“The aged population is a potential well of resources which, if we properly understand and tap into, can immensely benefit our society.”

Assistant Professor Cynthia Chen (Science ’09), NUS Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health

PUTTING THE “PRO” IN PRO BONO
Adjunct Professor Ruby Lee (Law ’85)

CELEBRATING AN ICON
Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music Alumni and The Esplanade’s 20th Anniversary concert

Caring Is Complicated
Professor Elaine Ho (Arts and Social Sciences ’02) on Future Prospects for the Elderly and Their Caregivers

Riding the Silver Wave
A Discussion on the State of Eldercare in Singapore

Solutions for the Grey Areas
As our population grows older, NUS is helping seniors to enjoy long, healthy, happy and productive lives through a combination of research, practice and education.
Organize events and meetings at Shaw Foundation Alumni House (SFAH). SFAH venues are suitable for conferences, workshops, networking events and many other types of events. Find the best venue for your event soon!
THE NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE (NUS) HAS RECEIVED A GENEROUS GIFT OF $5 MILLION FROM MR FRANKLE WIDJAJA, his wife Mrs Jehnny Widjaja and their daughter Ms Deborah Widjaja.

The gift, which will be made over five years, will support initiatives under Health District @ Queenstown, a first-of-its-kind multi-stakeholder collaboration to increase healthy longevity, enable purposeful longevity, promote intergenerational bonding, and support a community for all ages.

The gift was presented by the Widjajas to NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye, and NUS Senior Vice President (Health Innovation & Translation) and NHLS Senior Advisor Professor John Eu-Li Wong (Medicine ‘81).

Prof Wong said, “This philanthropic gift, in support of the Health District @ Queenstown, will go towards scalable and sustainable initiatives that address the multiple determinants of health to improve physical, mental and social well-being, strengthen intergenerational cohesion, and develop a community for all ages. We are deeply grateful to Mr Frankle Widjaja, Mrs Jehnny Widjaja and Ms Deborah Widjaja for their generosity and unwavering support, and for sharing our commitment to benefit the community around us. We are truly inspired by the support from not only the Widjaja family but the whole of Singapore, and this gift is yet another demonstration of how individuals can uplift the community.”

Mr Widjaja, who is the Executive Chairman and Chief Executive Officer for Bund Center Investment Limited, and Chairman of Shanghai Golden Bund Real Estate Co. Limited, said, “It has always been a key priority for my family and I to support whole-of-society initiatives – such as the Health District @ Queenstown – that could bring about transformative changes in the community and society. I am confident that the positive impact of this initiative will benefit communities beyond Singapore, and we are excited to lend our support to this meaningful endeavour.”

Noting that the recent global events have shown that things cannot be taken for granted, Ms Widjaja emphasised the need to be future-ready. She said, “Being future-ready means being proactive and creating a better future. The Health District @ Queenstown is testament to this as it encourages one to look outward and forward. We are the change that we seek. The strength of individuals across all ages, working together – now that makes a change.”

“Today’s decision-makers are investing in young people because they are convinced that it will provide the longest and most effective dividend towards meeting future goals. I hope our young people continue to be civic-minded and play an active role in shaping our future,” added Mrs Widjaja.

I am confident that the positive impact of this initiative will benefit communities beyond Singapore, and we are excited to lend our support to this meaningful endeavour.

Mr Frankle Widjaja

THE GIFT WILL FUND THIS FIRST-OF-KIND COLLABORATION FOCUSING ON RESIDENTS’ HOLISTIC WELL-BEING.

ENABLING PROPORTIONATE LONGEVITY

1. Preventive Health and Care Delivery: Encouraging the uptake of preventive health recommendations and the shifting of care delivery from hospital to, or near residents’ homes.
2. Purposeful Longevity: Enabling purposeful longevity by providing opportunities for residents to work, volunteer and participate in lifelong learning.
3. Planning and Design: Implementing planning and design solutions to support ageing in place, social and mental well-being, and for an active lifestyle.
4. Technology: Co-designing affordable technological solutions with the community to improve residents’ lives.

Co-creating a Healthy Town for All

Health District @ Queenstown aims to increase healthy longevity, enable purposeful longevity, promote intergenerational bonding and support a community for all ages. It will focus on four key areas to achieve its objectives:

1. Preventive Health and Care Delivery
2. Purposeful Longevity
3. Planning and Design
4. Technology

This article was first published on 8 August 2022 on NUS News at news.nus.edu.sg/health-district-queenstown-honoured-by-5-million-gift-from-the-widjaja-family.
NUS researchers invent self-charging, ultra-thin device that generates electricity from air moisture

Using sea salt as an eco-friendly moisture absorbent, this rechargeable fabric-like ‘battery’ provides higher electrical output than a conventional AA battery – potentially powering everyday electronics.

Imagine being able to generate electricity by harnessing moisture in the air around you with just everyday items like sea salt and a piece of fabric, or even powering everyday electronics with a non-toxic battery that is as thin as paper. A team of researchers from the College of Design and Engineering (CDE) has developed a new moisture-driven electricity generation (MEG) device made of a thin layer of fabric — about 0.3 millimetres (mm) in thickness — sea salt, carbon ink and a special water-absorbing gel.

The concept of MEG devices is built upon the ability of different materials to generate electricity from the interaction with moisture in the air. This area has been receiving growing interest due to its potential for a wide range of real-world applications, including self-powered devices such as wearable electronics like health monitors, electronic skin sensors, and information storage devices.

Key challenges of current MEG technologies include water saturation of the device when exposed to ambient humidity and unsatisfactory electrical performance. Thus, the electricity generated by conventional MEG devices is insufficient to power electrical devices and is also not sustainable.

To overcome these challenges, a research team led by Assistant Professor Tan Swee Ching (Science ‘01) from the Department of Materials Science and Engineering under CDE devised a novel MEG device containing two regions of different properties to perpetually maintain a difference in water content across the regions to generate electricity and allow for electrical output for hundreds of hours. This technological breakthrough was published in the print version of scientific journal Advanced Materials on 26 May 2022.

A LONG-LASTING, SELF-CHARGING FABRIC-BASED ‘BATTERY’

The NUS team’s MEG device consists of a thin layer of fabric which was coated with carbon nanoparticles. In their study, the team used a commercially-available fabric made of wool pulp and polyester. One region of the fabric is coated with a hygroscopic ionic hydrogel, and this region is known as the wet region. Made using sea salt, the special water-absorbing gel can absorb more than six times its original weight, and it is used to harvest moisture from the air.

“Sea salt was chosen as the water-absorbing compound due to its non-toxic properties and its potential to provide a sustainable option for desalination plants to dispose of the generated sea salt and brine,” shared Asst Prof Tan.

The other end of the fabric is the dry region which does not contain a hygroscopic ionic hydrogel layer. This is to ensure that this region is kept dry and water is confined to the wet region. Once the MEG device is assembled, electricity is generated when the ions of sea salt are separated as water is absorbed in the wet region. Free ions with a positive charge (cations) are absorbed by the carbon nanoparticles which are negatively charged. This causes changes to the surface of the fabric, generating an electric field across it. These changes to the surface also give the fabric the ability to store electricity for use later.

Using a unique design of wet-dry regions, NUS researchers were able to maintain high water content in the wet region and low water content in the dry region. This will sustain electrical output even when the wet region is saturated with water. After being left in an open humid environment for 30 days, water was still maintained in the wet region, demonstrating the effectiveness of the device in sustaining electrical output.

“With this unique asymmetric structure, the electric performance of our MEG device is significantly improved in comparison to prior MEG technologies, thus making it possible to power many common electronic devices, such as health monitors and wearable electronics,” explained Asst Prof Tan.

The team’s MEG device also demonstrated high flexibility and was able to withstand stress from twisting, rolling and bending. Interestingly, its outstanding flexibility was shown by the researchers by folding the fabric into an origami crane which did not affect the overall electrical performance of the device.

PORTABLE POWER SUPPLY AND MORE

The MEG device has immediate applications due to its ease of scalability and commercially available raw materials. One of the most immediate applications is for use as a portable power source for mobile powering electronics directly by ambient humidity.

“After water absorption, one piece of power-generating fabric that is 1.5 by 2 centimetres in size can provide up to 0.7 volts (V) of electricity for over 150 hours under a constant environment,” said research team member Dr Zhang Yaoxin (Engineering ‘20). The team has also successfully demonstrated the scalability of its new device in generating electricity for different applications. The NUS team connected three pieces of the power-generating fabric together and placed them into a 3D-printed case that was the size of a standard AA battery. The voltage of the assembled device was tested to reach as high as 1.96V — higher than a commercial AA battery of about 1.5V — which is enough to power small electronic devices such as an alarm clock.

The scalability of the NUS invention, the convenience of obtaining commercially available raw materials as well as the low fabrication cost of about $0.15 per metre square make the MEG device suitable for mass production. “Our device shows excellent scalability at a low fabrication cost. Compared to other MEG structures and devices, our invention is simpler and easier for scaling-up integrations and connections. We believe it holds vast promise for commercialisation,” shared Asst Prof Tan.

The researchers have filed a patent for the technology and are planning to explore potential commercialisation strategies for real-world applications.
PUTTING THEIR BEST FEET FORWARD

To mark NUS Cares 2022, Raffles Hall Association alumni spent a Saturday morning bringing cheer to vulnerable seniors.

