



SACA

SPRAYS RINKS



May 2024 Issue

DEAR DONORS & GUESTS,

We thank you for your support towards SACA. Your donation and presence at our Charity Film Screening 2024 fundraiser is greatly appreciated. All funds raised through this event will go towards supporting SACA's work with clients and their families.

We hope you enjoy the screening of *The Fall Guy* this evening. In the meantime, we invite you to take a look at our bi-annual digital publication.

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CHANGE

“

THE THINGS I SAW IN PRISON...

THIS SENTENCE REALLY
MADE ME [EXPERIENCE]
THINGS THAT I THINK A
LOT OF PEOPLE [WILL]
NEVER SEE...

I WORKED IN THE
MEDICAL CENTRE, SO I
SAW PEOPLE PASS
AWAY. I DON'T WANT
TO BE LIKE THEM WHEN
I'M OLD.

”

“MY LIFE IS...
I THINK IT’S WORTH
SOMETHING
BIGGER,
SOMETHING MUCH
BETTER.”

Alex* was sentenced to 12 years imprisonment and 16 strokes of the cane for drug trafficking, possession and consumption. In the last 2.5 years of his time in prison, he decided to spend his days differently.

Change came about when Alex decided to work in the medical centre in prison, an unconventional work arrangement that he volunteered for to spend his time helping others.

In the medical centre, Alex had to work with inmates with psychiatric issues, with some of them bedbound and unable to care for themselves.

Spending his days amidst people with debilitating conditions or nearing the end of their lives allowed him to focus on what truly matters - his **purpose**.

**Pseudonym*

“[I] KEPT ASKING MYSELF: WHY DO I HAVE TO LAND MYSELF IN THESE SITUATIONS? IT WAS ALL REALLY VERY STUPID.

THE MONEY WAS GREAT BUT THE CONSEQUENCES WERE ALSO GREAT. IF YOU WERE TO LIST DOWN [ALL THE REPERCUSSIONS], IT’S NOT WORTH IT.”

Change does not come easy. A motivating experience can push you in a direction you need to go, but it takes a lot of grit and courage to change your perspective of a way of life that is familiar to you.

Alex had been a drug user since he was a teenager. His early experiences were marred by fights and disarray, and all his friends led the same lifestyle.

To experience a change in his mindset was thus not easy, requiring hours of reflection to redirect his thoughts and his intentions to something more worthwhile for himself.

“DRUG TRAFFICKERS ARE [INTELLIGENT]. EVERYONE CAN THINK OF UNIQUE WAYS TO DO THINGS. WHY DON’T WE USE THIS [INTELLIGENCE TO DO] SOMETHING GOOD?”

“MY LIFE IS NOT EASY, BUT IF I [RETURN TO MY OLD WAYS], LIFE WILL BE EVEN MORE DIFFICULT.”

SUPPORT

Support from people who care is an important aspect in change and recovery. For Alex, these people take on the form of friends who are making similar transitions in life, his social worker, Charmaine, from SACA, and mentors from the Architects of Life (AOL), a social enterprise that provides programs for youth-at-risk and ex-offenders.

Alex was not a believer in these forms of structured support, initially. He attended AOL sessions as it allowed him to spend more time away from the Selarang Community Supervision Centre that he was residing at. He also felt forced to meet up with his social worker from SACA as it was a mandatory part of the prison's community-based programme that he had to undergo.

However, with time, Alex realised Charmaine's and AOL's sincerity and commitment in wanting to help him realise the goals he had for himself.

In no time, Alex was enrolled in the XOFG programme at AOL, where he was given the opportunity to undergo programmes targeting his self-confidence, financial mastery, and skills upgrading, among other things. He was also given the chance to mentor others and, soon, will take up a scholarship to further his education. In the meantime, Charmaine helps him in strengthening his psycho-emotional functioning.

All of these would not be possible without the vision of another future that Alex had for himself.



