

DSA NEWS

Newsletter for Down Syndrome Association (Singapore)



World Down Syndrome Day 2020

March has been an exciting month for DSA(S). We brought WDSO celebrations to the digital platforms.

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On set with 'Kin'

Adult Enhancement Programme learners were invited to visit the filming set of the drama series 'Kin'.

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Birthday with a meaningful twist

Evelyn Chew shares why she dedicated her birthday to raising awareness and funds for Down syndrome.

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FROM THE ED'S DESK

Dear Members,

Against the backdrop of a virus known as Coronavirus (COVID-19) that has now evolved into a global pandemic, kindly allow me to open this new issue for 2020 on a somber note.

We are learning more about how COVID-19 affects people every day. While a lot is still unknown about the virus that causes COVID-19, we do know that it is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person generated through coughing and sneezing. We are also acutely aware that elderly persons and people with pre-existing respiratory conditions, chronic medical conditions such as diabetes, immunodeficiency and heart disease appear to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms. Although no evidence at this moment suggests that persons with Down syndrome are more vulnerable to the virus, a number of children and adults with Down syndrome fall within these higher risk groups.

The pandemic is affecting all of us and our loved ones, our work, the services and amenities we rely upon, the health of the global economy, and the way we live our daily lives. However challenging this may present, we know we can navigate through this evolving challenge together if we adopt good personal hygiene, exercise good social distancing measures within the community and take heed of the precautionary measures implemented by the Multi-Ministry Task Force. Despite this trying period, I remain hopeful that we will emerge stronger and more resilient as an individual, a community and a nation.

On the Association's front, we will continue to keep you updated on the progress of DSA(S) through this newsletter and our website. Although the Association had to suspend a number of our signature events and activities over the next few months, we are working towards having some of these events presented to you through a virtual platform. In the pipeline, we will also be producing a video series

illustrating the lives of individuals with Down syndrome who live, work and attend schools in our communities to educate the public about Down syndrome. We believe, this would not only generate greater awareness of the genetic disorder but also to dispel misconceptions or incorrect assumptions made about persons with Down syndrome.

Although DSA(S) still has a long way to go to ensure that every person with Down syndrome has the opportunity to live a valued, integrated and fulfilling life, it is important for us to keep in mind that if we invest in our goal every day, we will definitely get to the end at some point.

Thank you.

Yeo Ando
Executive Director



ADVISORY UPDATE AND ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES AGAINST COVID-19

DATED 25 MARCH 2020

In line with the latest advisory, the DSA(S) COVID-19 Task Force has decided to suspend all programmes from 26 March 2020 until 30 April 2020 to ensure that the safety and well-being of everyone at DSA(S) are not compromised. In the meantime, our office will continue to operate to serve you.

For general enquiries, kindly contact us via our mainline 6500 9321 or email to: admin@downsyndrome-singapore.org

We seek your kind understanding and cooperation during this trying period. Thank you.



WORLD DOWN SYNDROME DAY 2020



*DSA(S) staff & learners
rocking their socks for
WDSD 2020*



Celebrated annually on March 21, World Down Syndrome Day is a global event to raise awareness and exemplify the abilities of persons with Down syndrome while advocating equal rights for them. This year's theme "We Decide" believe that all persons with Down syndrome can participate in decision making about matters relating to or affecting their lives.

At DSA(S), World Down Syndrome Day has been one of our key events marked with a community walk and family carnival. However, in view of the COVID-19 developments, the organising committee has made a decision to defer the event after a careful deliberation considering the well-being of all participants.

We may not have celebrated together in a physical space, but thanks to the advancement of technology, we were able to do so via digital means. 'Rock Your Socks' campaign was launched to raise awareness about Down syndrome. It encourages people to wear colourful mismatched socks to arouse curiosity among peers, spark conversations about Down syndrome and

remind others that differences can be beautiful too.

You may wonder, why socks?

Persons with Down syndrome have an extra copy of chromosome 21, and socks resemble the shape of chromosomes.

As part of the campaign, photo contests were organised, garnering much support from the community who posted photos of their socks on their social media feed. In line with this year's theme "We Decide", learners with Down syndrome from different DSA(S) programmes voted for their favourite photo to determine the weekly winner who will walk away with \$25 worth of vouchers.

