

FROM ME TO

we

A Resource Kit for
Diversity & Inclusion
March 2021

Conscious Creativity -
Working towards Diversity



Story #1: Grace, pg.1-4

A Little Bit of Kindness &
A Whole Lot of Love -
Community Impact



Story #3: Anne, pg. 8-11

Open Mind Open Heart -
Inclusivity on Campus



Story #2: Wei Lin, pg. 5-7

What does inclusion mean to you?

Have you pondered over this question before?

I never really gave it much thought until I met Grace.

Grace is the founder of Access Path Productions (APP), a disability-led creative organization and social enterprise that professionally platforms Deaf and disabled artists. Her work involves educating stakeholders on the social model of disability, and nurturing people with disabilities into professional artists.



Grace and the professional Deaf and disabled artists she works with

I was curious about Grace as I had never encountered an enterprise like APP before. What motivated her to set it up? I reached out to Grace, who was also an alumni of NUS, and we fixed a Zoom meeting.

Even though we were separated by 2 screens, Grace's enthusiasm about her work with the disabled community was palpable! "So Grace, what does inclusion mean to you?"

"Being **included** is to have an invite to the party. **Participation** is being able to tear up the dance floor."



Grace uses theatre as a medium to engage people with disabilities

Grace was the first person I knew who defined inclusion through participation. Strangely, I was drawn to her worldview and wanted to hear more.

"I use the word participation because it's about being actively engaged and having the power to make decisions and steer the process. Different systems have different ways of approaching diversity and inclusion. For me, it means to have a seat at the table and reaping the benefits of proper representation.

It is the opposite of giving a handout and treating people like charity cases. It's about providing different tools and opportunities for the disadvantaged to not just be productive members of society but to lead dignified lives and represent their own communities at leadership levels."

Her words reminded me of the **Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)** model. Instead of the traditional problem/gap-based model, ABCD builds on the assets found in the community and focuses on mobilising individuals, associations and institutions to come together to realise and develop their strengths.

"We **train** everyone we work with so we are not setting them up for **failure**."

The other thing that stood out to me was how nurturing Grace was. As a disability awareness exercise, Grace asked what would I do if I found the mirror in the toilet to be too high for wheelchair users. The first thing that came to my mind was to write a petition. Grace explained very politely that my response was rather typical.

"We don't need to write petitions all the time! Sometimes, all we need to do is to politely let the venue owner know and point them to IKEA where a longer mirror can be cheaply purchased. Now, not only wheelchair users can use, but also children!"

Yes indeed! Why didn't I think of that? That was when I realised Grace was slowly changing my perception of how social change is effected. This is an aspect which APP's Disabled trainers would touch on in their Disability Awareness Training through the Arts (DATA).



Grace actively engaging her participants



Grace explained that the change in mindset is not only about seeing the world from the perspective of the disabled, but also recognising that one day their challenges would be ours.

"It is likely that as we grow older we will develop mobility, sensorial disabilities natural and for some, cognitive issues too. We are not only championing for the current disabled community, but also for our future selves."

The hour with Grace flew by really quickly. I was grateful to have this opportunity to interact with her, for it prompted me to contemplate what inclusion means to me.



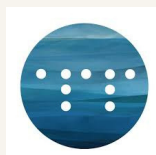
Click on the icons below
to access more resources



What does inclusion mean to
you? Share your views with
us



Learn about the
ABCD model



Learn about
Access Path Productions

How can we promote **inclusivity** on campus?

Do you have the desire to promote inclusivity on campus but are unsure of how or where to begin?

Fret not! Wei Lin, the president of NUS Enablers, is here to share with us tips on how to we can be more inclusive in our actions.

