



handicaps digest

A Publication of Handicaps Welfare Association
MICA (P) 022/01/2009

Jul - Sep 2009



**START / END
WHEEL, WALK OR JOG**

'Walks and Wheelies' in the Park!

/ See page 22



New Rehab Centre for HWA

Handicaps Welfare Association - Rehab & Training Centre

Handicaps Welfare Association -
1 Jurong West Central 2,
#04-03 Jurong Point Shopping Centre,
Singapore 648886

- Comprehensive Physical Rehabilitation Service For Adults and Children
- Physiotherapy
- Occupational Therapy
- Training on Activities of Daily Living
- Training on Community Mobility
- Caregivers Training
- IT and Skills Training
- Job and Internship placement
- Consultation on Accessibility
- HWA Rehabilitation Centre caters to the needs of people with physical disabilities.



- Programmes aim to rehabilitate people with physical disabilities by involving the participation of the disabled individuals in various essential activities so as to inculcate a sense of independence in them.

OBJECTIVES

To provide our clients with best quality programmes and services

To make a positive change in their attitude towards disability

To enhance the quality of life of the people with disabilities



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Jul-Sep 2009

The Handicaps Welfare Association was founded to encourage and foster the ideals of self-help and mutual among the disabled and to promote their welfare. All the members of the Executive Committee are persons with disabilities.

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Design and Print by
Octogram Press Pte Ltd

Handicaps Digest is a quarterly publication of the Handicaps Welfare Association. The opinions and views expressed in this magazine by writers do not necessarily reflect the official view of THE HANDICAPS WELFARE ASSOCIATION.

Information is correct at time of printing.

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Director's Foreword

Dear Readers,

I am pleased to highlight that this issue of Digest sees many exciting events and updates from the past 3 months!

I would like to express my gratitude to the members who have attended our annual AGM and given your support in the election of our Executive Committee. For the first time, we have had the opportunity to incorporate a dinner into the AGM and we sincerely hope the night was enjoyable for one and all.

As the year ahead continues to see the commemoration of HWA's 40th Anniversary, the various events we have lined up have seen much success and all thanks go out to our generous donors, supporters and volunteers who have made it all possible.

HWA's 40th Anniversary Charity Dinner held on 27th June 09 and our annual Wheel, Walk or Jog 2009

on 5th July, had helped us meet our fund-raising objectives. We are grateful to Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports, and Mr George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs, for gracing the above events respectively. We look forward to the upcoming fund-raising Gala Concert to be held at the Esplanade in September.

During a difficult period such as the H1N1 pandemic and economic downturn, we at Handicaps Welfare Association have been extremely fortunate to receive continuous support from our donors, supporters and volunteers.

We will continue to strive to provide our members and the public with the best of our services and as we work together, we shall continue to impact the lives of our physically-challenged fellow citizens and their families.

Leslie Teo

执行理事长前言

亲爱的读者朋友们，

我很高兴地申明这一期的文摘记载了过去3个月里许多令人兴奋的事件！

我要感谢那些参加了我们的常年大会的会员，和对理事选举给予支持的会员。第一次，我们把常年大会和晚宴举办在一起。我们真诚地希望那晚每个人都乐在其中。

接下来又继续了各种各样的HWA四十周年纪念活动。这些活动先后都取得了成功。这一切都要归功于我们慷慨的捐助者，支持者和义工们的贡献。

2009年6月27日举行的HWA四十周年慈善晚宴，以及2009年7月5日的行兼跑2009活动，帮助了我们去实现我们的筹款目标。我们要感谢维文医生，

社区发展，青年和体育部部长，以及杨荣文外交部长。他们分别参与了以上两个活动，使活动更具意义。我们期待着九月在滨海艺术中心即将举行的筹款音乐庆祝会。

在一个困难的时期，如这次全国流行的H1N1流感和经济低迷时期，我们残障人士福利协会非常幸运地获得我们的捐助者，支持者和志愿者的继续支持。

我们将继续努力，为我们的成员和公众提供最好的服务。在我们的共同努力下，我们将继续影响和帮助我们的身体有缺陷的国民以及他们的家人的生活。

Leslie Teo

Executive Committee 2007/2009

President

Nancy Chia

Vice President

Desiree Lim Kok Liang

Honorary Secretary

Chua Kian Sheng

Honorary Assistant Secretary

Judy Tan Keng Ngho

Honorary Treasurer

Lim Puay Tiak

Honorary Assistant Treasurer

Wendy Lau Wong Hing

Committee Members

Freddy Lim

Jack Lai Pak Lok

Julie Chong Cheng Harn

Michelle Siew Teok See

Ringo Om Kim Chai

New Members

HWA welcomes the following new members into its family:

Ordinary Members

- Nazareth Olivia Isabelle
- Mohamed Nasrudin Bin Noor Mohamed
- See Huey Lai
- Othman Bin Hassan
- Kumar s/o Adiapatham
- Goh Kim Hock Christopher
- Lee How Teck Andy
- Shah Hafiz Bin Anuar
- Muhammad Ashik Bin Ishak
- Loo Peng Kien
- Bibi Zaliha d/o Shah Baz Kwan
- Wang Peng Han
- Panneerselvam s/o Ulakanthan

Associate Member

- Chong Kee Yew
- Chia Sheau Ching

Obituary

With Deepest Sympathy and Heartfelt
Condolences to the Families of:

- Wan Kwok Tai
- Lim Bin Kiat
- Leow Chak Wa
- Low Eng Loo
- Lee Seng Hin
- Tan Kim Thye

Annual General Meeting

Handicaps Welfare Association's 40th Annual General Meeting (AGM) was held on 6 June at the Civil Service Club (Qian Xi Farrer Park Restaurant)

Members Poll for New Exco

It was a cool, pleasant evening with about 200 members of the Handicaps Welfare Association dressed in their Saturday best strolled into the Civil Service Club restaurant to enjoy a sumptuous dinner, karaoke competition, lucky draw and of course to attend our 40th Anniversary Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 6 June 2009!

As we celebrated our 40's year of improving the lives of the physically challenged, this year's AGM also promised to be different as members exchanged different views with HWA's president, Nancy Chia about helping the disabled, commended on our services as well as singing their hearts out at the Karaoke Competition while enjoying the 8-course dinner.

The President highlighted the achievements of the Association which included expanding our fleet of transportation vehicles, more social recreation activities as well as social services for the members. Despite the poor economic climate and more charities seeking donations, Ms Chia was optimistic that the needs of the physically challenged will not be compromised. This was evidenced with the opening of the new Rehab and Training Centre at Jurong Point earlier this year. This centre hopes to serve and meet the demand especially of those residing in the west region of Singapore and to expand our services to children with disabilities.

With the increase in services, HWA will also be embarking on more fund-raising activities which include a Charity Dinner and Gala Concert. These events will complement HWA's regular fund-raising efforts like the All-Cash Donation Draw,

and Flag Day. Our donors and sponsors were also given an honorable mention for their unwavering support all these years.

As Singapore heads towards an aging society, Ms Chia shared her vision of starting an institution home for members who may have ended up bed-ridden. As such the management will be in dialogue with the relevant authorities in setting up this home. Upon concluding her message, members proceeded to voting the new exco which resulted in Ms Chia being elected as the new unopposed president who will steer the Association through difficult waters for the next two years.

Next on the agenda was food and entertainment as members were served with sumptuous food which members savored while sharing stories with friends they had not met for ages. The long awaited Karaoke competition also saw many crooners singing both Mandarin and English songs, and swaying to the beat and rhythm of the tune. The newly elected President also joined in the celebrations as she joined in the fun and sang a number much to the delight of the members.

In between the fun and laughter, members were treated to a lucky draw which many crossed their fingers hoping to land a prize. All too soon, all the prizes were awarded to 20 lucky members, however that was not the end as the judging for the Karaoke Competition saw three members walking away with the top three prizes donated by Ms Chia and another 9 members with the consolation prizes. As the evening's programme ended on a high note, many members stayed on to catch up with old friends.

