

SACA IS TURNING 60!

We are truly in a festive mood here at SACA as come next year, we turn 60! Here are some fun facts about the momentous milestone and how people all over the world celebrate it!

- ∞ A celebration held to mark a 60th (or 75th) anniversary is often referred to as a diamond jubilee.
- ∞ The tradition of celebrating a 60th anniversary came into popularity after Queen Victoria celebrated her Diamond Jubilee.
- ∞ The word diamond is derived from a Greek word, "adamas." This term means enduring and unconquerable, which seems fitting for the 60th anniversary.
- ∞ The colour of the 60th anniversary is diamond white.
- ∞ Western monarchies:
 - ◊ The Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria was celebrated on 22 June 1897, while the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II was celebrated across the Commonwealth of Nations throughout 2012.
- ∞ Asian monarchies:
 - ◊ In East Asia, the diamond jubilee coincides with the traditional 60-year sexagenary cycle, which is held in special importance despite not being called a "diamond jubilee."
 - ◊ Monarchs such as the Kangxi and Qianlong emperors of China, and Hirohito of Japan held celebrations for their 60th year of reign, as did King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand on 10 June 2006.
 - ◊ National governments also mark their 60th anniversary as diamond jubilees, like the Republic of Korea in 2005 and the People's Republic of China in 2009.

SPARKS

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IGNITING
CHANGE

A PUBLICATION OF SINGAPORE AFTER-CARE ASSOCIATION

FROM THE STUDIO THAT BROUGHT YOU "THE AVENGERS"



ANT-MAN

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PG SOME VIOLENCE



HELPING EX-OFFENDERS AND THEIR FAMILIES GET BACK ON THEIR FEET

CHARITY FILM PREVIEW 2015

MARVEL'S ANT-MAN (3D)

“GOOD THINGS
COME
IN SMALL
PACKAGES.”

AESOP (C.620-560 BC)

The Marvel and Walt Disney Studios summer blockbuster starring Paul Rudd as Scott Lang aka Ant-Man, Evangeline Lilly, and Michael Douglas as Dr. Hank Pym is a feel-good family-oriented action/sci-fi superhero movie where Dr. Hank Pym – impressed by the former criminal Scott Lang's capacity for good – decides to mentor him and train him to become the next Ant-Man.

Held on Wednesday, 15 July at Golden Village VivoCity, the event saw an impressive turnout of some 700 people in support of the cause of reintegrating ex-offenders and their families. Our guests were also eagerly anticipating the preview as they would have bragging rights for being amongst the first in Singapore to watch the blockbuster – in 3D, no less!



We had the privilege of hosting Dr Teo Ho Pin (Mayor, North West District) as our guest of honour for our annual fundraiser. Mayor Teo presented tokens of appreciation to our generous corporate sponsors including NTUC Fairprice Foundation Ltd, Progress Galvanizing Pte Ltd, Resorts World at Sentosa Pte Ltd, Singapore Totalisator Board, and Super Galvanising Pte Ltd. Special mention was made of Kwan Im Tng Temple (Joo Chiat) as our Main Sponsor for their unwavering support for several years. SACA managed to raise more than \$115,000 which will go towards making up the shortfall required to sustain our programmes, which include the upgrading of skills and the pursuit of education and training for our clients.

Guests and supporters of SACA had an important takeaway from the preview – having faith in the ex-offenders' ability to make good in their lives despite their past mistakes is



essential in reintegrating them into society. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all who have contributed to the fundraiser – it helps ensure that the work we do towards rehabilitation and reintegration can continue to benefit the ex-offenders and their families.



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HOLIDAY PROGRAMME 2015 @ UNIVERSAL STUDIOS SINGAPORE, RESORTS WORLD SENTOSA

SACA recognises the importance of support from family for our clients especially when they begin their rehab in the community. SACA's Holiday Programme is an annual event organised for our clients and their families which hopes to provide a platform for them to reconnect as well as strengthen their bonds.

This year, the Holiday Programme was held at Universal Studios Singapore (USS), one of the main attractions at Resorts World Sentosa (RWS), where clients and families would be able to experience cutting-edge rides, shows, and attractions based on their favourite blockbuster films and television series. USS was picked because the organising committee truly felt that it would benefit low-income clients where they can enjoy and bond with their family at an award-winning attraction.

