

Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu flagging off the YES Amazing Race on Tuesday. Youth participants will attempt various tasks and answer sustainability related questions during the race.
ST PHOTO: SHINTARO TAY



New programme for youth to champion green cause

NEA initiative allows participants to form community, network with industry players

Lynda Hong
Senior Environment
Correspondent

The severe haze episode in 2013 gave Ms Sophia Ding a clear vision to contribute to the environmental cause.

Under the Green Doctors Programme (GDP) that she co-founded, the 23-year-old developed a proprietary green solvent technology that can chemically recycle blister packs, separating them into plastic and aluminium.

Talks are currently ongoing with Indonesian investors to expand this initiative.

Seeing the potential for GDP to

expand globally, Ms Ding, who graduated with a degree in environmental engineering from the National University of Singapore (NUS) in June, joined the Youth for Environmental Sustainability (YES) Leaders Programme to form a community with like-minded youth, and also in the hope for some of them to join the GDP social enterprise, which currently has 15 staff.

She is also looking forward to building up her environmental knowledge and skill sets.

"There is a course about waste management under the NEA YES Leaders Programme. It will definitely help me to gain a deeper understanding of how the waste industry, as well as how the recycling

industry, works. I hope to actually apply that knowledge to what I'm currently doing at the Green Doctors Programme as well," said Ms Ding, referring to the social enterprise that aims to promote a circular economy in the field of medical wastes.

Under the YES programme by the National Environment Agency (NEA), youth participants like Ms Ding can also take part in workshops and learning journeys taught by industry players such as the Energy Market Authority, NUS and waste management company Chye Thiam Maintenance from Sept 30, 2023, to Jan 19, 2024.

To cap off the programme, the 27 participants from eight local institutes of higher learning like Ms Ding will attend the youth segment of the biennial CleanEnviro Summit Singapore 2024, where some of their projects will be showcased.

Minister for Sustainability and

the Environment Grace Fu launched the programme at the Old Hill Street Police Station building on Tuesday afternoon.

"I think having knowledge, particularly knowledge that is grounded in a Singapore context, is quite an important part of this programme," she said, adding that participants will have a chance to pick up some important skills such as engagement, project implementation and management.

Speaking to the youth, Ms Fu said that the programme also gives room for networking with industry players, adding that the "networking, hopefully, will give you a more holistic view about the challenges of the sector and also allow you to get more resources".

"You get to see first-hand how things are done and understand some of the challenges on the ground, some of the problems, some of the gaps on the ground, so

that you can help us to address them," she added.

Apart from the chance to network and gain knowledge, participants can also get funding support of up to \$5,000 per project from the NEA.

These sustainability projects, which can be implemented on their school campuses or in the community, will be mentored by past recipients of NEA's EcoFriend Awards – Ms Pek Hailin and Mr Loo Deliang.

Another participant, Ms Jaymie Siah, hopes to get the grant for her XTRA Vintage project, which encourages the reuse of clothing through sales of pre-loved donated clothes mainly sourced from textile recycler Cloop.

The 18-year-old student at Ngee Ann Polytechnic is looking to move XTRA Vintage out of campus to the wider community, collaborating with thrift stores and reducing shoppers' participation in fast fashion.

Ms Siah said: "The textile recycling process itself through Cloop can also be more energy-efficient than producing new clothes, lowering our carbon footprint."

"So even if XTRA Vintage is not directly involved in green energy, we contribute to a culture of sustainability and circular fashion."

lyndahong@sph.com.sg