

SPARKS

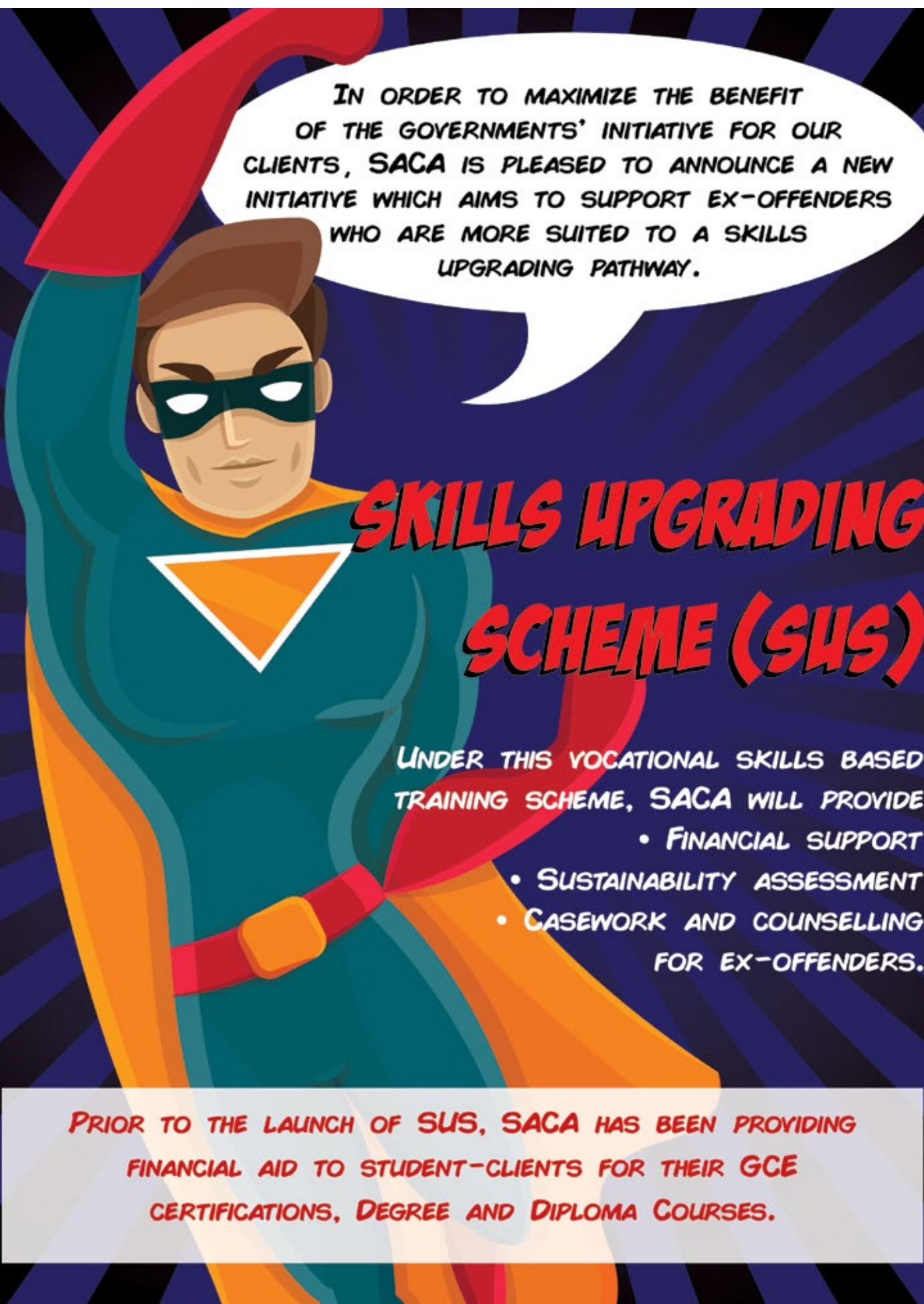
IGNITING CHANGE



SACA

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

A PUBLICATION OF SINGAPORE AFTER-CARE ASSOCIATION



IN ORDER TO MAXIMIZE THE BENEFIT OF THE GOVERNMENTS' INITIATIVE FOR OUR CLIENTS, SACA IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE A NEW INITIATIVE WHICH AIMS TO SUPPORT EX-OFFENDERS WHO ARE MORE SUITED TO A SKILLS UPGRADING PATHWAY.

SKILLS UPGRADING SCHEME (SUS)

UNDER THIS VOCATIONAL SKILLS BASED TRAINING SCHEME, SACA WILL PROVIDE

- FINANCIAL SUPPORT
- SUSTAINABILITY ASSESSMENT
- CASEWORK AND COUNSELLING FOR EX-OFFENDERS.

