

# DSA NEWS

25 years of service to the Down syndrome community



02

## DSA Turns 25!

DSA unveils a series of new initiatives in commemoration of its Silver Jubilee! Join in the celebration on 2 October 2021.

04

## Equip Students With Skills

IFSP student, Chian Kai Qi will be taking her PSLE examination.

06

## Hands Up!

Our learners' painting was once again selected for this year's NDP pack.

# From the ED's Desk



Dear Members,

We turned 25!

DSA was established in 1996 to better support and enhance the well-being of our members with Down syndrome and special needs.

It began as a parent support group operating out of a parent's home before a place was found at a void deck at Telok Blangah Crescent for this group of enthusiastic and passionate parents and volunteers to kick start their social and education programs for persons with Down syndrome.

Looking back at the journey it has taken over the past 25 years, DSA has now progressed to an established service provider and advocate of programs and services for persons with Down syndrome, their families, and caregivers. In the past year alone, DSA has served 810 beneficiaries, out of which 311 were individuals with Down syndrome.

This outcome would not have been possible without the partnerships of our many stakeholders. With the staunch support of community partners, donors, volunteers, and government agencies, we have been able to expand our services, develop

new programs and provide greater community outreach.

To achieve this outcome requires an essential ingredient - 'Awareness'. Raising the awareness of the genetic condition and the challenges that individuals with Down syndrome face is a pillar of our progress.

The success of individuals with Down syndrome is more directly attributed to the acceptance and support that the community gives than it will be for their typically developing peers. Not because they are a drain on resources but because others have more control over their access to opportunities. Hence, it is important that our community are supportive, celebrate their abilities and encourage them to achieve their potential.

Give individuals with Down syndrome the chance to shine, and I promise you they will. See their abilities first and you will be amazed at how far they will go.

Please enjoy this issue!

**Mr. Yeo Ando**  
**Executive Director**

# DSA Turns 25!

DSA has been caring and supporting the Down syndrome community since 1996 and this year, we are pleased to announce that we will be achieving another milestone – our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

To commemorate this Silver Jubilee, DSA is bringing you a special edition of our perennial Mystique Charity Gala Event graced by Guest of Honour, President Halimah Yacob at the Shangri-La Singapore on Saturday, 2 October 2021. As much as DSA would like to bring this unique experience to you through a physical event, the present COVID-19 safe management measures do not allow us to do so. Hence, this year's Mystique ceremony will be broadcast 'live' and performances will be pre-recorded and packaged into a 45-minute extravaganza.

Riding on the celebratory note, we are thrilled to unveil our new website that is now mobile-optimised, featuring a fresh look and more user-friendly.

In addition to the website makeover, we have commissioned a series of videos featuring beneficiaries who are attending our core programs. Through this set of videos, we hope that the pub-

lic will come to a better understanding of the genetic condition and for parents and caregivers to know that they are not alone in this journey.

Two videos from this series featuring beneficiaries from the Infant Toddler Program and the Independent Living and Training Centre, have been published via our social media platforms, with the third video illustrating the beginnings of the Association and the past 25 years journey to be unveiled at our 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Mystique Event.



*DSA is thankful to our beneficiaries and staff for their incredible support towards the videos production*



Find out more about Mystique XV at <https://bit.ly/mystiquexv>



# It Takes A Village To Raise A Child

Educational toys help children to learn and have fun at the same time

La Min Maung, a physiotherapist from SPD Therapy Hub started supporting DSA's Early Start Family Programme (ESFP) in August 2021. In addition to La Min, the Children Education Services team headed by Ms Viemala consists of two Early Intervention Teachers, a Senior Early Intervention Teacher and a speech therapist.

The ESFP helps in strengthening the capacity of families to provide competent care and support to their children with disabilities, and to enhance their child's development and learning through everyday activities. La Min supports families with weekly physical sessions and virtual intervention sessions arranged by the Early Intervention Teachers.

