FILM FESTIVALS [ONLINE]**

Calling all movie buffs! Join us for a trio of Film Festivals – Peruvian, China, and Canadian – from October to December and learn more about these cultures through the camera’s lens, from the comfort of your home.

### October

**Peruvian Film Festival [Online]**

In celebration of 40 Years of Peru-Singapore relations, the Embassy of the Republic of Peru in Singapore and NUS Alumni Relations are proud to present the inaugural Peruvian Film Festival. Come experience and learn about Peruvian culture through award-winning films.

- **7 Oct (Wed)**: Magallanes NC16
  - Time: 7:30pm
  - Register: Join us at alumnet.events/PF16
  - Contact: Ms Claudia Ng claudia.ng@nus.edu.sg

- **9 Oct (Fri)**: La Teta Asustada (The Milk of Sorrow) NC16
  - Time: 7:30pm
  - Register: Join us at alumnet.events/LTA
  - Contact: Ms Tan Li Hui lihui@nus.edu.sg

- **18 – 22 Dec**: The Hype versus Reality of the Impact of Financial Technology (FinTech) [Online]
  - Register: Join us at alumnet.events/CFF20
  - Contact: Ms Gabriella Nyam gabriella@nus.edu.sg

### November

**Canadian Film Festival [Online]**

After a two-year hiatus, the High Commission of Canada and NUS Alumni Relations have come together once again to present the Canadian Film Festival 2020. Join us online to enjoy some of the best of Canadian films.

- **11 – 13 Nov**: Climate Change: Are Tomorrow’s Needs more Important than Today’s Reality? U@live: Lifting Thought Leadership [Online]
  - Can countries, and the world, find that critical balance in the climate change debate between addressing today’s realities and the needs of tomorrow?
  - Panelists: Ms Grace Fu (Business ‘85) Minister for Sustainability and the Environment
  - Mr Abbas Jha Practice Manager, Urban and Disaster Risk Management, East Asia and the Pacific, World Bank Group
  - Associate Professor Leong Ching (Arts and Social Sciences ‘92) NUS Dean of Students
  - Moderator: Mr Yiswa Sadasivan (Arts and Social Sciences ‘83)
  - Former NMP and U@live Chairman
  - Register: Join us at alumnet.events/CFNF20
  - Contact: Mr Ng Shan Jun ngshanjun@nus.edu.sg

- **17 Nov**: China Film Festival [Online]
  - Jointly presented by the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China, Singapore China Friendship Association, and NUS Alumni Relations, and back by popular demand, join us to enjoy acclaimed Chinese films.
  - Register: Join us at alumnet.events/CNF20
  - Contact: Ms Gabriella Nyam gabriella@nus.edu.sg

- **30 Nov**: Thirsty Thursdays [Online]: Casual Conversations
  - Get ready for a night of fun ice-breaker games, lively networking with fellow young alumni and frank conversations on trending topics that concern you!
  - Register: Join us at alumnet.events/TTdec20
  - Contact: Ms Gabriella Nyam gabriella@nus.edu.sg

### December

**Canadian Film Festival [Online]**

After a two-year hiatus, the High Commission of Canada and NUS Alumni Relations have come together once again to present the Canadian Film Festival 2020. Join us online to enjoy some of the best of Canadian films.

- **18 – 22 Dec**: The Hype versus Reality of the Impact of Financial Technology (FinTech) [Online]
  - Find out how the legal profession can engage Financial Technology (FinTech) to improve standard functions like conveyance and contracts, as well as what regulators should be thinking about.
  - Register: Join us at alumnet.events/TDec20
  - Contact: Ms Gabriella Nyam gabriella@nus.edu.sg
LIFTING THE VEIL OF SILENCE ON FAMILY VIOLENCE

Often hidden from view, abuse within households is an issue that bears more attention. Ms Kristine Lam (Arts and Social Sciences ’12), Lead Social Worker at Project the characteristics of this phenomenon, and how the community can support victims.

Ms Y and her husband, Mr X, have been married for almost a decade and the couple have a daughter. To outsiders, the family appeared perfectly put together. Mr X would often wait to drive Ms Y home after work, and occasionally ordered flowers and gifts to be sent to her office. No one knew what was going on behind closed doors until Ms Y applied for a Personal Protection Order for herself and her daughter. When he made threats to kill me, I knew I should no longer try to convince myself that everything was going to be alright,” she revealed.

Most of us might find it hard to associate individuals who are successful in their careers with instances of family violence. However, no one is exempt from the possibility of experiencing such abuse. Victims and perpetrators who approach our agency come from all walks of life. Factors such as financial conditions, education level, social status, and even religious background do not exclude individuals from being a perpetrator or a victim of family violence.

“IT’S NOT PART OF THE NORMAL ROUTINE

“Each time he used violence on me, I would think to myself, ‘Was it me?’ Was there something else I could have said or done so that our marriage could be better, and the violence wouldn’t happen again?” Ms Y shared about how she attempted time and time again to manage the situation on her own. Victims might think that such situations are simply a normal part of married life. Some victims even blame themselves and perceive that it is their inability to manage “marital differences” which causes the perpetrator to be so angry to the point that they respond with violence. Initially, Ms Y thought that if she could provide an extra dose of acceptance and unconditional love, her abuser would one day see her contribution to the relationship and things would be fine again. “I thought he was just stressed at work and the little things at home got to him, causing him to scream insults at me,” shared Ms Y about her bid to make sense of the emotional violence. While she felt insulted and hurt by what Mr X said to her, she reasoned to herself that things were still alright since there were no physical injuries. Also, the abuse did not happen frequently, and Mr X would either apologise or treat her nicely the next day.

AN ESCALATING PATTERN

Like many victims, Ms Y found herself lowering her expectations of Mr X in the relationship from being a caring gentleman who would love and protect her, to feeling that she could continue accepting the relationship as long as things did not turn physical. Hurling vulgarities, threatening to leave the relationship, and insulting her and her family members became “acceptable” and were described as “ways of expressing anger”.