On March 20 (Friday), staff and learners wore their colourful mismatched socks to DSA Centre in celebration of WDSD.

Just before the day ended, Aaron Lee, founder of Upcakes delivered a chocolate cake to commemorate the occasion. The cake was a hit among our learners and staff, and it certainly brought much joy.

We thank all our donors and partners for contributing to the success of this year's celebration, and our supporters for rocking their socks in this show of solidarity for inclusivity.

#WorldDownSyndromeDay
#WDSDSG2020 #WeDecide

*#RockYourSocks for
World Down
Syndrome Day*





NP Leo Club rocking their socks in March for WDSD 2020.



#sisleytravelretailsea rocking their mismatched socks for WDSD 2020.



The process of taking a photo of two children was an arduous task. But mummy Amanda made it a point to show their love for the Ds community.

"I wear colourful mismatched socks to recognise that there are different souls who are just as wonderful and beautiful in the world."

- Hazel



Learners from DSA(S) Zumba class showed up in their colourful mismatched socks for their class on March 21



Our dancers were decked out in their crazy colourful socks on March 21.



Spreading love and awareness in the form of colourful mismatched socks.



Janelle, Jia Xing & Allan posing with their colourful socks in front of the tapestry



NUS CSC Love Signature Club rallied their club members to rock their socks on March 21



2020-03-21

PIC•COLLAGE

HAIRSTYLIST IN THE MAKING

@ SALON SOCIAL



Adults Enhancement Programme (AEP) learner June Lin, to be their first trainee with disabilities on 2 March 2020. Salon Social has previously offered employment and training opportunities with youths in difficult circumstances as well as to single mothers.

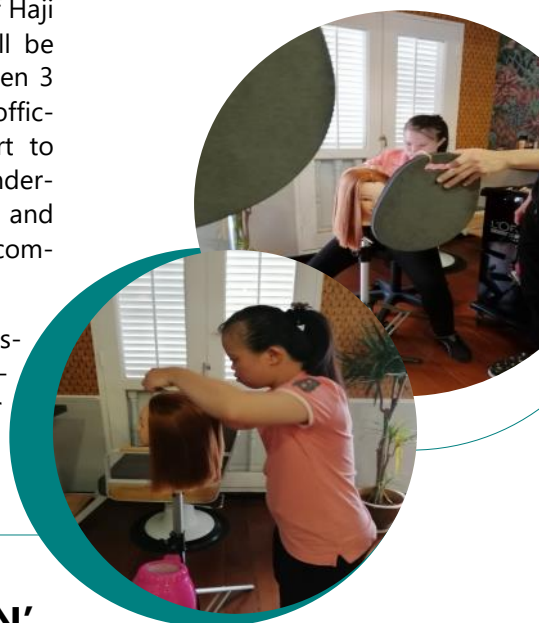
Located at the buzzing street of Haji Lane, June's apprenticeship will be conducted twice a week between 3 to 6 months. Our AEP training officers will offer seamless support to June and her employer by understanding the job requirements and recommending workplace accommodation.

Having worked in different industries previously, June is delighted to be able to learn from her new employers, Ms Delia and

Mr Rix, both professional hairstylists who are not only passionate with their craft but also making a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities.

They are positive that June will do well in this field.

Opening the doors to a new learning job experience and training, Salon Social, a social enterprise hairdressing salon, has warmly accepted



ON SET WITH 'KIN'

Last October, AEP learners were invited to visit the set of drama series 'Kin' and interact with some of the cast and production crew.

Learners who had watched 'Kin' before were filled with excitement as they visited the different sets. They had the chance to observe the filming process during the tour.

After the tour, the crew specially made arrangements for a meet-and-greet session with one of the cast, Timothy Lee, who also has Down

syndrome. They got to ask questions about his acting experiences whereby he shared with them "that with time and effort, it is possible to act too". Our star-struck learners also seized the opportunity to take photos with him.