2009常年大会

残疾人士福利协会于六月六日在国民服务俱乐部(千禧楼餐馆)举办了协会第40届常年大会。

会员选举新一届理事会成员

2009年6月6日,在位于花拉公园的国民服务俱乐部里,近200名残疾人士福利协会会员参加了一场别开生面的常年大会,并在会议议程结束后享用了一场丰盛晚宴,和会议余兴节目-卡拉OK比赛及幸运抽奖。

为欢庆协会40周年,今年的常年大会除了提供机会让会员与会长就帮助残疾人士,完善协会服务等课题交流意见外,还特别为会员们安排了精彩的卡拉OK比赛及八道菜的丰盛晚宴。

会长着重介绍了协会过去一年的工作成绩,包括了增加交通部门的车辆,提供更多的社交娱乐活动及扩大社会服务范围等。尽管当前国家经济萧条,更多慈善机构积极寻求社会捐助,Nancy仍对协会前景表示乐观。这一点可从协会全新的康复治疗与培训中心于今年年初在裕廊坊的正式开放看出来。这个中心除了将针对位于新加坡西部的居民提供服务外,还特别将服务范围延伸到残疾儿童群体。随着服务范围的逐步扩大,协会也将开拓更多的筹款活动。除了协会每年举办的福利现金奖券和售旗日外,还将首次举办慈善晚宴和慈善音乐会作为40周年的特别筹款活动。

针对新加坡人口日渐老化的趋势,Nancy提出建议,成立一个慈善疗养院以照顾那些卧病在床的会员们。协会管理层将就此与相关政府部门展开交涉。会长发言结束后,会员们开始选举下一届理事会成员。Nancy再次当选为理事会会长,她将继续带领协会度过未来两年可能面对的艰难局势。

选举结束后,会员们开始享用丰盛晚宴,与多年未见的好友们把臂同欢。与此同时,期待已久的卡拉OK比赛终于拉开帷幕,参赛者演唱了中英文歌曲,让与会者在享受美食之余也大饱耳福。新当选的会长Nancy也乘兴高歌一曲,博得满堂喝彩。

欢声笑语中。激动人心的幸运抽奖开始了,很多会员们默默祈祷着大奖的降临。一时间,惊喜的欢呼声与失望的叹息声此起彼落,总计20个奖项一一出炉。而接下来的卡拉OK比赛成绩揭晓更将会场掀起另一个高潮。掌声如雷中,前三名参赛者依此获颁头三等奖,而另外九名参赛者也分别获得了安慰奖。整场会议在一片欢乐的气氛中落下帷幕。

President 会长



Name: Nancy Chia
Occupation: Manager

Vice President 副会长



Name: Desiree, Lim Kok Liang
Occupation: Group Finance Manager

Honorary Secretary 荣誉秘书



Name: Judy, Tan Keng Ngho
Occupation: Retiree

Annual General Meeting

Honorary Asst Secretary 荣誉副秘书长



Name: Chua Kian Sheng
Occupation: Chief Architect

Honorary Asst Secretary 荣誉副秘书长



Name: Siew Teok See, Michelle
Occupation: Retiree

Honorary Treasurer 荣誉财政



Name: Teo Teck Soon
Occupation: Officer

Honorary Asst Treasurer 荣誉副财政



Name: Freddy, Lim Kah Chin
Occupation: Higher Technical Officer

Committee Members 委员



Name: Chua Kian Sheng
Occupation: Chief Architect



Name: Loh Kien Hoe
Occupation: Car Rental



Name: Henry, Yong Chee Seng
Occupation: Unit Supervisor



Name: Lau Wong Hing, Wendy
Occupation: Admin/Acct Executive



Name: Lim Choon Heng, Simon
Occupation: Sales Representative



Name: Poh Seng Liong, James
Occupation: Freelance Photographer

A Charity Dinner Worth Every Cent

A Wheelchair Dance Extravaganza!



Guests arrived at the Pioneer Spring Restaurant, (SAFRA Mount Faber) dressed in their best evening attire. Men came wearing their smart evening suits, complete with jackets and shining leather shoes and the ladies in their signature dresses with matching handbags. Bright cheery smiles were seen all round as many greeted close friends with hugs and pecks on the cheek. The ballroom dancers were equally well-dressed and were ready to dazzle the guests with their suave, smooth moves not from gliding across the dance floor but from twirling around with special wheelchairs.

The Charity Dinner that saw 250 guests present on Saturday, 27 June 2009 was more than just supporting a charity but also to witness how our physically challenged members were able to redefine 'ballroom dancing' to wheelchair ballroom dancing.

A Charity Dinner Worth Every Cent – A Wheelchair Dance Extravaganza



Guests Arrive promptly for Dinner



Mr Roy Yeo, Organising Chairman of Dinner gives a hearty welcome speech



Ms Nancy Chia, HWA President delivers her thankful acknowledgements to all present



Welcoming party together with Zhong Hup Lion Dance Troupe escort GOH, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan into restaurant



A painting by HWA Member, Tay Bee Lian was presented to Dr Vivian Balakrishnan in appreciation for his presence

In her opening speech, HWA's president Ms Nancy Chia highlighted the challenges the Association faced in helping to meet the growing needs of our physically challenged members which includes rehabilitation and training, accessible transportation, work-life and job placement, social services support and social integration.

She thanked the generous donors and supporters for their unwavering support and dedication throughout these years as the Association was able to grow from strength to strength for the past 40 years by being there for its 1,800 members. She also expressed her gratitude to Dr Vivian

Balakrishnan, Minister for Community Development Youth and Sports who graced the occasion.

Ms Nancy Chia stressed that despite the economic downturn and H1N1 crisis, the Association will continue to press on. She mentioned since its inception in 1969, the community has been forthcoming in their efforts to help the Association meet its objectives through generous donations from notable donors such as Chen Su Lan Trust and Shaw Foundation.

She thanked the community for helping to improve the quality of living for disabled members as well



Our wheelchair extravaganza dancers!



Specially flown in from U.K, dance professionals Barry Winters and Holly Woolcott



Wheelchair Dancers take center stage!



Temperature Checks at Reception



Guests dance the night away!



A grand finale

as to promote self- sufficiency. She mentioned that the newly opened Jurong Point Rehab centre which aims to provide therapy service for those residing in the West marked another milestone in the Association's history and will continue to place its members' interest first.

The evening hit a high note with the Wheelchair Dance Extravaganza, which incorporated able-

bodied and wheelchair dancers in jazz and contemporary dance styles, in a beautiful collaboration. One particular guest who enjoyed the performance and was thrilled with the turning and twirling of our disabled members commented to our staff, "This has to be the best dinner I have ever attended and is worth every cent!"

“An Inspiring and Insightful Community Visit to HWA”

Contributed by Jason Khoo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs



Interaction with HWA members at Rehab Centre

Tour of Independent Living Centre

20 staff from the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)** visited The Handicaps Welfare Association on 12 May 2009 with big packages and big hearts! It was a meaningful visit as we came to better understand the mission and appreciate the efforts of MFA's adopted charity in promoting the welfare and enhancing the quality of life of people with disabilities.

After a briefing by HWA's Programme Executive Jason Irwin Rodrigo, we were given a tour of HWA's premises and were shown the various rehabilitation and training services of the centre. One of the rooms simulated a home environment with a bedroom, washroom and kitchen stations to train clients to be independent in the activities of daily living. It was a poignant moment as we saw how simple everyday actions which we take for granted, like taking the lid off a cookie jar, require a whole lot of effort for someone with disabilities to accomplish. We were also shown a car that was retrofitted with hand-control devices to allow people with disabilities to drive.

When the tour ended, we took the opportunity to interact with the members who were undergoing occupational and physio-therapy and shared with them the food and snacks that we had brought along. HWA arranged for their member, Thomas Chua, who was paralysed from neck down from an accident 10 years ago, to share with us the challenges he faced. All of us were inspired by his spirit and his resolve not to let his disabilities get in the way of him living a fulfilling life. Thomas has plans to be a motivational speaker and has recently taken up mouth painting. He has also published a book chronicling his life as a person with disabilities.

Before we ended the visit, we helped HWA prepare about 2000 circulars for mailing. Inspired by the people we met and the mission of HWA, some of us expressed interest in signing up as a volunteer. If you would like to volunteer in any capacity, please email Programme Executive Jason Irwin Rodrigo to find out more. He can be reached at jason@hwa.org.sg.



Viewing of specially retrofitted car for the disabled



Volunteering to distribute circulars to HWA members



A group picture as we bid farewell to HWA's speaker, Thomas Chew



“A Kind Gesture Never Goes Un-noticed”

Contributed by Jason Khoo, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

In conjunction with Christmas Sherry Hour 2008, IMD organised a fund-raiser to garner donations for MFA's adopted charity.

A substantial amount raised went towards the purchase of rehabilitation equipment for HWA's newly setup Rehab and Training Centre @ Jurong Point.

MFA Club members and IMD staff who organised the fund-raiser excitedly visited HWA's new centre on 18 June 2009 to have a deeper insight into their contribution.



With a tour of the centre followed by lunch, HWA then presented a plaque to MFA Club Chairman Mr Roy Kho as a gesture of their appreciation.

It has truly been an enriching experience and a joy for us to know we have contributed to helping uplift the lives of the physically disabled in our society.



Tour of Jurong Point Rehab Centre and Equipment sponsored by MFA

As part of Kampong Java Neighbourhood Police Centre (KJ NPC) ongoing efforts to build strong police-community relation and friendship, an event titled “Community Service from the Heart” was organised by Kampong Java NPC.

Community Service fro

Contributed by Ms Kamisah Othman, Kampong Java NPC

On 30 June 2009, officers from Kampong Java NPC visited the Handicaps Welfare Association. About 26 volunteered officers came together to interact in a 2 hour session with 14 members of the Handicaps Welfare Association. It was a good opportunity for all to take time off from their busy schedule and spent some quality time chit-chatting with the handicap members.