The Morning of Saturday, 3 September, DAWNED BRIGHT AND CHEERY, after two weeks of heavy rain. Mr Leonard Tan (Engineering ’18) heaved a sigh of relief. “I’m glad it will go according to plan,” he said, referring to the Raffles Hall Association (RHA) alumni community’s involvement in “Ready, Set, Gold” for NUS Cares 2022. The charity walk was organised by Blossom Seeds, a group that supports lonely and needy seniors by promoting integration and friendships. Both undergraduates and alumni stepped up to support the event by befriending wheelchair-bound seniors and accompanying them on a 1.5km walk through the Canberra estate. They were joined by Minister for Health Mr Ong Ye Kung and Professor Chen Tsuhan, Deputy President (Research and Technology) and Distinguished Professor. In all, the NUS contingent comprised 15 students, nine alumni and three staff. They were part of a wider community of 1,500 walkers from over 30 organisations, among them Canberra Secondary School, Sembawang God of Wealth Temple, the Buddhist Fellowship, People’s Association, Council for Third Age and Health Promotion Board (HPB). After the walk, participants also enjoyed a carnival that featured a number of games and challenges centred on healthy living. It was a meaningful morning for all involved, especially Ms Teo Yee Hua, a current student at the School of Computing. “I am from Malaysia and all my family is back home. I haven’t had a chance to see much of them because of the pandemic, so I really miss interacting with them. While spending time with these seniors is no substitute for family time, I am happy for the chance to get to know them better and forge a meaningful connection.”

Mr Tan was instrumental in securing RHA’s participation in the event. “Over the years, I’ve tried to give back on different fronts: from befriending seniors to accompanying them on their medical appointments,” shared the 29-year-old financial advisor. Regularly finding different ways to give back is as easy as refreshing the Giving.sg page every month, he added with a laugh. He is no stranger to providing RHA members opportunities to give back, with previous efforts supporting soup kitchens and senior activity centres. “Giving back is a joy and I am happy to share that joy with fellow alumni and present students,” he said, adding that he worked closely with fellow alumnus and RHA Chairperson Ms Lim Swee Kim (Computing ’88) to make the event a reality. The pair have collaborated closely on various charity projects for the RHA community, even during the pandemic. To mark NUS Day of Service in 2021, they rallied six volunteers to prepare meals for over 10,000 beneficiaries at Willing Hearts, a soup kitchen that prepares, cooks and distributes about 10,000 daily meals to over 70 locations islandwide.

Alumni and undergraduates proudly displaying the NUS Cares banner at the event.

Mr Ong Ye Kung (right) flagging off the charity walk.

The volunteers made sure that everyone — both young and old — was able to participate in the walk.

The volunteers paired up with children from needy families and accompanied them at the carnival.

Mr Ong Ye Kung (left) flagging off the charity walk.

The event saw a great show of camaraderie by the RHA alumni.

FIND YOUR LANE

Whether your passion is to aid the disadvantaged, champion environmental causes or be a steward for animal welfare, there are plenty of ways to give back. You don’t have to do it alone: join fellow alumni and the NUS community in making a difference and start giving back today!

Visit nus.edu.sg/alumnnet/events/NUSCares for details.
Celebrating Milestones and Memories

DECKED OUT IN THEIR GROOVIEST DIGS, CLOSE TO 800 ALUMNI RETURNED TO NUS' BUKIT TIMAH CAMPUS ON 2 JULY FOR A DISCO FIESTA FULL OF FUN, LAUGHTER AND JOYFUL REMINISCENCE. Organised by NUS Alumni Relations and co-hosted by NUS Law and the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP), this year’s Bukit Timah Homecoming was graced by Guest-of-Honour, NUS Chancellor President Halimah Yacob (Law ’78).

The evening’s programme brought alumni down memory lane with lively performances of nostalgic 1970s disco hits by the University’s musical talents, Raffles Hall Family and Friends, NUS Alumni Sing-Along, and Silver Jam. Amid the reunions and catch-ups, one of the evening’s highlights was when a group of gorgeous NUS Senior Alumni strutted the runway dressed in glittering creations by local designers.

The homecoming event also took on an additional significance due to the combined celebrations of three milestone anniversaries – the 70th anniversary of Dunearn Road Hostels, 65th anniversary of NUS Faculty of Law and 50th anniversary of NUS Class of 1972.

Located just a short walk from NUS’ Bukit Timah Campus, Dunearn Road Hostels (DRH) opened in 1952 to provide accommodation for overseas undergraduates of the then-University of Malaya. Luminaries such as former President of Singapore, the late Mr S. R. Nathan (Arts ’54), once stayed at DRH. DRH was renamed Sheares Hall in 1982 when it was relocated to NUS Kent Ridge Campus. The site housing the former DRH has since been converted to College Green, a hostel for LKYSPP graduate students.

The roots of NUS Faculty of Law lie in the establishment of the Department of Law in the then-University of Malaya in 1956. The pioneer class of law students graduated in 1961, counting among its most illustrious members Emeritus Professor Tommy Koh, Singapore’s Ambassador-at-Large and former Dean, former Chief Justice Chan Sek Keong, former Dean Thio Su-Mien, and Emeritus Professor Koh Kheng Lian.

The NUS Class of 1972 is a notable cohort that called the Bukit Timah Campus home, and the prominent alumni in this cohort continue to give back to the NUS community, 50 years after their graduation. In 2005, the Class of 1972 Bursary Fund was established to award bursaries to needy undergraduate students at NUS. As part of its 50th Anniversary celebrations, the Class of 1972 raised more than $470,000 to bring total Bursary funds to over $2 million in 2022.

Mr David Ho, an alumnus from the Class of 1972 involved in fundraising efforts for the Bursary, said: “As the first NUS alumni cohort to form a bursary fund, we hope our efforts will encourage other NUS alumni cohorts to pay it forward and start their own fundraising initiatives as well. Education is the best platform for levelling the playing field and ensuring everyone has a good start in life regardless of their family background and financial status. The Class of 1972 is humbled to play a small but significant part in this direction.”

In his speech at the event, NUS President Professor Tan Eng Chye (Science ’85) also recognised the role of alumni in strengthening the NUS community. “As generations of graduates return here to celebrate, I would like to thank the alumni for their continued and invaluable contributions,” said Prof Tan.

“The alumni-alma mater relationship is a lifelong one, and I am proud of how our alumni are helping to build a richer, stronger NUS community, as evidenced in the numerous alumni-led initiatives, projects and events,” he added.
A HOMECOMING FOR NUS ALUMNI AT LONG LAST

IT WAS HOMECOMING AT LONG LAST FOR ALUMNI WHO GATHERED IN-PERSON, TOGETHER WITH THEIR FAMILIES AS WELL AS STUDENTS AND STAFF, AT THIS YEAR’S KENT RIDGE ALUMNI FAMILY DAY ON 13 AUGUST. After two years of virtual reunions, the event welcomed over 1,500 attendees for live performances by alumni and student talents at a carnival held at Town Green in NUS University Town (UTown). Organised by NUS Alumni Relations, the event also featured workshops, webinars and lab tours. The day took off with two engaging webinars, starting with “It Takes Guts!”, where the co-founders of Curated Culture, Ms Shermaine Heng (Science, ‘20) and Ms Sew Shu Wen (Science, ‘20) recounted their entrepreneurial journey. They shared insights of how they launched the beverage start-up which makes zero-sugar probiotic cold brew teas. During “What isn’t the Metaverse?”, Dr Lu Weiquan (Computing ‘08), Senior Lecturer at NUS School of Computing, demystified the hype on how the Metaverse will revolutionise the way we work, play, live and learn.

Professor Tan Eng Chye, NUS President welcomed everybody back to campus for the University’s biggest annual homecoming event. Prof Tan also officially announced the rebranding of NUS Day of Service to NUS Cares – a year-long, university-wide movement encouraging everyone to make a difference and give back to the wider community in Singapore. He encouraged everyone present to join in the movement by taking part in meaningful initiatives for society.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, participants laid out their picnic mats, grabbed their snacks and drinks, and settled down for a screening of Disney’s Encanto, winding down the day with their loved ones.
The Future of Healthcare

FUTURE-READY WORKSHOPS

The Future of Healthcare

EARLIER THIS YEAR, THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH ANNOUNCED THE HEALTHIER SG INITIATIVE, to manage the challenges of Singapore’s ageing population and improve health outcomes. Some 220 attendees joined us online and in person to learn how NUS is preparing health practitioners to achieve Healthier SG goals.

Associate Professor Lau Tang Ching (Medicine ’91), Vice Dean (Education), Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, NUS, and Senior Consultant, Division of Rheumatology, Department of Medicine, National University Hospital, shed light on the importance of promoting health and preventing chronic illnesses, understanding the social determinants of health, and using technology and health informatics as enablers for health practitioners.

Following his riveting sharing session, Prof Lau answered various questions from audience members, ranging from how to encourage our youth to pursue a career in the medical field and how service design and design thinking can help shape the patient experience and the healthcare landscape in Singapore, to measuring the effectiveness of government grants for senior mobility and a better quality of life, among others.

Dr Ganesh Neelakanta Iyer (Engineering ’10), Lecturer, Department of Computer Science, NUS School of Computing, provided 110 participants with insights on the key technologies that will help accelerate digitalisation and drive our efforts to deliver the UN SDGs. He also shared more about the trends in technology that will lead us towards a socially, environmentally, and economically resilient future, as well as the impact of the UN SDGs on technology in various areas. Dr Ganesh was then joined by moderator Dr Amirhassan Monajemi, Senior Lecturer (Educator Track), Department of Computer Science, NUS School of Computing, as they answered some burning questions from the online audience. The questions included clarifications about the blockchain, views on ethical and sustainable energy technology, and the available job opportunities that come with enabling technologies.

Catch up on all our webinars at alum.events/webinar/

TECH TALK

TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIETY – INDUSTRY OUTLOOK FOR 2030

THE UNITED NATIONS’ SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS (SDGs) PROVIDE a blueprint for people, the planet, and prosperity, and are intended to be achieved by 2030. With only eight years to 2030, a deeper, faster, and more ambitious response is needed.

Dr Ganesh and Dr Amirhassan sharing their thoughts on participants’ questions at the Tech Talk held on 16 August 2022.

