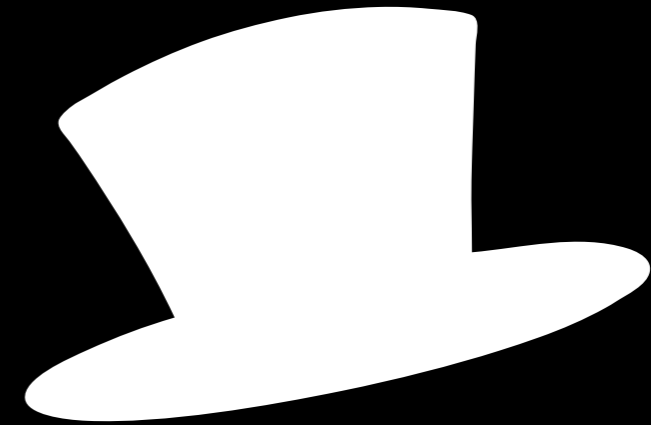
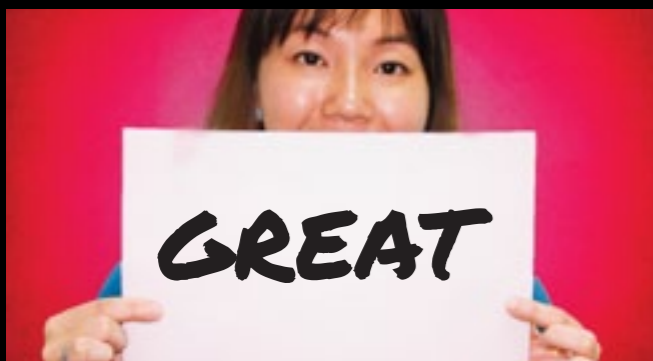
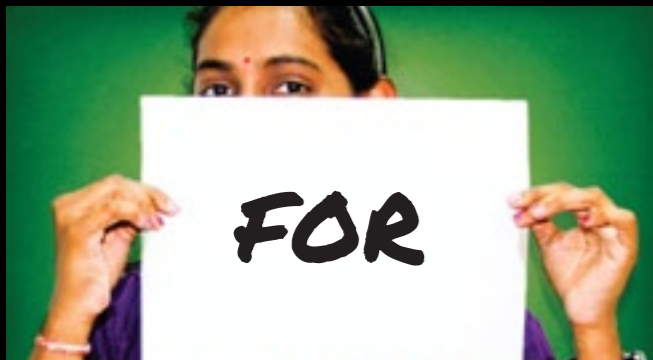
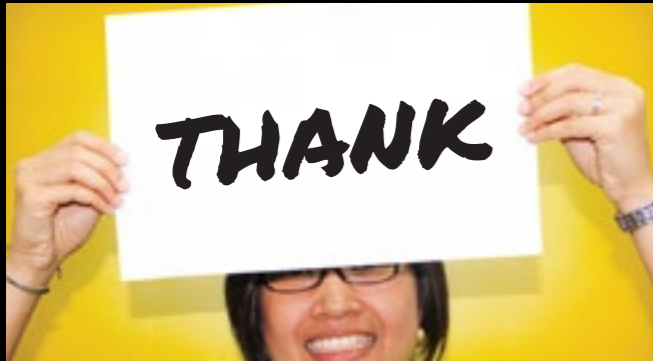


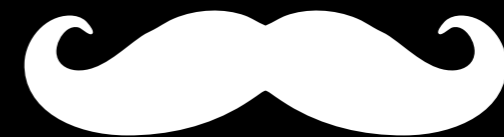
# SPARKS

MICA (P) 115/03/2013 ISSN 1793-8562 ISSUE 02 / NOVEMBER 2013

*Igniting Change*



HATS OFF  
TO YOU



In appreciation of  
all our SACA Volunteers!



SACA

A publication of Singapore After-Care Association

*Helping ex-offenders and their families get back on their feet*

# Editor's Note

Dear Friends,

And just like that - another year is ending.

How will we look back at 2013? Did we do everything we set out to achieve, or were there areas we feel we could have done better in and on hindsight, not make those mistakes we did? Some of us will look back at 2013 with deep fondness and affection - some found love in the grand scheme of life; some made a break-through at work, at school or at home; and there are those who became parents and took on such responsibilities for the very first time! (Congratulations Papa Prem! Hehe ... we are all cheering you on!). And there will also be some who dread 2013 and cannot wait for the year to be over. To this group of people, life is mostly filled with heartache and hardship. And some of our clients fall into this category - every waking day is low on hope and full of uncertainties.