PRIOR TO THE LAUNCH OF SUS, SACA HAS BEEN PROVIDING FINANCIAL AID TO STUDENT-CLIENTS FOR THEIR GCE CERTIFICATIONS, DEGREE AND DIPLOMA COURSES.

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**WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS DONATIONS
FOR SACA'S CHARITY FILM SCREENING,
MARVEL STUDIOS' AVENGERS: ENDGAME.**



**WE THANK YOU FOR DONATING ITEMS FOR OUR
GOODIE BAGS.**



I sometimes wonder why Super Heroes are so popular. Why are their movies nothing short of blockbusters, breaking all previous records?

These movies are filled with scenes of high drama – a girl desperately hanging on with sweaty and slippery hands to the handle of a car door as it speeds by the rusty railing of a crumbling bridge; or a little boy trapped in a burning building, as onlookers shriek and scream with fear as the conflagration continues to move closer and closer to the child. Then in flies the Super Hero, sporting his signature mask and cape, who snatches the clinging girl and the fear-stricken boy from the jaws of death as the bystanders heave a sigh of relief!

These scenes, in my opinion, are sometimes a dramatic representation of our own lives. There are times when our challenges appear to be so complex and insurmountable, that we are plunged into despair and hopelessness. Yet, inexplicably, sometimes a complete stranger, someone whom you have never seen before or done anything for, comes to your aid, flying in like a Super Hero on a rescue mission just for you.

And this is what led me to realize that yes, within our own SACA family, we have such Super Heroes, actually Super-Duper heroes who, in spite of being bogged down with their own responsibilities, fly right in giving their time and sparing no effort to focus on the wellbeing of a complete stranger.

These are the heroes who hold on to those sweaty hands that are slowly sliding down to the dark waters beneath; they are the heroes doing what it takes to hold on and not let go till they have effected positive change. They encounter their own set of challenges, just as Spiderman, Batman, Ironman all faced in their personal lives. Nevertheless, that does not stop them from proffering a helping hand to others when doom strikes and havoc is created.

In this issue of our newsletter, I have the privilege to share a little about two heroes I have met – Prasakthi and Clara, who have left no stone unturned in taking time from their busy schedules to support ex-offenders. Prasakthi, apart from being a full time employee with State Courts, has volunteered to be part of a CSR team, which seeks out different missions they can support from time to time. It has been a privilege for SACA to be the adopted charity of the State Courts for the past two years and for me to have been closely associated with Prasakthi since the beginning of the year. I am also happy to share Clara's befriending journey with SACA over the past 20 years. Even after two decades, she continues to find innovative ways to motivate her clients. Her passion and dedication for reintegration is worthy of much praise.

I hope we all, in our own way, can strive to go out into society and make a difference in the lives of those who need a hero. Should you like to join our family of heroes in supporting ex-offenders, do give us a sign that you are out there!

Tanya Sahni

Editor

SPARKS Newsletter

**"EVERYTHING DOESN'T HAVE TO BE
ABOUT FEAR, THERE'S ROOM IN OUR
LINE OF WORK FOR HOPE TOO!"
- BATGIRL -**

1) We are extremely appreciative and grateful to State Courts for choosing SACA as your adopted charity for the past two years. What aspects of our programs inspired your decision to choose SACA?

SACA's programmes not only provide assistance and services to ex-offenders and their families, they also give the beneficiaries renewed hope and belief in themselves, as they adjust to life outside prison.

In November 2017, the State Courts and SACA launched the combined initiative: family-connect @ State Courts, which provides first-level information to the families of offenders who have just been sentenced to prison, and to connect them with available community resources.

There is much synergy between the State Courts and SACA's objectives to help rehabilitate ex-offenders and assist their families. Therefore, we chose SACA as our adopted charity to further support its meaningful programmes.

2) When did State Courts embark on this journey of adopting a charity? What are some of the causes you have supported in the past?

Since 2002, the State Courts have adopted charities such as Children's Cancer Foundation (2002 – 2012), Autism Association (2013 – 2015) and Singapore Cheshire Home (2016 – 2017).

In selecting a cause to support, the State Courts Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) committee will first identify charities that align with our aim to reach out to the less privileged sectors of society. We will then poll our staff to decide the charity to adopt.

3) In addition to the CSR team, how do you spread the same passion to your colleagues?