“AT FIRST, I JOINED AOL AS MEETINGS WERE AT NIGHT SO I COULD RETURN TO CAMP LATE. BUT [WHEN I] REACH THERE, I FELT SOMETHING DIFFERENT.

THE MENTORS WILL KEEP CHECKING ON ME, AND WILL MEET UP AND TALK SO IT'S QUITE DIFFERENT.

FOR AOL, IT'S MUCH MORE LIKE A COMMUNITY, IT'S MUCH MORE LIKE A FAMILY.”

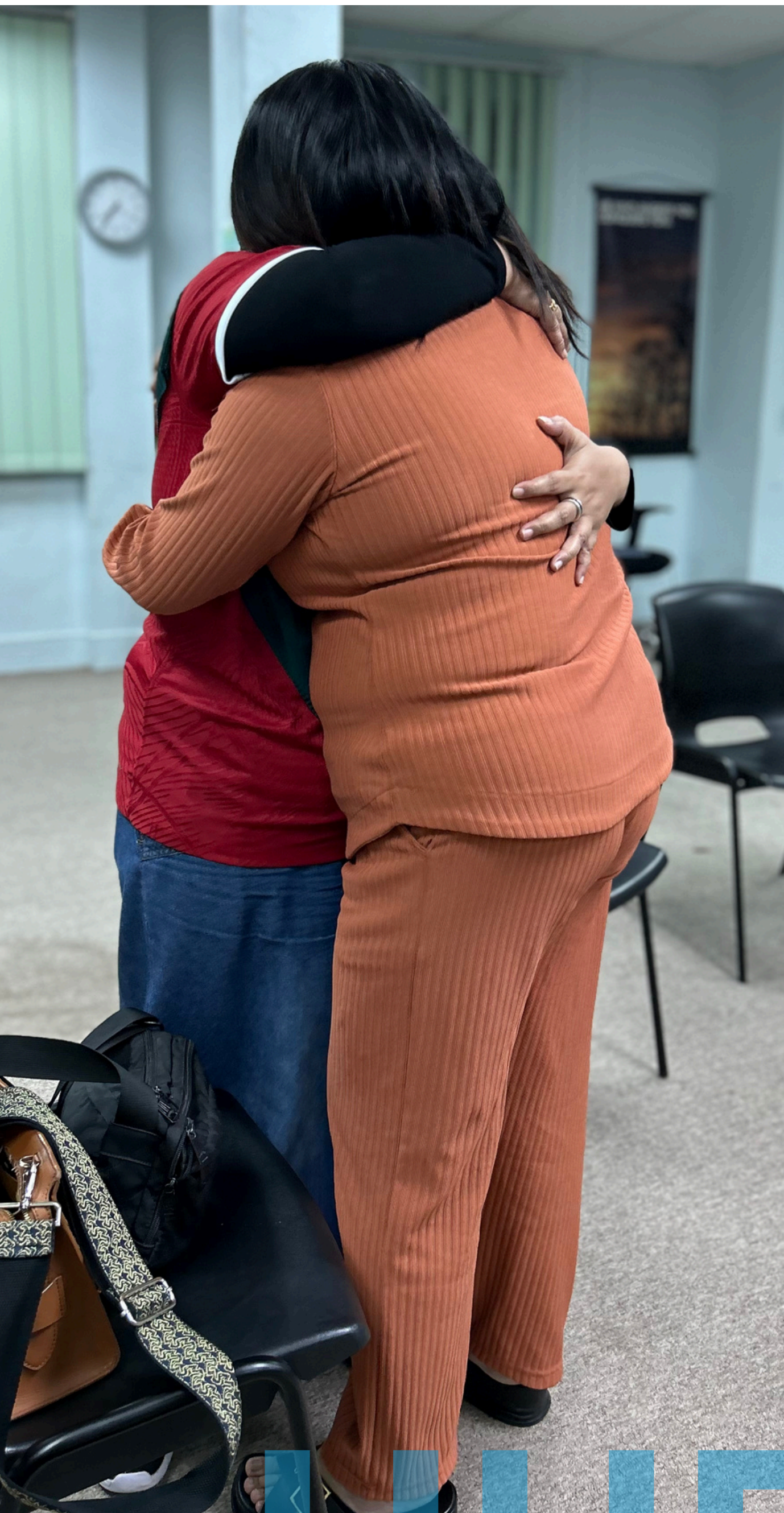
“

[THE PUBLIC] SHOULDN'T
JUDGE SO EASILY. THEY
HAVE TO [KNOW] THAT
IT'S NOT SO EASY, THIS
JOURNEY.