During the visit, members shared their stories with the officers and got to know each other better. The members were also treated to a delicious lunch. Following which, officers lined up an

entertaining song segment “Heal the World” for the members. Everyone sang along to the music and truly enjoyed themselves. Commanding Officer of Kampong Java NPC then presented each member with a goodie bag.

It was indeed an eye opener as the officers learnt what a person with disabilities feels and goes through. It is definitely an experience that will help us in our future interaction with children or adults with such conditions in our work and social life.



Kampong Java NPC Officers interacting with members at HWA rehabilitation centre

m the Heart



HANDICAPS



Members enjoying lunch with officers and participating in sing-along!



Visits to Our Association

Delegates from The Hong Kong Society for Rehabilitation visit HWA to discuss Accessibility and Transportation on 24 April 2009



Delegates engage in an enriching discussion on Accessibility and exchange ideas on improvement



HWA was pleasantly surprised by a token of appreciation presented to us!

Korean Social Workers visit HWA for educational purposes on 27 May 2009



Tour of Independent Living Centre



A vibrant goodbye!

RIJC project visit on 4 June 2009



Students working on a project to learn more about our service and their contribution to our members

Delegates from Social Welfare Organizations in China visit HWA to discuss Work life and Employability on 16 June 2009



Joyce and Gladys from HWA provided professional English to Mandarin translation, making it a productive visit!



Visitors took a tremendous liking to HWA's Art Room and its beautiful paintings by members



A goodbye group picture to remember

visit on School of Health Sciences (Nurses) Nanyang Polytechnic visit on 18 & 25 May 2009



...ect paid a visit to HWA to ...ces and how to be a ...rs



To facilitate the learning process of those pursuing their Advanced Diploma (Gerontology), Lecturer Ms Ambel from Nanyang Polytechnic has worked with HWA regularly to allow her students a hands-on experience with our rehab clients



The interest and enthusiasm of the students are remarkable!

Darkness unto Light

Contributed by Mrs Doris Fernando

“Where there is no struggle, there is no strength.” – Oprah Winfrey

Managing a serious mental disorder coupled with a physical disability, can be extremely daunting for both the sufferer and her family. “I was stricken with schizophrenia at the tender age of 17 and later on found out I had Psoriatic Arthritis Sine Psoriasis and Osteoarthritis of the knees in 2005,” said Mrs Doris Fernando.

Believed to be the most distressing and disabling of all mental disorders, Schizophrenia is a complex illness, which affects 1 and 2% of people during their lifetime. Sufferers have difficulties in their thought processes, which in turn leads to hallucinations, delusions, disordered thinking and unusual speech or behaviour. Many start hearing voices. Contrary to popular belief, people suffering from schizophrenia do not have “split personalities.” Unfortunately, this illness carries a stigma. That’s the bad news. But, here’s the good news: Medications and other treatments for schizophrenia, when used regularly and as prescribed, can help reduce and control the distressing symptoms of the illness.

In 2005, Doris found out that she had an arthritis condition and had to undergo a Total Knee Replacement (TKR) in 2006. She then joined HWA as a member in 2008.

With medication, counselling and strong emotional support, she has gone on to lead a perfectly normal life. “Despite having to struggle with schizophrenia that has ravaged a large part of my life and arthritis, a physical disability that leaves my mobility restricted, I have been blessed to have a loving, dedicated and caring husband in Raymond Anthony Fernando. We have been married for more than 33 years and he has taken exceptionally good care of me, many a time sacrificing his own social life.” Raymond’s commitment, love and dedication to Doris was recognised by the Asian Women’s

Welfare Association (AWWA) on 29 September 2007 when they presented him the “Model Caregiver Award.”

Recollecting some events, Doris said, “Throughout 33 years of marriage, I have suffered 11 relapses of schizophrenia and some of the causes include, the sudden death of my mother, financial problems, stresses of life, the loss of our only two children, missing out on my medications and my worry over my arthritis condition.”

“Writing is a good way to heal. Therefore, my husband decided in 2004, to go public and write about his journey in looking after me for more than three decades through his novel, “Loving a schizophrenic”. The book, which is the number 1 bestseller on mental health here in Singapore, launched his and my career as full-time writers.”

Raymond most certainly encouraged, motivated and inspired Doris to use the gift that God has given to everyone of us. Since her hubby found that her cooking was pretty good, Raymond suggested she write a cookbook, and thus “Cook with Love” was born. This cookbook proved a hit with 1,000 food lovers who enjoyed the many local dishes that were featured.

From there, Doris launched her second cookbook with her husband as co-author. “The pot that cooks and the pen that moves” has more of Mrs Fernando’s recipes. The second part of the book has a collection of beautiful poems penned by Raymond straight from the heart.

Encouraged by the success of her first two books, she was inspired and motivated to write her own true-life story – Documenting what life was like in the early years and the love her mother and husband showered on her. This novel entitled,



Mr and Mrs Fernando

"Beautiful memories, precious love" touched many readers. 1,000 copies of this book were snapped up in 6 months. "I was so uplifted!" Doris fondly remembers.

From there, Doris decided to write stories for children – to create and invent stories that would encourage the reading habit and creative writing in the young ones. With the success of, "Tell me a story, then I'll go to bed – a collection of bedtime stories for children" that was co-authored with Raymond, Doris went on to write her 5th book, entitled, "The glass slippers and other stories for children". The loving couple would like to publish this book by the end of the year if they can secure sponsorship to meet the publishing costs.

"I hope my story will encourage all our readers to enjoy life to the fullest. And even though you may be faced with challenges in your own life, find that spark that can set a mighty fire. In my case, my husband has provided me with that spark that had enabled me to see light at the end of the dark tunnel."

To get to know Doris and Raymond, order their books and read about the lovely poems Raymond has written for his wife, do log onto their website at <http://www.rayofhope.per.sg>

Flowers by the Hours

A floral tribute specially dedicated to my beloved wife, Doris

My Dearest Doris,

If I could compare your loveliness to a bouquet of flowers
The beauty that I could admire for hours and hours
For when I see a rose, I can see your face
In my heart, sweetie, you will always have a place

The colour red reminds me of how lovely you are
Your cuteness – so pretty like a flaming star
Just like the stalk, in whatever you do, you are straight
You keep your promises and carry out whatever you have said

Like the petals, you are soft and tender
Gentle, like a passing breeze that blows through your hair
For like the petals, you must be handled with utmost care

Though you may be fragile,
You've got style
You've got charisma that is unique
Doris, you've got that special technique

Like the flowers, your fragrance is so sweet smelling
Your warmth, your kindness, oh! So telling
You add colour to this uncertain world
You bring joy and make my heart twirl

Today, the sky will light up
And to it's beauty you will surrender
Today, your heart will flutter
And you will be in cloud nine
Today, you will rise and shine
Today, you are going to unwind
Many happy returns of the day, Doris my love
We are made for each other,
Like a hand and a glove

Sincerely,
Raymond Anthony Fernando
©copyrightraymondfernando2005

A Visit to the Vegetable Farm

Contributed by Edmund Wan, HWA Member

The first reaction when I received the circular from Handicaps Welfare Association was: 'Do we still have a vegetable farm? In a land as scarce as Singapore, how does one grow vegetables and make a profit out of this trade?' So I decided to sign up for the tour held on Saturday 25 April 2009.

Surprised to see other members who were just as keen as me, I happened to meet 2 members whom I have known for some time, Jason Tian and Keck San.

The journey was a pleasant one all the way to the farm at Neo Tiew Crescent.

We reached Aero-Green Technology (S) Pte Ltd, where we were greeted by the keen, enthusiastic volunteers from YMCA. Each one of us was assigned a volunteer with a name tag.

We were then given a video presentation on how this farm started applying the Aeroponic technology in growing vegetables in this 5.3 hectare farm – pioneered by Prof Lee Sing Kong of the Nanyang Technological University. This method of growing is with the roots of the plants supported in the air and anchored in holes on top of polystyrene foam. From a sealed trough below, fine mist of soluble nutrients are sprayed and absorbed by the roots.

Besides substantial savings in water and land / soil, the system also produces cleaner vegetables. It is cultivated under protected and controlled environment to prevent the insects helping themselves to the plants.



Arriving at Aero Green Technology

The tour leader explained the whole process starting with planting the seeds. The seeds are inserted into the polystyrene foam cut out into small square shape to germinate. It is kept in a dark air conditioned room until it starts growing, then transferred into the open and enclosed farm systematically.

Here, we learnt that most of the vegetables grown at the farm are sold locally at NTUC, Cold Storage, Shop N Save, Isetan, Giant and Carrefour Hyper market. Besides this, they are also packed into salad boxes (mix including tomatoes, etc) and supplied to places such as Sizzler, Brecks Café, Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf.

The farm even came up with an innovative idea of crushing the vegetables, mixing it with various fruits to make a nutritious drink. We were each given a small bottle to sample followed a big bowl of salad for lunch!

Many of us bought vegetables, drinks and sweet corn home and by 3pm, the heat had truly taken its toll on us.