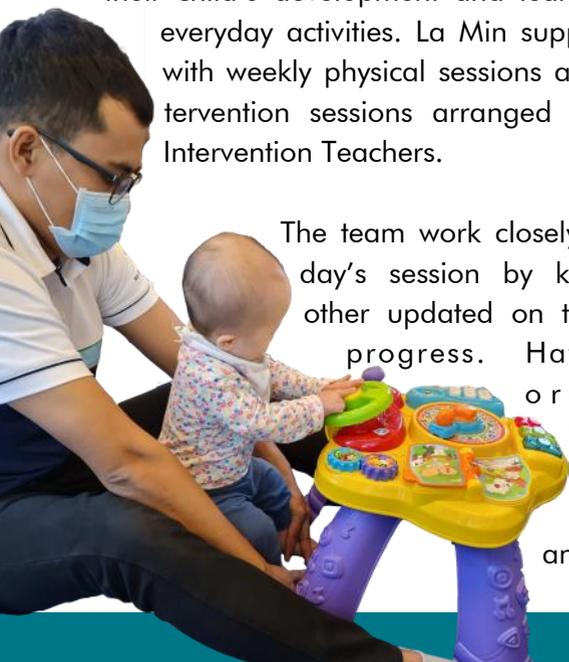
The team work closely to plan the day's session by keeping each other updated on the children's progress. Having well-organised, thoughtfully planned sessions and a welcom-

ing environment benefit the children and families. The children and caregivers are enjoying the sessions.

The Virtual Intervention Session is an essential platform for the parents and caregivers. They are well structured with clear objectives that allow the team to deliver comprehensive strategies in the family's natural settings. The biggest asset however, is the strong Caregiver-Professional partnership at DSA. ESFP has a relationship-based collaborative learning approach with caregivers. We help families reach their identified outcomes by having open discussions.

La Min shares that he has *"the pleasure of working with an exceptional team including dedicated caregivers to facilitate the development of their children, focusing on their gross motor and fine motor skills. The programme helps the children build secure relationships with caring and responsive adults, where they feel safe and are free to explore and learn."*

Contributor: La Min Maung, Physiotherapist, SPD Therapy Hub, Children Services



# Equip Students With Skills To Carve Their Own Success



I can't say that every student we serve is successful in the mainstream. However, what I have personally witnessed is that we should not underestimate our students' ability to succeed in the mainstream setting.

Chian Kai Qi will take her PSLE examination this coming October. She is a student at Gongshang Primary School.

When Kai Qi started IFSP in 2016, she was in Primary 1. We worked very closely with Kai Qi's proactive and determined parents who did not conform to the expected educational pathway for children with Down syndrome.

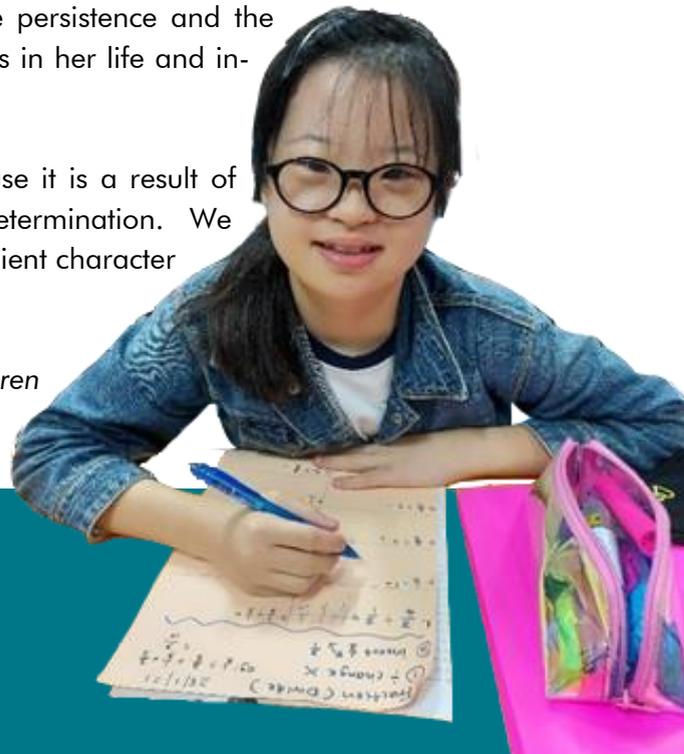
Kai Qi needed help to stay focused and complete assignments. Providing predictable schedules and classroom routines helped Kai

Qi adapt to the changes. We used simple relaxation exercises that encouraged her to take small steps towards accomplishing challenging tasks and we worked hard to create a learning environment where mistakes are viewed as a natural part of the learning process.

