

# SACA NEEDS YOU!

SACA has several events coming up and we invite you to join us in making these events memorable for our clients and guests.

If you are able to contribute towards our event in any way, do write in to [enquiries@saca.org.sg](mailto:enquiries@saca.org.sg) !

## Here's how you can help:


- Donations
- Goodie bag items
- Venue sponsorship
- Food sponsorship
- Talent in media (Photography, Videography, Design, and more!)
- Contribute as a guest writer for SPARKS and SACA's website


For more information:

 [www.saca.org.sg](mailto:www.saca.org.sg)

 @Singapore After-Care Association

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# igniting change SPARKS

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[WWW.SACA.ORG.SG](http://WWW.SACA.ORG.SG)

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



# SACA






The Singapore After-Care Association (SACA) is a key aftercare agency providing welfare and rehabilitation services for discharged offenders and their families. The Association recognises that, upon release, the discharged offender (thereafter referred to as client) would face challenges related to employment, stigmatisation, and acceptance by the family and others. It also recognises that, during a client's imprisonment, the family may be faced with several emotional and financial problems.

SACA was formed in 1956 and was registered as a charity and attained IPC status in 1984. The Association is a voluntary welfare organisation affiliated with the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) and is also a member of the Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders (CARE) Network.

SACA's aim is to assist clients and their families to cope with problems arising from the offending behaviour and the consequent incarceration. This is done with the belief that such assistance would give clients the chance to reintegrate into society successfully thereby reducing the chances of recidivism.

With compassion and patience, we hope to inspire the community to look beyond our client's labels and provide them with the opportunity to start afresh.

For more information:

-  [www.saca.org.sg](http://www.saca.org.sg)
-  [@Singapore After-Care Association](https://www.facebook.com/SingaporeAfterCareAssociation)
-  [enquiries@saca.org.sg](mailto:enquiries@saca.org.sg)
-  6294 2350/6294 2763 (office) 6295 0095 (fax)
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## PATRON

The Honourable The Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE 2018/2019

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Singapore Prison Service Ms Valerie Chiang

# Thank You Allies For Uniting With Us

Every year, the Singapore After-Care Association has been hosting a charity film screening to raise funds for our rehabilitative programmes and services.

This year, we are thankful once again to receive the goodwill of Walt Disney (Southeast Asia) Pte Ltd, in granting us the screening rights for the long-awaited Marvel Studios' Avengers: Endgame blockbuster. Special mention must be made of the event's main sponsors: GIC Private Limited, Singtel, Singapore Totalisator Board, Singapore Airlines and DBS Bank. Indeed, SACA is honoured to work with corporate organisations who are aligned with our vision and mission. Your help has been instrumental to the Association's progress over the years.

We would like to take the opportunity to thank each and every sponsor, donor, and patron who have been wholeheartedly supporting SACA's annual charity film events. We hope that you have enjoyed these events as much as we have.

Together, we can help ex-offenders and their families get back on their feet.



In its relentless pursuit of excellence, the Venture Group remains appreciative of how increasing interdependency today can impact the fabric of society. We believe corporates can contribute effectively to the economy and the society through philanthropy and job creation, and we hope that our token donation to SACA will aid them in their vision to reintegrate clients into society successfully.



Mr Wong Ngit Liong, Chairman and CEO of Venture Corporation Limited  
– a recurrent major sponsor of the Association



# Appreciation Night

Another year, another installation of SACA's Appreciation Night!

Our volunteers form the backbone of SACA's work. The dedication and commitment of these passionate volunteers are what propels the association to extend various services to our clients. To recognise and acknowledge their hard work, an evening of fun and dining is organised on a yearly basis. This year, with the assistance of Conrad Centennial Singapore, we had a blast with our volunteers and invited guests. A sumptuous seven-course meal was prepared by award-winning chefs at Conrad Centennial Singapore. Our roving magician doubled as our host for the night, hyping up the crowd with magic tricks and dancing challenges.



To amp up the fun factor, a photo booth with Superheroes theme along with the roving magician delighted guests prior to the dinner commencement. The Guest of Honour for the night was none other than SACA's Patron, The Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon.