It was indeed an insightful tour and on behalf of the members, I would like to thank HWA, the Volunteers from YMCA and the management of



The planting process

Aero Green Technology (S) Pte Ltd for organising this educational tour made possible to many of us who by own efforts, would not have been able to visit the farm by ourselves.



Finally our tour began!



Meeting our buddy volunteers from YMCA



The final result!

Marina Barrage, Here We Come!



Breathtaking views from Marina Barrage

Contributed by Naren Thiyagarajan, HWA Volunteer

YMCA and HWA get together for an on-site visit to Singapore's new Barrage.

HWA members and we (volunteers from HWA), arrived at the Marina Barrage, situated in the heart of the Marina South district. We were received with a warm welcome by Hans and the volunteers from YMCA. Imagine our excitement as we get the rare opportunity to be part of the Urban Reservoir Experience.

After the customary briefing by Hans and introduction of the volunteers, (where some familiar faces and smiles were seen), we realised that some members were already friends with some volunteers. This made it even more interesting as a group!

As the tour of the place commenced, we moved around to the viewing deck area followed by a stroll through the barrage's compound. Stopping for refreshments along the way, we were sure to take in the view of the sea, with the Barrage in front of us at the same time.

We started to follow the lead into the Audio Visual area. The high tech audio visual area described

Singapore's role in water conservation and how the Marina Barrage has boosted Singapore's water storage and the model of the barrage in operation was nicely presented by PUB.

Halfway through, we gathered at the roof-top with a view of the upcoming Integrated Resorts. The team had put together a number of interactive games, and HWA members most definitely enjoyed their skills being put to the test!

By the end of the tour, we learnt to identify the 3 main benefits of the barrage. Namely, its water supply and flood control techniques and lifestyle attraction with its unique location. Following which, we explored the six galleries, each sharing a unique aspect of Singapore's sustainable story.

To end, I have to sum it up as one of the most informative, educational and enjoyable trips we have ever had as a whole. And no better way to have ended it than with an awesome MacDonaldis lunch! We loved every bit of it.



Members and volunteers exploring interactive devices



Tour of the 09 galleries featuring sustainability

Fly High with GE Oil on the Singapore Flyer!

Contributed by Mai Okumura, HWA Volunteer

GE OIL invited HWA members to a trip on board the Singapore Flyer on 11 July 2009

As a volunteer with the Handicaps Welfare Association, I must say that it's my joy to be a part of the many activities organised by HWA and for HWA.

This time round, I was part of the Singapore Flyer experience that GE OIL had so graciously organised for HWA members. So with HWA members, staff and other volunteers, I excitedly made my way to the destination.

It was pouring heavily in the morning but to our surprise, it gradually dissipated and the sun shone brightly before we knew it. After ensuring all members were present, I realised that I did not know a single member that day. To my delight, they were extremely friendly and I was comfortable almost immediately!

After meeting the staff of GE OIL, we proceeded to board the Flyer. Not the first time on it, I noticed the vast difference between boarding it at night and this time during the day. The scenery in the day was spectacular. Throughout the ride, I took the opportunity to get to know the members and staff of GE Oil a little better. I was happy to see



Staff of GE OIL get to know members



Boarding the flyer!



Lunch at Italian Bistro!

the constant communication between members and other volunteers. I knew I would not have a problem fitting it in future events.

Upon alighting from the Flyer, we were provided with lunch at the Italian Bistro on the Singapore Flyer premises itself. Everyone would agree with me when I say the food was fantastic and we made good use of the time to know each other even better!

The day ended too soon. By the end of it, I reflected the different types of people I had met during the day, their different ages, various cultures and background. I am thankful to the members and staff of Handicaps Welfare Association for their warmth towards me and to GE OIL with providing us the enriching experience on the day and fun moments I will remember for a long time to come.

As I come from Japan, I have a slight disadvantage in the English Language. However, everyone has been gracious enough to help me through my communication. This proves that language is no obstacle. I will definitely do my level best as a volunteer of HWA and put in my best effort to make it worthwhile.

Walks and 'Wheelies' in the Park!

Nothing could stop the hundreds of people, wheelchair-users and able bodied from making their way to HortPark @ Alexandra on 5 July for HWA's 25th Annual Wheel, Walk or Jog event!



A beautiful scenic walk through the park

Beautiful weather on an early Sunday morning paired with the lush greenery of the newly opened HortPark (horticulture park), off Alexandra Road set the mood for Singapore's only "Wheel, Walk or Jog" event to be held annually.

HWA was fortunate to have had the venue for the first time, thanks to the National Parks Board (NParks) who have adopted us once again as its beneficiary charity for 2009.

A total of 120 volunteers came together in one heart to pitch in for preparations the day before the event and on the day itself. With the volunteers out in full force, many of the logistics and technical aspects of the event were taken care of the day before, which made easier the next morning.

With fingers crossed, we hoped for good weather and truly, we were blessed to have our wishes come true. At 7.30am, participants started to flow in at the reception area where they registered and were given goodie bags. By 8.15am, everyone waited eagerly for the arrival of Guest-of-Honor (GOH) Mr George Yeo, Minister for Foreign Affairs (MFA), who has graced Wheel, Walk or Jog four years in a row.

The GOH was given a warm welcome by hundreds of participants and SAFFC Cheer Warriors together with Ms Nancy Chia, President of HWA; Ms Desiree Lim, Vice-President of HWA; Mr Leslie Teo, Executive Director of HWA; Mr Wilson Tan, Group CEO of Singpost; Mr Roy Kho, Director of Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Mr Ng Lang, CEO of National



Volunteers registration



The simple pleasures of local food fare



Arrival of GOH, Mr George Yeo, Minister of Foreign Affairs



Emcee John and his stage games

Parks Board and Mr Kok Wai Leong, General Manager of SAF FC.

In Ms Nancy Chia's opening address, our HWA President expressed her gratitude and heartfelt appreciation to all donors, sponsors, supporters and volunteers for their generous contribution towards this special event. Ms Chia also noted her thanks to Singapore Post Limited who has joined us for the first time this year, to which their generous support contributed to its success.

Highlighting HWA's 40th Anniversary, Ms Chia gladly announced marking another milestone in the opening of Jurong Point Rehabilitation Centre. She gave forth her encouragement by noting that despite the economic downturn, HWA has

continued to receive support through fund-raising activities which sets a clear indication that Singaporeans still answer calls for help.

To show our outmost appreciation, a plaque presentation ceremony was carried out next to recognize the major partners, sponsors and donors for WWJ 2009. A specially designed plaque was then handed to GOH Mr George Yeo, for gracing the event with his presence.

The SAF FC Cheer Warriors then went on stage to lead all participants in a simple warm-up exercise before the start of the walk. Within the next 15 minutes, participants were geared up and ready to go as they waited excitedly at the flag-off point. Upon the sounding of the air-horn by Mr George Yeo marking the official flag-off, all

Walks and 'Wheelies' in the Park!



Plaque Recipients in appreciation to their generous contributions



SAF FC Cheer Warriors performing at the arrival



Participants trying their hand at game stalls

wheelchair-users, volunteers, sponsors and supporters wheeled and walked themselves in unison with the aim of completing the scenic 1.6km route together with a trivia with prizes to be won! Of course those who did not participate in the walk were not left out. Under a dome tent, there were game stalls with prizes and lots of local food. Many participants and children took part in the various games and were seen winning interesting goodies. The caricature and keychain booths proved most popular as long queues were seen with people waiting in line to have their face caricatured into a keychain.

As the first group of participants returned to the multi-purpose hall, stage games and performances begun. Emcee for the day, John Chan livened up the crowd with energetic games

for children and disabled members. A magic show was performed, leaving guests wowed with entertaining tricks! Participants stayed on for the lucky draw, anticipating the top prizes.

All too soon, WWJ 09 came to a close at 12pm and people were seen hanging around still enjoying the food and games and the beauty of HortPark.

WWJ 2009 would not have been a success if not for the never-ending and generous support of all present. We at HWA would like to give a shout-out with a big "HIP HIP HOORAY!" especially to those who contributed their time and assistance that Sunday morning. We look forward to all your support for the upcoming WWJ 2010!