Thursday, 7.30pm - 9.10pm

27 October 2022

Thursday, 7.30pm - 9.10pm

Auditorium, Shaw Foundation Alumni House

Please register at alum.events/FFoct22

We spend a third of our lives sleeping (even more so for the young), yet we don’t spend enough time understanding and learning about sleep and its problems. Join Dr Daniel Goh (Medicine ’88), Dr Michael Lim and Dr Mahesh Babu Ramamurthy from Khoo Teck Puat – National University Children’s Medical Institute, National University Hospital, who will share tips for parents and caregivers in common sleep issues, the importance of sleep, when and where to seek help, and how to ensure a good nights sleep for your child.

Office of Alumni Relations
School of Continuing and Lifelong Education

Office of Alumni Relations
School of Continuing and Lifelong Education
OCTOBER

BAD LUCKY GOAT [PG13]
Feature Films (Colombian)

After accidentally running over a goat with their father’s truck, two teenage siblings with incompatible personalities begin an adventure of reconciliation. Corn and Rita must find a way to repair the truck before the tourists who will be staying at the family’s hotel arrive. On their way, they go on a 24-hour adventure through Port Paradise, Colombia.

27 Oct (Thu)
Shaw Foundation Alumni House
7.30pm - 9.10pm
Register: alum.events/FFoct22
Contact: Ms Chu Hoi Yee
hychu@nus.edu.sg

We spend a third of our lives sleeping (even more so for the young), yet we don’t spend enough time understanding and learning about sleep and its problems. Join Dr Daniel Goh, Dr Michael Lim and Dr Mahesh Babu Ramamurthy from Khoo Teck Puat - National University Children’s Medical Institute, who will share tips for parents and caregivers on:
• Identifying when sleep is abnormal in your child;
• Understanding the importance of sleep in children;
• When and where to seek help for your child’s sleep problems; and
• Basic strategies to ensure a good night’s sleep for your child.

6 Oct
Online
Thu, 7.30pm - 9.00pm
Register: alum.events/HWoct22
Contact: Ms Tan Li Hui
lhtan@nus.edu.sg

Information is correct at the time of publication and is subject to change without prior notice.

WE ARE HIRING

Story Tellers, Content Creators, Information Specialists ...

Join us at
NUS Office of Alumni Relations.

Keep the adventure going with us as we meaningfully engage and inspire our alumni, and continue the transformative NUS journey.

APPLY NOW
Every student is a work-in-progress

Enable them to complete their education journeys.

NUS Bursary*
✓ tops up Government Bursary to provide full coverage of tuition fees (PCI* ≤ S$1,000)
✓ provides $4,000 per annum of living expenses (PCI* ≤ S$690)

Opportunity Enhancement Grant* provides $10,000 over 4 years to top up financial aid for on-campus stay and overseas programmes (PCI* ≤ S$690)

* Per Capita Income
# In addition to financial aid in the form of bursaries, grants, loans and more for all eligible full-time undergraduates

Information retrieved from National University of Singapore (NUS) News

Extend your helping hand to give back to society, under the umbrella of NUS Cares.
You can lead volunteers to serve in ways ranging from providing meals to improving the environment. Spearhead an activity with your friends, fellow alumni and the rest of the NUS Community.
Make a difference today by championing an activity in any of these areas:
• Animal welfare
• Arts and heritage
• Children and youth
• Community
• Education
• Elderly
• Environment
• Special needs
• Sports

Keen to participate but unsure of what is required? Drop us a note at alumnihelpdesk@nus.edu.sg

GIVE ONLINE
NUS SECURED ONLINE DONATION PORTAL
Please check that the QR code leads you to a webpage with a URL that starts with “https://nus.edu.sg” and a padlock icon.

PAYNOW
1. Launch your mobile banking application
2. Tap on “Scan & Pay” and scan the PayNow QR code
3. Key in the gift amount
4. Under the UEN/Bill Reference Number, key in <DA019-NRIC/FIN/UEN> to enjoy tax deduction
5. Please verify that the auto-populated text under “Recipient” is “National University of Singapore” in full.
SEEING THE SILVER LINING

We are all getting older and there is nothing we can do about it — or is there? One-dimensional thinking posit ageing purely in terms of deteriorating health or as a burden to society. In helping Singapore prepare for an ageing population, NUS wants older adults to enjoy long, healthy, happy and productive lives.

TEXT BY WANDA TAN

The middle-aged population is at [highest] risk of getting chronic diseases in the near future. If we can target them [through biological age testing], we can slow or reverse aspects of their ageing. Profeskor Brian Kennedy, Director, Centre for Healthy Longevity, NUS, in a June 2022 CNA interview

FINDINGS FROM THE BURDEN OF DISEASE IN SINGAPORE, 1990 – 2017

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>1990</th>
<th>2017</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth</td>
<td>76.1 years</td>
<td>84.8 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Healthy life expectancy at birth</td>
<td>67.1 years</td>
<td>74.2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time spent in ill health</td>
<td>9.0 years</td>
<td>10.6 years</td>
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</tbody>
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Source: MOH and IHME

A MATTER OF CARE

Elsewhere at NUS, the research focus is less on the biological or clinical aspects of ageing, and more on the social and psychological side. Duke-NUS Medical School’s Centre for Ageing Research and Education (CARE) is perhaps

DID YOU KNOW?

According to a study published in The Lancet in 2016, Singaporeans will have an average life span of 85.4 years in 2040, the third-longest globally next to Spain and Japan.

All it What you want — the third age, the Silver Tsunami or the Longevity Boom — but there is no escaping the fact that the world’s population is getting older. Decades of steadily rising life expectancy and declining birth rates have got us to this point, especially in Singapore, which has one of the fastest-ageing populations in the world. By 2030, all ‘baby boomers’ (those born in the post-war period between 1946 and 1964) will enter the ‘65 and older’ age group, and government statistics project that they will make up 23.8 per cent of Singapore’s citizen population — up from 17.6 per cent in 2021.

To put it another way, about one in four Singaporeans will be 65 years old and above by 2030. This realisation has caused much handwringing and debate over a host of issues. Among these include the potential ramifications on individual health as well as the public healthcare system, the adequacy of social support and protection for older people, strategies to enhance their livelihoods and productive capacity, and how living spaces can be re-designed or new technologies developed to help seniors live independently for longer.

Not ones to shy away from a challenge, NUS’ faculty, students and alumni are addressing these issues head on, and from multiple dimensions.

AT THE CELLULAR LEVEL

Any thoughtful discussion on ageing should distinguish between life expectancy — the average number of years a person can expect to live — and healthy life expectancy, defined as the average number of years a person can expect to live in good health, free of physical functional limitations.

In a 2019 report by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the United States-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), researchers made this distinction while studying the burden of disease in Singapore from 1990 to 2017 (see table). An increasing trend was found for both metrics; however, although Singaporeans are now living longer, they are spending a greater proportion of that time in ill-health due to chronic disease or injury.

The big question, then, is how to increase life expectancy and simultaneously reduce the amount of time people spend in poor health. At the National University Health System’s (NUHS) Centre for Healthy Longevity, various research projects are ongoing to develop and test interventions that can delay the ageing process — to be specific, one’s biological age, measured by the extent of damage to the body’s cells, tissues and organs over time. This parameter takes into account not just how long a person has been alive (chronological age) but also other factors such as genetics, lifestyle and nutrition. The sooner we know our biological age, the sooner we can intervene to delay or prevent the onset of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.

Professor Brian Kennedy, the Centre’s Director, heads the Healthy Longevity Translational Research Programme at NUHS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, where scientists and clinicians are investigating different aspects of the biology of ageing — for example, systemic ageing, vascular ageing, or brain ageing — to identify pathways for intervention. Other studies involving human subjects aim to, for instance, test the use of novel biomarkers of ageing in hospitals, or assess the effectiveness of different types of exercises and nutritional supplements in lowering the biological age of certain population groups.

‘Chronic diseases are hard to completely reverse. If people manage them, they will live longer. But if we can slow ageing they won’t get the diseases in the first place,’ Prof Kennedy told CNA in June 2022 as part of NUS’ documentary series, Innovating for the Future. ‘The middle-aged population is at [highest] risk of getting chronic diseases in the near future. If we can target them [through biological age testing], we can slow or reverse aspects of their ageing’.

A MATTER OF CARE

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In a 2019 report by the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the United States-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME), researchers made this distinction while studying the burden of disease in Singapore from 1990 to 2017 (see table). An increasing trend was found for both metrics; however, although Singaporeans are now living longer, they are spending a greater proportion of that time in ill-health due to chronic disease or injury.

The big question, then, is how to increase life expectancy and simultaneously reduce the amount of time people spend in poor health. At the National University Health System’s (NUHS) Centre for Healthy Longevity, various research projects are ongoing to develop and test interventions that can delay the ageing process — to be specific, one’s biological age, measured by the extent of damage to the body’s cells, tissues and organs over time. This parameter takes into account not just how long a person has been alive (chronological age) but also other factors such as genetics, lifestyle and nutrition. The sooner we know our biological age, the sooner we can intervene to delay or prevent the onset of chronic diseases such as diabetes, hypertension and heart disease.

Professor Brian Kennedy, the Centre’s Director, heads the Healthy Longevity Translational Research Programme at NUHS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, where scientists and clinicians are investigating different aspects of the biology of ageing — for example, systemic ageing, vascular ageing, or brain ageing — to identify pathways for intervention. Other studies involving human subjects aim to, for instance, test the use of novel biomarkers of ageing in hospitals, or assess the effectiveness of different types of exercises and nutritional supplements in lowering the biological age of certain population groups.

‘Chronic diseases are hard to completely reverse. If people manage them, they will live longer. But if we can slow ageing they won’t get the diseases in the first place,’ Prof Kennedy told CNA in June 2022 as part of NUS’ documentary series, Innovating for the Future. ‘The middle-aged population is at [highest] risk of getting chronic diseases in the near future. If we can target them [through biological age testing], we can slow or reverse aspects of their ageing’.

