

STUDENTS GO ISLAND HOPPING!

On 23 December 2017, SACA's student-clients were taken on an island hopping trip to round off a fruitful year of study.

The trip started off bright and early at Marina South Pier where a short ferry ride took us to the pristine shoreline of St John's Island. Highlights of the trip included a nature hike to explore the history and marine life of the island. On Kusu Island, us urbanites had the chance to get up close and personal with turtles, a highlight of the island. To wrap up the day, our students wrote a letter to themselves



Welcome to St John's Island! All set to explore!

and their loved ones, reflecting on their journey over time. Some wrote about their families while others spoke of their personal struggles in the midst of coping with work and education; they are heroes in their own way, achieving their dreams against all odds. These letters are in safekeeping at SACA and will be returned to the writers at a later date for them to revisit their experiences and reflect on the promises made.

WRAPPING UP 2017

In the spirit of togetherness, we gathered for our annual year-end party: a day of secret gift exchanges, team-building games, and merry eating that we have been anticipating with baited breath all year long.



Our Director, Prem, in a game of Wack-O.

Here are 5 things we have observed from the day of fun:

- ✔ It is always important to take a breather from our busy schedules and let our hair down once in a while
- ✔ Away from the office cubicles, our bosses and supervisors will revert to their most childish self when baited by gifts
- ✔ Two heads (or five, in our case) are better than one when solving riddles in treasure hunt games
- ✔ Your colleagues have hidden talents and ambitions and will gladly display them during competitive games
- ✔ Good food tastes exceptional when there is amazing company to share it with!

IGNITING CHANGE

MCI (P) 131/03/2018
APRIL 2018

SPARKS

A PUBLICATION OF SINGAPORE AFTER-CARE ASSOCIATION



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

MARVEL STUDIOS' AVENGERS: INFINITY WAR

The Avengers unite to battle the evil Thanos, their most powerful enemy yet. The destiny of the planet is in the hands of the Avengers. Will they defeat Thanos and his plans to collect all six Infinity Stones? Or will he successfully bend reality to his will?

The Association extends our heartfelt gratitude towards our donors and sponsors who have made Charity Film Screening 2018 a success! We would like to mention the following sponsors for their generous contribution towards SACA's fundraising event: Tote Board (Singapore Totalisator Board), GIC Private Limited, Singapore Airlines Ltd, DBS Bank Ltd, Certis CISCO Security Pte Ltd, Progress Galvanizing Pte Ltd, and Provisions 杂货店.

We hope that you will continue to support SACA's reintegration efforts!



2 CENTS

Traditionally, our first edition of Sparks! for the year is timed to coincide with our annual charity movie fundraiser. Not surprisingly, the theme or at least the look of the issue takes its cue from the movie being screened that year.

As I was contemplating my contribution for this year's first issue the theme of superheroes was quite naturally front and centre in my thoughts. Well heroes actually as I don't really know anyone who is faster than a speeding bullet, able to leap tall buildings...wait, wrong franchise! I mean I don't know anyone who has a hammer that causes thunder and lightning – I'm sure there's political imagery in there somewhere...

But I digress. I was talking about heroes; what makes someone a hero or what makes their actions heroic? Well, for starters, what defines their actions is the fact that they always find themselves in situations where the odds are stacked against them. It then follows that it would be futile to attempt a particular course of action that the protagonist seems set on committing himself or herself to.

That, however, seems to be the very essence of a classic hero story – stack the odds heavily against him or her, make it illogical to continue the struggle, and make the odds of success more remote than figuring out the six numbers for the Hong Bao Draw (not to be confused with Thanos's search for the six infinity stones). In such circumstances, the head would counsel a change of course; pointing out that it is better to hold back than to push on.

Yet, thankfully, the quintessential hero or heroic act is defined by the courage to listen to the counsel of the heart instead and to do that which must be done – or as Yoda would say, "Do or Do Not. There is no Try".

I believe we are all capable of heroic acts and it doesn't mean we have to put ourselves up to

the daunting task of living up to the 'hero' tag. Opportunities to do something heroic can present itself at any time and come in all shapes and sizes – it could be something as simple as approaching an inconsiderate commuter on a crowded bus or train and letting the person know how his or her actions are inconveniencing others. In many situations our heart instinctively defines how we perceive them but our heads instruct our actions, or lack thereof.