在公园里的一次散步 和‘轮椅行’！

没有什么能够阻止数百人，轮椅使用者和健全人士于7月5日在亚历山大的HortPark来参加HWA的第25届行兼走活动！

星期天一早美丽的天气配和着新开的HortPark (园艺公园) 的盎然绿意，在亚历山大路边，新加坡唯一的“行兼跑”年度活动又一次开始了。

HWA很幸运的第一次在此举行活动。这要感谢国家公园局(NParks) 再次选择我们为它的2009年的慈善受益机构。

总共120名志愿者一起齐心和力地在活动前一天和当天努力地做筹备工作。因为志愿人员的辛苦努力，许多后勤和技术方面的筹备工作在前一天就完成了，这使得第二天的活动更方便的举行。

我们祈祷，老天在活动当天赐予我们好天气，幸运的是我们的愿望成真了。上午7点半，参与者开始在

接待处登记，并领取礼包。上午8时15分，每个人都热切地期待尊客外交部部长杨荣文先生的光临。他连续四年来出席行兼走的活动，为活动增添了不少光彩。

尊客受到了热烈的欢迎。他们是数百名的参加者，SAFFC欢呼队表演团，HWA的会长谢南茜女士，副会长Desiree Lim女士，执行理事长Leslie Teo先生，新加坡邮政集团主席Wilson Tan先生，外交部理事长Roy Kho先生，国家公园局首席执行官Ng Lang先生和SAFFC团队经理Kok Wai Leong先生。

在谢南茜女士的开幕词中，我们的这位会长表达了她发自内心的感谢。感谢所有的捐助者，赞助者，支持者和志愿者为这次特别活动的慷慨贡献。谢女



Adults are captivated by the fire show!



HWA's Harmonica Group putting up a performance



The more the merrier!



Lucky Draw Prizes!



Magic tricks captivate the children

士也特别感谢了新加坡邮政局今年第一次的参与，他们的慷慨支持促成这次活动的成功。

在强调了HWA的四十周年庆祝后，谢女士很高兴地宣布了另一个重要的里程碑——裕廊康复中心的成立。她鼓励指出，尽管经济不景气，HWA继续得到筹款活动的支持，这清楚地表示了新加坡人的乐于助人的精神。

为了表示我们的感激之情，接下来进行了纪念牌的颁发仪式。纪念牌分别颁给了2009年行兼走的主要合作伙伴，赞助商和捐助者。一个特别设计的纪念牌，颁给了尊客外交部部长杨荣文先生，以感谢他亲临活动的支持。

在开始行走之前，SAFFC欢呼队表演团的队员们上台教导所有参与者一个简单的热身运动。在接下来的15分钟，参与者准备就绪，兴奋地等待在起点处。当杨荣文先生正式鸣笛开始行走，所有的轮椅使用者，志愿者，赞助商和支持者齐开步伐，决心完成这景色怡人的1.6公里路线，得不得奖并不重要！

那些没有参加行走的人也没有被遗忘。在帐篷下，设有一些有奖游戏的摊位和一些食物摊位。许多与会者和儿童参加了各种游戏来赢取有趣的奖品。漫画和钥匙串摊位最受欢迎，人们排长队等候着他们的容貌画成漫画并做在钥匙链上。

当第一批行走的人们返回多功能厅时，舞台游戏和表演就开始了。作为当天的司仪，John Chan以充满活力的游戏来吸引儿童和残疾人士，使活动气氛活跃。魔术表演给人们带来了阵阵惊喜和高潮！很多参与者留下来参加的幸运大抽奖，希望拿到头奖。

很快地，2009年的行兼走活动在中午12点结束了。人们还继续流连于各种美食，游戏和HortPark的美景。

2009年行兼走活动的成功要归功于所有在场支持者的持续不断的慷慨的支持。我们HWA的全体人员很想大喊一声“万岁！”来给那些在星期天早上贡献他们的时间和帮忙的人士。我们期待着您为未来的2010年的年行兼走活动的继续支持！

Do You Have a Story to Tell?

We are calling out to all HWA members for article contributions to Digest. If your article is published in the Digest, you will receive an incentive of \$40 per article.

Here's what you have to do:

1. Write an original article* of about 800 to 1000 words, either in English or Chinese. You can choose the topic of your article. For example, you can write about your holiday or life experiences, but your article has to be original and never-before published.
2. Send your article to us by email (editor@hwa.org.sg). Please include in your subject heading, "Article Contribution".
3. Watch out for the next issue of Digest! If your article is published, we will contact you shortly for payment.

It's that easy. So start writing now!

* Your story/article should contain no false or unwarranted claims for any product or service and contain no defamatory statements. It should also not infringe the copyright or other right of any person. Published articles will become HWA's property (for both print and/or electronic media) upon payment. You will keep HWA indemnified against all claims, actions, suits, demands, losses, costs and expenses in respect of the printed matter.

你有故事要与人分享吗?

我们诚邀所有残疾人士福利协会的会员们为本刊贡献文章。如果你的文章在文摘中出版,你将收到\$40的稿费。

以下是具体步骤:

1. 写一个大约800到1000个字的文章,英文或华文都可以。你可以选择你的文章的主题。举例来说,你能写有关你的假日或者生活经验的故事,但是你的文章必须是真实的并且以前从未出版过。
2. 可以用电子邮件(editor@hwa.org.sg)发送你的文章给我们。请在邮件名称中标明“文章贡献”。
3. 留意下一期文摘的出版! 如果你的文章被刊登,我们将很快地联络你并且支付稿费。

就是那么容易。现在就开始写作吧!

* 你的故事/文章不应该包含针对任何的产品或者服务的错误的或者无根据的要求,而且没有包含破坏名誉的陈述。它也应该不破坏版权或任何人的其他权利。付款之后,出版文章版权将归残疾人士福利协会所有(印刷品及/或电子媒体)。如果违反以上规定,你必须赔偿残疾人士福利协会有关该出版物的所有主张,行动,诉讼,要求,损失、费用和开销。

“A Fun and Fruitful Time at HortPark - WWJ'09!”

Contributed by Thomas Chua Chee Siong, HWA Member

Even though I had heard of the place a few times, I never had the opportunity to visit HortPark before. So when the opportunity presented itself in the form of the venue for Handicaps Welfare Association's wheel walk or jog 2009, I was over the moon and signed up immediately.

Waking up at 6am on a Sunday cannot be an easy task. But we managed! We left the house just as daybreak approached. There was already a woman in a wheelchair aboard when HWA's transport arrived at 7.15am.

Upon arriving at HortPark, we alighted in front of the visitor centre. There was a water garden with potted aquatic plants floating gracefully in the pond. There was a walkway in the middle of it with a young family of 4 crossing. A nice sight to be greeted to indeed.

To reach the top of the visitor centre, we had to use a seemingly endless and zigzag slope. Standing over us was a roof-like structure that reminded me of the huge canopy of a rainforest. It was supported by numerous steel poles and beams. Victor, Jason and Cassandra from HWA were already there. Not many people had arrived so we were seemingly early.

Suddenly, something bright and colorful caught my eye. It was a picture of a huge white, red and black butterfly. There were a couple more such pictures on both sides, showcasing the different species. It was so refreshing just looking at them. Then I spotted many familiar faces that I have not seen in awhile. It was good to meet and catch up with old friends and HWA members.



Preparing to start

More and more participants started to pour in making the place very crowded and livening it up with noise. Most of them were wearing the red and white official T-shirt for the event. Cheerleader girls and boys from SAFFC were also there but there were no sign of the football team. Three years ago, I had the privilege to be pushed by a few soccer players during the wheel, walk and jog 2006 at East Coast Park.

Just a few moments before, 2 volunteers offered to help push my wheelchair. They were Wen Xu and Petrina, 1st year occupational students from Nanyang Polytechnic. We tried to make small talk but it was impossible as the high-tempo music was blasting away at full volume.

The cheerleaders had started their performance! The girls were thrown and tossed around while the guys were trying their utmost to catch them done at a very fast speed. Then appeared Guest-Of-Honor, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr George Yeo, accompanied by HWA president, Nancy Chia. He touched my hand and asked me how I was. 'Good!' I replied.



**Tuck Chong and me
with the SAFFC
cheerleader boys**



Wen Xu, Petrina and me

After all the formalities were over, we moved down the zigzag slope to get behind the correct starting line. Thankfully the weather was beautiful with the clouds blocking out most of the morning sunlight.

Everyone was chatting away while waiting for the sound of the horn. The crew from Mediacorp were filming away. Surprisingly enough, a photo of my caregiver Fitri, Wen Xu, Petrina and myself appeared in *The Straits Times* and *Today* newspaper the next day.

I kept blabbering to keep the awkward moments of silence away. The 2 girls were still quite shy and reserved. Along the way, there were more trees, patches of grass and walkways leading to the Bamboo Labyrinth, Fantasy Garden, Recycling Garden, Herb and Spice garden, the Tree Climbing Corner and others. Then I saw Grace, HWA's transport officer.

"Wow Chee Siong you're so lucky...
Most of us have only 1 volunteer.
You have 3 young and pretty girls pushing you!"

'Yes!' I replied smiling from ear to ear.

The 1.5km was over in no time. After collecting the Old Chang Kee's curry puff, we went to rest in front of the Adam's Café. Wen Xu took out the copy of my book, *Beyond the Fall* that I had given to them earlier and started to read. Just like me, she reads very fast. She even attended a talk about how to do it and absorb the key points. Petrina is a slow reader who likes to take her time.

'Can you really move your ear?' Wen Xu said all of a sudden. She must be at the part where I wrote of the places that I could still move 3 weeks after my accident.

It was weird as she looked at me. I had the feeling that she wanted to see me do it.

'Yes. I can do it.' I said as I twitched my ears backwards.