WHAT IF YOU'RE
ADDICTED TO COFFEE,
[AND] WANT TO STOP?
ADDICTION IS NOT
EASY.

SO PEOPLE SHOULDN'T
JUDGE SO EASILY. YOU
HAVE TO GIVE PEOPLE
CHANCES. BECAUSE I
BELIEVE NO HUMAN IS
BAD IN NATURE.

”



HUFI:

SISTERHOOD IN RECOVERY

WHAT DOES COMMUNITY MEAN TO YOU?

To the ladies at HUFI, community means a safe space, familiar camaraderie and the comfortable sisterhood of a group of women who provide support, acceptance and healing.

HUFI is a Muslim women's group established in June 2023. What makes HUFI different from other support groups is that it is desistor-led. It was started by Ms Susanty who wanted to build a community of female desistors and volunteers who can provide each other with support, comfort and love.

The founding group also includes Ms Eva, long-time friend of Ms Susanty, and Ustazah Maria, a religious teacher who has been a Community Befriender with FITRAH and a Religious Counsellor with the Singapore Prison Service. The group has since expanded and is now 15 women strong.

During her own recovery journey years ago, Ms Susanty felt that support from a trusted and loving community was missing, as she did not have anyone that she could turn to for help when she needed it.

For many women, addiction can be especially isolating and difficult to overcome. Building up a community of support can then play a crucial role in providing a safe and supportive environment for women to share their experiences, receive encouragement, and access resources.

These groups offer a sense of community and understanding that is often essential for women in recovery. In addition to emotional support, female support groups also provide practical guidance on coping skills, relapse prevention, and wellness strategies.

Ms Susanty explained:

“WHEN THEY (FEMALE EX-OFFENDERS) ARE NEWLY RELEASED AND WANT TO RETURN TO SOCIETY, IT’S NOT EASY.

SO WHEN THEY JOIN HUFİ, THEY GET TO KNOW PEOPLE...WHO CAN SUPPORT THEM.”

HUFİ also invites volunteers who are not involved in the criminal justice system to participate in its activities, in order to create a community of people who are able to understand the lived experiences of others who are different from them and can offer mutual support.



Ms Susanty feels that it is also an opportunity for non-desistors to learn more from desistors about their struggles. This aims to educate the public on the experiences of female recovering drug abusers, a section of society whose experiences are not immediately known. She explained:



“THE VOLUNTEERS KNOW NOTHING ABOUT DRUGS AND EX-OFFENDERS SO THEY GET TO LEARN ABOUT PEOPLE LIKE US AND THEY ALSO SUPPORT US IN THIS JOURNEY.

THEY GET TO UNDERSTAND. BECAUSE THEY ALWAYS HEAR THAT DRUG ADDICTS CANNOT CHANGE. BUT AFTER GETTING TO KNOW US, THEY LEARN MORE ABOUT WHY DRUG ADDICTS REPEAT AND RELAPSE, WHY THEY CAN’T “JUST CHANGE”, ETC.

[THE PROCESS IS] SLOW, BUT THANK GOD, BOTH PARTIES LEARN FROM EACH OTHER TO UNDERSTAND THAT THIS IS THE JOURNEY OF RECOVERING FEMALE ADDICTS.”

A community that moves together, grows together. In addition to monthly support group sessions that Susanty, Eva and Ustazah Maria run, they also have monthly activities such as zumba, hiking and charity work, which allows the group to spend meaningful time with each other.