Everyone in the State Courts is encouraged to volunteer and support charities and worthy causes in his/her own way. The activities organised regularly by the State Courts CSR committee provide everyone with the opportunities and platforms for them to do so. Through these activities, the spirit of volunteerism and culture of giving are inculcated. Therefore, whenever there is a charity event, we have colleagues who are ready to volunteer.

4) Which CSR initiative (charity bazaar / charity film screening ticket sales / volunteering) has been most fulfilling for you to do and why?

The annual State Courts National Day charity carnival to raise funds for our adopted charity is the most fulfilling for me. The fund-raising event is usually held over two weeks where staff will buy and sell items from one another, and engage in a friendly competition as their divisions come up with creative ways to raise as much funds as possible. What I find fulfilling is that everyone is willing to contribute his/her time and effort to organise the activities and generously spend to support the fund-raising effort, epitomising the spirit of giving in the State Courts.

Wonder Woman is my favourite superhero! I grew up watching her cartoons in awe and fascination. She is a daredevil with a feisty spirit who would fend for the weak and vulnerable. Her character encapsulates a woman's strength, love and kindness, which had taught me valuable lessons as a child, and motivates me to make the world a better place today.

Prasakthi Allagoo

5) Has SACA's launch of 'family-connect @ State Courts' initiative, been advantageous to State Courts?

The State Courts deal with about 99% of the criminal caseload in Singapore. Therefore, the strategic location of the family-connect @ State Courts surely has a positive impact on the families of offenders who have just been sentenced to prison. The family members may face anxiety and stress as they may not know what to expect. The services that are available to them help to provide stability in their households, which is very important for an ex-offender's rehabilitation process upon release from prison.

6) State Courts volunteered at our recent Family Day event at Sentosa, engaging with ex-offenders and their families. What was your experience?

It was a truly memorable one for me as I got to meet and mingle with SACA's clients and their families. Through the tote bag designing activity, I got to know them better, and as I learned about their hopes and aspirations, I came to understand that most families of offenders are victims of circumstances and are no different from you and me. This experience reinforces my personal belief that one should always give a listening ear and not be too quick to judge.

7) What is your opinion of people's willingness to support ex-offenders' reintegration in society?

I have observed that people are more open minded and inclusive today. They are accommodating and less judgmental about the reintegration of ex-offenders into society. They accept that everyone deserves a second chance in life and are willing to help ex-offenders ease back into society. There are also a number of social enterprises which practise inclusive-hiring to offer ex-offenders a dignified livelihood. This mindset is indeed a welcoming change in the community.

8) Is there a change you would like to see in terms of community acceptance of ex-offenders?

There is still a minority that considers ex-offenders to be a shame to society and will reinforce the stigma of having gone to prison. However, they may have their own reasons for this perception. Education and proper awareness should be able to bring about a positive change. I would like to see more companies and social enterprises practise inclusive-hiring and abandon discrimination.



State Courts, Corporate Social Responsibility Team.

HERE COMES THE SUN

On 6 September 2019, SACA staff spent time having fun and interacting with children from Sunbeam Children's Home at SuperPark Suntec City. A total of 19 children, two Home staff and 17 SACA staff participated in a thoroughly enjoyable event.

The morning kicked off with a quick introduction before exploring SuperPark in small groups. The children warmed up to SACA staff very quickly. From football, to basketball, throw ball, trampolines, climbing, jumping, swinging and much more, the children were on a high as they raced across at furious speeds to explore as much of the park as they could. We played with them, and cheered them on as they hit high scores on the brightly lit electronic scoreboards.

The enjoyable four-hour morning ended with a scrumptious lunch and ice cream at Suntec Tower, in a beautiful room which had an equally beautiful view.

From our interaction with the children, we learnt that despite the difficulties they are facing at such a young age, they seemed determined to maintain a positive attitude. It was truly an inspiring experience. All in all, the day was not just about having fun, sweating it out and letting loose. It was a platform for children to go out and experience new attractions in Singapore as well as express themselves with an adult they can trust.

A huge thank you to SuperPark Suntec City for sponsoring the event; you brought much joy to the children at Sunbeam and brought out the child in all of us at SACA!



COMMUNITY SERVICE AT KIN YAN

Clients and families contributing towards ecological sustainability

Every year, SACA organises community service events for our clients. The first Community Service event of the year was held at Kin Yan Agrotech Farm on 7 April. Clients and their families started the Sunday morning with a tour of the farm where they were introduced to an array of plants such as cactus, pea sprouts and wheatgrass that were grown organically.

Families then participated in bonding activities where they planted organic wheatgrass and harvested pea sprouts as a team. The family bonding activities did not end there! At the end of the day, families brought home the planted wheatgrass which they could continue nurturing together as a family.