A MATTER OF CARE

Elsewhere at NUS, the research focus is less on the biological or clinical aspects of ageing, and more on the social and psychological side. Duke-NUS Medical School’s Centre for Ageing Research and Education (CARE) is perhaps

DID YOU KNOW?

According to a study published in The Lancet in 2016, Singaporeans will have an average life span of 85.4 years in 2040, the third-longest globally next to Spain and Japan.
**YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT**

With greater awareness of how good nutrition can help people age well and prevent or manage chronic illness, the food science industry is booming. At Danone Specialized Nutrition, Senior Health & Science Manager Ms Mia Isabelle (Science ‘07) leads the company’s nutrition and scientific aspects of healthy ageing innovations in Southeast Asia. She reveals two exciting areas of food research:

1. **MOBILITY**

   “Aging causes decline in muscle, bone and joint health, which is important for movement. For example, our muscle mass starts to decline from the age of 30 and the loss accelerates after 50. At the same time, our muscles become less sensitive to protein intake. Older people can benefit from higher protein intake, and nutrients like vitamin D and leucine, to help promote muscle protein synthesis.”

2. **GUT MICROBIOTA**

   “There is growing knowledge of the importance of our gut microbiota beyond gut health [...] preventing weight gain, control blood sugar, and improve brain and heart health." Aging alters the gut microbiota balance, so specific probiotics and prebiotics that help restore the balance would be helpful for older populations.”

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**WHAT’S NEW**

Dr Mahotra clues us in on the latest updates to CARE’s ongoing studies.

- **Prescription Medication Label Improvement for Singaporean Elderly (PROMISE)**
  - "We are currently in partnership with SingHealth and the National Healthcare Group to develop locally-specific pictograms for use on medicine labels. Hopefully, these will one day be used across Singapore’s health system."
  - **Caregiving Transitions among family Caregivers of Elderly Singaporeans (TraCE)**
    - We enrolled 300 caregivers and followed up with them over time.
    - We are now analysing the data to identify patterns in health and well-being, employment, and other outcomes among caregivers.

- **Qualitative Insights into Caregiving Transitions (Quali-T)**
  - "We purposefully sampled and interviewed caregivers from the TraCE study to find out what drives their positive or negative perceptions of caregiving. The aim is to develop a pilot intervention for enhancing positive caregiving experiences.”

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The aged population is a potential well of resources which, if we properly understand and tap into, can immensely benefit our society.

Assistant Professor Cynthia Chen, Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, NUS

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In 2021, we released a paper on how loneliness impacts health expectancy among older adults – an issue which garnered a lot of attention during the COVID-19 pandemic as many people were isolated at home.

Dr Rahul Mahotra, Assistant Professor, Deputy Director and Head of Research, CARE, Duke-NUS Medical School

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Studies show that healthcare services only contribute about 10 per cent to the health of a population. Psychosocial determinants of health — including residents’ social and physical environment as well as their health behaviours — are more important.

Adjunct Associate Professor Ian Leong, Assistant Chairman Medical Board (Community Care Integration), Tan Tock Seng Hospital

assistance to the former group, and to also recognise the often-overlooked contributions in unpaid work such as volunteering.

Arguably, though, fixing the pain points in healthcare takes precedence. “Singapore’s conventional method for healthcare payment uses fees for service and works based on volume and treating illnesses and injuries as they occur,” says Asst Prof Chen. “This is expensive and unsustainable, as hospitals and healthcare organisations cannot expand indefinitely. Furthermore, as chronic diseases are a culmination of lifestyle behaviours, a life course approach to understanding and preventing such diseases is necessary.” MOH’s announcement earlier this year to pursue a Healthier SG strategy — which aims to motivate all Singaporeans to proactively take steps towards better health and quality of life through preventive care — is therefore very timely.

THE CASE FOR HEALTHCARE TRANSFORMATION

Before Healthier SG, there was MOH’s “Three Beyonds — the three paradigm shifts regarded as critical for the transformation of our healthcare system, in preparation for an ageing population. At Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), Adjunct Associate Professor Ian Leong (Medicine ‘92), now the Assistant Chairman Medical Board (Community Care Integration), has spent the better part of his career focused on moving ‘Beyond Hospital to Community’.

“The Three Beyonds, especially Beyond Hospital to Community, represented a clarion call to all healthcare clusters for a more concerted involvement of hospital staff in the community, working alongside our community partners, to coordinate and integrate care,” says Assoc Prof Leong. “It recognised that the reality of managing chronic illness is ‘out there’ and not in the hospital.”

TTSH, for its part, has gradually stepped up its involvement in the community over the last two decades or so. Shared care between hospital specialists and polyclinic doctors is becoming the norm. In addition, TTSH runs multidisciplinary care teams comprising doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and health coaches (trained laypersons) who work in diverse community settings across the Central Singapore region. For instance, in home care, a dedicated team regularly visits patients (mostly elderly) who are frail or bedridden to provide direct medical care and to also support caregivers. Neighbourhood community health posts, usually set up within the premises of social service agencies and manned by nurses or health coaches, allow residents to easily access routine health screenings and learn how to manage chronic conditions. The hospital also partners with nursing homes to provide quality palliative care for those approaching the end of life.

Like Asst Prof Chen, Assoc Prof Leong agrees that further healthcare expansion, albeit necessary to some degree, is by itself not a panacea for our greying population. “Studies show that healthcare services only contribute about 10 per cent to the health of a population. Psychosocial determinants of health — including residents’ social and physical environment as well as their health behaviours — are more important. For example, studies estimate that residents take their medications 60 to 70 per cent of the time,” he explains.

While there will be a continued need to address gaps for people who are unable to manage themselves, we need to think of other ways of tackling the psychosocial determinants of health. The answer to that is likely to lie beyond the medical fraternity and would require the active involvement of residents and caregivers.”

THE PROMISE OF GERONTECHNOLOGY

In response to global ageing, a relatively new field called gerontechnology — a portmanteau of gerontology and technology, and first coined in the 1990s — has gained popularity.

“Gerontechnology is an interdisciplinary field that looks into the design, development and deployment of technologies to mitigate the challenges associated with ageing. These include assistive devices for mobility and rehabilitation, assistive devices for daily living — for example, automated pill dispensers, health monitoring devices for seniors, sensory aids, and technologies that assist caregivers in their caregiving,” says Dr James Kah (Engineering ‘10), a Senior Lecturer at the Department of Biomedical Engineering. However, he notes, it is still nascent in Singapore. “I see big gaps in gerontechnology and assistive technology development in Singapore, since very few products that cater to these communities are developed locally to fill our local needs.”

Therefore, in 2020, Dr Kah initiated the Gerontechnology in Ageing module to introduce Biomedical Engineering students to the concept, and to equip them with knowledge and skills in this area. Using a community-based learning approach, the module includes a service-learning
The course exposed Ms Fatin to a broad range of age-related challenges, resulting in the prototype she and her teammates developed, called Brake Bear. Inspired by an elderly person from the Lions Befrienders’ Senior Group Home programme, Brake Bear is basically a set of wheel chocks that can be attached to any rollator for extra stability, on top of the rollator’s brakes. Elderly users can thus transfer from a standing to sitting position (and vice versa) on their rollators without the help of a caretaker, allowing them to move around on their own. “We debuted our prototype at the Gerontech Showcase and residents who tried it were impressed. When the wheel chocks were deployed, they found that the rollator stayed securely in place during a transfer. Some even expressed interest in purchasing the product!” Ms Fatin shares.

Currently, her team is experimenting with different materials to improve the product’s durability, in hopes of eventually making Brake Bear commercially available.

As the population continues to age, our society will increasingly turn to technology to address some of the associated challenges. The emerging silver economy will bring more opportunities for new technologies to be deployed with its increasingly larger user base.

Dr James Kah, Senior Lecturer, Department of Biomedical Engineering, NUS

Dr Yap Hong Kai (Engineering ‘13) and Ms Jane Wang (Engineering ’16).
It is projected that, by 2030, 29.8 per cent of Singapore’s resident population will be aged 65 years and over. Singapore has been preparing for this since the 1980s, when a Committee on the Problems of the Aged was formed to study the implications of, and recommend responses to, an ageing population. As each cohort of seniors enjoy progressively better education, income and health, their needs and aspirations become more varied. Our alumna discusses the blind spots and challenges going forward.

Riding the Silver Wave

NUS alumni discuss the current state of elderscare in Singapore, and what it will take to move towards inclusive solutions.

Ageism is everywhere, and we have to raise awareness to remove the stereotypes associated with persons of a certain age.(*MS ZAIBUN NISSA SIRAJ*)

*What do you think the public perception of senior citizens is? (ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES ’18), RETIRED, FOUNDING COMMITTEE MEMBER OF CHARITY FUNDRAISER NUS RAG & FLAG*

*ZAIBUN: Seniors are often invisible. For example, in the recently released White Paper on Singapore’s Women’s Development, older women were not mentioned, let alone the issues and challenges they face. There has to be a change in the way we think about how our society views senior citizens.*

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*MS ZAIBUN NISSA SIRAJ (ARTS ’16), TRAINER, INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER AND AUTHOR*
people without children? Next, beyond financial considerations, what those born before 1965 want are often time and attention. I encourage my boys, who are in their 20s, to visit their grandparents, who are in their 90s, while they are still around. The concern is not just about reassuring people while they are with us, but also about being more considerate of others’ needs. Our turn will come, to be in our seniors’ shoes. The big question is: How do we get more and younger people to commit more time to senior care, facilitate intergenerational conversations and nurture empathy? These all start with a change of mindset.

How can this mindset be changed?

MEE LEEN: As an educator, I believe many agencies and schools try to teach the children to show respect to seniors. Schools also offer community programmes that raise a sense of social responsibility and nurture empathy. However, because of curriculum requirements and other factors, these programmes are often organised during school breaks and after exams, rather than at a higher frequency. That said, education happens beyond schools, within homes. Family upbringing is an influence on a child’s mindset, and children look at how their own parents treat old people to form their opinion — and subsequently, how they treat their own parents in their old age too.