As part of HUFI’s community, SACA and FITRAH (Family and Inmates ThRoughcare Assistance Haven) provide logistical support and assistance in group intervention when needed.

HUFI is an acronym for *Hijrah, Uzair, Fikir, Ikrar*. These words were chosen carefully to reflect the values of the group, its members and its purpose.

Hijrah means a journey for the sake of God, *Uzair* means to help or support. *Fikir* means to think, and *Ikrar* means a solemn promise. It also brings in the importance of religion in the journey of recovery for these Muslim ladies.

According to Ustazah Maria, the religious aspects of the support group allow the members to recognise that:

“RELIGION IS HERE TO GUIDE AND MAKE THEM MORE CONFIDENT SO THAT THEY KNOW THAT GOD IS ALWAYS WITH THEM AND THAT GOD WILL NEVER [CAST] THEM ASIDE.”

Ustazah Maria also shared that she holds weekly religious classes for members to ask anything about the religion, its obligations and clarify any doubts that they might have.

In addition, techniques on how to overcome stress and anxiety, which could increase risks of drug use, are also touched on from a religious perspective so that members can utilise these skills in their everyday life.

By facilitating connections and empowering women to support each other, HUFI can have a profound impact on the recovery journey of its members.



KNOWLEDGE BUILDING FOR GOOD

While passion and dedication is what often drives professionals and volunteers in the helping sector, it is equally as crucial to have the necessary knowledge and skills to make a meaningful impact.

In the specialised field of corrections, supporting individuals with offending histories and experiences of incarceration can sometimes present a set of unique challenges.

Recognising these obstacles and understanding how to effectively address them as individuals in the helping field is of great significance. This is where SACA plays a part.

Beyond direct work with clients, SACA also supports the aftercare sector by providing training opportunities for volunteers, professionals and community partners; with one of its more recent being a collection of e-learning courses created in collaboration with Singapore Prison Service (SPS) and Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS).

From understanding the correctional landscape to counselling techniques, befriending skills, substance issues and more, the courses offered cover a

wide range of topics that are of relevance to those presently engaging with clients & families in the sector, as well as those who have future plans to.

There are a lot of factors to consider when designing a course for learners.



When asked what were some of the challenges faced, William Soh, Head of Organisational Development at SACA, shared:

“THE EASY PART IN CONTENT CREATION IS LAYING DOWN THE FACTS AND KNOWLEDGE RELATED TO THE TOPICS.

THE DIFFICULT PART IS BEING ABLE TO DESIGN THE CONTENT IN A WAY THAT IS SIMPLE TO UNDERSTAND, SUCH THAT LEARNERS ARE ABLE TO APPLY IT IN THEIR OWN CONTEXT.