The day ended with lunch as well as sample tasting of scrumptious mushroom and pea sprouts with vegetarian mushroom sauce prepared by the farm.



ESP WORKSHOP

SACA and Young NTUC worked together to conduct SACA's first Career Discovery Workshop tailored exclusively for our students in the Education Support Programme (ESP).

On 13 April, more than a dozen people made up of current and former students, and staff attended the workshop. The workshop started with self-discovery through a 'Points-of-You' tool. Through this tool, participants learnt something new about themselves and discussed how this would impact their career or educational journey.

The workshop wrapped up with a segment where our clients and volunteer career coaches had a more in-depth discussion of their career or educational journey over snacks and drinks.

Thank you Young NTUC and volunteer career coaches!



"I LIKE THE MEDITATION PART. THE ATMOSPHERE WAS CALMING AND THERAPEUTIC AND IT HELPED WITH REFLECTION."

"THE ACTIVITIES HAVE HELPED ME TO DISCOVER MORE ABOUT MYSELF IN TERMS OF PERSONAL VALUES & BELIEFS."



FAMILY DAY

On 14 July, SACA organised an annual Family Day event at Adventure Cove Waterpark, Sentosa for more than 130 clients and family members.

The sunny Sunday kicked off with an ice-breaker game of "Hot Potato" which ignited adorable squeals and laughter from children as the prize was passed from one participant to another. After getting warmed up, families embarked on designing canvas tote-bags that included designs or logos representing the values, goals or unique qualities of their family. Seeing families working together and deciding on their shared values and beliefs was truly inspiring.

To encourage the families to spend more quality time together, our clients and their families received tickets to spend the rest of the beautiful Sunday at Adventure Cove!

A special shout out to the 17 volunteers from State Courts who helped us make this event truly enjoyable for our clients and their loved ones. Thank you!



CHARITY FILM SCREENING

It takes a team – a community – to overcome all odds

The heart-gripping, 3-hour long movie reminded us that during difficult situations and crossroads, strength of character matters most. The protagonists of the movie faced challenges not just in combat with the enemy, but also conflicts within themselves. But their spirit of sacrifice and willingness to do "whatever it takes" helped them to win the day.

A big thank you to our allies for supporting us in our annual Charity Film Screening held on 24 April 2019 at GV, Great World City. More than 850 guests spent their evening at our annual fundraiser, filling up 3 halls!



We once again thank our main sponsors – Singapore Airlines, GIC, Singapore Telecommunications, Singapore Totalisator Board and DBS Bank. Our goodie bags were filled with wonderful items generously donated by Singapore Pools (Private) Limited, Singapore Airlines, GIC, CNB and SCORE. Thank you, Mr Amrin Amin, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs & Ministry of Health for gracing our event as Guest-of-Honour. Students from Hwa Chong Institution also contributed by setting up an exhibition on ex-offender rehabilitation and also helped sell-out an entire hall!

Once again, thank you all for the support that helped us raise some \$220,000! We are looking forward to your continued support for SACA's Charity Film Screening next year.



INTEREST-BASED BEFRIENDING

Complementing SACA's befriending programme, SACA initiated Interest-based befriending in the 2nd quarter of 2019. This programme provides a platform for our volunteer befrienders and clients to build rapport through a shared interest in activities such as decoupage or beadwork. This holistic initiative consists of three in-care sessions at the women's facility. Upon release, SACA befrienders will follow up with clients through individual sessions or craft-based group sessions.

YELLOW RIBBON PRISON RUN

Despite the unhealthy haze situation, more than 10,000 supporters of the Yellow Ribbon Project and Second Chances turned up for the event. The Guest-of-Honour, President Halimah Yacob, kicked off the run by "unlocking" the start gate with a Yellow Ribbon token symbolising the "unlocking" of the second prison and paving "the road to acceptance".

Participants started their run or walk from the vicinity of Changi Village and ended within the Changi Prison Complex. Their run ended with a carnival of performances, appreciation letters from inmates as well as freebies such as ice cream and cookies!

Halfway through the run, it started drizzling but the rain did not deter our ESP students. Instead, they pressed on, cheered each other on to complete the race. It was motivating to hear the students cheer each other on with inspiring comments like "It's not the end point that matters, it's the journey" and "If others are going to be here [despite the haze], then, I'm going to be here too".



Community support is crucial to reintegration and this run showed how supportive our community can be. Keep up with the good work, Yellow Ribbon Prison Run team! Thank you for having us in your meaningful event.

Let's keep running forward together!