During the visit, five of our learners – Dawson Tan, Kenneth Tong, Lim Ming Fei, Natasha Velez and Toh Wei Kang – were offered to be part of the drama series.

Natasha Velez was offered a

supporting role which she had to prepare and audition for. Her efforts were paid off as she was eventually cast as Hannah and acted opposite Timothy Lee who was playing Handsome.

The other learners were cast as Handsome's schoolmates and had an enjoyable time on set savouring soybean milk and beancurd during filming.

It was an interesting experience for all of them as this was their first time being involved with a drama production. The episodes were aired in February and available to watch on 'meWATCH'.

A big thank you to Kin's production team for the invitation and gifting us with these precious memories!



Our members engaged in a discussion with Timothy Lee on his journey of being an actor



EMPATHY IN ACTION

caring for the children amidst COVID-19 and decided to make cards to dedicate to these heroes.

Indeed, during this time of fear and uncertainty, we have not forgotten the nurses and doctors who are working tirelessly to care for those infected with the virus, activating our collective cheer for everyone involved in combating against COVID-19.

In total, the learners made more than 10 beautiful cards for the KKH medical staff.

Through this experience, we hope to instil the awareness of the issues that are affecting our society and impart good and proactive traits among our learners.

As part of our training at Independent Living and Training (ILT) Centre, learners are putting what they learnt about empathy to action. Our learners have expressed their admiration for the courageous work of the medical workers at KKH in

ILT Centre learners expressing their gratitude towards frontline medical staff through hand-made cards



FSS CELEBRATES LUNAR NEW YEAR

On 8 February 2020, families gathered together for a Chinese New Year celebration organised by Family Support Services. The party kicked off on a lively note with a festive performance by the talented Bishan Symphonic Orchestra to the delight of our members.

What ensued was a Townhall meeting where members interacted with our newly-appointed Executive Director, Mr Ando Yeo, along with our

Chairman Mr Siva and other Board members. Information on COVID-19's precautionary measures and association's upcoming events and initiatives were provided during the session.

Dr Bhavani and a caregiver also shared the importance of equipping persons with Down syndrome with a medical passport as an effective contingency.

Almost a given, the celebration ended with a Yu Sheng platter where all 'lo hei-ed' for good health and great success throughout the year!



ABOUT DSA MEDICAL PASSPORT

DSA Medical Passport was initiated with the help of our advisor, Dr. Bhavani for all our members to organise the medical records of their child with special needs.

This will help doctors and healthcare staff to better access the health status and needs of the child during consultation.

If you'd like to find out more about the medical passport, please contact Janet at janet@downsyndrome-singapore.org.



An auspicious note to the celebration



Enjoying Bishan Symphonic Orchestra's rendition of CNY tunes



A FOOL IN LOVE, LOVE LIKE A FOOL

Back in February 2020, Clover Films and Cathay Cineplexes organised a charity screening of 'A Fool in Love, Love Like A Fool', a Taiwanese romance movie featuring a character with Down syndrome to raise awareness about the genetic disorder.

"The movie is a heart-warming story depicting individuals with the biggest heart and selfless love, that can come from the most unexpected places. We are grateful to have partnered with Clover Films to support

such a meaningful cause" – Hock Ong, CEO of Cathay Cineplexes.

Thank you Clover Films and Cathay Cineplexes for your unwavering support. We are appreciative of all the effort in making this event possible and spreading greater awareness of Down syndrome.

BIRTHDAY WITH A MEANINGFUL TWIST

For her 29th birthday, Evelyn Chew who conducts Rock-climbing holiday programmes for our members, decided to dedicate her special day to raise awareness and funds for Down syndrome. She created an online fundraising campaign and rallied her community to raise some \$2,500 for our association.

"As I am nearing 29, I started to reflect on how much more I still have to learn and to give to the world.

During the lowest period of my entrepreneurial journey, DSA(S) came into my life by asking me to conduct a holiday programme for their members. While I was coaching them, I started to notice the great

potentials in these individuals. They had never given up the opportunity to learn to be better versions of themselves.

Adults and children with Down syndrome need society's help and support to develop themselves so that they can live a more independent life and be able to integrate into society. Their families and caregivers need to be guided with specialist services, information and education.