With Emcee Aman at the helm, and his trusty DJ, the evening proved to be a memorable one filled with laughter. Emcee Aman wowed everyone with his magic and mind-reading tricks, receiving a standing ovation from everyone (including Chief Justice Menon!).



Of course, the night would not be complete without the annual awards presentation to long service and outstanding volunteers. The evening also ended on a special note, with a cheque presentation from the State Courts to SACA, presented by Presiding Judge See Kee Oon to SACA's Patron and Chairman. As one of its adopted charities, SACA has received S\$39,000 in donations from the State Courts. We are very grateful for their help in raising funds for the Association.



A gift was prepared for the State Courts in the form of a Batik painting done by a student of the Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore, keeping in line with SACA's efforts to support local community initiatives. The night ended on a meaningful note as guests received door gifts from MINDS Bakers, from which proceeds would be channelled into providing allowance and training for the beneficiaries at MINDS.



The planning committee at SACA had an enjoyable time organising this year's dinner, and we look forward to yet another year of appreciating our volunteers.



# Graduation Ceremony 2018

It was a special afternoon on 22 September 2018 at the Singapore After-Care Association as members of SACA's Executive Committee, distinguished guests from Prisons, agency partners and students gathered to celebrate the achievements of our student-clients who have completed their course of study and to congratulate the students for their hard work and perseverance. For the first time, a panel discussion was held between our graduates, a family member and invited guests. The focus of the discussion - to hear from the graduates on the difficulties faced not only during the

period of study, but also upon graduation. The mother of a graduate also shared the challenges the family faced in the years leading up to her daughter's graduation as well as her feelings and hopes now that her daughter had completed her studies. The mother's account was indeed heartening and a source of motivation for our current students.

The event ended off on a beautiful note with a rap performance by one of the graduates accompanied by staff of the organization as the backup chorus!



# Waves of Fun

The ESP collaborated with REACH Youth Service for an eventful dragon boat experience. Student-clients, staff and volunteers from REACH met up on an early sunny morning in December 2018. The SACA team was greeted by enthusiastic clients and other volunteers from REACH. This was followed by a warm-up session during which teams introduced themselves to one another.

Once the rowing started, there was a happy chatter of volunteers and clients letting down their guard and sharing their backgrounds and life stories with teammates on their boat.

Exerting energy to row in sync, expressions and emotions were re-charged by the positive vibes from all present.

At the end of the activity there was a 25 push-up challenge. Although tiring, it felt energizing as the adrenaline rushed through the body during the whole exercise. After bidding goodbye to REACH, the SACA team proceeded to a quiet location for a relaxing lunch and a reflection session. The time spent felt like a meet up with old friends learning from each other. Overall, everyone felt that it was a unique experience and discovered new things about themselves.



*"I am determined to stay away from my old life."*



"There you are!" exclaimed Roman\* as he halts mid-stride on the sports track. Bent at the waist to catch his breath and smiling toothily at me, the 62-year-old is relieved to meet me after the long journey on foot from the halfway house he resides in. By that time, he had already gone three rounds at a running track nearby, and was on his way to completing one round of the 888m sports track. Ask anyone who sees him; nobody will be able to guess he is a part of the Merdeka Generation, or that he had been subjecting his body to the harmful effects of drugs since his teens.

**A long history of addiction and offending behaviour**

Roman was released in 2018 after spending almost 5 years in prison for drug consumption, and was referred to SACA under the Case Management Programme, to guide him on his recovery and reintegration. When I met him in prison, he was nervous and uncertain of what life would be like once he was released. He had never been able to successfully practice self-control, and had learnt to rely on the prison system to help him manage his drug-taking behaviour. Aside from drug-related

offences, Roman had also been imprisoned several times for theft, which he would commit on purpose just so he was able to undergo painful detoxification while in prison without the distraction of his many addict peers and the easy availability of drugs.

Looking at how carefree Roman looks while on the running track, one would never guess what he has had to endure to free himself from the shackles of long-term drug addiction.