The reality of life is that bad things sometimes happen to good people. We can plan all we want, but life is far from perfect. Detours happen; needs evolve and so do circumstances. New arrangements must be found; and older pacts must be re-evaluated to fit the new context - and gradually we begin to reframe our viewpoints and our view of ourselves and our lives. This is the strength of the human spirit - adept and to improve and be better.

“So, I guess we are who we are for a lot of reasons. And maybe we'll never know most of them. But even if we don't have the power to choose where we come from, we can still choose where we go from there. We can still do things. And we can try to feel okay about them.”

— Stephen Chbosky, *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*



Last summer, I was invited by some ex- business partners to visit Hiroshima (Japan). I am familiar with Japan; but it was my first trip there. The city was destroyed by the atomic bomb during the last world war. Over the years, the city has rebuilt itself and life has returned back to normal. I visited the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and the horrors of war are well documented and showcased. The exhibits tell a fair and honest story about the tragedies of war. There is no nationalistic propaganda here - everyone loses in a war. The museum tells a tale about human suffering and the importance of universal tolerance and peace.



I was given an opportunity to meet up with a living survivor of the war. She was a kid when the atomic bomb was dropped; and till this day, she has been living with both the mental and physical nightmares of the war since she was a child. And while talking to her, something struck me - it was her strength and determination to live on and tell her tale that stood her apart. She sees herself as a messenger of peace; and the more she can spread awareness of the cruelty of war, the more she feels alive and energized to carry on living. What an extraordinary person! Typically these extraordinary people are passionate and live life to the maximum - with zest and empathy; and they are determined to make the best of their time on earth and be useful contributing members of their community.

One way to live an extraordinary life is to become a volunteer. It is not easy being a volunteer. The volunteer's motivation to help others and to promote a cause comes from deep within. Not everyone works for money. Money is important; only until a point. There are some people who want something more out of life; and helping others is a core purpose of their existence. While being a volunteer requires great dedication and time, the benefits are also clear - expansion of social circles and networks and fuelling a purpose in life.

In an extract taken from *Simple Changes, Big Rewards: A Practical, Easy Guide for Healthy, Happy Living*, a special health report published by Harvard Health Publications, it was written that volunteering enhances the happiness effect:

*Helping others kindles happiness, as many studies have demonstrated. When researchers at the London School of Economics examined the relationship between volunteering and measures of happiness in a large group of American adults, they found the more people volunteered, the happier they were, according to a study in Social Science and Medicine. Compared with people who never volunteered the odds of being "very happy" rose 7% among those who volunteer monthly and 12% for people who volunteer every two to four weeks.*

This is especially true for our SACA volunteers! They are the true pillars of the Association; and one of the key reasons why SACA has gone from strength to strength since 1956. The Prisons Service and the relevant local authorities recognise that the community (volunteers and the after-care sector) has an important role to play in the rehabilitation and re-integration of ex-offenders into society. This is because the government alone can never be the provider of solutions. With volunteers, the sector can tap on their collective expertise in various fields of knowledge; and their energy (and time) to help inmates through various enrichment programmes and coordinated activities. Being in the community, volunteers can assist offenders and ex-offenders and link them back into the community and their families. In a nutshell, our volunteers are trained to be mentors and facilitators of the reintegration process.

Tonight's celebration is for all our volunteers! And we take this opportunity to take our hats off to you and to salute you for your efforts, dedication and passion towards the after-care sector. You have given us your love and time. You have all made the difference in our community and have improved the lives of our clients and their beloved families.

And this issue of Sparks is a labour of love dedicated to you!

Before we welcome 2014, I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few groups of people who have made varying degrees of impact to our cause. Firstly, my sincere gratitude to the brilliant marketing teams at Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, Singapore and Sony Pictures Singapore who have supported SACA through the years and believe in the cause of *Reintegrating Lives*; kudos especially to Ms Rachel and Ms Irene. Secondly, to Mr Eugene and his dedicated team from Kuan Im Tng Temple (Joo Chiat) for their many kind words of encouragement and support. Your trust and belief made all the difference. Thirdly, to Mr Desmond Yew and his team from Resorts World Sentosa for their steadfast faith and dedication towards SACA. You have always been supportive and generous towards us.

And lastly, my heartfelt appreciation to all the organizations whom SACA has benefited from in terms of friendship, support and donations through the years - Ngee Ann Kong Xi, NTUC Foundation, Hong Leong Foundation, Lee Foundation, Super Galvanising, Keppel Offshore & Marine, SATS, Singapore Polytechnic, NUS Student Union, The Patatas, Cathay Organization, SCORE, SWCDC, Tote Board and Singapore Pools.

The New Year promises to be an exciting one; new adventures, fresh ideas, infinite possibilities and more blessings, all in the name of love ...

The love for life, that is.