Family violence usually starts off with the perpetrator denouncing or disregarding the wellbeing of the other party. After violence occurs, the abuser tends to apologise and attempt a reconciliation, fearful that the victim might leave or disclose the incident to others. From this point, there is a chance that the abuser will use violence again when conflicts arise, and the cycle will repeat in this fashion. And when left unchecked, the violence tends to increase in lethality, such as threats to kill, or physical injuries which could result in permanent disability or even death.

THE BARRIERS TO EXIT

Given the very real danger of escalation, why then do victims choose to stay? For many of the victims I work with, it is commonly shared that stepping forward to seek help is a difficult decision to make. Unlike many other acts of violence, family violence is caused by a person whom the victim loves, trusts, and/or is dependent upon. Stepping out to protect themselves may cause some victims to feel that they are harming their loved ones. Other victims may feel that they are ‘washing dirty linen in public’ or bringing shame to their family. In addition — particularly for victims of psychological and emotional violence — there tends to be a concern about whether others would believe them, and thus they might not be willing to come forth about the incidence of violence. Then there are those who may have been systematically isolated by the perpetrator and have limited access to resources such as accommodation and finances, which increase the challenges these victims would face if they were to leave the relationship. When the fear and cost of leaving continue to be high, victims may prefer staying in the abusive relationship to stepping out to seek help.

MORE THAN A COUPLE ISSUE

Family violence is, unfortunately, not limited to cases of spousal abuse. Mdm B, 50, had been suffering at the hands of her mother-in-law for five years. She was given very little food each day and was hit a few times each week. Neighbours noted her condition but made no report to the police because Mdm B herself denied all incidents of violence, there was little the authorities could do. Our agency visited Mdm B monthly for about a year, sharing with her the possibility of requesting safety as well as the resources available to her if she consented to receiving help. Mdm B repeatedly rejected the offer for assistance, as her family threatened not to let her see her children again should she disclose the violence. Over time, neighbours found it difficult to accept her decision to continue to stay with her family, especially when the physical abuse affected Mdm B’s eyesight and caused her nasal bridge to be broken. Despite that, they did not grow weary in supporting her. They continued to make police reports each time they heard Mdm B’s screams when she was beaten. Three years later, an extremely violent incident eventually led Mdm B to leave with the police to go to the hospital. When we spoke with her again, Mdm B shared that while she was in the hospital, what kept replaying in her mind were the words of people who had cared for her — the social workers who told her that she did not deserve such abuse, the police officers who repeatedly promised her protection even though she is not a Singaporean, and neighbours who would knock on her door when they heard her screams. While she took some time to reach out, it was the persistence of the community that convinced her to receive help.

WE ARE IN IT TOGETHER

For Mdm B, it was the consistent community support which eventually led her to decide that she could leave the abusive relationship. Victims need to know that people believe their stories and society will not turn a blind eye to their suffering. While our society prohibits the act of violence by one person on another, most of us are unsure of what to do when it happens in our own families or those of friends. This is especially so if we are taught not to meddle in other people’s domestic affairs and that we may not know enough to pass judgement. Questions such as whether we may be deemed as ‘bullybodies’, or have the right to interfere in another person’s family matters, or doubts about whether the person has an actual need for help, would likely run through our minds and cause us to hesitate about taking further steps.

I would advocate for society to view family violence as a societal issue and not just a domestic one. That way, each of us, as a member of society, would no longer feel inhibited when wanting to show care and support to victims. Doing our part can involve smaller efforts like knowing how to knock on our neighbour’s doors to check in on them when we hear loud noises, or providing a listening ear to our friends or family who reveal that they are experiencing family violence. While we may not know what can be done in a situation, checking in with victims and encouraging them to seek help can go a long way in providing them with the support that they need at that moment. Together, we can stop abusive relationships.

Ms Kristine Lam graduated from the National University of Singapore with a Bachelor of Arts, majoring in Social Work. She joined Care Corner Singapore Ltd in 2012 and decided to specialise in Family Protection work in 2013. In 2017, she was awarded the Promising Social Worker Award by President Halimah Yacob (Law ’78). Ms Lam is currently the Lead Social Worker at Care Corner Project SAFETY, a family violence specialist centre in Singapore. Besides leading the team at Project SAFETY, she also regularly conducts family violence training for social service practitioners.
While Singapore strives for the top spot in technological advancement, where do we stand in terms of economic performance and areas such as economic performance and technological advancement, where do we stand as a gracious society? Our senior and younger alumni from various fields share their perspectives.

**GOODNESS GRACIOUS WE!**

While Singapore strives for the top spot in areas such as economic performance and technological advancement, where do we stand as a gracious society? Our senior and younger alumni from various fields share their perspectives.

What, in your opinion, is a gracious society?

**MUSTAFA IZUDDIN**: It is human nature to be selfish; so a gracious society would be one where individuals can surmount that and take care of one another, realizing that everyone has a part to play. It is the spirit of gotong-royong (neighbourly cooperation) — and while we don't really have physical kampung any more, that spirit remains its core. A gracious society is one which looks after, and spares a thought for, the vulnerable.

**IVY TSE**: Gracefulness to me is a way of living, and a gracious society is one that practises kindness and compassion, and adopts the other mindsets associated with these acts naturally. It is something that is in all of us — and for those who might have forgotten, it's just about tapping into our inherent nature and regaining the "muscle memory".

**LEE LAY BENG**: It's a society wherein we develop not just as individuals, but as a community that cares about its members. We have focused so much on competitiveness and on training our survival instincts. But our humanity has a part to play in the development of a nation too. The COVID-19 pandemic has awakened us to the importance of living not just for ourselves, but also the community that we are part of. That said, we have a lot to catch up on — and new role models to seek.

**MICHELLE LAU**: I agree with Lay Beng. In a gracious society, nobody is made to feel like a stranger, and empathy and kindness are shown to all, regardless of language or cultural background. Singapore's competitive, fast-paced environment drives us to pursue academic and career excellence — and we might have lost the 'human touch' in the process. My hope is that while we strive to be number one in finance and everything else, we can also strive to be number one in graciousness.

Is building a competitive nation at odds with nurturing a gracious society?