**A purpose-driven life**

As we chatted about the usual topics – prison life, his motivations for change, his family, and his peers – I realized that what set Roman apart from his peers is a dogged determination to do whatever it took to lead a more peaceful existence. And it all started in prison, when he looked around him and told himself he no longer wanted to be another "old newspaper", which, he ruefully explained, was what older inmates were known as. "I was ashamed of myself, when I was with the kids. I don't want to be a negative example; I want to be a positive role model. I don't want them to follow in my footsteps," he explained. And that was

how he developed the motivation to leave his old life behind within the walls of the prison, and become a new person.

He knew that had to start with him reconnecting with his children. Since his stay at the halfway house, his family has attended every event there. He also meets up with his children when they are free, trying his best to make up for lost time with meals and words of advice, now that they are adults. Most importantly, he says he is taking this time to introduce the real Roman to them, and to show them he isn't the drugged up mess they knew growing up.

**Receiving Guidance from SACA**

Roman says that the opportunity to undergo counselling has also been instrumental in his journey of change. "In the past, I was too free. I went everywhere without anyone to guide me. So now, I can share my feelings about the things that I am going through, especially feelings that I can't share with others, or things that I don't know how to do. I need guidance, and someone to supervise me a little. I know counselling is not forever, but at least I get to learn how to live a better life," he shared.

When I asked him if he had any advice for others going through the same experience, he chuckled and said, "But addicts don't take advice very well! When I tried to advise other friends, they would throw it back at me and mock my old decisions as well. They'd say, as long as they don't take heroin anymore its fine, but they take other substances. To me, [if you want to change], why do things that you've always done? Do different things – like now I exercise, I aim to do volunteer work, I am looking to upgrade myself. I jog regularly, and look after my health. I don't want to spend time doing non-beneficial things anymore."

Now, he says that his "value of life" has changed, and he is proud of how far he has come. However, he knows how precarious this journey can be, if he does not remain focused and keep up his new, healthier, and more positive routines in life. He also knows that the road is long, and while he may be 62, he feels



that life for him has just started. If there's one thing I've learnt from chatting with Roman, it's this: where your feet takes you in life – whether it's down the slippery slope of addiction, or thrice around the track – it all starts with the intentions and goals you set out for yourself each day.

Run, Roman, run!

**Life Lessons with Roman**

**1) Family**

"My counsellor always reminds me to spend time with my family, and I've realized that they need me as much as I need them."

**2) Work**

"I am thankful that my counsellor helped me look for a job, and [I want] to be a good and productive worker and employee. To do that, I need to be patient and tolerant towards the management and residents of the condominium that I work at."

**3) Health**

"Not only in the physical sense, but also in terms of inner or spiritual health, such as not damaging yourself [by consuming] alcohol, cigarettes, drugs. Do things that are good for life on earth, and also for the afterlife."

\* not his real name

# Her Daily Bowl - Healthy cooking and eating is possible!



Charmaine has deliberately set aside this time of “togetherness” with her father which gives both of them something to look forward to every evening. This is their time to connect, a chance to click the pause button and catch up and share their daily happenings with one another.

The duo is quick as well; taking a maximum of 45 minutes to whip up dinner. “The meat is prepared ahead of time”, Charmaine explains. They work together in perfect harmony. Her father portions and marinades the meat beforehand, storing it in the fridge. Charmaine prepares the carbs and vegetables. One component of the meal that father and daughter savour is the soup. It is not only the epitome of comfort food and easy to make meals for her but also closely linked with positive childhood memories of home cooking.

In addition to this, Charmaine likes to stay healthy and hence her interest in cooking is not just about preparing quick, weekday meals- it is a way of living. Since the age of 18, she has embraced ‘clean eating’, a lifestyle that encompasses eating food that is nutritious like whole grains, vegetables and lean protein and avoiding processed food. In line with this, she does not cook with oil (she stir-fries only with water and seasoning!) and instead infuses flavour into her food through the freshness of the raw ingredients, the use of marinades and gentle stewing. She has even tried making her own noodles, pasta sauce and granola, which she creates from scratch so as to reduce the sugar content. She also stays away from sweet drinks and fast food, eats minimal carbs and focuses on eating three meals a day. “I do allow myself the occasional snacks though. I love Ritz cheese biscuits”, she laughs.

Reflecting upon her journey into healthy eating, Charmaine says she feels healthier now by monitoring the food she chooses to consume.