The event was made possible due to the generous sponsorship of RWS for entry into the theme park! Once the venue was set, planning kicked into high gear to meet every event objective possible so as to make this an unforgettable experience for all participants. Site visits to USS and meet-ups with vendors were carried out among other preparations; and finally, the big day arrived.



In spite of the very wet weather in the early morning of 7 June 2015, 134 clients and their families turned up for the event; looking all enthused to begin their adventure. The event commenced at the Bull Ring entrance to USS where SACA staff facilitated fun-filled games for the clients and families to get them psyched up before the gates to USS opened. The facilitators engaged adults and children in icebreakers designed to energise them and get them thinking on their feet. In addition, the games helped to encourage mingling as participants were encouraged to form random groupings. After the games ended, we bid farewell to our clients and their families so that they could continue the rest of the day at USS which they were eagerly looking forward to.



Our clients and their families enjoyed their time tremendously at USS and we hope that through such events the process of healing strained ties can begin. Our clients enthusiastically shared with us that they had a pleasant and meaningful time during the event as they were given the chance to strengthen ties by spending time together and enjoying each other's company, and informed us that they look forward to similar programmes in the future.



VAP GET-TOGETHER DINNER 2015

SACA's Volunteer Affairs Sub-Committee (VASC) hosted their second Volunteer Get-together Dinner on 28 August 2015 at the Moghul Mahal Restaurant at the scenic Clarke Quay district. This event is one of SACA's many efforts to express our appreciation to our dedicated volunteers as well as to provide a platform for volunteers to network.

Volunteers were provided an update on the latest developments relating to volunteering. They also discussed future plans for volunteers and enjoyed the sumptuous North Indian buffet spread, of course!

The evening was filled with much joy and laughter as volunteers mingled and shared their experiences in the hopes of getting more people on board the various initiatives they are involved in. It is always heartwarming to see



people who are passionate about their work with SACA making a difference in the lives of others. The feedback and insights gained during the dinner will indeed help shape a more effective volunteering programme for the Association.

SACA would like to take this opportunity to especially thank our volunteers for their valued contributions and support to the cause of reintegrating lives.



ESP CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION 2015

For the competition held in June 2015, a total of 104 students participated, comprising of 51 participants from the Amateur category (GCE 'N' level and below) and 53 participants from the Open category (GCE 'O' level and above). Participants' scripts underwent two rounds of grading by two separate groups of judges, with the first group being English Language teachers from the Prison Education Branch (PEB) and the

second group consisting of educators from UniSIM and Republic Polytechnic.

To acknowledge participants' efforts in the competition, a certificate of participation was given to every individual who took part. In addition, for the 16 students who emerged victorious – 8 from each category – NTUC vouchers ranging from \$50 to \$350 were awarded to family members of each winner.

Open
Category
1st Prize

ESP Creative Writing Competition

Responsibility - Responsibility is about action beyond words.

Marsha Sinetar once said that "Life's ups and downs provide windows of opportunity to determine your goals and values". My life entered a maelstrom when I stumbled into the jaws of heroin addiction at the tender age of fifteen. Although I had many opportunities to turn my life around, I failed repeatedly. I sorely lacked the ability to assume responsibility for the choices I made in my life and this factor has led to a prolonged entanglement with heroin addiction for the past twenty years of my life.

It has taken me many years to realise that a chequered past is not an impediment to success. On the other hand, positive actions and an ability to assume responsibility for our own destinies are vital ingredients for successful recovery from drug addiction. Although the road to sobriety is long and arduous, there are many ex-offenders today, who have successfully triumphed over their adversities and are beacons of hope for those still grappling with the disease of addiction. A constant value that these successful individuals display in their lives is responsibility – the ability to take positive action and move beyond mere words and empty promises.

I have experienced innumerable cycles of recovery and relapse in my life and the constant ineluctable truth is that I have never assumed responsibility for the choices I have made in my life – leading to the fact that I have never been able to break away from the vicious cycle of addiction. My dalliance with heroin spiralled out of control by the time I turned eighteen and I was soon shuttling between prison and home for most of my young adult life. Heroin's stranglehold on my life made me

an educated derelict as it gradually stripped me of my dignity, personal freedom and youth. Despite the best efforts of my parents and siblings, I relapsed time and again and often masked my addiction by weaving an intricate web of lies and deceit. It was a colossal tragedy in the making but I did not realise it then.