**IVY**: The economic development of our country is something that we should appreciate and treasure, but we do need to be able to code-switch from a competitive mode in the corporate world to a gentler way of living outside of it. And it is possible; I left the private sector for the public service sector. But that doesn't mean that everyone has to go down that same path! A person working in a sector for good, but who doesn't actually care about the people around him or her, isn't gracious either.

**MUSTAFA**: They are not mutually exclusive. Riding on globalisation and racing to the top might have made us forget about the 'human' side of what we do. But to even just think about it is recognising the importance of being gracious. In fact, we see acts of graciousness in all sectors these days, from private-sector companies becoming more socially responsible to the public sector putting more effort into building an inclusive society. Things are changing — and I expect it to happen more quickly now, given the wave of social movements around the world. While Singaporean society is unique, we are not immune to global trends, and these events can motivate us to build a better society.

**LAY BENG**: Striving for excellence and being competitive, fast-paced drives us to pursue academic and career excellence — and we might have lost the 'human touch' in the process. My hope is that while we strive to be number one in finance and everything else, we can also strive to be number one in graciousness.

Has our system conditioned youths to see “doing good” as a checklist item to give their CVs an edge?

**MICHELLE**: Our education system and government have been trying to put more emphasis on promoting graciousness through small initiatives. And we do observe youths being enthusiastic about helping others. KampungKakis, a buddy system that matches volunteers with neighbours-in-need — with a focus on elderly and vulnerable residents who may be increasingly isolated due to social distancing measures, has seen an overwhelming number of volunteers. However, we found that the youths did not know how they could help or get the ball rolling — this is an aspect that we can improve on.

**MUSTAFA**: As an academic, I find it hard to teach graciousness. It is not something that stops when you leave school. Values are inculcated through action. The delight derived from doing something that makes you feel like you have made a difference in the lives of others — or even just putting a smile on someone's face — will spur you to want to do more in a spontaneous and organic way. Youths doing good work can also have a cascading effect — there is no need to force it upon them. Doing 30 years of youth development work has also taught me that young people will find their own niche and understanding if you give them the freedom and space to grow. If you provide them with bottom-up, youth-inspired opportunities, and let them take ownership, they will learn. At the same time, we need to give ourselves a bit more credit: we have a burgeoning NGO sector and increasingly active young people. They can be idealistic, and so need support and guidance from mentors to help them improve on what they are doing.

**IVY**: Peer influence really works. And while I am deeply appreciative of the conversations about Gen Z and Millennials, I feel that labelling persons by their age group (“Oh, you are a Gen Z, so you behave this way”) or shaming their behaviour (“If you don’t give up your seat, you are a bad person!”) doesn’t help. I believe that everybody wants to be kind and gracious, and positive narratives that highlight those who do good can awaken that innate quality.

**LAY BENG**: I respect my children and grandchildren as unique individuals. Rather than force values upon them, I try to communicate clearly why I do certain things in a certain way. For example, rather than get upset by those who might do things more slowly, I take it as an opportunity to train my patience, and I will share this
Being gracious is about building a community that respects individual differences. By doing so, we create a forgiving environment that enables one to acknowledge their problems and weaknesses. — MS LEE LAY BENG

with the young. The experiences that my peers and I had growing up also helped us to be more gracious. I belong to the last year of the Merdeka Generation, and back then, everybody was pulled into the same class in school, whether you were rich or poor, or even physically disabled or mentally challenged. Our teachers made an effort to treat everybody with respect and genuine care and concern, and it taught us to be accommodating of differences. But as we become more structured and systematic, we have forgotten this basic graciousness.

IVY: I catch myself wondering at times about our work with youths. Volunteer work might be structured, but it is important because of the exposure it gives. Without that exposure, I would not have changed my career trajectory. Yet what is more important is the sense-making aspect of it guidance to understand the intrinsic value of doing social work. I am often amazed by how some of my peers think and talk about society, and I have come to realise that they developed this perspective from a young age. While there is nothing wrong with a systematic way of promoting graciousness, the best way to teach it is to live it. So, while we think about youths, we also need to work on ourselves (in order to inculcate positive values).

Does building a gracious society start in the family? — MICHELLE: Graciousness starts from how you treat your own family. If you aren’t empathetic to your own family members, it’s not congruent for you to behave in such a way in public.

Lay Beng: We need to respect differences in families just as we respect differences in individuals. Rather than impose certain “correct” ways of doing things, we need to see where each family and individual is in their stage of growth in life. Being gracious is about building a community that respects individual differences. By doing so, we create a forgiving environment that enables one to acknowledge their problems and weaknesses. Only through such awareness can we have acceptance, understanding, and compassion.

IVY: It’s a bit tricky when it comes to family. Every family is different, and we express emotions differently and have different beliefs. The way I see it, we are trying to move the “big picture needle” slowly, without making any value-judgement or imposing an idea of how things should be. This is not about everybody moving uniformly like a marching army, but about creating a collective awareness of the importance of graciousness.

What is your view of the behaviour of “Ugly Singaporeans” that we see on social media? — MUSTAFA: Ugliness is not new; it’s just amplified by social media these days, and often we as viewers don’t even try to understand the reasons behind the person’s actions. That said, “Ugly Singaporeans” will always be there — and you can see that side of society in any country. It’s just part and parcel of society. I wouldn’t arrive at any judgement about what Singapore is like solely because of them. What’s important is to rise above the ugliness that is being perpetuated and bring out the goodness instead.

IVY: Do our youths have any consciousness of what they consume on social media? If they only read one part of it, I would skew their perspectives and take them deeper down a certain path. In recent months we’ve seen a lot of people stepping up for minorities or the disadvantaged. However, I feel that the way it has been done created a lot of “You vs Me”. We must be very careful with the messaging, because a gracious society should be one that brings people together, not divides them further.

MUSTAFA: Sometimes, you need loud voices to get people talking about the issues — we need a bit of messiness in society. That said, one should still be mindful and tactful. The things we are doing on social media can be worrying, but instead of avoiding it, we should think about how to use it for the right purposes and how to bring graciousness into the way we use it.