I have lost count of the number of times I have walked away from a situation wishing I had taken more affirmative action. But I have also been fortunate to be placed in situations where others around me have chosen to follow their instincts and their hearts to carry out the actions I may have failed to do. Approaching life with a spirit of gratitude, we might just be able to notice the many heroes and acts of heroism we are surrounded by daily.

So as I enjoy this inter-galactic attempt at scoring the big six I will try (sorry, Yoda) to be more ready for my own auditions for momentary heroic status that life has a habit of presenting to all of us. Let us all remember the little acts of heroism that matter; not just the big ones.

Prem Kumar

Spotlight

SHAPING YOUNG MINDS

Every year, SACA hosts enthusiastic interns from the Nanyang Polytechnic Diploma in Social Sciences (Social Work) programme for a 12-week internship. The Association firmly believes in the value of shaping young minds and presenting opportunities for students to grow, both professionally and as people.

At SACA, interns are assigned to help with cases under staff supervision. A certain level of technical knowledge is expected as they are required to actively apply theories learnt to cases. Our interns are also encouraged to ponder about their future. “We urge them to speak to us (their supervisors and staff) and think about whether they would like to further their studies, or whether the aftercare sector is an area they’re truly passionate about”, Social Worker Ms. Evina says.

We speak to three interns who shared with us how their internship experience with SACA has enriched their learning and catalysed their growth as people, students and future social workers.

John



“Lunch breaks were mostly spent exploring the Dunlop Street area and eating with Gary.”

During John’s 12 weeks with us, he was involved in various aspects of work including programmes like the Initiative for Incarcerated Mothers and Affected Children, the Ex-offenders Assistance Scheme, family-connect @ State Courts, plus Training and Research and event planning. John’s wit and dry humour was a joy to all in the office, and we sure miss it!

We hope that their introduction to the helping profession through the work that SACA does becomes an invaluable learning experience, not just regarding the field of correctional social work, but about themselves as well. SACA wishes them the very best in their future endeavours!

1 Providing real-world insight into the aftercare and social service sector

Stacey:

I was exposed to the different programmes in SACA and worked with a variety of people. There was always something for me to learn and explore. My involvement with the family-connect @ State Courts initiative gave me a first-hand experience of how the sentencing process and procedures are like. I was also able to witness family members at the courtrooms watching their loved ones get sentenced. Approaching families was not easy as they were going through a tough time and I learnt how to approach them while giving them space to grieve.

Gary:

I realise that is not easy to be a social worker – a good one. It is emotionally draining as one has to focus on both the individual clients and the social environment. However, love and passion will carry a good social worker through the work while making an enormous impact on his clients.

2 Advocates of SACA’s work

Stacey:

While working on the RISE books with SACA and my teammates, I realised that the stigma around ex-offenders and their families is still prevalent in Singapore. As much as ex-offenders want to reintegrate into society, I think society’s attitude towards them also plays a part in their reintegration. I feel that even if it is only one person helping ex-offenders and their families, that effort can go a long way in influencing others to do the same too!

John:

I was stationed at State Courts for the family-connect @ State Courts initiative. It has a lot of potential, and I like the idea that assistance was going upstream. This flow of services is very much prevention-oriented (not of crime, but of recidivism).

Gary:

I love to interact with the clients as their stories never fail to amaze me. They often demonstrate resilience despite their on-going predicaments.

Stacey



“I destress by watching my favourite videos on YouTube, or take a breather by shopping to get my mind off things for a while.”

Stacey’s quiet and unassuming nature belies a great thirst for learning. Aside from the exposure to the different SACA programmes, she was especially instrumental in the production of the RISE books, a series of three books that hope to support family members cope with the incarceration of their loved ones.

Gary



“Try the fish head soup that is located at Veerasamy Road, near SACA’s office. My all-time favourite!”

Gary was a valuable sidekick to the SACA team. He helped with home visits with families of incarcerated mothers, following up with assessments, reports and referrals to services within their communities. Gary actively managed distribution of the RISE guidebooks. He also energised SACA with fun activities for staff and volunteers!