Whether Kai Qi ultimately demonstrates proficiency in her academic skills during PSLE does not matter. What matters most is the opportunities awaiting Kai Qi with her set of knowledge and life skills that she has gained through the years. Coupled with her positive persistence and the right attitude, Kai Qi is going to achieve many more goals in her life and inspire others around her.

Each achievement, regardless of size, is important because it is a result of many apparent failures and more importantly, hidden determination. We congratulate Kai Qi for the unyielding confidence and resilient character within her.

*Contributor: Viemala Davie Kelaver, Head, Children Education Services*



## Hands Up!



(L to R): Samuel Lee, Amanda Chin & caregiver, Dawson Tan, Lim Thye Ann, Teacher May, Lee Yan Ting

DSA is very proud of our learners whose painting was once again selected to be printed on the foldable fan and stickers in this year's NDP pack.

The painting is a combined effort of six of our talented artists, Amanda Chin, Dawson Tan, Lee Yan Ting, Lim Thye Ann, Samuel Lee and Seth Klein who put their artistic talents together to create their art piece titled, 'Hands Up'. They were supported by Teacher May during their art en-

richment classes.

'Hands Up' depicts three hands in different sizes and the vibrant colours symbolise a community coming together and reaching up to strive for a common good. The vibrant colours used illustrates the idea of strength in unity.

All six artists together with AEP trainer, Ms Fadilah and AES Services Manager, Ms Prema had the privilege to be engaged in a virtual meet up session with President Halimah Yacob and other artists on 25 August 2021. Our learners were very excited to have met with the President of Singapore. Before the session ended, the artists told the President that they hope to meet her in person soon at the Istana when the Covid-19 situation gets better.

*Contributor: Catherine Michael, AEP Supervisor*

## Recreating A 'Piece' Of NDP

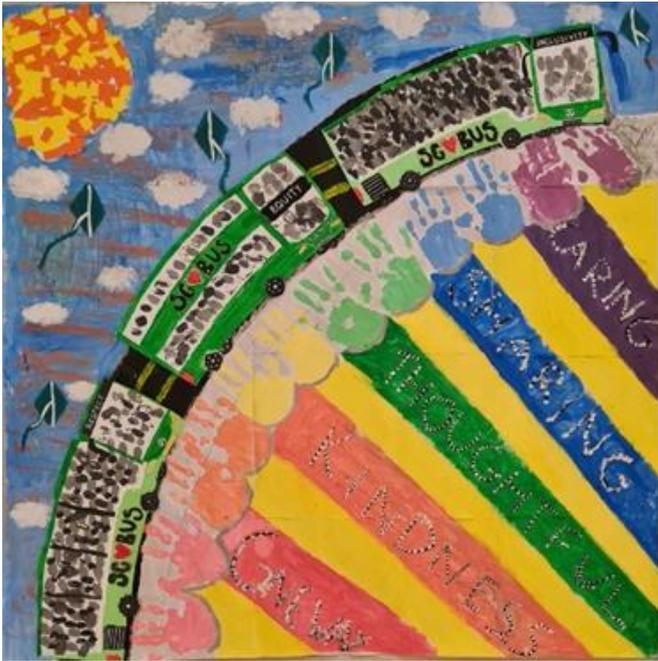
On 5 August 2021, learners and lifestyle educators of ILT Centre attended a virtual National Day Party. Majority of them turned up in bright and bold national colours of red and white with their National flags. We kickstarted the celebration with a 'Dance of the Nation' to get everyone excited and ready before moving on to the crafty highlight of the session – replicating the annual

aerial display of fighter jets. Art materials such as mini paper planes, a bunch of cotton balls, and a paper with cloud prints were provided for our learners to replicate the dynamic show that we eagerly anticipate at every NDP. A step-by-step demonstration was provided and all the learners, some assisted by their parents, were able to fold a large fighter plane. They used the cotton balls to represent smoke from the jets and clouds in the sky. Learners were proud of their work and even prouder to call Singapore home.

*Contributor: Yoginita S Vanu, Lifestyle Educator*



# Inspiring A Caring Commuting Culture



Inclusion is one of the cornerstones of ILT Centre. Being included is not often part of most people's daily concerns, but it is something many of our learners are forced to consider on a daily basis. When our learners at ILT Centre were commissioned by SG Enable (under i'mable public education initiative) to create an art piece for the Heart Zone @ Bukit Batok Bus Interchange, in support of the Caring SG Commuters initiative, they were given the opportunity to tell the community just how important inclusion is to them.