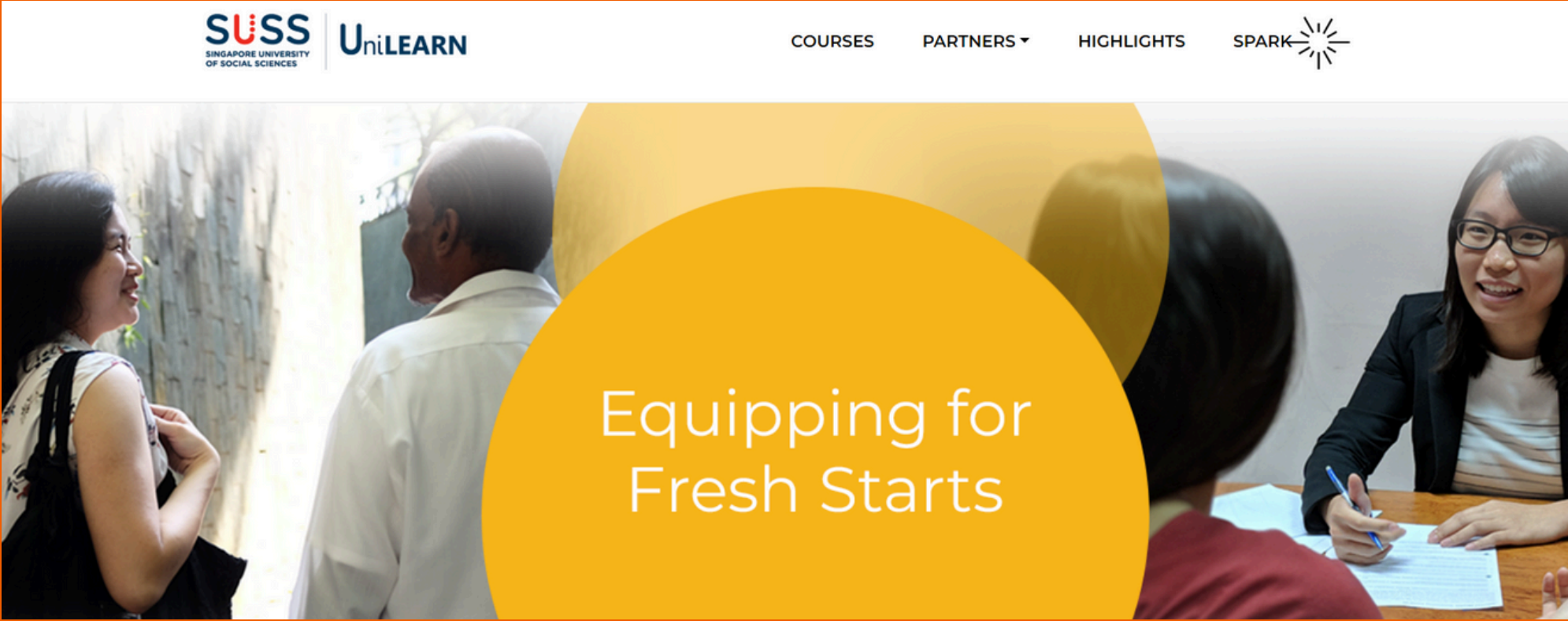
THIS IS CHALLENGING BECAUSE, UNLIKE A CLASSROOM TRAINING, LEARNERS CANNOT IMMEDIATELY CLARIFY WHEN IN DOUBT. HENCE, MUCH THOUGHT IS PUT INTO THE DESIGN TO FACILITATE LEARNING.”

The content for each course is designed in a way that is intuitive and encourages independent learning. To ensure that the content remains digestible and engaging for learners, interactive exercises, quizzes as well as videos and animations are included.

Participants are also invited to provide feedback upon completion, and offer suggestions that can improve their learning experience.

Coming up with the scope of content and learning format is only half the job. Having the right platform to host the content is an equally important component.

The courses, which were launched progressively over the last two years, are available on the SUSS UniLEARN platform, an e-learning initiative by SUSS that is focused on making a positive impact in community learning.



Associate Professor Gabriel Gervais, Director of Online Learning at SUSS commented:

“DRAWING ON SUSS’ EXTENSIVE EXPERTISE IN E-LEARNING, THE UNILEARN PLATFORM AIMS TO COLLABORATE WITH ALIGNED NON-PROFIT ORGANISATIONS AND SOCIAL ADVOCATES TO OFFER ONLINE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES TO EMPLOYEES, VOLUNTEERS, AND INDIVIDUALS SEEKING TO DRIVE POSITIVE CHANGE AND ACTIVELY PARTICIPATE IN INITIATIVES FOR THE COLLECTIVE BENEFIT.

THIS PLATFORM'S SIGNIFICANCE IN SINGAPORE LIES IN ITS ABILITY TO CENTRALISE DIVERSE DOMAIN EXPERTISE WITHIN THE SOCIAL SECTOR BY FOSTERING COLLABORATION AMONG VARIOUS SOCIAL SERVICE AGENCIES BOTH LOCALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.”