Does Singapore society have any unique attributes that might help us in our journey towards becoming a truly gracious nation? — IVY: We are very driven and meritocratic — so if we want something bad enough, we will get there! The knowledge and skills that we have acquired to build the nation into what it is today can be applied to this domain, and I do see some degree of that transfer in this area. Some might look at us from the outside and question things like our Courtesy Campaign — but that’s just our modality. I don’t see it as an indication of how “Third World” we are. Certainly, we could be more innovative, but I wouldn’t be so hard on our structure. A lot of what we discussed today has been about how to structure things, and teach this and that. That’s just how we are — we are just really good at structuring things! It’s instinctive in Singaporeans.

MUSTAFA: Our multicultural, multilingual make-up — and added to that, the huge presence of foreigners in our labour force — stands us apart from many other countries. This diversifies helps us to be more embracing of differences. We are making good progress, but there is still much to learn. The pandemic has ignited the flame for helping those in need, but we can do a lot more as a collective society. I hope Singaporeans will maintain this sense of curiosity about those different from us and around us, starting from our own neighbourhoods. Also, graciousness is not a one-way street. We often think of doing good as the privileged giving to the needy. But it is even more empowering when we enable those who are less fortunate and get them to a position where they can help themselves. For example, we have seen seniors who benefitted from the KampungKakis matching system stepping up to give to neighbours in the same situation as them, even in small ways such as sharing food. I find that very inspiring.

Lay Beng: The COVID-19 situation has given us an appreciation of the different struggles that many people have, and I have observed strong community spirit and a lot of very good initiatives throughout this pandemic. My hope is that we will never lose what we have learnt and that we will push us in growing socially, emotionally and psychologically.

MUSTAFA: Our diversity is our strength. Asian values that have been localised — such as gotong-royong, which I mentioned earlier, and the idea of solving problems together as a community — add to that. To do a bit of forecasting, I think we have acts of kindness and compassion in our society. I hope Singaporeans will maintain this sense of curiosity about those different from us and around us, starting from our own neighbourhoods. Also, graciousness is not a one-way street. We often think of doing good as the privileged giving to the needy. But it is even more empowering when we enable those who are less fortunate and get them to a position where they can help themselves. For example, we have seen seniors who benefitted from the KampungKakis matching system stepping up to give to neighbours in the same situation as them, even in small ways such as sharing food. I find that very inspiring.

OARconnect@nus.edu.sg to express your interest.

If you’d like to join our Forum panel, do write to us at OARconnect@nus.edu.sg to express your interest.
He approached Professor Arun Mujumdar, then with the NUS Department of Mechanical Engineering, who connected Mr Veerappan to his alma mater in India. Mr Veerappan’s team came up with the winning idea of enabling the farmers to process and preserve fruits using a low-cost, solar-powered machine — this extended the shelf-life of their harvests and earned them more income. The Solar Dryer Project still exists today and has grown into a much larger project, overseen by his former project partners from India. The prize money for their Mondialogo win was $42,000 — the first of many wins. Mr Veerappan and two of his classmates opened a joint account and put all their winnings in it: they won seven out of 11 competitions they took part in.

SL2 began life as a student club within UPE. “We started in Chatterbox at Block ADM,” Mr Veerappan remembers. “There was an empty office space, and we asked Professor John Richardson, who was the then director of UPE, for permission to use it. He and the current director Professor Kang Hway Chuan allowed us to set up our own prototyping studio.”

Upon graduating in 2011, the trio started SL2. By 2014, the founders reached a point where they had to decide whether to transform to become a non-profit organisation or remain a for-profit social enterprise. This led to them parting ways, with Mr Veerappan to his alma mater in India. Mr Veerappan’s team took part in the Mondialogo Challenge, which required him to form a team with individuals from different countries and create a product that seeks to promote sustainability. Recognised as a leader of the maker movement in Singapore and Southeast Asia, Mr Veerappan is also the CEO and director of edmk8r, which trains teachers to impart “maker education” to youths. He was awarded the NUS Outstanding Young Alumni Award in 2010, and the 2018 Joseph Jaworski Next Generation Foresight Asia Special Award.

Mr Veerappan sparked off the creation of maker culture, and its creations are often pitched as alternatives to ‘throwaway’ mass-produced goods. "Our innovation work centred around technology. Collaboration and a DIY ethic are hallmarks of maker culture, and its creations have shifted understanding on the corporate innovation, for example, to teach maker skills to children across the globe, as robotics and artificial intelligence. We try to stay a little bit ahead of the curve, so that we can bring value to customers, and also because these things sometimes can reframe the entire problem space. Being in such a business requires a flexible mindset. SL2 initially intended to develop its own products, but being unable to be physically present in the countries these products would serve, it focused on offering services instead. While COVID-19 has cost SL2 some of its regular business, such as in-person corporate programmes in Cambodia and Thailand, Mr Veerappan says its skills-development projects are seeing an uptick in demand.

Mr Veerappan is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in Intellectual Property Management, which is recognised as being among those who introduced the maker movement to Singapore: creating a culture that enables people to develop skills to create, evaluate, and analyse — the higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy (a hierarchical classification of educational objectives), as he puts it. In 2014, he co-founded One Maker Group, with SL2 being the majority investor, and later sold his stake in 2017. From 2015 to 2017, he was also a director of the Singapore Makers Association. In 2016, he founded edmk8r, an educational extension of the maker movement that builds competencies in problem-solving, communication, and resilience. Starting with a handful of schools in Singapore, Mr Veerappan sparked off the creation of maker spaces that now exist in many primary and secondary schools. Today, edmk8r works with educational organisations and school districts in the United States and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.

Repair Kopitiam is another initiative he started to promote the habit of repairing items and combat today’s ‘buy-and-throw’ culture. “Repair Kopitiam has been very successful in terms of getting repair a prominent role in the zero-waste strategy of Singapore,” he notes. “Before this, repair was considered marginal. So with this, we have shifted understanding on the ground and among agencies, and it’s one of our bigger contributions towards sustainability.”

“My chosen field of work is one worth doing — we want to work on things that are real issues, not invented needs,” says Mr Veerappan, who credits his critical thinking abilities and desire to solve problems to his parents: his father, a former financier now managing an old folks’ home; and his mother, a retired school teacher.