They both looked very amused. I also used my upper lip to touch my nose since I mentioned it too in the book.

It didn't make any sense to go around as it was getting hotter, so I decided to stay put. Under the white dome-shaped tent were food and game stalls. There were fried chicken wings, fish balls, fried bee hoon and nasi lemak. On the right of the tent, there was a multi-purpose hall where many people were lining along the sides, trying to watch the performances. There were cheerleaders, magic shows and stage games.

Wen Xu and Petrina introduced some of their classmates to me. Then they went off together. It sure was nice to have 2 new faces to talk to. Fitri and I had gotten so bored and tired of each other. I did the next most sensible thing by going into the air-conditioned Fruit Room. I was there with Tuck Chong and Timothy until everything was over.

I hope that many of our HWA members had as good a time as I did. I will definitely go back to HortPark again to see the many different themed gardens and I am for sure looking forward to the next wheel, walk or jog!

Spot The Difference Contest



Win a \$20 cash prize simply by spotting 5 differences in the two sets of cartoons below, circle them and mail the completed contest form to us at:

Handicaps Digest Contest (Attn: Editor)
Handicaps Welfare Association
16 Whampoa Drive
Singapore 327725



Contributed by HWA member, Mr Ong Chin Sin

Spot The Difference Contest Form

Full Name (as in NRIC): _____

Contact Number: _____

Address: _____

Membership No.: _____

Rules and Regulations

1. Only HWA members are eligible to participate (staff, Exco members and editorial board are not eligible)
2. Entries must be submitted using the application form on this page.
3. There will be a maximum of 3 winners per contest.
4. In the event that there are more than 3 correct entries, the winners will be decided by ballot.
5. The judges' decision is final.
6. The closing date of this contest is **10 September 2009**. All completed entries should reach HWA no later than this date.
7. The correct answers as well as the winners of this contest will be announced in the next issue of Handicaps Digest.



Did you managed to spot the differences in our "Spot The Difference" contest, April-June 2009 issue?

Here are the answers, in case you are pulling your hair out searching for them:



Congratulations!

The lucky winners of the "Spot The Difference" contest, April - June 2009 issue, are:

Woon Fui Meng

Membership no: 2056W

Sheila Johns

Membership no: 1596S

Faridah Bte Salleh

Membership no: 0765F

Each winner will receive a cash prize of \$20.

New Face on the Block



Name: P. Kathirvel

Date of joining HWA: 11 May 09

Designation: Occupational Therapist

Background: I completed my degree in May 2006. I then joined a multi-specialty hospital in India and came to Singapore to join HWA

Personal goal: I aim to be the best Occupational Therapist!

Likes: I love playing Carrom, Cricket and spending time with my family and friends

Favourite food: Different variety of Fish

Anything you may want to say to HWA members or

colleagues: I must express my thanks to everyone at HWA because they have been extremely friendly and kind. They are like a family.

Goodbye

We would like to apologise for an error in salutation in the April - June 2009 issue of Handicaps Digest.

We thank **Ms** Frances Tan [FR Asst. Executive] for her services to HWA and wish her all the best in her new endeavors.

Touch A Life!

Have you ever thought that you can make a difference in the lives of people with disabilities? Now you can. Join our Befriender programme to enrich the lives of our members.

What is Befriender programme?

A programme that seeks volunteers who are keen to develop friendship and rapport with a HWA member

What do I have to do?

- Be able to conduct home-visits once a month
- Provide emotional support and offer a listening ear
- Encourage member to talk and think about his or her hopes for the future and plan the steps needed to get there
- Be able to submit a simple report

What are the criteria?

- Volunteers preferably need to be 20 years old and above
- A passion to help people with disabilities

For more details, please contact **Mr Jason Rodrigo** at **6254 3006**.

In the News

USER-FRIENDLY FACILITIES

Thumbs up for sports club

Sengkang Sports and Recreation Centre clinches gold in the annual BCA Universal Design Awards

ONG DAI LIN
dailin@mediacorp.com.sg

IT IS a recreation club where wheelchair-bound users can literally get into the swim of things — two gentle slope ramps enable them to access the lap pool and children's play pool easily.

Besides these, the gymnasium, sports hall and other activity rooms are also fully accessible to wheelchair users.

These, and other user-friendly details such as tactile floor markings, clinched the gold award for the \$50-million Sengkang Sports and Recreation Centre and Anchorvale Community Club integrated hub in the Building Construction Authority (BCA) Universal Design Awards 2009.

"It is very convenient here because I walk in and there is the gym on the ground floor. I don't have to climb stairs," said Mr Louis Wong, 68. The retiree travels five days a week from his Hougang house to use the gym at Sengkang.

At a press briefing yesterday, chairman of the 10-men assessment committee Pro-



A demonstration of how a person relies on the user-friendly ramp to get into a swimming pool. WEE TECK HIAN

fessor Cheong Hee Kiat said there is now "more awareness by designers to provide these (user-friendly) features".

This year, 36 entries were received, up from 34 last year and 32 in 2007, when the award was first introduced.

This year, 10 BCA Universal Design Awards were given out, along with five silver and four bronze awards.

Asked if the economic downturn will deter architects from including such seamless and accessible designs in buildings, Professor Cheong, president of SIM University, said that "it is an attitude of the industry". The costs will even out in the long term when people are drawn to the buildings because of the facilities.

"If you build something with a not-so-good design, it is much more costly to put them in later," he said.

Silver award winners include Vivocity (commercial building category) and Alexandra Hospital (refurbished building category). Another silver winner — in the residential building category — is Parc Emily, the first private residential building to receive such an award.

The entries were judged based on criteria like accessibility, integrated design and safety.

The winners will receive the BCA Universal Design Award from Ms Grace Fu, Senior Minister of State for National Development, at the BCA Awards Night on May 27.



He joins triathlons with disabled son

REPORT: ELYSA CHEN
elysac@sph.com.sg

A DISABLED child is hardly the ideal partner to take part in a triathlon with.

Yet, that is exactly what Mr Anthony Payne, 41, a business development manager with NYSE Euronext, will be doing.

He is taking part in the Bintan Triathlon today with his son, Ralph, 10, who has severe learning difficulties and is unable to walk by himself.

Although Ralph suffers from a rare condition which doctors have yet to diagnose, he has been going on cycling trips with his father for the last five years. The pair even took part in their first triathlon last month.

Modified bicycle

When he takes part in triathlons with Ralph, Mr Payne swims alone before cycling with Ralph in a modified bicycle and pushing him in a push chair for the final stretch of the race.

For the Bintan Triathlon, organised by Tribob, Mr Payne will need to swim 750m, followed by a 20km bike route and end with a 5km run.

"Each time we're on the bike and he turns around with a cheeky smile and wrinkles his nose, he just brings me so much joy."

— Mr Payne, 41, on his son Ralph, 10.

Taking part with Ralph, however, means that Mr Payne has an additional 65kg load to carry. His bike weighs 35kg and Ralph, 30kg.

Yet, he says, having his son with him during the race is not a burden, but a motivation.

He added: "With Ralph, it becomes a different sort of race. It's less about getting a good timing, and more about having fun."

Despite that, the pair finished their first triathlon last month in a time of 1 hour 39 minutes, placing them around 500 out of 1,000 participants.

They have been taking part in triathlons, hoping to change how people perceive the disabled.

It is difficult. But what keeps him going, said Mr Payne, is a video which he saw last year.

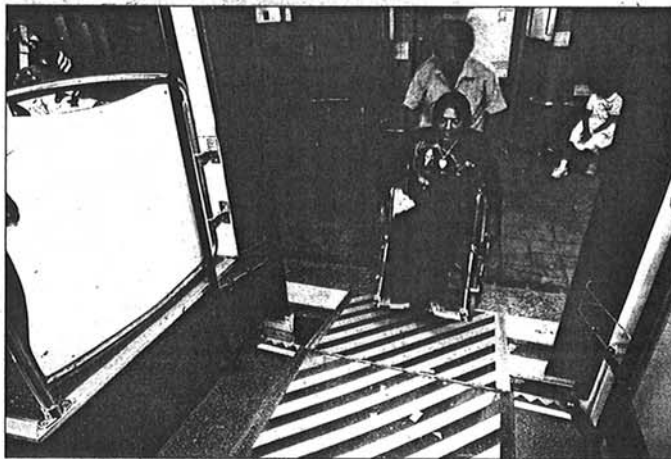
The video, Team Hoyt, which was posted on YouTube, is about a father who also takes part in triathlons with his physically disabled son.

Mr Payne said: "Ralph has reminded me that life isn't perfect. But as a parent and a human, I owe it to him to make him as happy as possible."

This is why he is also racing to raise money for the Asian Women's Welfare Association school which Ralph attends.

The father-son duo have raised \$30,000 so far.

Those who wish to make donations can log on to www.donation.org.sg for more information.