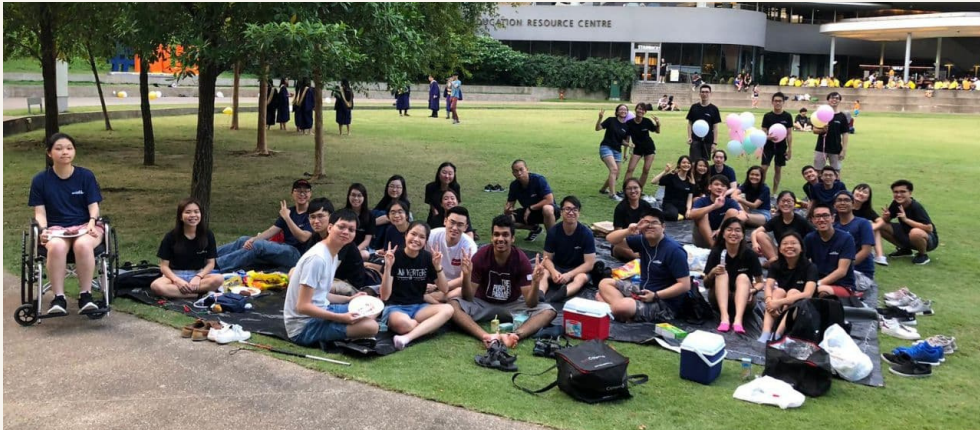


Wei Lin joined NUS enablers in year 1 as she was curious about disabilities

Q: Can you briefly share with us what the NUS Enablers do?

Wei Lin: We are a student interest group dedicated to the creation of equal opportunities for Students with Special Needs (SSNs) on campus. Our programmes and activities revolve around the objectives of raising awareness, reducing social stigma and alleviating challenges faced by SSNs.

For example, we organise our own orientation every year. As most freshmen orientation camps (FOC) in NUS involve activities like amazing race or beach day, some SSNs do not apply for FOC. Instead, they join our orientation where inclusive games are planned and everyone can participate together.



Students bond over food and games at UTown during the NUS Enablers 2019 Orientation

Q: How can NUS students be more inclusive in their actions?

Wei Lin: With little exposure to persons with disabilities (PWDs), it is only normal that people feel scared and confused about how they could support PWDs. Having experienced that initial uncertainty myself, I have learnt that the first step is to have an **open mind**. We should all get to know PWDs as persons, rather than identify them via their disabilities or the stereotypical notions of what a PWD is like.

The second step is to have **open communication** with the PWD. Communication is important in promoting mutual understanding and for both parties to be cognisant of each other's needs. **If you do not know what to do, it is okay to ask how you can best support him/her. It is also okay if they decline your offer to help as they want to be independent.**

The last step is to have **empathy**. It will be great if we can all go beyond accommodation to having acceptance and optimism of a person's abilities.

While the COVID-19 climate has restricted the type of activities NUS Enablers can plan for, their passion has motivated them to innovate. One of their main projects in 2021 is to conduct a series of online training with the aim of reaching out to the wider NUS community.

"We hope to get them on board with us in promoting inclusivity," Wei Lin explained. Their January online event 'Electric Purple' saw 23 student participants, comprising of both SSNs and non-SSNs.



Group photo at the 'Electric Purple' event

Besides the upcoming training sessions that are opened to all NUS students, they also conduct bi-weekly online gaming sessions on weekends. Check them out at their Instagram to find out more!



Click on the icon below
to access more resources



How do you mobilise community resources for **inclusivity**?



Do you live in Toa Payoh, Yew Tee or Tampines?

These are just some of the places Giving Collective has set up distribution points at, for community members who are in need to receive bakeries' leftover food items.

I caught up with Anne to learn how her initiative grew from 1 to 10 distribution points in the span of 4 months. Our first phone call was after 6pm on a Thursday, as we had to wait for Anne to knock off from work. Despite working as a full-time pharmacist, she still managed to find time to volunteer every Saturday at her neighbourhood's Care Corner.