Given the platform's inherent alignment with SACA's core belief in creating positive change for the betterment of society, collaborating with SUSS was a natural decision. The platform is open and easily accessible to all within the community, regardless of experience levels.

SACA is extremely grateful towards its partners at SPS and SUSS for their contribution and support. This partnership underscores the shared commitment to driving positive change and fostering collaboration across the social service landscape, ultimately benefiting the clients and families who need help.

With more than 500 sign-ups in the last year, SACA sees more collaborations and knowledge-sharing opportunities as such in its purview, and hopes to continue playing its part in supporting the aftercare sector and the wider community.

Find out more about the list of available e-learning courses:

**E-LEARNING
COURSES
AVAILABLE**

Befriending for Reintegration:
Making Connections for a Fresh
Start

Correctional Case Management

Correctional Landscape
and Rehabilitation Approach

Counselling Practice in Institutional
and Community Corrections

Group Facilitation skills

Substance (Alcohol and
Other Drugs) Addiction

Understanding Offenders
in the Context of Family

Find out more and sign up here:
<https://www.saca.org.sg/courses>

EXCERPTS FROM CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION 2023

"I WANTED TO ENTER THIS COMPETITION BECAUSE I HAVE NOT TOUCHED A PEN IN MANY YEARS. I THOUGHT THAT ENTERING THIS COMPETITION IS A WAY TO REDEEM MYSELF AND DO SOMETHING TRULY BENEFICIAL FOR MYSELF.


I ENJOYED THE PROCESS OF BRAINSTORMING, REFLECTING ABOUT WHO I WAS AND WHAT I WANT TO BECOME. I NEVER LIKED TO WRITE OR THOUGHT I COULD DO IT, NOW I KNOW I CAN.

SO, I WOULD TELL ANYONE WHO WANT TO START WRITING TO JUST GIVE IT A SHOT AND EXPRESS YOURSELF."

REFLECTION BY F.S
'N'-LEVEL STUDENT-INMATE
1ST PRIZE (AMATEUR CATEGORY)

Initiated in 2010, the Creative Writing Competition is an annual essay writing competition done in partnership with Singapore Prison School.

Student-inmates are encouraged to write meaningful stories based on different topics. Check out the excerpts from some of the winning entries:



LIFE IS LIKE THE OCEAN IT WILL DRAG YOU WITH ITS CURRENTS

I was not raised in a broken family. In fact, my family is the epitome of perfection. I have a father who works extremely hard to put food on the table and a mother whose heart is made of gold. Their love towards me and my brother knows no boundaries. The both of us have the luxury of having our own rooms, we never went a day hungry and have annual family holiday trips. This is why I cannot fathom how I became the dregs of society when my family is so put together. In a picture-perfect family, I was the black sheep.

Many would ridicule me for not appreciating what I have. But the lure of drugs were too strong for my already damaged soul. What started off a curiosity morphed into an addiction.

Unbeknownst to me, I was pulled into a cycle. I had an insatiable appetite for the high life as it was an escape from the disappointment in my parent's eyes, from the world's lofty expectations of me, from my self-loathing thoughts. When I was high, everything felt right or rather, I could not feel anything. However, when the high wears off, I was forced to face my demons. Afraid to face them, I turned to my loyal companions. Thus, creating a vicious cycle.

Read the full story [here](#).

'A' level student-inmate from institution A4
2nd Prize, Advanced Category

OR YOU CAN LEARN TO SURF

LIFE IS LIKE THE OCEAN WHERE WONDERS

Have you ever seen an ocean? In my 43 years of life, I have been blessed to have sailed across three of them. Magnificent bodies of water, so vast and multi-faceted that most people are never able to fully grasp or comprehend beyond what they see on the surface. Yet I have been able to identify the vicissitude periods of my life with this very incomprehensible nature of an ocean. Sometimes mundane, sometimes turbulent, and sometimes surreal.