Food. Enticing, delicious, glorious food. It can be found on every corner in our cosmopolitan nation and in a variety of cuisines. In addition, with the advent of food delivery options to the comfort of our very own homes within a reasonable price range, cooking at home isn't a necessity anymore. And really, who has the time? Well, Charmaine does – she makes the time.

As a social work associate with the IIMAC team, Charmaine is no stranger to hectic workdays, filled with reaching out to clients' family members and the accompanying paperwork. Despite this, almost every evening, she returns home to prepare a home-cooked meal with her father.

Before embarking on this healthy lifestyle she carried out a lot of research regarding food and nutrition and also believes that exercise is a necessary part of healthy living. Over and above everything else, cooking is a passion of hers.

“At the end of the day, it's a joy to cook together with and for people you love”, she says simply, as she tucks into her steaming, bowl of soup.



### For quick & healthy weekday cooking:

- ✓ portion and marinate protein ahead of time
- ✓ try stir-frying with water and seasoning only
- ✓ soups are an easy addition to any meal!

### One of Charmaine's favourite recipes - Hearty soup for 2

#### Ingredients:

- 50g ikan billis, rinsed
- 1 litre water
- 3 ripened tomatoes, halved
- 1 head of iceberg lettuce, leaves separated
- 1 box of silken tofu, cubed
- 1 packet of tofu puffs
- 1 packet of chilli fishball (fresh)
- 1 packet of baby corns

#### Preparation:

In a pot, add washed ikan billis to the water and bring it to a boil. Simmer for 15-20 minutes before sieving out the anchovies. Do not simmer for too long or the broth may turn bitter.

Add the halved tomatoes into the broth. Simmer till soft before using a fork to crush the tomatoes. This will allow the broth to be infused with flavors from the tomatoes. Add in the iceberg lettuce leaves, baby corn, tofu puffs and silken tofu and simmer for another 10 minutes.

Lastly, add in the chilli fishball. Add some pepper for taste and remove pot from heat after a minute of boiling.



# How to Organise your Workspace... and Keep it Organised!

Lately, the Marie Kondo phenomenon has been sweeping through the planet, with her signature “KonMari” method of decluttering. It involves going through one’s clutter based on particular categories and only keeping those that “spark joy”. The rest of the items are thanked for serving their purpose and are then disposed of. The result is a clean living space, bringing peace and stability to previously disorganised lives.

Here at SACA, we have our own joy-sparker. In a sea of cubicles piled high with papers, tons of stationery and files, amidst a hectic work environment, there exists a cubicle of calmness. And in this cubicle of serenity, sits Wei Fang. Her desk is clear and clean. The only papers in sight are the ones she is working on at the current time. What’s her secret, we all wonder. We want to be her!

It turns out that Wei Fang has a number of principles for keeping her workspace tidy and spotless, which she is ever willing to share. “It’s just a part of my life”, she reflected, adding that being orderly provided her with a sense of control over her space, which translated to a structured mind that allowed her to manage her work tasks more effectively.



## These are Wei Fang’s top 5 tips for keeping your workspace organised:

- ✓ **Have a place for every thing:**  
By creating a unique keeping place for every item, no matter how small it may be, it helps one to always be aware of where an item is. “That way, I don’t lose things”, Wei Fang shared.
- ✓ **Return it to where it belongs:**  
At the end of every workday, always return items used to their rightful place.
- ✓ **Organise by frequency of use:**  
Create separate sections in your cubicle, according to how often you utilise the items in that section. In contrast, items that are seldom used should be kept in a section furthest away from the active workspace.
- ✓ **Organise by category:**  
Within each section, one should organise the items according to easily identifiable categories, for example, writing instruments or notebooks. This enables the individual to locate the item that is required as efficiently as possible.
- ✓ **Declutter once a week (at least!):**  
Make the time to keep items away, whenever one’s cubicle starts to adopt a messy appearance. As Wei Fang says, “I organise whenever I can”.