Anne, the founder of the Giving Collective

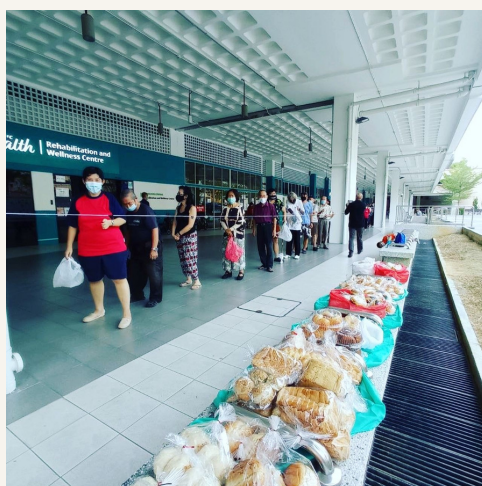
"How did you start this initiative? Don't tell me you were out one day and this random idea suddenly struck!" I thought for a successful ground-up initiative like Giving Collective, it must have taken long to ideate, plan and execute.

"But it really was! One day I walked past the bakery near my workplace and there were leftovers, so I thought I could give them to the seniors at the Care Corner where I volunteer."

"It does not take much to start an initiative in your community," Anne shared, "I simply went up to the staff and asked if they may be willing to donate their surplus buns for a good cause. Often I would have to ask for their manager's contact number for further discussion."

I asked if she had been rejected by bakeries before.

"Oh yes, rejection is more common than consent, but I would try to find out why they rejected us, for example hygiene reasons, and think of ways to reassure the bakeries."



Residents queuing to receive buns and pastries

In August 2020, Anne was approached by Daphne who was interested in replicating the model in her neighbourhood. Anne guided her along, from selecting the optimal location in Tampines to volunteer management. "We tried to find more than one volunteer to help to prevent fatigue. Subsequently, we set up an internal WhatsApp group for those who may be interested to collect the buns and publicised it on the telegram channel."

As news of Anne's initiative got around, more volunteers came forth to learn from Anne and set up distribution points in their own neighbourhoods. While the current 12 distribution points are run decentralised, the 6-man core team headed by Anne provides various support.

For example, their logistics head plans the most efficient route for collecting and transporting food items by matching volunteers to their nearest bakeries and distribution points. Their volunteer management head is in charge of volunteer recruitment, orientation as well as informing them about joining the Zeles App to clock attendance and claim volunteer rewards. (Zeles is a mobile application that tracks and manages volunteers.)

"Who foots the bill for the rewards?"

"Zeles supports ground-up initiatives and does not charge them, as long as they are validated. I met up with them last year to be validated! They also work with corporates, which is another way for us to widen our network. Because when your programme clocks more points, your organisation will be listed as more active, and is more likely to catch the eyes of corporate sponsors."

It is a virtuous cycle, I realised. As organisations use technology to engage and reward their volunteers, they increase volunteer retention. In turn, the volunteers' attendance generates more attention for the organisations in Zeles' network. It is no surprise that Giving Collective has already been approached by corporate sponsors, given how proactive their volunteers are.



Group photo of volunteers at Serangoon

To Anne, being inclusive means helping anyone in need indiscriminately and allowing anyone who is keen to help to do so regardless of their race, religion or socio-economic background. What started off as a simple idea of sharing joy and redistributing resources that would otherwise be wasted had grown tremendously with the help of many unexpected hands. In fact, the core team was formed when the members and Anne were practically still strangers! "It was formed during phase 2, so we barely met or knew one another. It is amazing thinking back how a group of strangers came together for a good cause!"

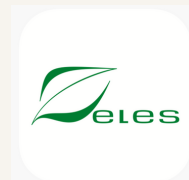
At Giving Collective, we witness not only Singaporeans, but also Indonesian, Malaysian and Myanmar volunteers giving back to the local community they live in. It is truly the Kampung spirit in action!



Click on the icons below
to access more resources

The Giving Collective

Learn more about the Giving
Collective



Learn about Zeles

More Resources!



Read this [article](#) by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre on the 4 things to consider in order to build a thriving community.



If you have a budding idea for promoting inclusivity, we want to fund you under the Diversity & Inclusion Grant! Head over to our [website](#) to learn more.

If you are still looking for inspiration, why not take a look at other students' stories and projects [here](#)?



Has the resource kit been useful for you?
We would love to hear from you!
Click on the icon to access the feedback link.