I was incarcerated for the fourth time in my life in the year 2012. In that year, I entered prison a broken man, without definitive goals in my life and I was facing a possible annulment of my marriage. It took me many months to come to terms with the imprisonment and I was racked with guilt for the fact that my two young daughters would be going through their childhood without my presence in their lives. However, this state of despondency did not last long. During this ordeal, my wife wrote a meaningful letter to me in which she said that, "...all that your daughters and I wish from you is that you will one day transform into a responsible man and fulfill your obligations towards us". The experience of reading that letter was my "road to Damascus" as it struck a chord deep within the inner recesses of my heart. It was an ultimate act of betrayal to subject my daughters to a dysfunctional family environment. They deserved much better treatment from me. With these thoughts, I decided to take action – to assume responsibility for my life and that of my family and move beyond false starts and broken promises.

The first positive action that I undertook while incarcerated was my application for the GCE A-level course in the year 2013. I was selected and subsequently transferred to Tanah Merah Prison School. It was a deeply enriching experience and the positive steps I took to achieve academic success instilled confidence in my life. Although I was weak in Principles of Accounts, I ensured that I cleared all my doubts with my

Responsibility - As long as you have done your very best, nothing else truly matters.

What is the most important thing in your life? Is it wealth, your health or perhaps your family? Well for me, the well-being of my son comes above all else. It is of such paramount importance to me that I am willing to sacrifice my freedom in order for him to have a better tomorrow.

In the past, I was conceited and ignorant, I was full of myself. I had this perception that the world revolved around me. With this deep-seated mentality instilled in me, it was no surprise that I eventually got into trouble with the law but rather than facing the consequences of my action, I evaded imprisonment and fled to Thailand – "the land of smiles".

Being a fugitive was no walk in the park. I had to peddle drugs for a living. The risks were immense but it was justified by the vast amount of money it could generate in a short period of time. In Thailand where corruption is rife, the living standard relatively low, I was able to live off the drug trade like a king. I also met the love of my life who I got married to. At that point of time, I thought I was "having it all".

The reality that I was leading a meaningless life first hit me when my wife was pregnant with our son. In fear that my particulars will be checked against the legal system, I had to pretend to be her brother whenever I accompanied her to the hospital for check-ups. I felt so useless as my son had to be registered as fatherless. The second blow came when my mum phoned to inform me about the passing of my dad. She insisted that I come back to pay my last respects to him but

teachers and I also sacrificed recreational hours such as watching television for another extra two hours of revision during the weekends. These efforts paid off when I sat for the A-level examinations in 2014. I met with a resounding success; I scored three distinctions and qualified for admission to the local universities. This experience taught me the value of being proactive and I have never looked back in my inexorable march towards attaining the goals and aspirations in my life.

Similarly, surmounting the disease of addiction is also not a miracle that is bestowed by divine providence. I have to take responsibility for my own sobriety and ensure that I take certain basic actions to safeguard my recovery after my release. Avoiding old drug haunts, drug paraphernalia, fellow addicts and ensuring that I attend counselling sessions after my release, would prevent another relapse in my life. Such positive actions would be a testament to my sincerity in wanting to beat the cycle of addiction and it would surely present me in a new light to my family. In taking action to correct my own shortcomings, I also move beyond the clichéd situations of social stigma and societal acceptance. It is no longer about the 'fickle finger of fate' and external circumstances that dictate my choices. Instead, when I assume responsibility and 'walk the talk', I become the architect of my own life.

Stephen A. Brennan once said that, "Our goals can only be reached by a clear vehicle of a plan in which we must fervently believe and upon which we must clearly act. There is no other route to success". Indeed, by adopting the 'STARR value' of responsibility in my life upon my release, I am leaving nothing to chance. My successful academic experience has taught me that when I take action and move beyond words, no obstacle is too difficult to surmount!

ESP Creative Writing Competition

Amateur
Category
1st Prize

I had to tell her the heartbreaking truth that I was not able to. The guilt of this still lives with me to this day. The third and final straw came when my mum told me that she wanted nothing more to do with me. To her, I was no better off than dead. I could not even be around to take care of her when she comes of age. Her parting words to me were, "if you do not love your mum, at least love your son. Come back and surrender so your son will be able to come to Singapore to study". This really got me reflecting about the responsibility I was supposed to uphold. It was then that I realised I needed to come back and face the music in order to have a life.