SHARMA: Educational institutions are uniquely placed to change the mindset of the young because the students who come through their doors will be the leaders of tomorrow. If students can commit to spending more time with older adults on a regular basis — planned as a part of the curriculum — they can form their own understanding of ageing. It is not something that can be impressed upon through textbooks.

SHI CHUN: In Asian societies, people are often shy to ask for help. But if we try to see the other party in a neutral light, simply as a person — rather than one in need of assistance — it will help open up. It takes more than a one-time visit to gain their trust.

Given that the world is changing faster than ever, how can the aged keep up with the times?

ZAINUB: My husband, who is much older than me, uses the computer and watches a lot of TV. But he does not use a mobile phone. People, especially young ones, are often shocked. But Shi Chun’s point is brilliant. There is a push for digitisation everywhere, and there are many programmes, services and schemes that old people are unaware of because they are not online. It is something that needs to be rethinked.

SHARMA: There is a lot of help out there but it is communicated mostly through digital channels, which might not reach the intended audience effectively. Rethinking communications can make a good job even better. The National Library Board’s outreach efforts, for instance — from targeted digital resources to large-print books — have been very well and thought through thoroughly. Technology can unite, not divide, as long as it stems from a genuine care for others. There are gaps and cracks to fill, but I am optimistic we have capable talent to build a more cohesive society, despite the widening intergenerational differences in a rapidly changing world.
A fall in one’s senior years can be debilitating enough. But its effects can be made worse if no one knows that you have fallen down until much later. This issue is especially pressing in Singapore, where more than one in ten seniors live alone. To tackle this, three NUS alumni have brought together technology and a dash of sensitivity to create HomePal, a remote monitoring solution that also protects the privacy of seniors.

The system relies on a set of infrared sensors placed around the house. These detect the movement patterns of clients and the data is fed back to a machine learning system, which learns to identify the seniors’ usual patterns. Caregivers are then notified when patterns out of the ordinary are detected. Because it uses infrared technology and not video, HomePal sensors can be placed with confidence in private areas such as bathrooms, so using tech like HomePal could help them improve their productivity. “But there are lots of nuances and needs that we, as non-healthcare professionals, may not understand. So it’s important for us to speak to our partners regularly to get a sense of what they need before we can think of ways that tech can solve these issues.” HomePal’s product lead, Mr Lai, adds that the early relationships they foster with stakeholders in the eldercare space, such as nursing homes, will put them in good stead for further expansion. “If we can make our impact felt in nursing homes, we may be able to grow our business to reach out to customers who live alone.”

JOURNEYING TOGETHER

The trio is currently looking to grow more partnerships and hopes to launch HomePal in 2024. Helping them on this journey are the nine or so interns who Mr Tan, Mr Chen and Mr Lai passionately mentor. “Our entire team is highly capable, with strong technical perspectives and an ability to translate these to real-world solutions,” shares Mr Lai. The core team of Mr Chen, Mr Lai and Mr Tan is driven by a close friendship that was forged at N-House, an entrepreneurship-themed residence managed by NUS Overseas Colleges and part of NUS Enterprise. Being part of the N-House community inspired each of them to pursue a field related to tech.

Mr Tan is driven by a close friendship that was forged at N-House, an entrepreneurship-themed residence managed by NUS Overseas Colleges and part of NUS Enterprise. Being part of the N-House community inspired each of them to pursue a field related to tech. In 2019, he, together with Mr Chen and Mr Lai, and a few part-time interns who Mr Tan, Mr Chen and Mr Lai had mentored, formed HomePal, a startup to create a remote monitoring solution for seniors living alone.

In order to bring HomePal to market, the team conducted an on-site trial at Jamiyah Nursing Home. The core team is a close-knit group of three. Mr Tan, Mr Chen and Mr Lai share the common passion to help seniors live more independently.

THE NEXT LEVEL

To develop HomePal further, the co-founders are in regular contact with nursing homes, who will likely be among HomePal’s biggest clients when it is eventually released. “Working with nursing homes means that the scope of the problem we’re trying to solve is much more defined, which will help as we are in the early stages of development,” explains Mr Chen, who looks at tech development for HomePal.

He likens the process of working with nursing homes to co-creating a solution: “nursing home staff and resources are often stretched, so using tech like HomePal could help them improve their productivity.”

Mr Lai, HomePal’s founder, says that the team is in regular contact with the nine or so interns who Mr Tan, Mr Chen and Mr Lai had mentored, to keep them informed of the progress of HomePal. He adds that they had a close relationship with their seniors to ensure that they understand the needs of seniors.

Mr Lai says that the team is currently working on improving the system to better detect unusual patterns, and that they are also considering developing a mobile app to allow seniors to report any issues they are facing.

HOW HOMEPAL WORKS

Infrared sensors are placed around the house and feed data on movement patterns to a central dashboard.

Machine learning algorithms help the dashboard understand what a person’s normal movement patterns are.

When a person strays from these normal patterns, a caregiver or loved one is alerted.
PUTTING THE “PRO” IN PRO BONO

How Adjunct Professor Ruby Lee Yen Kee (Law ’85) helps law students realise the value they can bring to the community.

CHAMPIONING THE COMMUNITY

Recalling the nascent days of the Centre, Adj Prof Lee recounts, “We went out into the community to find projects that would meaningfully engage students.” It was also important for these projects to be formalised, as the Singapore Institute of Legal Education requires all law students to complete 20 hours of pro bono work as part of their graduating requirements.

Among the early projects she initiated were public talks on matters like wills, probate matters and divorce. She saw these as valuable learning lessons for both the community and law students. “My students were able to see the very real impact of the laws they study. They would hear from the public and be quizzed on the laws by them, so they learnt how to communicate these to the layperson.”

During her course of work, Adj Prof Lee also saw an opportunity to help parents and caregivers of children with intellectual disabilities. “These parents can be so consumed with the stress of caregiving that they fail to realise that when their charge turns 21, they can no longer do certain things for them, like access their bank account or sign consent forms on their behalf. That’s because the law recognises their children as being of age and thus, able to make such decisions.” Parents can apply for deputyship of their children to overcome this legal hurdle, but it is a process that can cost up to $10,000. “Those with the means are able to afford the hefty fee. But there are others who will struggle with the cost. I then saw this as an opportunity for my students to assist,” shares Adj Prof Lee. Under her supervision, law students would help parents navigate the legal process, assisting in areas like filing court documents and attending court hearings with them.

During her time at NUS, Adj Prof Lee and her team of students helped more than 60 families save thousands of dollars in legal fees, while ensuring they could continue caring for their loved ones with intellectual disabilities. Adj Prof Lee ran this project to help various organisations, among them the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS), KK Hospital and the Down Syndrome Association.

THE NEED TO HELP

Improving legal representation and access to justice are key goals of pro bono programmes. It is an important issue in Singapore, where more than 90% of applicants and 95% of respondents for maintenance and personal protection orders are unemployed.

Source: Criminal Justice Club, an official sub-club under the Law Club of the National University of Singapore, Faculty of Law.

WHO SHE IS

With almost 40 years of experience in nearly every aspect of the law — from private practice and in-house counsel roles to time in academia — Adjunct Professor Ruby Lee is a familiar face in legal circles. She now focuses on helping law students discover the possibilities of pro bono work.

ADJUNCT PROFESSOR RUBY LEE HOLDS FIRM TO THE BELIEF THAT, AT ITS CORE, THE LAW IS A SERVICE VOCATION.

Legal professionals can sometimes lose sight of their purpose in the hustle and bustle of practice,” she explains. “But she hopes that through early and meaningful exposure to pro bono work, lawyers will keep sight of their purpose in doing a trial practically every week! It was the point where it takes away from your daily work. Do a case here, do a case there... it’s a worthy start.”

These are some of the lessons she instills in students at the Singapore Management University’s Pro Bono Centre, where she is currently Deputy Director, and previously at the NUS’ Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education, which she co-founded in 2015. Both centres aim to foster a pro bono culture among law students through various programmes.

FINDING HER LANE

The pro bono requirements for graduating students were only implemented in 2014 — more than three decades after Adj Prof Lee graduated. “So when we left school and thought about ‘helping the community’, it was restricted to activities like spending time with seniors in a nursing home.” Her work with the Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education has inspired her to think about how else she can contribute to the community.

She eventually settled on being a Pro Bono Deputy, to be a proxy decision-maker for those without the mental capacity to do so. “Singapore is an ageing population and the government was worried about people who developed conditions like dementia, but who also had assets. This group of people would have trouble accessing their assets because of mental conditions.”

While professional deputies are remunerated for their work, Adj Prof Lee does it for free. It can be a thankless process, she reveals. “There are, for instance, bureaucratic hoops I need to jump through in order to fulfil my responsibilities as a deputy.” She shares about one case she handled for a woman in her 80s. “She had to be put in a nursing home and had no one to make financial decisions for her. Eventually, I decided to liquidate her assets and upgrade her to a top nursing home because of mental conditions.”

The phrase “liquidate assets” can be misleading — it doesn’t bring to mind the heavy lifting that Adj Prof Lee engages in: going into the flats of those she is caring for, to selling their belongings to karung guni (rag-and-bone) men, and even choosing the clothes they will be laid to rest in. “Someone’s got to do these things, so why not me?”

THE COMMUNITY

Currently, the Centre for Pro Bono and CLÉ at the NUS Faculty of Law educates law students about the legal issues relating to adult guardianships in Singapore. This project is a part of the Pro Bono Deputy scheme, where students can apply to be a Pro Bono Deputy, to be a proxy decision-maker for those without the mental capacity to do so. It is an important programme that helps the community.

At the Centre, Adj Prof Lee runs this project to help various organisations, among them the Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS), KK Hospital and the Down Syndrome Association. She is the founder of the Criminal Justice Club, an official sub-club under the Law Club of the National University of Singapore, Faculty of Law.