ESSAY WRITING COMPETITION

OPEN CATEGORY (WINNER)

TITLE: IF I COULD STOP... TIME... WOULD I?

Coming from a relatively well-off family, there were not many of my material needs and wants that were not met. I never once had to miss meals and all means were at my disposal to attain the 'standard' life through the well-worn path of 'proper' education. To make sure we treaded this Singaporean notion of success, my dad was an uncompromising disciplinarian. My large home, although filled with love, was also filled with rules and regulations. Any breach, was met with swiftly and severely. This is when the latent rebellious spark in me began to burn.

My dad was often away and busy with work and mum was distracted in tending to the household to really notice my subtly encroaching wayward ways. My rebellion had a concrete and identifiable source: I hated the house with the soul of my being. I despised its power over my independence and freedom, its iconic grip over the choices I made. I felt that my parents wanted everything their way. Every aspect of my life they wanted to exert control, to the extent that they proceeded to choose for me my educational, and thus career, pathway they were adamant I must pursue. I had exactly zero interest in Aerospace Electronics and had always gravitated towards Business Management.

My parents were at that time heavily influenced by peers of their own social standing (my father is a successful businessman and we live in a private residential area) where one-upmanship is rife when it comes to children and their achievements in certain socially acceptable careers in a class-conscious society. To my young eyes, all this posturing was something to elevate my parents social standing with nary a thought reserved for us children and our desires. I hated this and I started to hate home.

I was drifting away when I was as young as 14. In my family, I was the proverbial 'black sheep'. My sister diligently followed the dictates of my parents and ended up as a scientist with A* Star laboratories. My brother too followed every whim of my parents. The one who didn't fit in was me.

I stopped academic studies at 'O' levels and went on to the polytechnic where I promptly dropped out less than a year later. I was bringing shame and disrepute to my family. Family dinners were unpleasant affairs and I avoided them studiously as much as I could. In fact, I avoided home altogether.

Feeling ostracized by my own family, I found myself similar company where I could feel belonged and welcomed. Naturally, this motley group of 'lackeys' from all walks of life received me with open arms and almost crushed me in their vice-like embrace from which it took me courage and determination to eventually escape.

But, it was an interesting and eye-opening life though: Gangs and their ideas of honor and code of conduct, sultry girls who only come out at night, clubs and Karaoke bars that I was too young to enter, the apprehension and excitement of gambling and finally, the inescapable siren-call of drugs. I wasn't even 18 then and I'm ashamed to say that there is little in the way of vices that I had not indulged in before. How long could such a life last? Not long! The tentacles of law and order caught up with me.

By this time, I had gotten seriously involved in the trafficking of drugs and at the age of 21, was arrested for possessing more than 500 grams of cannabis: the amount that carries the death penalty. When I was told this, my head swam and I felt faint. I couldn't believe that my life was going to end so soon at such a young age. My girlfriend then, who is my wife now was just 2 months pregnant with our daughter. My parents were devastated to say the least. None in my extended family of relatives have ever stepped foot into prison. Another blow landed on them when they discovered that I was going to father a child. I was prepared to face their wrath, even their disowning me, but it was their sudden about-turn that completely took me by surprise and made me regret the error of my ways.

Throughout all this drama and chaos, my parents stoically stood by me and my wife. I know what it must have cost them to do that. When I was facing the gallows, they came to visit me in prison without fail. I could only imagine what it must have felt like for them to see me in that state. And when the drugs were sent in for processing and dilution, to sieve out only the core, pure form of the substance, the total net-weight now, was less than half of what I was caught with. Bail was offered and my parents bailed me out and arranged for me to get married to my now wife. Another pivotal moment was when I personally witnessed the birth of my daughter and the pain and struggle my young wife went through.

I was sentenced to 8 years in prison and 6 strokes of the cane. To my young mind and my parents aging ones it seemed like a lifetime.

Most importantly, I did not know how my wife and myself were going to face the obstacles that were sure to come our way. But, wonder of wonders, during the initial difficult period, my parents were the source of our strength. They never wavered in encouraging and motivating us. They never ceased in reminding me that everything will become better, that all of them were still there for me no matter what I had done. Sticks and stones may break our bones, but never shall the ties that bind, for better or for worse.

Crushing remorse plagued my slow, lethargic days and sleepless nights. I did not know what I could do to make things right, until my parents encouraged me to study in prison. I had no idea if I could do it but I did not want to let my family down after they had been with me every step along the way. I threw all doubts and anxieties aside (what if I failed? How will my parents feel if I do?) and took the plunge by enrolling into the prison school. I was offered the 'A' levels and I grabbed it without a moment's hesitation. Whatever it is, however tough it may be, I was single-minded and determined to work hard and make my parents proud and change my life for the better. I understood the gravity of my responsibilities now that I have a wife and daughter to care for.