Making the decision to come back and surrender was no mean feat. The thought of giving up my "good life", losing my freedom and being away from my wife and son was too much to bear but when I looked at my son, I know I could not let my selfishness deprive him of a better education opportunity which will likely lead him to have a better quality of life. So I came back on 19th October 2012 and was sentenced to 2 years imprisonment and 24 strokes of the cane. My mum has forgiven me and now visits me once a month. I only get to see my wife and son once a year when they come over to celebrate Chinese New Year with my mum. I miss them a lot and the pain is sometime unbearable but knowing my relationship with my mum is gradually building up and that my son will be coming to Singapore to study upon my release gives me the strength to carry on.

The onus is ultimately on my son to decide how he wants to lead his life when he grows up. I know I had done my very best for him under the circumstances so I will just let nature take its course but no matter what comes of him, I will still love him wholeheartedly.

Initiated in 2010, the creative writing competition is part of SACA's approach to ex-offender education and upgrading. The competition serves as a platform for student inmates to reflect upon their life experiences and to encourage them to express themselves through writing their personal narratives.

Prizes are awarded to the best essays written and the prizes are given to the students' families. This gesture allows students to have the opportunity to reach out to their loved ones.

Essay topics are provided to participants about two weeks prior to competition day and participants are encouraged to reflect and mentally draft out their essays. Participants are then gathered in the hall during competition day and they have to complete their essays within 90 minutes.

*The featured essays are the actual essays submitted by the winners of the competition and in no way have been altered.

ESP GRADUATION CEREMONY 2015

In order to celebrate the achievements of our student-clients pursuing their education, SACA holds a graduation ceremony for those who graduate from their institutions annually. On 1 August, the ESP Graduation Ceremony 2015 was held at SACA and teachers from Tanah Merah Prison School as well as family and friends of the graduates were invited to attend the event to celebrate the students' achievements.

Prior to presenting the awards, students were invited to share their experiences and learning journeys that they had gone through. Students provided heartfelt accounts detailing their journey during the course of the studies and shared about the challenges they faced in their bid to reach their educational goals.

After the sharing session by students, a guest performer – also a client – showcased his musical talents that left the audience enthralled.

With the colourful décor and a funky mini photo booth set up just for the event, graduates and guests eagerly took the opportunity to capture memories through photographs. Overall, the event was well received as students and guests alike enjoyed the afternoon thoroughly and left the ceremony inspired.



A FAMILIAR FACE, A MEANINGFUL GESTURE

“IN THE END, YOU ALWAYS GO BACK TO THE PEOPLE THAT WERE THERE IN THE BEGINNING.”

ANDIE MCPHEE

We received a knock on our door on a Friday afternoon and were greeted by Mr Sim Tien Seng, a man who has known about SACA for many years. Mr Chua Boon Tee, who has been with the Association for 40 years, instantly recognised an old friend and the two broke out in friendly banter in Hokkien, reminiscing the old days.



Mr Sim Tien Seng & Mr Chua Boon Tee

We then came to understand that Mr Sim had come to our office for an important task. His beloved brother had passed away several months back and the Sim siblings had collectively agreed to donate the \$10,000 collected from their late brother's funeral towards the cause of reintegrating lives! Mr Sim, being the eldest sibling, was entrusted with this task. We were truly heartened by the generous donation and the meaningful gesture behind it, and we just had to have a chat with Mr Sim to find out more...

Mr Sim from Dunlop Street

Mr Sim Tien Seng, a 77-year-old retiree, has been a friend of SACA since he was a young man of just 18 years when SACA was first formed in 1956. He had been staying just a few doors down from our premises till the 90s when he left Dunlop Street for Geylang Bahru where he currently resides. However, he still returns to the area often especially for Seventh-Month prayers and events. He also still keeps in contact with the current shop owners in the area as they were his old neighbours after all.

Mr Sim has fond memories growing up in the area and formed a close bond with the SACA staff from way back then – Mr Chua being one of them. The two have known each other for over 20 years since Mr Chua joined the organisation in 1975. Mr Sim also recalled how the residents in the area turned up to witness the fanfare during SACA's official opening ceremony in 1960 – he was 22 then!

Why SACA?

Mr Sim also shared how SACA came to be the family's choice to receive the donation. The Sims have been aware of SACA's services for ex-offenders and their families since its formation as they have witnessed the work done first-hand and know that any funds raised will be used to help clients and their families.

Furthermore, Mr Sim's late brother was a charitable man, and the donation made in his name would verily honour his legacy.