3 Imparting the value of social work

Gary:

I always tell others that good social workers should be respected because they make a difference to the lives of others. I want to advocate for vulnerable individuals to fulfil their passion; everyone should be given the freedom of choice to live the life they want. If I were given the chance, I would ultimately want to be a social work lecturer to shape the next generation of social work students.

4 Personal Growth

John:

I learned a lot through social work theories and direct work with clients. Effort is essential towards self-improvement and making goals a reality. This is applicable to personal goals and professional ones.

APPRECIATING....

“Remember to celebrate milestones as you prepare for the road ahead.”

– NELSON MANDELA

SACA is constantly looking for new ways to better serve our clients and their families. The road ahead for SACA includes new programmes that acknowledge the importance of families and the struggles they face when their loved ones have been incarcerated. SACA's Patron, the Honourable the Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Chairman of SACA, Mr Jeffrey Beh, officially launched both the RISE series of help books and the family-connect @ State Courts initiative during SACA's Appreciation Night held at Hilton Hotel on 24 November 2017.



The community plays a vital role in the return and eventual reintegration of the ex-offender.

Some thoughts on the initiative from our volunteer:

“The incarcerated are not the only ones who are having a hard time. The moment the prison sentence is passed the incarcerated's families members are subject to emotional, psychological, social and financial challenges.”

– VOLUNTEER LIM KAH KENG

Students from Nanyang Polytechnic staged a short skit to illustrate the unspoken pain family members go through because of incarceration. It is often said that when a parent, sibling, or child goes to jail, the whole family serves the sentence alongside him. We hope that family members will be able to overcome their hurdles with love and support from the community.



The night was also a celebration of SACA's people: much of what the Association does is made possible by its volunteers, who celebrated the two decades since the initiation of the Volunteer After-Care Programme in 1997.

Awards were presented to tireless volunteers who have dedicated time and energy in journeying with our clients in their efforts to look ahead and re-establish ties with loved ones.



Ms Nicole Ong, winner of the Outstanding Volunteer Award, with Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon and Mr Jeffrey Beh



New volunteers, such as Tay Hwee Boon, were recognised during the night. Our volunteers are voices championing hope and acceptance for our clients!

SACA believes that education is key to opening new doors for ex-offenders. Our Education Support Programme's 10th Anniversary was celebrated during the night. We applaud the resolve of our student-clients to forge a brighter future. Never stop believing!



Mr Pek Keng Siong, who won the Outstanding Student Award, was an inspiring voice that spoke about the realities of working hard to complete his degree and hold down a job while desisting from a life of crime.

Responding to new needs, celebrating successes and the spirit of working together with community partners all contribute to where SACA stands today and her future in fulfilling her vision of seeing well integrated ex-offenders contributing in a caring society. We will not be here today without our valued partners, volunteers, and clients, who tirelessly support and advocate for our cause.

Some thoughts on the initiative from our volunteer:

"I learnt how to have more empathy and understanding towards people who are affected because their loved ones made the wrong decisions. I hope families know that we're there to help when they feel the need for assistance."

— VOLUNTEER
TRIWINA WAHYUDI



SACA's Patron, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, giving an exclusive interview to media.



The RISE series of books, jointly published by SACA and Nanyang Polytechnic.

family-connect @ State Courts

When a loved one is sentenced and serves his terms, families are inevitably thrust into a situation of pain, loss, and confusion. Recognising this need, State Courts and SACA have teamed up to provide immediate support to these families. The family-connect @ State Courts initiative reaches out to family members who require assistance upon witnessing their loved ones being sentenced to a prison term in court.

Families who require information regarding what to expect next – be it practical arrangements, where they can turn to for help – or who would like a listening ear are encouraged to approach SACA's volunteers and staff who are stationed at State Court's i-Connect area several times a week.

As of end March 2018, a total of 54 families have been approached through the initiative.

Community Collaborations RISE series guidebooks: SACA X Nanyang Polytechnic

Complementing the family-connect @ State Courts initiative, the RISE series of guidebooks have been distributed to families of offenders as well as agencies in the community. These books comprise information and tips to help families, especially of first-time offenders, cope with the emotional and material challenges they will face after a loved one's incarceration.

Agencies who have received the books include Family Service Centres and Social Service Organisations.

SACA in the News

We are thankful to the local media for supporting our new initiatives and spreading the message of hope and resilience on behalf of the Association and our clients.