Living is giving. With extreme gratitude, I hope to spread the word and raise awareness to help this group of individuals in our society."
– Evelyn Chew.

In addition to raising funds, she also invited Mr Andrew Soh, Assistant Director of CPCC to her birthday party to share more about Down syndrome and the association with her family and friends.

Special thanks to Evelyn Chew and her peers for their support towards our cause!

If you'd like to pledge your birthday in support of Down syndrome, feel free to drop Alicia an email at alicia@downsyndrome-singapore.org.

Evelyn rallied her community and raised more than \$2,500 for the association



LEARNING JOURNEY @ UNITED WORLD COLLEGE SOUTH EAST ASIA

As part of United World College South East Asia's SEED (Social and Environmental Entrepreneurship Development) programme, our adult learners were gifted with a school life learning experience.

UWCSEA student volunteers and our learners bonded through various craft and sports activities over the past five months. Thanks to UWCSEA, we had a great experience and an enjoyable time at the school campus throughout this learning journey.

Nearing Chinese New Year, a group of learners from DSA(S) Adult Enhancement Programme and Singing with Friends Enrichment Programme were invited by UWCSEA to their campus' annual Chinese New Year Tea on 22 January 2020.

Our learners had an enjoyable time as they watched cultural performances, sang along to the festive songs and mingled with friends from UWCSEA.

DSA(S) would like to thank UWCSEA



Samuel Lee and Dawson Tan mingling with fellow students from UWCSEA

(East Campus) for the many years of support! The weekly sessions conducted have forged friendships among our learners and caring students of UWCSEA.

SPECIAL VISIT TO VICTORIA JUNIOR COLLEGE

Article contributed by Krishna and Jia En, JC2 Project V

Having special visitors from Down Syndrome Association (Singapore) to our school on 29 January was such a joy for us. It was refreshing to see people who are excited to come to school. As soon as we met them, we were amazed with their level of enthusiasm and energy, and it truly radiated among the students from Victoria Junior College as well.

Interacting with individuals with Down syndrome, seeing their smiles and watching them having fun made all the time and effort we have put into planning the activities worthwhile. They are really genuine people, who spread so much joy and happiness to people around

them. Through the fun activities we participated together in, such as the relay matches as well as arts and crafts, we got to learn more about each individual which was one of the most memorable moments for us.

It reminded us that although we may be different, we can connect on

a deeper level nonetheless. The whole experience has made us reflect on why we volunteer - give back to society, help and bring joy to those in need. It was truly a heart-warming experience and I will definitely want to work with DSA(S) again.



Friendships were forged as VJC students and our learners completed various activities together

SAARANG FESTIVAL @ CHENNAI



Four DSA(S) members, Arassi Rajkumar, Hee Yuan Sheng, Jaspreet Kaur and June Lin, from the Diverse Abilities Dance Collective took part in the Saarang Festival WorldFest in Chennai, India from 8 to 11 January 2020. Our members, along with professional dancers from Maya Dance Theatre, put on three dance performances at the festival including a Bollywood Medley dance for an audience of about 300 people. The performances were warmly received by the audience.

The management team from Saarang Festival commented that the "programme was a wonderful and wholesome experience" and it "helped all of us gain a better un-

derstanding of the arts, especially differently abled arts and for that we are grateful."

The members also took part in an exchange with Down Syndrome Federation of India to share their experiences and thoughts. The sharing session was facilitated by Jaspreet who is part of 'Our Lives, Our Voices' advocacy programme. She also prepared a speech and poem on how dancing changed her life, and how it could be performed as an act of active citizenship.

It was definitely a special experience for all our learners as it marks the first overseas trip being chaperoned by the instructors only. The intention was to allow them to practise

and develop independent living skills.

"I made a short speech and shared my poem dedicated for this visit. My father assisted me in the development of this poem. We learned much and made many friends too. Overall, the trip went very well, thanks to the teamwork during the trip. We all felt empowered. Being able to express our feelings and emotions was an amazing experience. I would like to thank everyone for making this trip possible. In fact, the organiser mentioned that this is their first ever inclusive performance at the festival and we felt proud that we could bring this experience to all of them from Singapore!" – Jaspreet



The team put up a spectacular performance which was well-received by an audience of about 300 people



June, Jaspreet and Arassi guided parents and their children to engage their body in different, meaningful and fun ways



It was the combination of people in this team that created magical moments of connection across cultures and abilities.