Our learners chose to express this message in both a tactile and a visual manner. They immersed themselves in this project, using a wide range of materials and processes to exhibit their creativity. By using unconventional methods such as handprints, fingerprints, and correction fluid to accent the words that provide the "support" for Singapore's transportation culture, they created an exclusive piece that communicates to Singapore that people with special needs are worth

the time and deserve to be part of the community.

The vibrant colours used illustrate a cheery and joyful journey when they share their commuting experience with caring commuters. The multi-coloured handprints represent how people from different walks of lives who share similar traits – 'caring, sharing, thoughtful, kindness, give way' – can help to uplift spirits and bring joy to others. For example, you can show care by simply sharing your space, or giving up your seat to someone who needs it more.

Through this artwork conceptualised by our lifestyle educators and adult clients – Angie Ng, Jenny Chen, Toh Wei Kang, John Patrick Grace, Lee Pei Yun, Dylan Kwok and Kenneth Tan – we hope that it will inspire commuters to make the logical choice.

*Contributor: Todd Simonson, ILT Centre Supervisor*

# Cha Ching!

Co-developed by Prudence Foundation and JA Asia Pacific, Cha-Ching Curriculum introduces financial literacy focusing on the four key concepts: Earn, Save, Spend and Donate. Through an engaging musical narrative approach of six characters in their journey learning to make right choices, 14 members spent three days learning about the four fundamental money management concepts.



If your child is keen to have a better understanding of the four key money concepts, you may wish to use the resources on <https://chaching.cartoonnetworkasia.com/en/>. The website provides an extensive list of resources like worksheets, guides, videos, games and comics to engage your child.

*Contributed by: Amelia Sim, Executive (Membership & Enrichment Programs)*

## Fun With Mickey



Are online events just as fun as face-to-face events? Definitely! On 24 June 2021, we conducted a Mickey Mouse Event via Zoom for DSA members. We wanted to let them interact with their friends amidst the sudden phase 2 heightened alert, and to confidently showcase and speak in front of everyone as this will allow them to step out of their comfort zones despite it being online and meeting us for the first time.

The members were extremely focused and engaged as they merrily created their clay art. Some members could even create Mickey and Minnie with the given clay that could initially only create one figurine. The members were also hyped up during the dance session.

We are beyond grateful for this opportunity to work with DSA and having a blast with the members. If the situation permits, we would love to work with DSA once again face-to-face and meet the members! Thank you.

*Contributor: Aqilah, Camelia, Chelsia, Haziqah, Ngee Ann Polytechnic School of Humanities & Social Sciences*

## An Insight on Otolaryngologic Issues

One of the health challenges that persons with Down syndrome may face is otolaryngologic issues, which involves the ear, nose, and throat. As such, DSA Family Support Services conducted an online workshop 'Otolaryngologic Issues in Down syndrome' on 3 July 2021 with a speaker from National University Hospital, Dr Loh Woei Shyang.

With the improvement in the care of children with Down syndrome, multiple otolaryngologic problems common to them such as otologic infections, hearing loss, airway problems, rhinorrhea and sinusitis have become more apparent.

Dr Loh discussed each condition in detail in terms of clinical presentations and possible treatments

available. Although the treatment outcome of these conditions is still being evaluated in many centres worldwide, appropriate management of these ENT conditions can be instrumental in allowing these children to achieve their full potential.

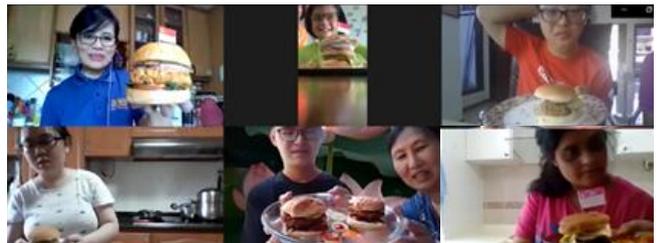
Throughout the session, Dr Loh took questions and held discussions with parents on causes of these conditions. Case examples were also given to illustrate the range of conditions. We hope that such sessions will give parents more insight into their children's condition, and the reassurance that they are supported every step of the way.