Remember, remember - the cause of *Reintegrating Lives*; and to always Choose Life in everything that we do and believe in. Merry Christmas in advance and a happy 2014 ahead!

The Japanese culture focuses on hard work and dedication. It is never about luck; something which I admire deeply.

This is **eric lue** here. 😊  
It's been a great 2013.

\*Sayonara everyone; Oyasuminasai; and Gambatte!  
(translate: Goodbye, Goodnight and Work Hard!)

(Special note: All design work by Agnes Lim and All photographs and text by Eric Lue)

# YELLOW RIBBON RUN 2013

Running is a great form of exercise. But running for a meaningful cause and benefiting the community is even more awesome!

The YRR 2013 took place on the 15th September 2013. The route has been the same for both the 10km and 6km run over the past few years - beginning from the vicinity of Changi Village to inside the Changi Prison compound where a festive carnival greets all participants at the end of their run. This event is part of the wider Yellow Ribbon Project initiative which advocates a second chance for offenders, ex-offenders and their families. It is aimed at reintegration and to raise community awareness of this very important issue. 2013 marks the 10th anniversary of this very popular movement.



The guest of honour was Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean also Coordinating Minister for National Security and Minister for Home Affairs. He was there to chat with fellow runners before the flag-off, taking photos with families and waving to the crowd. Mr Teo himself is an avid runner and a strong supporter for the Yellow Ribbon Project.

One of the highlights for this year was the Giant Human Yellow Ribbon Formation. It



was formed by a record 1,230 runners and helped raise more than \$130,000 for the Yellow Ribbon Fund! People from all walks of lives coming together to lend their support for the cause is truly a very inspiring and unforgettable sight. SACA as part of the CARE Network was there to lend its support. Hopefully such efforts will help reinforce the Yellow Ribbon Project's message that offenders, ex-offenders and their families do need the community's help and understanding to get back on their feet again.

Keep on running!

"It's not how much we give but  
how much love we put into giving."

— Mother Teresa

## ANYONE CAN CHANGE FOR THE BETTER — LET LOVE BE THE ENERGY

Mr Pee Kong Eng has seen more than his fair share of the inside of a prison. Between 1981 and 2007 he had been in and out of prison five times; serving more than two decades and receiving a total of 38 strokes of the cane. His offences ranged from gang-related violence to drug-related abuses. It was such a bleak period in his life that his family and friends gave up on him and the only contact with the outside world were the visits by his aged mother.

In a frank face-to-face interview in Mandarin, Mr Pee recalled the missteps of his past. He said he was an angry child; always needed an outlet to vent and generally felt misunderstood by the people around him. He was stubborn as a kid and refused to adhere to rules laid out in school and at home. Often he felt trapped. When he was a teen, he fell into bad company and joined street gangs and secret societies to feel a sense of belonging. Drugs further complicated his life and made him lose his self-control and moral compass.

Whenever he was in prison, he would yearn to start life afresh. He would hear stories of how people made good and he would see how some of the ex-inmates had transformed their lives for the better. However, Mr Pee lamented that upon each release, the realities of life kicked in - no housing; no family support; no money; no education and no job experience. Confronted with such odds, the lure of his old life always became too attractive to resist; he would always convince himself that this time his luck would change for the better and he would not end up behind bars. How wrong he was!

Time and tide waits for no man. Mr Pee paid with his youth and spent almost 22 years behind bars. His turning point came when his mother introduced religion to him in 2006 while he was in Changi Prison. He felt a gradual change in himself when he turned to God. He felt safe in God's presence and this started his reflections of his past. It was also during this time that he signed up for the Coping Skills Program. The course allowed him to understand the need to let go of the past. He recalled the struggles he experienced; the agony of being alone; the hurt he has caused to those around him and how important it is to take a step back when provoked; and to try to remain calm and even forgive others when the going gets tough.



**Breakthru' Cafe**  
101A UPPER CROSS ST #01-02C  
PEOPLE'S PARK CENTRE  
Tel : 6533 5977  
Opening Hours :  
Mon - Fri : 7am to 5pm  
Sat : 7am to 3pm  
Closed on Sundays & Public Holidays



Through his coping skills facilitator, Ms May Hui, Mr Pee learnt positive thinking techniques and the importance of sparing a thought for others. He realised that no man is an island; and that he needed proper support to get back on his feet again.

Looking back he is thankful that his mother and councillors did not give up on him. His mother continued to share religious teachings with him and he was very touched by his mother's enduring love despite all the misery he had subjected her to. In his own words, he



Editor's note:

Ms May Hui still shows her support for Mr Pee in her own unique way - she frequents the Breakthru Cafe where he works whenever she can. It's her small way of recognizing the courage and determination that he has demonstrated to turn his life around. Indeed all of us at SACA hope that you will remain steadfast to the cause.