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She initiated these projects at the Centre to promote a pro bono culture among law students at SMI. She instils in students at the Singapore Management University’s Pro Bono Centre, where she is currently Deputy Director, and previously at the NUS’ Centre for Pro Bono and Clinical Legal Education, which she co-founded in 2015. Both centres aim to foster a pro bono culture among law students through various programmes.

THE NEED TO HELP

Improving legal representation and access to justice are key goals of pro bono programmes. It is an important issue in Singapore, where more than 90% of applicants and 95% of respondents for maintenance and personal protection orders are unrepresented.

Source: Criminal Justice Club, an official sub-club under the Law Club of the National University of Singapore, Faculty of Law.
Bridging the Gap through Dialogue

Through the lens of local writer Ms Josephine Chia, attendees at the Around the Tok Panjang chat on 13 August gained insights into gender-related issues within the Peranakan culture.

**Debunking Cultural and Gender Stereotypes**

When Ms Lim asked Ms Chia if she was one of those “rich Peranakans”, she replied that she had to overcome the stereotype of all Peranakans being rich. Also, many people associate Peranakans with people of Chinese extraction, not realising that there are also Peranakan Arabs, Peranakan Dutch, and Peranakan Indians. “A number of the Peranakan Chinese in Malacca and Singapore were merchants who established businesses in these places and so they did indeed become very wealthy. And much of the political elite in Singapore in the early days stemmed from those who were of mainly Peranakan descent — and this has led to the idea that a lot of Peranakans are very wealthy and influential,” Ms Chia explained. “When I used to meet some of the Peranakans at social events, I used to feel terrible because I was a ‘poor Peranakan! Nobody heard of where we come from,’” said Ms Chia. Interestingly, Ms Chia — who always sensed that her mother was different from the other kampong women — learnt that her mother used to play the violin and that she had come from a wealthy family.

During the engaging 80-minute chat, Ms Chia, who incorporates social consciousness into her works, stressed that education makes a difference in how a woman becomes “somebody”. “Back then, a woman’s role was to be a breeder, and you just were supposed to have as many kids as possible. I would say almost 90 per cent of the women, when I was growing up in the 1950s and 1960s, were poor and didn’t have an education. It was only when the People’s Action Party came in that schools were set up and education was made compulsory — and this led to greater opportunities,” said Ms Chia. In her book Kampong Spirit, Ms Chia narrated the story of her best friend, Paradi, an Indian woman who never received an education. “My father used to wonder what the point of girls going to school was, because you will poison your mind and you will have an opinion! It was really tough. And I had to fight hard for my education,” shared Ms Chia.

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**The Importance of Open Conversations Between the Genders**

During the Q&A session, Ms Chia also answered questions on gender equality and said women and men are co-dependent, and must learn to reason with each other. “For example, a working woman who wants to have children will need to discuss with her husband on how they can share child-raising responsibilities,” said Ms Chia. “As a Peranakan woman, it’s nice that we learn domestic skills sewing and cooking. But as we are also educated, we can now have an open discussion with men instead of fighting with them. For example, we can tell them that we need their help to change our kids’ diapers at night since we are also working.” Ms Chia added. She also answered a question on what a Peranakan woman should look like and why women need to be comfortable in their own skin. “I’m Peranakan so I do not look like the fair-skinned Chinese beauty typically depicted in our society. I’m tanned as I love the outdoors and I do sports like hiking,” she said. Finally, Ms Chia ended the conversation by saying that life and culture constantly evolve. “For example, I might wear a Peranakan costume that’s made from a different material now instead of the traditional fabric, simply because it’s more comfortable. But a ‘poor’ Peranakan might frown upon that,” she said, adding that it is important to embrace change.

**The Need to Bridge Gender Inequality and Discrimination**

In a study by Ipsos, 24 per cent of Singaporeans deny the existence of gender inequality and believe that feminism does more harm than good, and that feminism has resulted in men losing out in political, economic and social settings.

In a study by Ipsos, 24 per cent of Singaporeans deny the existence of gender inequality and believe that feminism does more harm than good, and that feminism has resulted in men losing out in political, economic and social settings.

Gender discrimination in the workplace remains elusive, with seven in 10 women agreeing that men and women experience unequal treatment at work. And women in specific sectors, such as construction, healthcare and engineering, are more affected by gender disparity in the workplace.
people move on

Professor Elaine Ho is a member of the NUS Department of Geography and the Asia Research Institute. Themes in her research agenda include immigration and citizenship, diaspora engagement and emotional geographies. While much of this research is centred on mainland China, she has also studied migration trends in Singapore, including its intersection with ageing.

The Republic of Singapore was turned 65 in 2020, and every fourth person you encounter then at your appointment will be that age, or older. In eight years’ time, the country will thus enter the ranks of ‘super-aged societies’, according to a Duke-NUS study acknowledged by state officials. While that might conjure imagery of people in retirement homes, Professor Elaine Ho suggests otherwise. “The young old, like the Merdeka Generation, are very active (physically as well as socially) and have really embraced the government’s call for active ageing,” she says. “One senior in my research project had accumulated more than 20 certificates from using her Skills Future credits!” This, in her view, is a group of people who are clearly ready or willing to engage, socially and otherwise, in ways that they otherwise might not have done.

Currently, Prof Ho is engaged in no fewer than five research projects, mostly centred on ageing. Why is a geographer looking so intently at this issue? Prof Ho points out that ‘ageing in place’ — the formal term for living out our golden years in our own homes and neighbourhoods — is fundamentally about place; and ‘place’, of course, is something geographers specialise in.

Ageing, Migration and Long-term Care

While studying migration, Prof Ho’s project on the confluence between migration and ageing led her to dive deeper into the topic of ageing in Singapore. “In order to understand our seniors’ experiences of ageing in Singapore as a migration hub, I needed a better grasp of long-term care and ageing policies in the country,” she explains. The project began in 2017, with the Lien Foundation coming onboard to ask for a review of the long-term care policy framework in Singapore. The resulting Care Where You Are report became part of a CNA documentary released in 2018, Prof Ho concludes, that while Singapore has “a world-class acute care system and provides universal healthcare, the long-term care system remains relatively undeveloped and underfunded.”

Singapore’s position as a migration hub allows Prof Ho to explore a multitude of subjects, including ageing. The topic of ageing did however, bring up questions about migration and how that ties in with long-term care in Singapore. Her research (Transnational Relations, Ageing and Care Ethics in TRACE) also revealed that seniors in Singapore were ageing alongside seniors from other countries, largely elderly from China acting as caregivers for their grandchildren. “Many of these grandparenting migrants are on short-term visas, but they attend to the needs of their children in Singapore for decades. They have been a critical pay gap between care providers who deal with acute healthcare and those in the long-term care profession. While acknowledging the point that these are indeed two separate areas, Prof Ho notes that long-term care providers get the short end of the stick. The work is dirty and difficult, and the pay does not stack up.

Caring is Complicated

By 2030, 20 per cent or more of Singapore’s population will be aged 65 or above. Professor Elaine Ho Lynn-Ee (Arts and Social Sciences ’02) reviews this seismic demographic shift to see what the future might hold for elderly and their caregivers.

We advocate an all-of-society approach to tackle the issue of an ageing society — and this is where the geographer in me speaks.

Accessing and Social Networks: Mapping the Life-worlds of Older Singaporeans

The subject of community care brings up the issue of caregivers once again, and it is an area that Prof Ho has done significant work in. She highlights a critical pay gap between care providers who deal with acute healthcare and those in the long-term care profession. While acknowledging the point that these are indeed two separate areas, Prof Ho notes that long-term care providers get the short end of the stick. The work is dirty and difficult, and the pay does not stack up.

Solving a First-world Problem

Given that Singapore requires caregivers such as nursing aides, this is clearly a problem. Prof Ho also notes that it is indicative of a future problem, because some children quit their jobs to take care of their parents. They might burn through their own savings to such an extent that they will no longer be able to support themselves in old age. The solution might seem like migrant labour, but it is complicated. As part of the TRACE project, she also went to Myanmar to interview牵挂 in the area of care for the aged. They say that Singapore is not their first choice as a migration destination, Japan and Hong Kong pay better. Canada allows them to eventually apply for permanent residency. So we’re competing globally, and the best may not choose to come (to Singapore).

Community care is thus an option, although it is not without its own issues. “Increasingly, there’s this recognition that this is probably the better model, as domestic workers will not be able to provide that level of professional care.” Community care is not another term for nursing homes. “What we are referring to is day care, rehabilitation and dementia care. These are daytime facilities rather than nursing homes where seniors stay in,” says Prof Ho. “Families are now more open towards community care.” She adds that this model allows the elderly to benefit from professional care while still being able to live with family. Nevertheless, funding issues remain.

In the report Care Where You Are, Prof Ho concludes that while Singapore has “a world-class acute care system and provides universal healthcare, the long-term care system remains relatively undeveloped and underfunded.” While a few years have passed since the report’s release in 2018, Prof Ho is optimistic about new grants and schemes, and better training options for caregivers. “We advocate an all-of-society approach — and this is where the geographer in me speaks.” She adds that exploring the topic of ageing in the school curriculum, in Social Studies classes for example, could equip children with information that may be relevant to their grandparents.
CELEBRATING AN ICON

Graduates from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music will help make The Esplanade’s 20th anniversary celebration an evening to remember.

Fittingly, the occasion will be marked by an unforgettable night of music: Illuminations, a one-night concert by the Singapore Symphony Orchestra (SSO), is a love letter to the venue from the arts community.

The show on 5 November will be a big night for graduates from the Yong Siew Toh Conservatory of Music (YSTCM) as well. Renowned conductor and YSTCM faculty Dr Lien Boon Hua (Music ‘11) will kick off the night with a stirring rendition of Mendelssohn’s Concerto for Violin, Piano and Orchestra. Following their performance, the stage comes alive with a performance of Illuminations, an original composition by pianist Mr Jonathan Shin (Music ‘15) and pipe organist Dr Phoon Yu (Music ‘15). The piece was specially commissioned for the occasion and is inspired by the history, architecture and cultural significance of The Esplanade. The SSO will be joined onstage by the Singapore Symphony Chorus, Youth Choir and Children’s Choir for the performance.