## Excerpts from ESP’s Creative Writing Competition 2018

For so many years, I had poisoned my body with harmful drugs and felt pity for my own body. I know my journey does not end here in prison school; I still want to continue my journey out there where I could explore more. I want to hold a degree one day, give speeches to younger students to inspire and help others who want to change and are willing. I believe in the power of my dreams because the future belongs to those who believe in the power of their dreams. Today I am writing an essay, who knows one day I might write a book, a motivational book about my journey. All it takes is that first step.

At 29 and with eight more months to my release, I decided that there is nothing I could do to change my past. All I can do is to change my future through sheer effort and will. I am to attain a degree in social work and establish my career. The journey will be tough as an ex-convict and a single mother of two. I am aware that the road will be long and exhausting. However, I am prepared to push myself beyond the boundaries and achieve my goals in life.

I am already in my forties and there is not much time left. I have wasted more than ten years inside prison. Now it is time for me to restart my life and focus on the well-being of my family. Time is really not on my side. Therefore, I am going to lead a fruitful life not for myself but for all suffering and sacrifices my family has gone through for me. Suddenly, I recall a song and it starts like this, “Tie a yellow ribbon on the old oak tree.....”

I started a new journey as an inmate, with a jail term of 22 years and 8 months. Prison gave me a lot of time to reflect on my journey in life so far; every action, every word and every broken relationship. More fortunate than most, my family never gave up on me, my friends accepted me. They give me the courage and persistence to pull myself up again. As Shira Tehrani said, “You can’t do anything about the length of your life, but can do something about its width and depth.”

## Amateur Category - 2nd prize

Some people simply drift through life without a sense of purpose or direction, often seeking ephemeral pleasures, instant gratifications and only 'Live for the day'. These hedonists are usually so caught up in the present moment that they seem incapable of seeing the consequences of their actions. Their choices, when they can summon the will to choose, tend to take the path of least resistance. I was once such a person.

While still young, I lost my father. My mother, a stoic woman, raised me single-handedly. Despite our circumstances, she tried her best to provide my material and emotional needs. However, I did not reciprocate her love and endeavour. I was rebellious and obstreperous by nature and had a recalcitrant attitude towards discipline. I turned from bad to worse and started mixing with the wrong company. Soon, my impressionable mind was exposed to and inundated with unsavoury influences and vices of every kind. I became intrigued and enticed by the glamour of substance abuse. A confluence of events led me to cross the Rubicon and I got myself involved in drugs.

There is a saying that goes: one puff is too many, and then a thousand is never enough. Thus, before long, I found myself heavily addicted to drugs. Those friends (fiends), that used to supply me drugs for free started charging exorbitantly. Initially, I would pilfer from my mother and when she does not have any money left for me to steal, I would resort to petty crimes and eventually peddling drugs to feed my pernicious and expensive habit. During my drug induced stupor, days passed like a drunken haze, and strangely I felt neither compunction nor contrition for what I did then. I was only concerned on how and where do I procure the money for my net fix.

In a span of a year, my life spiralled out of control. Deep in my heart I knew it was only a matter of time before the long arm of the law caught up with me. My world came crashing down one day, when I was ensnared in an island wide drug sting. It was then that I knew that the day of my reckoning had come. A cocktail of emotions washed over me, a bittersweet feeling laced with pain, regret, sadness and relief. The pain of being arrested and a sweet relief from my tormented existence. Being addicted to illicit drugs and constantly trying to satisfy its insatiable cravings is likened to trying to fill up a bottomless pit with a shovel.

It has been two years since that fateful day, and I have been languishing in prison since. I am surrounded by steel doors, iron bars, a plethora of rules and a motley assortment of criminals as companions. Even though I lost my freedom, I gained something else in return. The demon that had held me in bondage has been vanquished. The fog of miasma that had shrouded me in darkness, lifted. Those dark and dreadful days were over. Sobriety allows me to see with clarity now. I realised my follies and appreciated my life, my freedom and most importantly my mother.

Life is a journey and everyone embarks on it the moment they are born. The vagaries and vicissitudes of life encapsulates us all. Life's journey, from cradle to the grave is fraught with felicities and sorrows, opportunities and difficulties, crossroads and dead-ends.

For me, the road to recovery will be a long and arduous journey and I may stumble along the way. But I know for every step I take, it brings me closer to my prize, at the end, beyond the horizon - A life of hope and a future.