Mr Nedumaran boards a wheelchair-accessible bus, service 831, near his home with the help of SMRT bus driver Or Tiong Lim. Not all public buses are wheelchair-friendly so Mr Nedumaran sometimes has to miss a bus before the right one comes along. ST PHOTO: BRYAN VAN DER BEEK



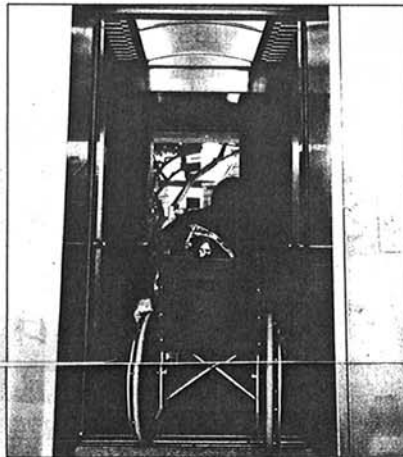
Some footpaths are inaccessible to the handicapped. Because the path sometimes ends in a sharp drop to the road, he has to wheel himself along the road side. Cars whizz by, but he is unnoticed. "This is the only way to get around," he says. ST PHOTO: BRYAN VAN DER BEEK



He leaves his workplace, the Society for the Physically Disabled in Tiong Bahru, for home at the end of the day. It takes him 30 minutes to get to Tiong Bahru MRT station. Some parts of the route are steep and uneven. ST PHOTO: MUSILAN RAJASEGERAN

Bumps along the way

Yishun resident G. Nedumaran, 47 and wheelchair-bound, travels by public transport to his Tiong Bahru workplace at the Society for the Physically Disabled, and back every day. Last Friday, *The Straits Times* accompanied him on his morning and evening commutes for an insight into the kinds of obstacles he has to overcome. He took the bus to work and the train home.



He enters a lift at street level to take him to the MRT station below ground. Before lifts were built at MRT stations, he had to use a wheelchair lift. "It was very scary. This is so much better," he says. ST PHOTO: BRYAN VAN DER BEEK



He holds onto a grab bar in the train on the way home. Alighting is sometimes difficult as it is crowded and he has to ask commuters to give way to him. ST PHOTO: MUSILAN RAJASEGERAN

Tough going for wheelchair-bound

Improvements seen on public transport but there are still hurdles to clear

By YEO GHIM LAY

ALL MRT stations are now barrier-free and more wheelchair-friendly buses are plying the roads.

The routes to these stations and bus stops, however, are still fraught with obstacles — such as

steeply-sloping pavements — for the physically disabled.

As wheelchair-bound commuter G. Nedumaran, 47, put it: "It's not the train or bus that is the problem. It's the in-between journey that is tough."

Nevertheless, he boards the train daily to get from his Yishun

home to the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD) in Tiong Bahru, where he is being trained to assemble microphone wires.

His doggedness is rare. Miss Tay Hwee Lin, the manager of SPD's rehabilitation centre, said most of the wheelchair-bound people at the SPD are reluctant to do what Mr Nedumaran does.

This is despite recent efforts by the authorities and public transport operators to make buses and trains here more accessible. A year on, the results are starting to show. All MRT stations now have at least one barrier-free access route so that those in wheelchairs can get onto the platforms.

Among SMRT trains, 66 — more than half of the operator's fleet — were refurbished last year and made wheelchair-friendly.

On the roads, SBS Transit operates 22 wheelchair-accessible bus services, up from just one three years ago. SMRT will run its first batch of such services next month.

More such bus services are in the pipeline. The Ministry of Transport expects that two in five buses will be wheelchair-accessible by the end of next year.

The Government has also set aside \$60 million to make all roads, pedestrian walkways and access routes to MRT stations, taxi stands and bus stops barrier-free by next year.

A quarter of the work has been done and already the differences have been noticed.

Ms Nancy Chia, who heads the Handicaps Welfare Association, said: "They have actually done quite a lot, but loopholes still

need to be plugged."

For example, the wheelchair-bound are unable to alight at certain bus stops along routes plied by wheelchair-accessible buses because the bus stops themselves are not wheelchair-friendly; they may, for instance, have steps leading from them or too

narrow passageways. Eighty per cent of the bus stops along a route must be wheelchair-accessible for the service to be declared as such.

misunderstandings occur frequently. SBS Transit said wheelchair-bound commuters have insisted on boarding the wheelchair-friendly buses, even those plying routes not declared wheelchair-accessible.

"Attempts by our bus captains to explain usually fail. As a result, the trip is disrupted, resulting in delays for commuters," said a SBS Transit spokesman.

SPD's Miss Tay suggested that, to avoid this, public transport operators post information at bus stops listing the wheelchair-accessible stops — information now available only online.

Member of Parliament Cynthia Phua, a member of the Government Parliamentary Committee for Transport, said some MRT stations need more lifts.

Ching Kovan station, she noted that it has only one lift, so a wheelchair-bound commuter coming from across the road would have to wheel himself to that one access point.

Such problems aside, wheelchair-bound commuters must contend with other obstacles like drain covers that snag the wheels of wheelchairs, and pavements without ramps to road level.

But Mr Nedumaran is hopeful things will improve so that more wheelchair-bound commuters like him will get out and about, and start using public transport.

glimley@spk.com.sg

Disabled man hit by MRT train doors stranded after train leaves with wheelchair

'My wheels got stuck in the gap'

REPORTS: LEDIATI TAN ledtan@spk.com.sg

IT WAS anything but a typical train ride home for one physically disabled passenger. An MRT train took off with his wheelchair while he was left behind on the platform.

The incident, which left Mr Michael Quek, 44, stranded at Tiong Bahru MRT station took place on Tuesday at around 5.45pm.

Mr Quek, who lives in a three-room flat in Tampines, said he was once in the Society for the Physically Disabled near Tiong Bahru where he was doing a nine-month information technology course.

He said he boarded at the end of the platform nearest to the driver as it was less crowded and it would be easier to alert the driver if he needed

any help. He was the last to board as he had allowed the other passengers to enter the train before him.

As he reversed his motorised wheelchair into the train, the smaller front wheels became stuck in the gap between the platform and the train because he had reversed too slowly.

He stood on the wheelchair so that other passengers could help him pull it into the train, which they did. He was outside the train then.

"As I stood on the platform and was turning around (to face the train), the doors closed," said Mr Quek.

He was hit by the closing platform doors on the left side of his face. Instinctively, he stepped back and his spectacles were knocked off in the process.

Before he could react, the train and platform

doors slammed shut and the train departed from the station with his wheelchair, while he stood dazed on the platform.

"I didn't know what to do. I was worried. My wheelchair was gone, how was I going to go back? I was without my glasses too," he said.

He immediately asked a female commuter to alert the staff at the station control.

As she disappeared upstairs, Mr Quek walked slowly along the platform, supporting himself by holding on and leaning against the wall, while looking for an intercom.

He took about five minutes to reach the intercom located at the centre of the platform.

He told a station staff member, through the intercom, to help retrieve his wheelchair at the next station.

He then took a lift up to the station control and waited while a station staff member took down his particulars.

Passengers helped return chair

He got his wheelchair back 10 to 15 minutes later with the help of two female commuters, who had earlier tried to help him when his wheelchair got stuck.

He said the two commuters, who looked to be in their mid-20s, got off at Outram MRT station - the station after Tiong Bahru - and brought his wheelchair back on a train travelling in the opposite direction.

"I was surprised to see them as I was informed by SMRT that their staff will bring it back. I'm grateful to them," he said.

Mr Quek, who is unemployed, said he used to move around with a walking stick until he bought a motorised wheelchair in April this year to make it easier for him to do his grocery shopping.

A sudden stroke in 2005 had left the right side of his body paralysed.

He has been travelling between Tampines and Tiong Bahru on the MRT every day since he bought his wheelchair and never had problems until that day.

When The New Paper met Mr Quek at Tiong Bahru MRT station yesterday afternoon, he showed us how easy it was to get his wheels stuck between the platform and gap.

Mr Quek said that more should be done to improve the safety of trains, such as having more staff on train platforms during peak hours at stations close to centres for the disabled.

He also felt that intercoms should be installed at the ends of train platforms, and not just in the middle.

The station staff have apologised and assured Mr Quek that they will investigate the incident.



STUCK: Mr Quek showing how the wheels of his wheelchair got stuck in the gap when he reversed into an MRT train.

TNP PICTURES: KELVIN CHNG

Approach staff for help: SMRT

AN SMRT spokesman said that safety sensors are installed on train and platform screen doors to "ensure all doors are secured before a train is permitted to move off from the station".

The train officer will re-open train doors if the sensor indicator shows that the doors are not fully secured.

She said: "In Mr Quek's case, there was no obstruction detected as the wheelchair was inside the train when the train doors closed.

"In the event a passenger experiences difficulty boarding the train, the passenger should seek the assistance of fellow passengers inside the train to activate the Emergency Communication Button to communicate with our Train Officer.

"Passengers on the platform can also activate the Emergency Stop Plunger (ESP) to stop the train from moving off."