SL2 approaches sustainability solutions from an innovation standpoint, occupying a unique space next to other sustainable companies that may focus on environmental and sustainability governance, for example. “If anyone wants to do corporate innovation, for example, we will approach it from the angle of sustainable design,” Mr Veerappan explains. “Our innovation work centres around technology, which is why we are occupied with things like

The Maker Makes His Mark

Mr Veerappan Swaminathan (Engineering + USP ‘11) is the founder and director of Sustainable Living Lab (SL2), a consultancy which helps organisations innovate for environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Recognised as a leader of the maker movement in Singapore and Southeast Asia, Mr Veerappan is also the CEO and director of edmk8r, which trains teachers to impart “maker education” to youths. He was awarded the NUS Outstanding Young Alumni Award in 2010, and the 2018 Joseph Jaworski Next Generation Foresight Asia Special Award.

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The Maker Makes His Mark

Mr Veerappan Swaminathan (Engineering + USP ‘11) is the founder and director of Sustainable Living Lab (SL2), a consultancy which helps organisations innovate for environmental, economic, and social sustainability. Recognised as a leader of the maker movement in Singapore and Southeast Asia, Mr Veerappan is also the CEO and director of edmk8r, which trains teachers to impart “maker education” to youths. He was awarded the NUS Outstanding Young Alumni Award in 2010, and the 2018 Joseph Jaworski Next Generation Foresight Asia Special Award.

Mr Veerappan sparked off the creation of maker culture, and its creations are often pitched as alternatives to ‘throwaway’ mass-produced goods.

Mr Veerappan, who is currently pursuing a Master’s degree in Intellectual Property Management, is recognised as being among those who introduced the maker movement to Singapore: creating a culture that enables people to develop skills to create, evaluate, and analyse — the higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy (a hierarchical classification of educational objectives), as he puts it. In 2014, he co-founded One Maker Group, with SL2 being the majority investor, and later sold his stake in 2017. From 2015 to 2017, he was also a director of the Singapore Makers Association. In 2016, he founded edmk8r, an educational extension of the maker movement that builds competencies in problem-solving, communication, and resilience. Starting with a handful of schools in Singapore, Mr Veerappan sparked off the creation of maker spaces that now exist in many primary and secondary schools. Today, edmk8r works with educational organisations and school districts in the United States and the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.

Repair Kopitiam is another initiative he started to promote the habit of repairing items and combat today’s ‘buy-and-throw’ culture. “Repair Kopitiam has been very successful in terms of getting repair a prominent role in the zero-waste strategy of Singapore,” he notes. “Before this, repair was considered marginal. So with this, we have shifted understanding on the ground and among agencies, and it’s one of our bigger contributions towards sustainability.”

“My chosen field of work is one worth doing — we want to work on things that are real issues, not invented needs,” says Mr Veerappan, who credits his critical thinking abilities and desire to solve problems to his parents: his father, a former financier now managing an old folks’ home; and his mother, a retired school teacher.

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Ms Eileen Chai (Science ’01) is a staunch advocate for mental health awareness and was the driving force behind the book ‘The Write Stuff’, which explores how individuals can come to terms with their past experiences and heal through music.

Ms Chai discovered that a high Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) score led her to seek professional help. Through working with Dr Ung, Ms Chai identified her life goal as “to give through music”, and hopes that through her work with Strings For Kindness, people can make their lives better.

Ms Chai and Mr Kranen through working with Dr Ung, Ms Chai discovered that a high Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) score led her to seek professional help. Through working with Dr Ung, Ms Chai identified her life goal as “to give through music”, and hopes that through her work with Strings For Kindness, people can make their lives better.

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Many people with mental health issues are afraid to speak up because they fear being judged and being seen as weak or ‘freaks’. These are the kind of prejudices and taboos that they face as they progress from hurt to healing. In this collaboration, songs are penned and performed by artists and musicians of various genres such as Jack And Asi, Beverly Morata Grafton, Kevin Mathews, Ng Yu-Ying and Mr Kranen. These songs have been powerful in connecting with those who are going through mental health issues and helping them to understand themselves.

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Ms Jade Rasif (Arts and Social Sciences '18) is also an actress, model, and talk-show host. Having been in the public eye since 2013, she is also a popular social media influencer, with over 360,000 followers on Instagram currently.

THE JADE OF ALL TRADES

One of Asia’s biggest club DJs and multi-hyphenated influencer, Ms Jade Rasif (Arts and Social Sciences ’18) proves that a woman can, in fact, do it all.

While in NUS, I took Business electives, and learnt how to diversify my portfolio. Now with the pandemic stopping clubs from opening, I’m thanking my lucky stars and my ability to adapt to different circumstances.

What made you want to volunteer with the Singapore Healthcare Corps, and how has the experience been? Would you encourage others to play their part? I’m happy to serve and be of use. I enjoy the work a lot and feel so proud of my job and country every day. In the events/clubbing scene, things are planned weeks, if not months, in advance. But for healthcare workers on the frontline, entirely new departments and teams can be up and running within days. People can be mobilised in the morning and get ready to work by night. I was eager to get out of the house and do something during the Circuit Breaker. It was by chance that an opportunity to volunteer with the Singapore Healthcare Corps came along. Plus, it seemed like they were short-handed at the time. I would neither encourage nor discourage people when it comes to volunteering. Honestly, you are already doing your part by just observing infection control directives.

In the midst of your successful career, you also decided to go back to NUS to complete your degree — why? Completing my degree made my mother happy. Initially, I was driven by passion; I wanted to become a psychologist after seeing my sister suffer from childhood depression. However, the more I delved into the subject, the more I realised I could not cope with the emotional demands. I felt myself inching towards an existential crisis, and I decided not to take any more Psychology modules. But now I have so much respect for people who go into counselling.

What is your advice to young people wanting to pursue a less ‘mainstream’ career path, as you have done? I’m not qualified to give advice, but from my own experience, a career in media and the arts, while exciting, is not the most stable. If you crave security, this may not be the best path for you. Write down your long-term goals, be aware of your appetite for risk, do research on the industries you want to enter before career planning — and do it early!