There is this song by Robbie Williams which came to mind:  
"If you're willing to change the world, Let love be your energy;  
I can't contain how I feel, When your love shines down on me"  
Jia-you Mr Pee! Always look forward and think positive!  
We will be cheering you on! 😊

described her love as  
"blissfully forgiving and  
complete".

At 52 years of age now, Mr Pee is a changed man. He deeply regrets his selfish past and wayward life. Currently, he is living and working with Breakthrough Missions; having learnt new skills in managing an F&B outlet and more importantly, how to work and interact harmoniously with other teammates and friends. Mr Pee's key objective in life is to lead a happy and meaningful life as a servant of God; to be a useful member of society; as well as to spread the message of God's love and care to everyone in the community. He is appreciative of what Breakthrough Mission has done for him; and he is a keen supporter of the cause of Second Chances.

Mr Pee has learnt to move on; "I have done many bad things in life and have hurt all the closest people in my life. But I also know that I am a living example of God's unconditional love and grace. God gave me hope when hope was gone. I will continue my best to carry on; and share my story with as many people as possible and hopefully be a role-model myself. It is my sincere wish that through my sharing, I can help save lives and bring hope to the people who most need hope".



# COMMUNITY SERVICE

WITH DCM TEAM



“Love is not patronizing and charity isn't about pity, it is about love. Charity and love are the same -- with charity you give love, so don't just give money but reach out your hand instead.”

— Mother Teresa

Community service is all about reaching out to the needier and less fortunate. Many times we assume that because we are not Bill Gates or some rich *towkay* we are unable to help others. Such a mind-set is unfortunate but sadly exists in our society. Even a one dollar donation helps saves lives in some instances; even a minute of your time can improve the lives of others.

On 22nd September 2013, in the early hours of a Sunday morning while the rest of Singapore was still snuggling in bed, our clients and members of the DCM team and other staff volunteers were at the Thye Hua Kwan Hospital (AMK) to spend some quality time interacting with the elderly residents there.



Thanks to **CNS Connections Pte Ltd**, we were able to provide 150 goody bags consisting of tooth brushes, tooth paste, face towel, soap and other necessities to the residents there. The morning was spent playing simple games, colouring and the resident's favourite - bingo. Despite such simple fare there were genuine smiles and happiness radiating all around. It was especially heart-warming to see our clients reach out and create rapport with the residents at every opportunity. Such community visits aid in the process of reintegration for our clients; reminding them that despite all the setbacks and challenges, as long as there is determination and willpower, they can still contribute back to society and help those who face challenges in life.



# COMMUNITY VISIT

WITH CMF TEAM



“It's not enough to have lived. We should be determined to live for something. May I suggest that it be creating joy for others, sharing what we have for the betterment of person-kind, bringing hope to the lost and love to the lonely.”

— Leo Buscaglia

Another community service event was carried out by the clients and members of the CMF team on 20th October 2013. This time, the focus was the Sree Narayana Mission at Yishun Avenue 5. The Sree Narayana Mission (Singapore) is a charitable organisation named after the great saint philosopher and social reformer from Kerala, South India, Sree Narayana Guru. Active since 1948, it has grown into a leading welfare organization for the elderly. It is affiliated to the National Council of Social Services (NCSS) and the Ministry of Health (MOH).

Once again the team brought along goody bags consisting of useful basic necessities sponsored by **CNS Connections** and **P&T PL**.

Activities such as playing simple ball games, colouring cute animal pictures and talking to the residents brought many smiles and cheer to the elderly residents. As the saying goes “*Happiness is only real when shared*”.

I spoke to one of the residents, Mr Lim PT who has been in the home for the last 7 years. He was wheelchair-bound but has an extremely positive outlook on life. He spoke in a mixture of Cantonese and Hokkien, and told me that he is happy here with his friends at the home; and that he is grateful that he has a shelter over his head and professional care for his medical conditions. He told me that he enjoys watching programs on Channel 8 in the afternoon and that his favourite actors are HK superstar Chow Yan Fatt and Stephen Chow. Mr Lim's positivity is a worthy example for all of us.

The morning ended with an Indian dance performance by a dance troupe brought in to specially entertain and spread good cheer to the residents. It is very heartening to see that despite the modern busy lifestyle that everyone is leading, there are people who care and who are sincere in helping others who are less fortunate than themselves.



# JUNE HOLIDAY PROGRAM

@ SNOW CITY (JURONG)



Snow City



Goody Bags kindly sponsored by Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, Singapore. 😊

## SACA: Relaxes...

On the 17th October 2013, a staff welfare event was conducted at Laser Quest located at the HomeTeam NS @ Bukit Batok.



Laser Quest