There are four ESPs located on each side of the platform and a red emergency telephone located at the centre of every station platform for commuters to contact station staff.

The spokesman added that SMRT received similar feedback from another passenger this year.

She advised physically disabled passengers to approach station staff for help as they can escort them to the platform and arrange for someone to assist them when they arrive at their destination.



"But the question is what happens if the wheelchair was stuck and the train moved off. Won't this be dangerous?"

- Mr Quek (left), showing how the train doors hit his face and knocked off his glasses. He was also concerned about the safety of the passengers if the train moved off with the wheelchair still stuck in the closing doors.

Don't treat disabled people differently

I AM responding to Tuesday's letter by Mr Daniel Chan, "Amputee in club", in which he supported the decision by The Butter Factory at One Fullerton to deny entry to an amputee.

Mr Chan seems to have painted himself as someone lacking compassion, who is out of touch with reality.

I trust his views do not reflect those of people living and working in Singapore. While he says we should "empathise with people who are handicapped and treat them with respect", he should practise what he preaches and pay a visit to Dr William Tan, an extraordinary Singaporean

whom I had the privilege of listening to a short while ago when he spoke at the United World College of South East Asia graduation ceremony.

Dr Tan was paralysed at an early age, but that has not stopped him from achieving some extraordinary things, for example, completing seven marathons across seven continents in under 27 days. He was also the only person to "run a wheelchair marathon" in the Antarctic.

People with disabilities are no different from us and they do not want to be treated differently.

Ray Bigger

Getting around S'pore not easy for the disabled

Improving infrastructure to make city wheelchair-friendly can be a boon to tourism

By ANG YIYING & RACHEL AU-YONG

A GROUP of Ngee Ann Polytechnic (NP) students has experienced first-hand the potholes along Singapore's road to becoming a city friendly to the elderly and the physically disabled.

The students, who were doing a study for the Disabled People's Association, found the infrastructure here generally wheelchair-friendly, but encountered unwillingness by people to go to the aid of those who need help getting around.

Wheeling around a member of their team in a wheelchair, the students made their way from the Fajar LRT station to West Coast Road.

Along City Hall MRT station to the Esplanade, they took notes on the difficulties faced by the person in the wheelchair and the one pushing it.

At CityLink Mall, the wheelchair lift meant to get them to the shops was out of order and they were unable to get through to anyone using the intercom. The management at the mall said the lift has since been fixed.

The team presented these findings at the International Conference for Accessible Tourism 2009, which opened at the Singapore Management University yesterday. About 100 participants from more than 10 countries - including academics, travel industry insiders and representatives from organisations that work with the disabled or elderly - are taking part in the biennial conference, organised this year by the Disabled People's Association here.

The thrust of the three-day conference is that improving accessibility is as important to the growth of tourism as it is for the residents of a country.

Ms Joanne Huang, 20, who graduated with a diploma in tourism and resort management from NP, said the exercise was a reminder that Singapore still had a way to go to becoming truly accessible to all, including those with disabilities.

Speaking from her own experience of taking her wheelchair-bound aunt on outings, she said she has to plan her route to avoid staircases.

"And when I go to a foodcourt, I have to check that the tables are at the right height for her to eat at," she added. Turning to how the public here regards the disabled, she said they are resigned to being stared at when they go out, and have come to accept that they cannot visit particular places as they cannot get their wheelchairs around easily.

"This needs to change," she said.

Disabled People's Association president Leo Chen Ian, addressing conference participants, said it made economic sense for any country to improve accessibility.

He noted that 42 million disabled travellers in the United States made 31.7 million trips and spent \$13.6 billion every year.

Another major group of travellers is senior citizens, the current lot of which have a wanderlust - and cash to spend.

In Singapore, one in five persons will be 65 or older by 2030.

Mr Leo said "inclusive tourism" meant catering to everybody - persons with disabilities, those who are injured and hence temporarily disabled, seniors, families with young children and expectant mothers. Asked about its stance on access for the disabled and elderly at attractions here, the Singapore Tourism Board did not respond by press-time.

The Building Construction Authority (BCA) here, which has a masterplan for an accessible city, said a key challenge in creating a friendlier built environment lies in retrofitting buildings built before 1990, which was when the Code of Barrier-Free Accessibility in Buildings was set up.

To get around this, BCA has set aside \$40 million to subsidise building owners' upgrading works to make their premises more disabled-friendly.

Conference participant Hideto Kijima, 36, who broke his back in a sporting accident, has seen 99 countries in 16 years in his wheelchair.

Ranking Singapore "medium" in terms of accessibility, he said he had been afraid to take the MRT when he first visited the country in 1995, but now finds the public transport here accessible.

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RELIEF FOR THE DISABLED

A different world of caregiving costs

Letter from Ng Soek Cheng

I BELIEVE that much more can be done in terms of tax reliefs and monetary grants to assist disabled folk and their families.

Currently, both able-bodied and disabled parents must earn less than \$2,000 a year in order for their children to be eligible for Parent/Handicapped Parent Relief. The policy seems to suggest that the cost of living for both non-disabled and disabled parents are similar, since the income requirement is exactly the same.

To allow more disabled persons and their families to get access to monetary assistance, perhaps the policymakers can consider a tiered income threshold cut-off point - perhaps having cut-off points of \$2,000, \$5,000, \$8,000 per annum, and correspondingly lower amounts of tax relief at each level.

I currently take care of my brain-damaged mother without the assistance of a maid. Taking care of a mentally-disabled elderly person is like taking care of a child: Both are 100-percent dependent on the working adults. However, taking care of an old disabled person is much more taxing on the whole family. Most in my position will agree that the costs of taking care of a disabled parent are very

The costs of taking care of a disabled parent are very high and the expenses seem to continue to escalate with no reprieve in sight.

high and the expenses seem to continue to escalate with no reprieve in sight.

The basic costs include items such as daily medicine, adult diapers, wet wipes, cream to prevent bed sores and underpads. This does not take into account doctor's visits. From my family's experience, the costs increased further when my mother started to suffer from other illnesses relating to old age or a bedridden life, such as diabetes.

There are at present not many tax relief or subsidy options for handicapped citizens and their caregivers. While the Government encourages us to look after aged and disabled parents in their own homes, this can be a considerable financial burden, especially to families with few siblings to share the burden.

The Government should relook the existing policies so that more can be done to assist the disabled community and their struggling caregivers.

LET THE DISABLED COMMUTE FOR FREE

OUR public-transport operators are looking into lower fares for the disabled. How about letting disabled people ride on our public transport for free?

Doing so should not cost the operators a considerable part of their annual profits.

I also hope that the plans to offer lower fares will not take months or years to become a reality.

Mr Allan Tan

Calendar of Events

for July to September 2009



4 July

Durian Party @
Fort Canning

Organised by YMCA

5 July

Wheel, Walk Or
Jog 2009 @
HortPark

11 July

A Ride on
Singapore Flyer

Organised by GE Oil
& Gas

18 July

Shooting
Competition
(4th National Disability
League)

Organised by SDSC

21 July

Bowling Doubles
Competition
(4th National
Disability League)

Organised by SDSC

25 July

Wheelly Friendly"
2009 @ Holland
Village

Organised by SMU

26 July

A Dinner Invitation
@ Geylang

Organised by Yew Ee
Association



9 August

National Day



14 August

Buffet Dinner

Organised by Hong Ho
Lion Dance

17 August

Cantonese Opera

Organised by YMCA

22 August

Flag Day 2009

23 August

Coin Counting Day
@ HWA



29 August

Donation Draw
2009 @ HWA



18 September

HWA – SSO Charity
Gala Concert @
Esplanade

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20 September

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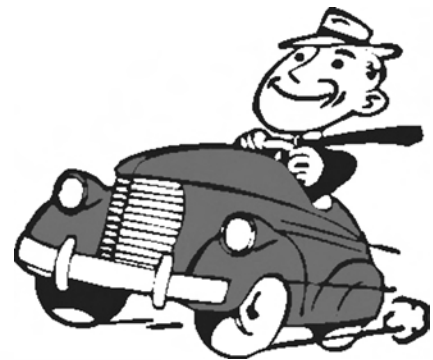


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 Tel: 6254 3006 Fax: 6253 7375
 Website: www.hwa.org.sg



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The Handicaps Welfare Association (HWA) was formed in December 1969. Since then, the Association has grown to over 1,800 members and its membership is increasing every month. As a self-help group, HWA raises funds on its own.

HWA has been serving the needs of people with disabilities from the low socio-economic group for 39 years. It has strenuously made every attempt to help meet their needs through its ever-expanding range of services, which is on-going. The HWA has been able to do this simply because the Singapore public has been more than generous and forthcoming in their monetary contribution.

HWA provides a range of programmes and services for its members and the community – from welfare assistance to education courses, a door-to-door

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CATHERINE HENG CHAY HUA
LOW GIOK LEONG



Our Mission

An organisation
committed to enhance
the quality of life of people
with physical disabilities
and integrate them into
mainstream society.