SINGAPORE

Families of offenders to get support services and counselling from 2018

24 Nov 2017 07:50PM

Updated: 24 Nov 2017 11:45PM

Bookmark

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SINGAPORE: Family members of offenders facing jail time will have access to counselling and referrals to financial and social services at the State Courts from January next year with the launch of family-connect @ State Courts.

The collaborative initiative between the State Courts and the Singapore After-Care Association (SACA), an aftercare agency for ex-offenders, was launched by Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon at SACA's Appreciation Night on Friday (Nov 24).

Channel News Asia, 24 Nov 2017

It was accompanied by a 4 minute video clip of the launch, as well as an interview with a past client of SACA's. Together with his wife, they described the practical and emotional challenges endured during his 18-month sentence.

SINGAPORE

COURTS & CRIME

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Question-and-answer booth at State Courts to help families of those sentenced to jail

Starting next January, the Singapore After-Care Agency will set up a booth at the State Courts to answer questions from family members of those soon to be imprisoned. PHOTO: ST FILE

© PUBLISHED: NOV 24, 2017 7:50 PM SGT | UPDATED: NOV 24, 2017 10:16 PM

Straits Times online, 24 Nov 2017

SINGAPORE

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Early support for families of inmates

PUBLISHED NOV 25, 2017 5:00 AM SGT

They can get help, queries answered at State Courts booth once court judgment is passed

Aw Cheng Wei

An agency that helps former inmates and their family members cope with life after prison wants to offer its services to them earlier, once the courts have passed judgment.

Starting in January, as part of a six-month pilot, the Singapore After-Care Association (Saca) will set up a booth at the State Courts to answer questions from family members of those who will be jailed soon.

The State Courts and Saca said in a joint statement yesterday that the stability of inmates' homes plays a vital role in their reintegration into society upon their release.

Straits Times online, 25 Nov 2017

Singapore

World

Big Read

Opinion

Visuals

Brand Spotlight

Families of offenders to get more immediate support and information at State Courts

Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, launched today a new initiative to help families of offenders facing jail time. He said the initiative will help families of offenders facing jail time to get more immediate support and information at State Courts.

Today online, 24 Nov 2017

SINGAPORE

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Booth at State Courts to help families of those sentenced to jail

AW CHENG WEI

© Nov 25, 2017 04:00 am

12 Shares

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The State Courts and Saca said in a joint statement yesterday that the stability of inmates' homes plays a vital role in their reintegration into society upon their release.

Saca director Prem Kumar said the agency's work with young children whose mothers are imprisoned highlighted the need to help and support affected families.

"It makes sense to reach out and offer help to these families at the point of sentencing rather than wait until the loved one is in prison," he said.

The New Paper, 25 Nov 2017

முதல் முறை குற்றம் புரிந்து சிறை செல்பவர்களின் குடும்பத்தினருக்கு ஆதரவு வழங்கும் புத்தகங்கள்

23/12/2017 18:59

By: தங்கநந்தினி தம்பையன்

சிங்கப்பூர் பின்னல்சேவைச் சங்கம் (SACA), நன்யாங் பலதிறைத் தொழிற்கல்வாரி மாணவர்களுடன் சேர்ந்து RISE எனும் 3 புத்தகங்களைக் கொண்ட தொட்டரை வெளியிட்டுள்ளது.

Tamil Seithi online, 27 Dec 2017, on

the RISE books providing support to families of first-time offenders. Featured an interview with teacher-in-charge of the NYP FYP team RISers, Saraswathi Raja Krishnan, and RISer Vinosha Sivanathan.

SINGAPORE

COURTS & CRIME

Education

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Help for families with a member facing jail

Families of people who are about to be jailed could be at a loss, especially if a breadwinner, is being sentenced. Under the pilot project, volunteers from the Singapore After-Care Association will be available at a booth at the State Courts for at least six months. They will answer questions and help families understand what happens when a loved one is jailed. PHOTO: DICK VINCOY JR FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

© PUBLISHED: JAN 29, 2018, 5:00 AM SGT

Straits Times, 29 Jan 2018

帶稚孫探母監 兩親家起爭執

义工:家人比当事人更伤痛

國家法院一樓將設有三個資訊台，供家屬尋求協助。(西報圖)