My efforts paid off.

For the academic year 2018, I emerged the top 'A' levels student in prison school with 5As and 1B. The national papers came to interview me and devoted a section to celebrate this achievement. The experience felt surreal. Above all else, when we were given the opportunity to share our academic results with our family during a special unobstructed open visitation session, the look of utter pride and joy on the face of my loved ones is difficult for me to describe. Suffice to say that it was worth every waking hour I spent studying like a madman.

Now that I have a daughter, I realise how much I want to give the best to her, how much I want to help her make the best out of her life. I understand now, with clarity of being a parent myself, how my own parents felt. The experiences that I went through, the lessons that I have learnt, have shaped me into who I am today. Whatever that has happened to me in the past – including the prison sentence that I'm currently serving – is indeed a blessing in disguise. I can confidently to say that I have improved my inner self and polished my knowledge in this most unfavorable environment. I believe I am a better person now, and will continue to be a better person that I was before for the rest of my life. So now to the question...If I could stop... time... would I?

The answer is most certainly, a no. I am who I am today because of my unique past. I hope this true story of mine would inspire others like me – who have detoured towards the wrong path, and give them a glimmer of hope that there is still light at the end of the tunnel.

Why I chose to volunteer with SACA?

SACA helps to transform the lives of ex-offenders who have complex issues. Not only the clients but also their families are assisted to cope with the challenges as a result of their loved one having been incarcerated. Many volunteer for psychological and sociological needs. As for me, I want to make a positive difference for those who are vulnerable in managing their own lives. SACA gives me the opportunity to use my transferable skills to support a group of individuals who are in need of a second chance. Volunteering at SACA enhances my personal values and I learn a lot in this process. It helps me to expand my social network.

How is befriending carried out?

The 'Befriending Programme' provides a supportive relationship, encouragement and motivation to clients which taps on the befrienders' network and resources. One-to-one befriending includes visiting the client before and after release. During the first session, rapport and relationship building are very important. Thereafter we identify issues, discuss release plans and goals in life. The aim is to reduce social isolation, build confidence and self-esteem. As they have experienced social stigma after having been incarcerated, the idea is to empower the client to take charge of their own lives and never give up.

How do I approach my clients?

The past is already over. It does not matter what mistakes one has made. Everyone is unique, we have our own baggage, we have been through trauma and pain, we can lighten our load and let go of the things that caused us pain. Being a trained 'Solution Brief Focused' practitioner, I focus on the present and future goals rather than past experiences. For example, I like to use the 'Miracle Question Method' – "If, by some miracle, your problem no longer exists?" or "If a genie were to grant three wishes, what it would you wish for?"

How 'Interest-Based Befriending' works!

The Interest-based befriending initiative links befrienders and clients through doing craft work (Decoupage) together. Decoupage is a fun art and craft that is suitable for all ages. This initiative empowers clients to take ownership of learning to do decoupage craftwork. It requires a lot of patience and attention to fine detail to master this skill. During the sessions, clients learn the importance of accountability, which helps promote their sense of efficacy. It also enhances social interaction which I hope will support them in their reintegration in the aftercare.

A wife, a daughter, a school counsellor and a volunteer. How do I do so much?

I usually analyse how I devote my time in terms of how I spend it for work, family and myself. Once my family is taken care of, I begin to plan my other commitments. I prioritize my tasks in advance so that I can manage my time efficiently. I have set goals in my 'To do list'.

Self-care is important as it helps me to manage my stress. I maintain strong relationships with my family and friends. For my physical self-care, I attend 'Lose to Win', a holistic weight management programme organised by Health Promotion Board. This is my sixth year now and this is where I meet people who are like me with high BMI to get fit through a fun exercise programme. As for my psychological self-care, I make time for self-reflection and remember to love myself. I enjoy soap making, DIY essential oil candles and decoupage craft. These wonderful crafts have therapeutic benefits which also allow me to express my creativity.

What would you say to anyone thinking of volunteering with ex-offenders and their families?

Importantly, they need to be non-judgmental, committed, and genuine in their desire to support clients cope with challenging situations. We have to be mindful and show compassion towards them. For example, they may have limited skills and be unable to gain employment and hence we can help work on their strengths specifically in areas regarding jobs they can do and cannot do, will do and will not do. We can assist them to make effective choices.