THE JADE OF ALL TRADES

MS JADE RASIF NEEDS NO INTRODUCTION. For many, local DJ, model, and actress Ms Jade Rasif (Arts and Social Sciences ’18) is also an actress, model, and talk-show host. Having been in the public eye since 2013, she is also a popular social media influencer, with over 360,000 followers on Instagram currently. That many Singaporeans flew to Indonesia for the festival to watch my set. When I looked into the audience, I saw pockets of people who had brought Singapore flags to wave at me. The support and love I get from Singaporeans really warms my heart. I also enjoy the travelling that comes with the job: I’ve been blessed with trips to the United States, New Zealand, Japan, Hungary, and Italy. I love meeting people and witnessing the nightlife in cities all around the world.

What has been your biggest challenge in juggling the responsibilities of being a mother, DJ, actor, and model? Being a mother has its unique challenges. Just two weeks after giving birth, I was in Kuala Lumpur playing a show. I had to pump breastmilk every four hours and get the hotel staff to help me store it in the freezer. A gig scored is not something you can simply cancel or postpone. In the six years I’ve DJ-ed, I’ve only ever cancelled once; I’ve endured bad cramps while boarding a plane, passing through immigration, conducting sound checks, fulfilling extra promotional work, getting through hair and makeup, and giving my 100 per cent to the show. I can’t say that my experience is any harder than someone else’s job, but, I feel so proud of my job and country every day. In the events/clubbing scene, things are planned weeks, if not months, in advance. But for healthcare workers on the frontline, entirely new departments and teams can be up and running within days. People can be mobilised in the morning and get ready to work by night. I was eager to get out of the house and do something during the Circuit Breaker. It was by chance that an opportunity to volunteer with the Singapore Healthcare Corps came along. Plus, it seemed like they were short-handed at the time. I would neither encourage nor discourage people when it comes to volunteering. Honestly, you are already doing your part by just observing infection control directives.

The success of Singaporeans flying to Indonesia for the festival to watch Ms Jade Rasif perform is testament to the support and love she receives from Singaporeans. That many Singaporeans flew to Indonesia for the festival to watch my set. When I looked into the audience, I saw pockets of people who had brought Singapore flags to wave at me. The support and love I get from Singaporeans really warms my heart. I also enjoy the travelling that comes with the job; I’ve been blessed with trips to the United States, New Zealand, Japan, Hungary, and Italy. I love meeting people and witnessing the nightlife in cities all around the world.

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A CHANGE IN THE AIR
The new NUS Centre for Nature-Based Climate Solutions is looking at novel responses to the tough problems of climate change.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE SINGAPORE IN PRE-INDUSTRIAL TIMES. Mangrove swamps, fishing villages, and tropical jungles might be all we can conjure up in our minds, given how modernity has almost completely swallowed up this past. Greenery is certainly a distinctive feature of Singapore, though one may attribute it to the careful work of landscaping. But more creative solutions than landscaping — ones that harness the power of nature itself — are on the way, with the establishment of the NUS Centre for Nature-Based Climate Solutions.

Prof Koh leading the charge against climate change on the frontier.

Prof Koh notes that this is because the extended influence of carbon emissions lasts decades, not mere years. “Rather than be distracted by the COVID-19 crisis or bank our hopes and future on any green economic stimulus, my colleagues and I at the Centre will focus on our mission to produce the much-needed science to inform the development and implementation of long-term solutions to protect, restore, and better manage natural ecosystems for climate mitigation.”

Every society will need to prioritise competing land uses by internalising and taking full account of the costs and benefits of decisions with regard to climate mitigation and adaptation.

THE CENTRE FOR NATURE-BASED CLIMATE SOLUTIONS’ FIVE RESEARCH AREAS

UNDERSTANDING IMPACTS
Understanding the impact of climate change on natural and human systems in the Asia-Pacific region is of critical importance for clarifying risks, and developing strategies to safeguard and future-proof Singapore against ever-resulting perturbations.

IDENTIFYING SOLUTIONS
The Centre will quantify the potential and limits of nature-based climate solutions (NCS) for increasing carbon capture and reducing CO2 emissions in the Asia-Pacific region. Quantifying the cost-effectiveness and viability of NCS to inform land-use and climate policies in Singapore and across the region will help advocate mitigation and adaptation goals.

OVERCOMING BARRIERS
Working in close collaboration with public- and private-sector partners, the Centre will identify the trade-offs and opportunity costs of NCS, as well as other economic, social, and political considerations. This is to ensure the effective, collaborative, and equitable implementation of climate solutions across the region.

PRIORITY ACTIONS
Emphasising on the best return on investment measures, Criteria include comparative cost-effectiveness of solutions, scientific uncertainties of their outcomes, and the vulnerability of communities to climate change impacts.

Leveraging technology
The Centre is well-positioned to develop, integrate, and adopt new technologies for the implementation of NCS. These include existing real-time monitoring and warning systems for forest fires and other catastrophes. Additionally, the Centre will explore the use of technologies such as blockchain and distributed ledgers to improve the transparency and accountability of climate mitigation efforts in both the public and private sectors.
**The High Life**

The vertical kampong concept works with all four of those ideas, allowing a shared residential space and the chance for seniors to build a community. The original RSVP proposal from 2010 envisioned a ‘housing plus care’ lifestyle, with HDB taking care of the housing and the Ministry of Health providing the attendant care package. Reading from the announcement of assisted living flats, Dr Chiang notes: “The 160 Assisted-Living flats in Bukit Batok, will come with a mandatory package of services, including 24/7 emergency response, and an on-site community manager to facilitate social interaction and referral to care services.” In other words, ‘housing plus care’ for seniors – not very dissimilar to the RSVP proposal that NUS Senior Alumni supported.

Dr Khoo and Dr Chiang are quick to point out that many other stakeholders also made their contributions in the area of eldercare, including senior housing. In the 10 years that have passed since the original RSVP proposal, the Pioneer Generation Package (2013) and the Merdeka Generation Package (2016) were introduced. On the housing front, HDB launched Kampung Admiralty (2017), with 100 units designated for seniors. These are served by a range of social, healthcare and community services, along with an active-ageing hub.