費貝盈 報導
ngpelyin@sph.com.sg
邵佩儀 攝影

于本月尾推出新的援助計劃，以協助家屬在法庭判決後，能及早上座尋求經濟援助或心理輔導等支援。

許淑芳律師說，設計出為，是不只難地獄又「中律律」。「在法庭上，我親身沒有經驗過，家人在庭上目睹親家被上樓後，還要與律師在庭上辯論，這與許多人在庭上時所感受，該有多麼痛苦。

她指出，义工主要是為家屬提供協助的幫助，我才能減輕他們的悲痛負擔以外，也會讓囚犯初下心火火。

許淑芳(左)與時常與家屬援助計劃試驗律師費貝盈。

許淑芳律師之後，建議以雙方直接詢問與會者的意見，以得知他們的決定與否。正如費利，母家寧可承受與親家分離之痛，也不願讓兒女再負。

經討論後，這囚犯的老伴都不願到，並帶同牛馬，帶上兩個女兒進庭。

對費女士指稱，有些家屬可能無法理解律師，又有些也會與律師發生爭執，他們的律師

Lianhe Wanbao, 29 Jan 2018

B6 | HOME

Early support for families of inmates

They can get help, queries answered at State Courts booth once court judgment is passed

Aw Cheng Wei

An agency that helps former inmates and their family members cope with life after prison wants to offer its services to them earlier, once the courts have passed judgment.

Starting in January, as part of a six-month pilot, the Singapore After-Care Association (Saca) will set up a booth at the State Courts to answer questions from family members of those who will be jailed soon.

The State Courts and Saca said in a joint statement yesterday that the stability of inmates' homes plays a vital role in their reintegration into society upon their release.

Saca director Prem Kumar said its work with young children whose mothers are in prison highlighted the need to help and support affected families. He said: "It makes sense to reach out and offer help to these families at the point of sentencing rather than wait until the loved one is in prison."

Staffed by experienced volunteers, the booth, called family-connect @ State Courts, will run every Monday and Wednesday from 10am to 2pm. It is a stop for families who want to know the type of help they can receive, particularly at the State Courts, which handle about 99 per cent of Singapore's criminal caseload.

Volunteers will point families in the "right direction based on their specific needs", said Mr Kumar.

Examples include referrals to social agencies for those cash-strapped, support for schooling children and legal help.

Mr Kumar added: "Some families only need someone to pour their hearts out to, and we will be there for them as well."

At a Saca event yesterday, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon said family was one of the most critical aspects in helping former inmates reintegrate into society. He added that family-connect @ State Courts helps families to "weather through that time where somebody who may be the main breadwinner is going to be incarcerated".

For the pilot project, Mr Kumar's agency will train 25 volunteers.

At yesterday's event, Saca also launched a book series that aims to support children with family members in jail. It worked with final-year students from Nanyang Polytechnic to publish three books on how families can cope with the temporary loss of a family member. Among them is an illustrated storybook titled Alex Visits Daddy, where the narrator describes his struggles with his father's sudden imprisonment.

Translated into Chinese, Malay and Tamil, the books will be distributed at the family-connect @ State Courts booth, some schools and other agencies that work with inmates. Digital copies will be available on Saca's website at a later time.

awcw@sph.com.sg

Straits Times, 25 NOV 2017

速读狮城

明年起被告被判入狱后 家属可立即获心理辅导

从明年1月起，被告在法庭上被判入狱后，他们的家属可立即在一项新的援助计划下获得心理辅导，如果有需要，还可转介社会服务机构，申请经济援助。

这项从“上座”开始援助囚犯家属的计划，由国家法院和新加坡狱外监护协会（Singapore After-Care Association，简称SACA）合作推出，目的是在被告家属在法庭宣判后，当下提供支援。

大法官梅达顺昨晚在新加坡狱外监护协会的答谢晚宴上，为上述计划主持推介仪式。

狱外监护协会将在国家法院设立一个咨询台，每周两个早上安排三四名工作人员接受培训的义工，为前来求助的家属提供服务。

协会也会安排工作人员或义工到法庭聆听个别案件，一旦被告被判刑，就与被告家属接触，以了解他们是否需要援助。除了辅导和转介服务，协会也为家属提供监狱程序等方面的信息，同时也会跟进，确保家属获得全面的支援。

Lianhe Zaobao, 25 Nov 2017