The AlunNUS meets some of the performers to hear more about their musical journeys and reflections on their time in YSTCM.

His Year, The Esplanade — Theatres on the Bay celebrates 20 years of being a premier arts space in Singapore.

AN EARLY EDUCATION MR LOK JUN HONG, 32

“I started playing the violin when I was seven. My older sister played the piano, so my parents wanted me to try something different. Eventually, they settled on a violin. I think I had a natural ease in picking up melodies and memorising them. Coupled with my competitive nature, that helped me improve quite quickly.

It was a big decision for me as a 15-year-old to leave Raffles Institution. I was seven.

I had great teachers who nurtured my curiosity. I remember listening to lots of recordings and being amazed at the kind of sounds that these musicians were able to create, stirring up powerful emotions and telling fantastical stories. At YSTCM, I found my musical footing. My education also cemented great friendships, such as with Abigail, whom I will perform with at Illuminations. She has been a long-time chamber music partner but November will be the first time we perform a combined solo with an orchestra. Whenever I play for an audience, I hope they will leave inspired and emotionally fulfilled. Music is in many ways a form of communication, just like a story or movie. It draws on the great works of the past, combined with the interpretations of musicians in the present, to touch the audience’s hearts.”

MUST LISTEN: “Tchaikovsky is my favourite composer. His music is always theatrical and beautiful, and till this day, my number one violin concerto is Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 35 — the only concerto for violin he ever composed.”

TEACHERS PAVED THE WAY DR ABIGAIL SIN, 30

How did you decide that you wanted to pursue music professionally? I had a slightly unusual educational trajectory. I entered YSTCM when I was only 14 years old and graduated at 18. I skipped the O-Levels and everything, but kind of overcompensated for that by getting a PhD. My parents have been very supportive throughout, though I am sure they did not know what we were getting into as they are not musicians.

Tell us about how your interest in music developed.

I had great teachers who nurtured my curiosity. I remember listening to lots of recordings and being amazed at the kind of sounds that these musicians were able to create, stirring up powerful emotions and telling fantastical stories. At YSTCM, I found my musical footing. My education also cemented great friendships, such as with Abigail, whom I will perform with at Illuminations. She has been a long-time chamber music partner but November will be the first time we perform a combined solo with an orchestra. Whenever I play for an audience, I hope they will leave inspired and emotionally fulfilled. Music is in many ways a form of communication, just like a story or movie. It draws on the great works of the past, combined with the interpretations of musicians in the present, to touch the audience’s hearts.”

MUST LISTEN: “Ravel’s Gaspard de la Nuit performed by Martha Argerich. It’s a shimmering, volatile and utterly seductive sound-world that made me fall in love with the possibilities of the piano.”

A VOICE FOR THE ORGAN DR PHOON YU, 32

If there is one thing Dr Phoon Yu hopes the audience will pick up from his performance at Illuminations, it is a curiosity about the organ. “Better still, an inspiration to learn it — or get their kids to,” he quips. His own journey to the organ started relatively late when he was 20, but he has been playing the piano and the Chinese qin since he was a child.

“My interest in music developed quite organically from playing those two instruments and then listening to, and reading about classical music.”

This appreciation deepened during his time at YSTCM. “Being in YSTCM gave me access to a lot of resources, such as scores and books about music. I was also fortunate to gain connections with other musicians and opportunities to compose and perform.” It also led to a three-semester stint at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, the oldest conservatory in the United States.

Since then, he has completed his Doctor of Musical Arts degree in organ performance at The Juilliard School as a C. V. Starr Doctoral Fellow under the tutelage of Paul Jacobs. He will return to Singapore for Illuminations, which he co-wrote with fellow alumnus and friend Mr Jonathan Shin. Reflecting on the hard work of musicians, he says, “I think splashes don’t generally happen out of the blue; usually, people just keep working and improving at their craft until they get noticed by someone who can make things happen for them. It’s a slow-building process, although getting to know people (and getting to know you!) certainly can accelerate the process.”

MUST LISTEN: “Johann Sebastian Bach’s ‘Gold Well Fugue in G major’ BWV 577 as played by my teacher Paul Jacobs on the NPR Music Tiny Desk series: the combination of feet virtuosity, complex counterpoint, and quasi-orchestral registration sums up the pinnacle of organ playing.”

Tickets for Illuminations are available at esplanade.com.
Philosophy Party 2022

On 1 July, NUS Philosophy Department held its first Philosophy Party since the COVID-19 pandemic struck. The party provided a chance for over 90 faculty members, recent graduates from the Classes of 2019, 2020 and 2021, and alumni to connect over dinner, games and great conversation.

Associate Professor Gu Hsueh Ming, Head of Department giving the Opening Address.

Other than the party, the Department also organised another dinner on 1 August to thank alumni for their contributions to their alma mater. As part of the PH4550 module on Internship: Philosophy for Teaching, the Department also partners pre-tertiary institutions in Singapore to provide undergraduates a teaching internship experience. Many stakeholders are Philosophy alumni, who continue to provide invaluable guidance and mentorship to undergraduates.

Reunion Lunch for EMBA Intake 29

Congratulations, EMBA Intake 29! This batch was the first cohort from NUS Business School to graduate during the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite a three-month delay to the start of their 15-month journey, the group soldiered on amid a volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous and hyperconnected (VUCAH) world. The class tackled relentless disruptions, embraced changes in the world order, integrated across boundaries, showed their mettle and beat the odds to finish their course.

On 9 July, after the Commencement ceremony, some members of the class – comprising talented individuals from across 16 nationalities – gathered for a jubilant reunion lunch at the University Cultural Centre to celebrate their togetherness, relive precious memories, exchange updates and make vows of long-lasting friendships. Bravo NUS! Bravo Intake 29!

On top of the tuition fee rebate, NUS also unveiled a refreshed Career+ mobile app, an AI-powered learning and career development tool designed exclusively for NUS students and over 330,000 alumni. The new enhancements help identify the relevant skills required for the user’s career aspirations, and match skills gaps to courses offered by various Institutes of Higher Learning.

NUS LifeLong Learning Festival 2022: Helping Alumni and Singapore’s Workforce Meet the Demands of the Future Workplace

Thank you for making NUS Lifelong Learning Festival 2022: FutureWork a roaring success! Organised by NUS School of Continuing and Lifelong Education (SCALE), the Festival was part of the ongoing SkillsFuture Singapore Festival, aimed at promoting and supporting lifelong learning as the future of work continues to evolve. The event was graced by more than 30 experts, industry leaders and academics, including Minister for Education Mr Chan Chun Sing. Out of over 1,000 participants, around 400 NUS alumni attended the event, which was held at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House.

To mark NUS’ commitment to supporting its alumni in their career advancement, transition and lifelong learning goals, the University announced a new alumni benefit: an automatic 15 per cent tuition fee rebate on more than 60 Masters by Coursework programmes which are not subsidised by the government.

On 1 August to thank alumni who intend to pursue postgraduate studies, myself included – the financial impact and potential return on investment in upgrading ourselves.

The FutureWork Panel Discussion on what organisations must do to help their human capital ride on opportunities brought about by digitalisation and the green transition. From left to right: Professor Susanna Leong (Law ’80), Vice Provost (Master’s Programs & Lifelong Education); and Dean (School of Continuing and Lifelong Education) Professor Pong Kik Ying (Medicine ’91), Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer (Medical and Clinical Services), SingHealth; Mr Dean Tong, Managing Director and Head, Group Human Resources, United Overseas Bank Limited; Mr Frank Koo (Business ’90), Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer (Medical and Clinical Services), SingHealth; Mr Dean Tong, Managing Director and Head, Group Human Resources, United Overseas Bank Limited; Ms Pavita Puansari (Design and Engineering) ’22, an Operations Executive who recently graduated with a Bachelor of Technology in Industrial Engineering; Associate Professor Zhou Wentao (Nursing ’09), and Associate Professor Lau Tang Chong (Medicine ’91), Associate Professor Chong Choon Seng (Medicine ’04) from NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

Q&A during a masterclass on developing future-ready healthcare professionals. Left to right: Associate Professor Lau Tang Chong (Medicine ’91), Associate Professor Zhou Wentao (Nursing ’09), and Associate Professor Chong Choon Seng (Medicine ’04) from NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

Ms Susan Lee, Lecturer from the NUS Centre for English Language Communication, presenting a masterclass on future-proofing workplace communication skills.
Faculty of Dentistry’s Commencement and Welcome Dinner 2022

The Faculty of Dentistry (FoD) hosted its recent graduates from the Class of 2022 at a Commencement and Welcome Dinner, which was held at NUS Society’s Kent Ridge Guild House on Wednesday, 27 July. Graduates from the Bachelor of Dental Surgery, Master of Dental Surgery, Master of Science and PhD programmes attended the dinner. Acting Dean and Vice Dean (Academic Affairs), Associate Professor Wong Mun Loke (Dentistry ’99) kickstarted the dinner with an opening address in which he congratulated the Class of 2022 and welcomed them to the FoD Alumni Family. Certificates were then presented to the Class Ambassadors by Associate Director of Alumni Relations, Dr Betty Mok (Dentistry ’81). Graduates enjoyed the rest of the evening bonding and catching up over a sumptuous buffet dinner as smiles and laughter filled the function room.

NUS Alumni Tokyo Chapter Gathering

Three years after the COVID-19 pandemic, NUS Alumni Tokyo Chapter was finally able to hold an in-person gathering in Tokyo. Most participants who showed up were MBA graduates, while some were alumni from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP), showing the depth and breadth of the NUS alumni network. During the gathering, each participant shared recent developments and discussed how they could assist in one another’s work and careers, and how they could contribute to Japan and its economy. The Chapter believes that the gathering was a good respite for all, and hopefully an inspirational experience for participants who were steadily developing their careers after graduating from NUS.