The private sector followed suit in 2018 with the Saint Bernardette Lifestyle Village, an assisted-living facility run by the husband-and-wife team of Dr Joseph Lee and Dr Belinda Woo. When Dr Lee launched the Assisted Living Facilities Association (ALFA) Good Practice Guide, Dr Chiang spoke in support and the NUS Senior Alumni Committee attended.

It should be noted that the Henderson Home in Bukit Merah has been operating as a home for seniors since the 1970s; it is more of an assisted-living-style facility than a nursing home, according to press reports. It is managed by NTUC Health, and Dr Chiang is a member of the Home’s Advisory Council.

Playing an active role in advocating for senior housing since its launch in 2013 is the PAP Seniors Group (PAP5G), which is helmed by Speaker of Parliament, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin (Public Policy ’08). It submitted to Government a proposal titled Empowering Us to Live with Purpose and Dignity in Our Senior Years in early 2019 that made the case for healthcare, lifelong learning, and housing for elders, among other key points. Dr Chiang, a former Member-of-Parliament for Ulu Pandan, is a member of the Group, which also consulted widely with stakeholders when preparing its proposal.

**A Labour of Love**

Both Dr Khoo and Dr Chiang are modest about their contributions in this process, noting that they and other seniors simply want to make the most of their golden years. Dr Khoo says that this was why the topics discussed during the Senior Alumni’s 2013 “Our Singapore Conversation” session included volunteering – senior citizens want to do meaningful work as long as they are able. “We can also be useful,” remarks Dr Khoo. This echoes the sentiments of the PAP5G in its 2019 proposal with the executive summary noting that senior citizens could continue to learn new things and contribute meaningfully, if they so wished.

Dr Khoo and Dr Chiang note that their own efforts, and the various proposals they have been a part of, will likely benefit generations beyond their own. After all, the 2019 proposal is called Empowering Us to Live with Purpose and Dignity in Our Senior Years – it does not put any limit on who the ‘Us’ in the title refers to.
DEPARTMENT OF SOCILOGY ZOOM GRADUATION EVENT

A group of five Sociology students came together to organise a virtual celebration on 13 June for the graduating Sociology cohort. As the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible for the graduands to celebrate in person, they wanted to find another way to commemorate this significant milestone with their peers.

Graduating in a pandemic after many years of hard work can be a discouraging experience. Holding this celebration was the cohort’s way of reminding themselves that there is strength in solidarity. It was also a way for them to become comfortable — together — with the intersection of a past once so familiar, a present so unpredictable, and a future so uncertain.

On 4 July, Raffles Hall Association (RHA) held its first online community event, Homecoming@RHA. RHA Vice-Presidents, Ms Lim Swee Kim (Computing ’88) and Mr Dion Tioh (Computing ’14) began the event with a warm welcome to all attendees — including VIPs, Emeritus Professor Dr Lee Soo Ann (Arts and Social Sciences ’60) and Associate Professor Ho Chee Kong. RHA President Mr Sonny Yuen (Business ’85) thanked Dr Ho, who was RHA Master from 2010 to 2020 and established RHA during his term. Dr Ho recently handed over the mantle to the new Master, Associate Professor Stefia Tan (Science ’98), who is the first female Master of Raffles Hall.

RHA also congratulated Dr Lee Soo Ann, who was conferred the honorary title of Emeritus Professor of Economics for his distinguished service to NUS since the 1950s. On behalf of their RH brothers, Mr Rohyakaran (Engineering ’79), Mr Teo Eng Leong (Law ’77), and Mr Jeffrey Chan (Law ’73) expressed their gratitude for Dr Lee’s friendship and stewardship when Dr Lee was their Hall Master from 1970 to 1973.

In August, RHA also launched Raffles Hall Alumni Learning. During the launch on 1 August, RHA President Mr Yuen invited guest-of-honour NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85) to officially launch RH Alumni Learning. The RH Alumni Learning project, the branchchild of Ms Weiwei Cheong (Law ’87), is a regular programme that covers diverse topics to ensure that there is something for everyone and to reflect that learning occurs in many facets of our lives.

The first learning session at the launch, titled “PIVOT”, featured alumni Dr Lai Kok Fung (Engineering ’88) and guest speaker Mr Harley Young from Amazon, with both sharing ideas on how to change and innovate in this current time of uncertainty.

On 25 July, 18 Presidents and Vice-Presidents from 17 Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) alumni chapters across the world connected on Zoom at 8pm (Singapore time) for the inaugural LKYSPP Alumni Chapter Presidents’ E-Summit. The Presidents of NUS Alumni Mania Chapter and Toronto Chapter — who are also LKYSPP alumni — attended the e-summit as well.

Organised by the School’s Alumni Relations team, this biannual e-summit serves as a source of inspiration and new ideas for chapter leaders, as well as a platform for them to seek updates and clarifications from the School.

The AlumNUS thanks all contributors for the articles and photos in Alumni Happenings, showcasing our vibrant alumni community.

For the full stories, please go to nus.edu.sg/alumnet/TheAlumNUS/issue-123/community/alumni-happenings.
PRIVILEGES & OFFERS

The newly launched AlumAPP is available for download to all NUS alumni. Now, you can gain access to alumni-dedicated news, be notified about events and enjoy special deals at popular retail outlets and service providers.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: The NUS Office of Alumni Relations and participating merchants reserve the right to amend the terms and conditions governing the offers without prior notice. All information is correct at press time. Visit www.alumnuscard.nus.edu.sg for the latest privileges and promotions.

We welcome alumni business owners to come on board as our merchant partners. Drop us an email at alumnuscard@nus.edu.sg and make an exceptional offer to fellow alumni.