**Mahatma Gandhi rightly said,
"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the
service of others."**



Decoupage Art



Decoupage Art

My favourite Super Hero is Batman!

Batman inspires us to be the best version of ourselves. He embodies the spirit of protecting the innocent and fighting for truth and justice. He shows us that saving the world is not about strength and speed, but we need to have the drive and determination.

Batman is a role model. He has no super powers. We learn that through understanding our strengths and knowing how to use them, we will be able to reach our full potential. There is a Batman inside all of us!

Adam walks with a limp and the gait of someone who has seen much and done even more. At 50 years of age, he is a survivor of countless fights and emotional turmoil since his youth. Adam's choices in life have resulted in multiple incarcerations – a life full of violence, often lurching from one crisis to another, was par for the course for the headman of a gang addicted to drugs from a young age. Life was a rollercoaster ride of triumphs and failures, well mostly failures; brought about by relapse and broken promises, punctuated with a recurrent thought: "Why can't I be like others, why can't I be better?"

Adam feels the burden of guilt accumulated over the years on his weary shoulders. Speak to Adam's "brothers", and they will paint a picture of a fearless

man who always had their back, the epitome of loyalty and courage, always the first to step up whenever there was some problem to be settled or managed, often resulting in the spilling of blood. But speak to Adam's wife, and you'll see a picture of a man who, time and again, emptied his home of love, dreams and hope.

During his last incarceration, Adam decided that he had had enough of his old life. He no longer wanted to be a man that saw violence as the only answer to every challenge in life. He wanted to be a different kind of leader. Slowly but surely Adam's view of life has changed and Adam shared with us the values that now guide him.

Life was a rollercoaster ride of triumphs and failures, well mostly failures; brought about by relapse and broken promises, punctuated with a recurrent thought: "Why can't I be like others, why can't I be better?"

Loyalty

Having spent decades putting his brothers first, Adam has now learnt to prioritise his family. Time spent with wife and father is something he treasures above all else, as these are the people who have stayed by his side through his tumultuous years. When friends tried to reconnect after his release from prison, he challenged, "Why did none of you visit me while I was in prison? From now on, I am going to spend more time with my family. They're the ones who have been there for me all this while."

Adam's loyalty to his brothers was legendary when he was younger; he would be the first in line to confront or attack any enemies they faced. He has since realised that all his sacrifices have come to naught, as the price he has had to pay is spending so many years of his life behind bars, leaving his dear wife behind to live life alone and at the mercy of wagging tongues. Adam has learnt that loyalty to family is what matters most.

Responsibility

"What if I become a leader in a good way? Is that possible?" When Adam was about to be released, he knew he did not want to be the same kind of leader he was in the past. But he knew first hand that change was never easy. He understood that inmates have the desire and motivation to change while in prison, but upon release, "Everything changes. We forget everything [that we have learnt in prison through counselling]," he muses.

Adam decided that the best way to show them that it is possible to follow through with their intentions and motivations to change once out of prison is to be the best example of that. Adam focused on changing his lifestyle and his thinking, and even made the decision to voluntarily continue counselling with SACA, even after completing part of a programme mandated by Prisons.

When asked how he feels about the way he is now living life, Adam said he is proud to be able to show his old friends a new side of himself. He hopes they learn a thing or two about life and about change – that a value-driven life that focuses on love and family is not only possible, but one worth living.

Courage

In the past, with Adam's reputation for bravery often bordering on recklessness, he was challenged by many who wanted to see him fail, and he believed that the only way to live (and die) was by the sword. Now, realizing the physical and emotional toll his past misdeeds have had on his life, Adam's idea of what it means to be brave has changed.

Courage now means saying no to a life that brings more harm than good, and accepting that change is necessary. It definitely wasn't easy – Adam's idea of bravery was deeply rooted in gang culture defined by violence and bloodletting. Changing that idea of courage was one of the most difficult things that he had to do, as it meant admitting to his mistakes and the pain and suffering he had caused others. To put a stop to this he had to get out. "It was so difficult and heavy to take a step back and tell my brothers that I don't want to be involved. But I think of my wife. Who's going to keep looking after her if I am imprisoned again?"

Adam ruminated for a long time as to how he was going to inform his old associates that he was no longer interested in living life as a gang member.

He decided the best way to do this was to just be honest and to the point. The simple phrase "I am tired", coming from a man who had sacrificed so much, carried such weight that, thankfully, his gang associates understood and accepted his decision.

The next step to being courageous was learning to say 'sorry'. A man of action, Adam's apology took on the form of changed behaviour, rather than mere words, something that his wife appreciated. After years of empty promises to change, she recognised it took immense courage to reject his old ways, and finally embrace a new life with his most loyal members – his family.