MEET KYLIE TAN

*Article contributed by:
Kylie Tan, Cedar Girls' Secondary*

It was only a short month, but I had the best experience volunteering at the Down Syndrome Association (Singapore)! The individuals there were very welcoming and I looked forward to seeing them every day.

I started my gap month hoping to make an impact on them, however at the end of my gap month, they've inspired me and I learnt so much from this loving bunch. They have taught me many things such as patience and perseverance. Tasks like making toasts may seem trivial to most of us, but presents a challenge to them. Despite the arduous task, they smiled and enjoyed the learning process, remaining very positive throughout the sessions! It is really heart-warming to see them partici-

pating actively during lessons, and how inquisitive they are, asking questions and exhibiting their curiosity trait. Even though some of them may have difficulty articulating their thoughts through speech, they still put in the effort to converse with me through simple gestures like fist-bumps and high-fives.

Although I was only a volunteer, they did not see me as one and treated me like their friend. Passing me my water bottle to make sure I stay hydrated, taking an extra chair and leaving a seat for me to join them for lunch. These simple acts really made me very happy! Overall it was an eye-opener (and fun!), and I am very thankful to have been given the opportunity to volunteer at Down Syndrome Association (Singapore).



I was hoping to make an impact on their lives, however they are the ones making an impact on me instead

THE KWOK FAMILY ON RAISING DYLAN

"When I first found out Dylan has Down syndrome, I will cry like there is no tomorrow. Why is this happening to me?"



Ever wondered what it is like to raise a child with Down syndrome? In March, we collaborated with Millennials of Singapore, an online editorial and video platform that seeks to share compelling stories of everyday individuals, to produce a video that provides a glimpse of Mr and Mrs Kwok's parenting journey.

In the video, Mr Kwok discloses his struggle to tell his wife about their child's condition and Mrs Kwok

shares how she came to terms with the fact that her child has Down syndrome.

In this short 5-minute video clip, the Kwok family candidly shares their parenting journey and struggles when they found out that Dylan has Down syndrome.

If you like to know more about their story, scan the QR code to watch the video.

Special thanks to Millennials of Singapore for featuring this heart-tugging video and to the Kwok family for their upfront sharing.



Dear Friends of DSA(S),

Greetings to you from all of us at Down Syndrome Association (Singapore) — DSA(S).

Your support will enable us to support our children and adults with Down syndrome through various educational, developmental and social programmes with the aim to assist them to become more independent and lead productive lives.

Whether in big or small ways, we hope that you will continue to support our cause. If you wish to make a contribution, kindly complete the donation form below and return it to us via post or at DSA Centre.

Once again, our heartfelt thanks and appreciation from the Board of Management of DSA(S), staff and our community of persons with Down syndrome!

DONATION FORM (NEWS/2020/03)

Name [as per NRIC/FIN/Registered Company]: (MR/MS/MDM/DR)

Contact no.: _____ NRIC/FIN/UEN/: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

I would like to make a contribution of:

A donation of \$ 50 / 100 / 500 / 1,000 / Others: \$ _____

By Cheque:

Made payable to Down Syndrome Association (Singapore)

Cheque No.: _____ Bank: _____

By Credit Card:

☐ One-time ☐ Monthly Contribution

Visa/Mastercard

Credit card no.: _____

Card Holder's Name: _____

Expiry date: _____ Signature: _____

All outright donations will be entitled to a tax deduction of 2.5 times

Kindly drop off this form together with your contribution at our reception counter or mail to DSA Centre, attention to "Team CPCC".

You can also make your donation online:

<http://www.downsyndrome-singapore.org/Donate-DSA>



Scan to Donate



TO BE THE CENTRE OF
EXCELLENCE FOR INDIVIDUALS
WITH DOWN SYNDROME,
THEIR FAMILIES
AND THEIR COMMUNITY.



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