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

HORSE’S MOUTH BAR
10% off total bill. horsemouthbar.com

SOFITEL SINGAPORE CITY CENTRE
15% off Racines’ à la carte menu. sofitel-singapore-citycentre.com

ALTERNATIVE SELECTION
10% off with minimum spending of $20 for butchery products. 5% off with minimum spending of $10 for other products. 10% off total food bill (excluding beverages). ryansgrocery.com

FASHION AND RETAIL

EARNEST AND COLLECTIVE
20% off all regular-priced shoes and belts. earnestcollective.com

VESTIAIRE COLLECTIVE
• $50 off and free shipping on your first purchase with a minimum spending of $200.
• Refer to the VC APP and website for more details on seasonal campaigns.
vestiairecollective.com

HEALTHCARE

FARRER PARK HOSPITAL
• 10% off consultation fees at Farrer Park Hospital 24HR Emergency Clinic. farrerpark.com

IDOC CLINIC
• $10 consultation rate (Usual Price: $15) at IDOC’s clinic, Telemedicine and Telehealth services. idoc.sg

ATOS WELLNESS
• Exclusively rates for beauty treatments. atoswellness.com.sg

DANCING WITH FRIENDS
• 25% off all class packages. 1-for-1 promotion when you sign up with a partner. dancingwithfriends.sg

HERTZ CAR RENTAL
• 10% off Hertz car rentals worldwide. hertzasia.com/alumnus

FLOWERS & KISSES
• 10% off all products. flowersandkisses.com.sg

EDUCATION

WORLD SCIENTIFIC PUBLISHING CO.
• 25% off all purchases with discount code: WSPNUS25. worldsscientific.com

THE WRITE CONNECTION
• 35% off (a waiver of the Registration Fee) for regular programmes at The Write Connection for a full term. thewriteconnection.com.sg

LIFESTYLE

STORHUB SELF STORAGE
• Additional 5% off on top of current in-store discounts. storhub.com.sg

ARANDA COUNTRY CLUB
• Exclusive rates for Executive Suites. o $180 / night for Off Peak Period. o $320 / night for Peak Period. o $340 / night for Super Peak Period.
• Complimentary deals along with the booking of Executive Suites. o 1 complimentary BBQ Pit. o 1 complimentary Car Decal. o 4 complimentary passes for the use of the Club’s sporting and recreational facilities.
• 15% discount at Wild Wild Wet. arandaclub.org.sg

FLOWERS & GIFTS
• 10% off regular-priced flowers and gifts. noelgifts.com

STORHUB SELF STORAGE
• Free first month of storage. storhub.com.sg

NOEL GIFTS
• 15% off all regular-priced Flowers and Gifts. noelgifts.com

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LEARNING & DEVELOPMENT

THE WRITE CONNECTION
• 35% off (a waiver of the Registration Fee) for regular programmes at The Write Connection for a full term. thewriteconnection.com.sg

WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY IN SINGAPORE
• 12% off (a waiver of the Registration Fee) for regular programmes at the WWS program. wssingapore.edu

NUS MUSEUM
20% discount on all NUS Museum’s publications and catalogues. $20 for NUS Museum guided tour of 20 pax maximum per group (Usual Price: $50). museum.nus.edu.sg

LEE KONG CHIAN NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM
10% discount on single-entry tickets as well as for both Individual and Family memberships. lkcnhm.nus.edu.sg

PRIVILEGES ON CAMPUS
BAR BAR BLACK SHEEP
20% off North Indian, Thai and Western à la carte food menu. bbbs.com.sg

NUS LIBRARIES
Complimentary entry to all NUS Libraries upon presenting the AlumNUS card. Annual subscription fee at $139.10 (Usual Price: $353.10) or a 5-year membership package (exclusive to NUS alumni) at $460.10. ilportal.nus.edu.sg

SHAW FOUNDATION ALUMNI HOUSE
MUSEUM
• 10% off North Indian, Thai and Western à la carte food menu. cartefoodmenu.com
• 20% discount on all NUS Museum’s publications and catalogues.
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IT PAYS TO PIVOT

Being agile and adaptable is one way to rise above today’s life uncertainties, especially for those in the travel sector, says entrepreneur Mr Andrew Chai (Science ’92).

For those of you [in the aviation industry and elsewhere] whose lives have been impacted by this pandemic, take it as a forced change. Changes — despite their short- and mid-term inconveniences — are always good in the long term. Be highly adaptable to new ways of doing things.

Mr Andrew Chai, founder of Sass Atlantic and Scammicon, an integrated solution for the containment and prevention of COVID-19 spread at workplaces, shopping malls, government buildings, and residences. He also sits on the boards of three organisations, which handle robotics, e-commerce logistics, and biotechnology respectively.

It is no secret that the COVID-19 pandemic has paralysed the travel industry. “Even the most innovative players have been affected as travel comes to a standstill,” says Mr Chai, the father of an 18-year-old son.

He predicts that the travel sector will likely take three to five years for it to fully recover to pre-pandemic days, seeing that it took one year for airlines to bounce back from the SARS epidemic, which lasted about six months. “The long-term impact on commerce and economies will be detrimental to everyone, big or small,” he says.

And when travel eventually resumes, it is likely to be a different experience. “Most of us will travel only for essential matters, at least for the first three years, while leisure travel will depend on how governments work together to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, as well as the reliability and efficacy of a vaccine,” says Mr Chai. He also forecasts a significant increase in airline ticket prices as a result of social distancing requirements. In addition, Mr Chai recommends that cabin crew should don personal protective equipment when providing in-flight service.

This greater emphasis on hygiene and safety moving forward has inspired Mr Chai to pivot into his latest venture, while leveraging on his industry experience. “There are technologies out there — related to air purification that filter out sub-micron particles, as well as surface coating using nanocomposites to prevent cross-contamination — that can prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the aircraft,” he says.

“A combination of these technologies and regular surface testing is the only way to make travelling viable again.”

At the height of the SARS outbreak in early 2003, Mr Andrew Chai founded Sass Atlantic — arguably the world’s first manpower outsourcing consultancy for the aviation industry — when he saw a gap in the provision of this service for airlines. “My goals were simple — to provide the best people and teams based on a variable costing structure to any client who wanted the best representatives for their brand,” says the 52-year-old, citing Emirates as one of his clients then. In April this year, Mr Chai founded Scammicon, an integrated solution for the containment and prevention of COVID-19 spread at workplaces, shopping malls, government buildings, and residences.

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