TAKE A SUPERHERO QUIZ!

- 1 He is a hero who is defined by his weaknesses as much as by his strengths! He comes across as a nerdy kid with glasses who lives with his old aunt. He feels like one of us. He has some of the same problems that we have. He gets punched in the face and just keeps on going. He's an inspiration to everyone no matter how hard things are!
- 2 He is a brilliant engineer, a good-looking man, and a rich, successful industrialist. While in Southeast Asia checking out his weapons, he's taken hostage by an Asian warlord and told to construct a weapon for him. Instead, he secretly builds a suit of armour. He may sometimes come across as selfish but we've seen his soft spot for the teenage Spiderman.
- 3 He is a leader that trains, teaches and inspires his students. He works hard to achieve his goals in establishing harmony between two different species despite any challenge that is thrown at him and his students' way. His intuition, intelligence and telepathy has helped him greatly in achieving his goals and overcoming adversity.
- 4 This superhero is a natural-born leader of men. Despite lying frozen for more than 60 years, this titan doesn't miss a beat, saving and protecting humanity, all the while trying to get up to speed with the modern world. This superhero fights for Truth, Justice and ...
- 5 She hails from a race of great women warriors. She strongly follows her principles and is guided by duty and honour. She has superhuman strength and the skills of a highly trained pilot, though you would not be able to see her fly.
- 6 She is not superhuman but a talented superspy possessing the stealth of a cat, out-of-this-world combat skills and carries state-of-the-art equipment. She has extensive experience in black-ops missions and has also been assigned by Nick Fury to keep an eye on the Avengers.
- 7 He is the heir to the throne of a Nordic kingdom. He was betrayed by his half-brother but the two eventually reconcile, albeit in tragic circumstances. He is subject to many tests that he successfully passes, finally wielding a weapon which only he and Captain America are able to use.
- 8 Before he was a superhero saving the world, he was actually a villain! While he has no superhuman powers (with the exception of the period when using Pym particles to become Goliath), he is at the very peak of human conditioning. He is an exceptional fencer, acrobat and marksman, having been trained from childhood in the circus and by the criminals Trick Shot and Swordsman.
- 9 He is the seldom seen hand working behind the scenes guiding the Avengers. He is trained as an all-rounder - a paratrooper, ranger, demolitions expert and vehicle specialist. We will let you in on another secret; his youthful looks are all thanks to the mysterious Infinity Formula.
- 10 A world-renowned surgeon, his life changes after a car accident robs him of the use of his hands. When traditional medicine fails him, he looks for healing, and hope, in a mysterious enclave. He quickly learns that the enclave is at the front line of a battle against unseen dark forces.

ANSWER: 1. SPIDERMAN 2. IRON MAN 3. PROFESSOR X 4. CAPTAIN AMERICA 5. WONDER WOMAN 6. BLACK WIDOW 7. THOR 8. HAWKEYE 9. NICK FURY 10. DOCTOR STRANGE

Adopt us as your charity mission

As our charity partner, you could volunteer with our clients and their families, provide specialised services to our beneficiaries, partner us in our fundraising efforts or suggest other ways we can collaborate.

Be a volunteer at SACA

SACA, under its Volunteer After-Care Programme, has the following initiatives:

- Befriending
- Family-connect @ State Courts
- Initiative for Incarcerated Mothers and Affected Children (IIMAC)

Should you like to be a volunteer with SACA under any of the above initiatives or would like to know more about our volunteer programme, please email us at volunteer@saca.org.sg.

WAYS YOU CAN HELP REINTEGRATE LIVES

Sponsor Goodie Bag items for our events

Over the course of a year, we run several community events where goodie bags are given away. As we are always on a tight budget, we are constantly on the lookout for kind sponsors of corporate gift items.

Should you have any suitable gift items, please get in touch with us.

Sponsor an event for ex-offenders' and their families

As part of a holistic approach to integrating ex-offenders into the community, we believe family acceptance is at the core of these efforts. Hence, we organize a host of events bringing ex-offenders and their loved-ones together in a fun setting.

We are always looking for partners for these events at various family friendly attractions. Your support will be invaluable to us.


Donations (one-time donation / ongoing donation plan)


Should you like to donate to SACA on a regular basis or even just once-off:


- For cheque donations, please make your cheque payable to "Singapore After-Care Association"
- For online donations, please log onto www.giving.sg


For enquires on any of the above, please email - enquiries@saca.org.sg - or call us at - 62942350.
We're waiting to hear from you!


For more information:

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