Singapore’s 57th National Day Celebration in Manila

Members of NUS Alumni Manila Chapter attended a reception hosted by the Singapore Embassy in Manila at the Grand Hyatt Ballroom in Bonifacio Global City, to celebrate Singapore’s 57th National Day. Around 25 alumni were present at this first major event that the Singapore Embassy in Manila has hosted since 2019. The alumni in attendance represented six faculties and schools, including the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, Faculty of Science, NUS Business, College of Design and Engineering, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKYSPP) and Faculty of Law. More than 800 guests, including government officials, the Diplomatic and Consular Corps, the business community, and Singaporeans in Manila, filled the ballroom to capacity.

The Guest of Honour for the event was Hon. Sara Duterte, Vice President of the Republic of the Philippines and the Secretary of the Department of Education. The formal event started at 7pm, with a welcome remark by Vice President Duterte. She highlighted the importance of Singapore as a partner in developing the Philippines’ human resources through capacity-building programmes such as the Singapore Cooperation Programme, and expressed her hope that Singapore-Philippine relations will continue to flourish with increased cooperation in education and other related areas during the current administration. Ambassador Gerard Ho (Arts and Social Sciences ’97), who was also present at the event, noted the warm friendship between Singapore and the Philippines, and expressed his gratitude for the contributions of the Filipino community in Singapore during the COVID-19 pandemic. A buffet-style dinner featuring popular Singaporean food was served, including familiar dishes such as nasi lemak and Hainanese chicken rice. Guests stayed until about 10pm, enjoying both the food and the company.
NUS College’s Alumni Gathering on Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day

13 August 2022

NUS College (NUSC) counts among its alumni graduates from the University Scholars Programme and Yale-NUS College. In support of Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day, members of the NUSC deanery, faculty and staff warmly welcomed these alumni back to campus for a cozy gathering and for them to learn more about the College. More than 120 alumni and their families attended the event, which was also accompanied by a tour of the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum led by Ms Julienne Tan (Chemistry ’12). At the gathering, Professor Philip Holden launched a Guided Autobiography course for alumni to reflect on milestones in both their careers and with their families. The College was also heartened to hear that the alumni were keen to pay it forward by offering their assistance in areas such as internships, career advice and more. The gathering concluded with remarks, Vice Dean (Outreach) Prof Quek Su Ying thanked the many alumni who had stopped forward to conduct admissions interviews. Faculty members who attended the gathering, including Associate Professor Barbara Ryan (Affiliate Alumnaus ‘19), Associate Professor Low Boon Chuan (Affiliate Alumnaus ‘19), Dr Long Wing Sze, Ms Anne Yee (Arts and Social Sciences ’88) and Ms Tan Sin Yee (Arts and Social Sciences ’11) were happy to see alumni doing well in both their careers and with their families. The College was also heartened to hear that the alumni were keen to pay it forward by offering their assistance in areas such as internships, career advice and more.

Pixel Art with Bricks Workshop

13 August 2022

Thank you to the ‘Pharmily’ members who attended the Department of Pharmacy’s Pixel Art with Bricks workshop on Saturday, 13 August, in conjunction with this year’s Kent Ridge Alumni Family Day! It was a splendid afternoon spent with Pharmacy alumni and their family members. Kudos to all for creating their own beautiful pixel art within the short space of an hour, and the department hopes that everyone made wonderful memories at this year’s annual homecoming event! The workshop was conducted by fellow alumnus Mr Jeffrey Kong (Arts and Social Sciences ’03) from Artisan Bricks.

A Time for Celebration!

15 August 2022

Since 2020, NUS Alumni Sing-Along (ASA) has celebrated National Day online over Zoom due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Alone in their homes or with a few invited friends, members sang along with the song leader while muted on Zoom.

On Monday, 15 August, ASA members all decked out in red and white were able to celebrate National Day on-site at the Shaw Foundation Alumni House. The guest speaker for the day, Mr Desmond Moey (Engineering ’84), more commonly known as Dezz, Managing Director of Serendip Showbiz Pte Ltd and Board Member of Musical Theatre Ltd, an Arts Charity with IP status; kicked off the celebration with a talk on Why Write Songs? As a songwriter, show producer and vocal coach, Dezz highlighted different reasons why people write songs – for entertainment or to express one’s feelings, values and beliefs. In addition, he highlighted how songs could be structured, and how with different series of notes, chord patterns or musical phrases, songs could grab the listener’s attention. For example, the “hook” – a repetitive musical phrase which captures our attention – was often said to be what makes a song popular. Needless to say, Dezz was also able to “hook” the attention of the audience, leaving them hungry for knowledge on music creation.

Following the talk, ASA members led the sing-along by belting out local national favourites such as ‘Home’, ‘Count on Me Singapore’, ‘Stand Up for Singapore’, ‘Bunga Sayang’, ‘Voices of the Heart’, and many more. The ASA Ukulele Group and members also gave their renditions of the evergreens and pop songs like ‘My Way’, ‘The Young Ones’ and ‘Una Paloma Blanca’, while the audience sang their hearts out to these upbeat tunes.

For the first time since the pandemic, refreshments were also served on-site. And what would a birthday celebration be without a birthday cake? To the delight of everyone present, Mrs Jenny Gan-Kwa Siew Eng (Arts and Social Sciences ’96) wheeled in the cake to celebrate the occasion. The celebration rounded off with Mr Desmond Moey, more commonly known as Dezz. ending the celebration with a line dance to the tunes of “Y.M.C.A.”

The AlumNUS thanks all contributors for the articles and photos in Alumni Happenings, showcasing our vibrant alumni community. For the full stories, please visit nus.edu.sg/alumnet/TheAlumNUS/issue-131/community/alumni-happenings.
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From trailblazer in the banking world to leader in social services — Ms Junie Foo (Arts and Social Sciences ’90) has found her journey to be full of fulfillment.

You could call it an essay-writing assignment that changed her life. In 1990, Ms Junie Foo was a Political Science undergraduate when she entered a Japanese essay-writing competition. The topic? The past, present and future of Singapore. “I don’t remember exactly what I wrote, but I think we had been coming out of a recession at that point, so I touched on that, as well as on our multicultural society,” she recalls.

Her piece caught the eye of business leaders and, even before graduation, she was offered a job at a major Japanese financial institution. That kick-started her success in the financial industry, where, over the course of nearly 30 years, she attained many firsts. For instance, the distinction of being the first non-Japanese and the first woman in the management team of the Corporate Banking Division, Asia Oceania, in a Japanese financial institution.

But climbing the corporate ladder was not all that it was made out to be. “After 25 years or so, I recall doing the budgeting for our regions, looking at revenues and earnings, and thinking, ‘I can do much more for the community,’” she shares. She spent two years pondering her next move even as other banks came calling. Her husband, whom she had confided in, told her going back to the banks would be an act of “vanity”. “So I decided to do an act for the community,” she says, explaining her decision to join Methodist Welfare Services (MWS) as its Chief Executive Officer in 2018.

The world of social services was a far cry from the glamour of banking. As a multifaceted social services agency with over 600 staff, MWS’ operations span from helping the destitute to caring for vulnerable seniors in the community. Ms Foo quips that her career change took her from the glitzy restaurants of Marina Bay to rental flats in Hougang. “There was once I was at a nursing home and sitting with a resident who had been born blind and deaf, and had just been abandoned,” she recalls. “We could not converse at all, but I just sat next to her and put my hand on her shoulder to let her know that she was not alone.” Ms Foo describes it as a “moment of affirmation”. “It made clear that me being in social services was a calling.”

But she admits that, as with every sector, the social services industry too, has its challenges – the biggest being talent retention. Ms Foo’s former world of banking is rife with fat pay cheques, but such large salaries are impossibly rare in social services. “It says a lot about society and what we value,” says Ms Foo with a shrug. “But I’m hoping to change that. We cannot short-change our talent, because they do so much good for the community.”

Ms Foo’s advice to those who are grappling with tough career choices: “Consider how fulfilling your new role might be. It is an overlooked factor, but one that can make all the difference.”

A DIFFERENT WORLD

Finding Fulfilment

Ms Foo with staff and volunteers at a Chinese New Year celebration.

Above: Ms Foo chatting with a senior at the MWS Active Ageing Centre at Kebun Baru. Right: On stage at the MWS Charity Ball in October 2019.

A different world

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Finding Fulfilment

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Did you know that with a little planning, you can include a gift to NUS within your overall estate or financial plans?

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Since a charitable bequest can take many forms, you have considerable flexibility. You can leave a specific asset, a specific sum of money, a percentage of your estate or what remains of your estate after you have provided for other beneficiaries. You can designate how you want your bequest to be used or leave it unrestricted so that the University may direct the funds to where it is most needed at the time. Most importantly, you remain in complete control of the bequest process and can change any bequest provision during your lifetime.

CPF Monies

You can nominate NUS as a beneficiary of your CPF monies using a CPF nomination form. Further information and the nomination form can be obtained from the CPF Board Office or the CPF website at www.cpf.gov.sg.

Insurance Policies

You can designate NUS as the beneficiary of your insurance policy when the policy is no longer important to you or your family’s financial security. Alternatively, you can purchase an insurance policy and name NUS as both the owner and the beneficiary.

If you would like to know more about making a legacy gift to the University, please email legacygift@nus.edu.sg.
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Nominations open on 1 January 2023.
Visit nus.edu.sg/alumnet/AlumniAwards to see past recipients.

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Nominees are alumni who have:

• Distinguished themselves in their chosen fields
• Rendered excellent volunteer service to NUS and/or the community

Nominations open on 1 January 2023. Visit nus.edu.sg/alumnet/AlumniAwards to see past recipients.