In my first 15 years of my life, my family and relatives all had their own image of who I should be. Maybe an obedient son, a joyful cousin, or a good student. Yet, I was never asked who I wanted to be. Whenever I tried to voice my opinions more often than not, they were brushed away as simply childish banter. Even when things went against their expectations like a poor PSLE grade for example, I was never asked for reasons why. Being older, everyone had the answer to why things were the way they are. All they had to do was of me to being just a mediocre student with complete disregard of my voice. I lived like a diver trapped under a glass dome in this dark ocean of indifference, powerlessly watching the cable that connected me to the outside world snap and knowing that I will never be pulled up soundless depth.

Read the full story [here](#).

'A' level student-inmate from institution A4
1st Prize, Advanced Category

LAY BELOW THE SURFACE



I always chose the easy way out. Whichever route led to the fastest cash; there I will be trying to can' it. Despite whatever the risks and factors involved; it did not matter as I loved seeking for thrills. Being a drug addict, I always had to find ways to feed my habit and the lifestyle I wanted. It may seem awesome at first, especially since being so young at that point of time and yet living the high life on the fast lane. However, as the days went by, I started to do become complacent and even adopted the "don't care, don't bother" attitude.

Before I knew it, my 'friends', whom I hung out with and had lived for, went on to stab me in the back and sold me out to the authorities. That would be my first major mistake. Thankfully, the authorities dropped the trafficking charge and as I was underaged and was incarcerated only for consumption. This was a major case for me as it involved drugs compared to my prior charges which were mostly for fighting, and merely got warnings for. This, however, was 8 years ago. Since then, I have been in and out 3 times and am currently serving for trafficking.

Read the full story [here](#).

'N' level student-inmate from institution TM1
2nd Prize, Amateur Category

LIFE IS
NOT ALWAYS PERFECT
IT IS
WHAT YOU
MAKE OF IT

SACA EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

November 23' to March 24'



APPRECIATION NIGHT 23'

SACA held its annual Appreciation Night for volunteers at Concorde Hotel last October. On top of a scrumptious dinner, we enjoyed a performance by a band of desistors from Xtreme Convictions (XC) as well as a magical act by Comedian-Illusionist Aman Alhamid.



MALAY/MUSLIM ORGANISATION (MMO) REHABILITATION NETWORK CONFERENCE

SACA was invited as one of the partners for the annual MMO conference earlier this year. Staff from the Volunteer After-Care Programme team shared more on the different initiatives available for clients and their families, and helped facilitate a discussion during one of the breakout rooms.



COMMUNITY SERVICE EVENT 23'

The annual community service event saw over 20 clients volunteer their time to interact and engage with seniors living in the NTUC Health (Geylang East) Nursing Home. It was a meaningful experience for the clients as they bonded with the elderly over games and spent time together with them.

ABOUT THE SINGAPORE AFTER-CARE ASSOCIATION

Since 1956, SACA's work has served to:

Empower ex-offenders to take ownership of their own transformation and facilitating their reintegration into society by mobilising them, their families and the public.

Foster a change in the mind-set of both ex-offenders and society to enable ex-offenders achieve their fundamental life goals and needs.

The work includes programmes such as:



CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES (CMS)

Structured mandatory programme for ex-offenders referred by Singapore Prison Service.



EDUCATION SUPPORT PROGRAMME (ESP)

Education and skills upgrading for ex-offenders.



VOLUNTEER AFTER-CARE PROGRAMME (VAP)

Tapping on volunteers to befriend ex-offenders and reach out to their families.



GOOD SAMARITAN REINTEGRATION ASSISTANCE SCHEME (GSRAS)

Hotline and walk-in support for ex-offenders.



TRAINING

Building up the capabilities of volunteers and professionals in the sector.

More on what we do [here](#).

CONTACT SACA



81 Dunlop Street, Singapore 209408



General enquiries: enquiries@saca.org.sg
Seek help: help@saca.org.sg



saca.org.sg



fb.com/SACA1956



[@saca_1956](https://www.instagram.com/@saca_1956)