*Contributed by: Janet Boo, Executive (Family Support Services)*

## A Twist To The Classics

What better way to celebrate National Day than to engage in Singaporeans' favourite pastime – eating! On 24 July 2021, Family Support Services and RSVP volunteers co-facilitated the FSS online cooking session – Chicken Satay Burger with Milo Dinosaur, a twist to the classics - to celebrate our National Day.

The virtual workshop led by RSVP trainer, Ms Elaine Teng, with assistance from her two volunteers and DSA staff, Ms Janet Boo was attended by nine groups of parents/caregivers and their children via Zoom. The session had a record-breaking 100% attendance as all 15 participants who registered turned up bright and early, ready to whip up a good meal in time for lunch.



The participants were able to follow instructions with ease as they were taught how to make the Chicken Satay Burger and Milo Dinosaur with step-by-step demonstration. Parents and children enjoyed the session as it provided a great parent-child bonding opportunity and they also got to showcase their delicious creations by the end of the Zoom session.

*Contributed by: Janet Boo, Executive (Family Support Services)*

## A Meaningful National Day



Recently, Methodist Girls' School (Secondary) partnered with Boon Lay Secondary in a joint Values-In-Action (VIA) project with DSA to bring some National Day Cheer to the learners from Adult Enhancement Program. It was a great experience for us to meet people from various backgrounds and understand the challenges these individuals face in life. It also taught us to pay more attention to the different yet beautiful tapestry of our society and embrace our differences.

We learnt to be more inclusive and sensitive towards the special needs community and how to engage with them effectively by putting ourselves in their shoes. This VIA truly allowed us to display our values of empathy and sensitivity. As we become more knowledgeable of the struggles the adult learners face, we are reminded that everyone is different and in order to progress as a society, we must first learn to extend a helping hand to those with special needs.

*Contributor: Chloe Koh, Methodist Girls' School (Secondary) and Wendy, Boon Lay Secondary*

## Zoo De-classified! Tour

As an adopted charity for the [Klook Cares] Donate-an-Xperience Initiative organised by Xperience Singapore Destination Management Company, 40 members enjoyed a Zoo tour in small groups during the September school holidays.

Members and caregivers spent time understanding the concept of an "Open Zoo", animal's exhibit design elements, animal conservation and "behavior enrichment". Everyone took the opportunity to pose with their favorite animal and reptiles in their natural habitat! Members ended the day with a hearty lunch and took home a "Ah Meng" plush – an icon of the Singapore Zoo.

DSA would like to thank the public for their kind donation of the Singapore Rediscover Vouchers and Xperience Singapore for making the day fun and memorable.



*Contributed by: Amelia Sim, Executive (Membership & Enrichment Programs)*



# My Reflection On Attending The ACSE Course

My hope for attending the Advanced Certificate In Supported Employment (ACSE) course was to learn ways that we can have an impactful voice within the workforce community and to advocate plans that will be relevant to persons with disabilities (PwDs). We need to explore or create employment pathways for our learners and review the job market demands which align to the government funding initiatives on inclusive workforce.



Some challenges faced when supporting our learners in open employment are uncondusive environmental and physical structures, competition from other prospects, communication barriers with new colleagues, lack of social understanding between different parties, motivation of individuals, coping with job demands and inadequate family support. Throughout the month-long journey, I realised that these barriers are possible to overcome if we look past their disabilities and focus on their abilities. I began to set a more realistic expectation on the learners and focus on improving their quality of life from a more holistic perspective.

Simply put, we are like the “bridge builder”. We connect the PwDs to the community and ensure they receive support from their caregivers, siblings, co-workers, supervisors, and work buddies.

During the online discussions with various job coaches and other professionals in supported employment, we share the importance of employment in promoting the PwDs overall well-being, quality of life and the benefits of meaningful engagement for both learners and their family in achieving a more desirable outcome. Strategic approaches such as preparing learners using visual aids, helping them obtain relevant job skills as well as soft skills (e.g. communication) were introduced for learners to succeed in the working environment.

With the new knowledge and skill, we hope to empower learners to be “work-ready” by developing a more comprehensive supported employment framework and redesigning an enhanced employment support plan for the learners who are currently working or seeking for employment. Moving forward, we would work on refining the working relationship with employers, by having certain modifications and accommodations that can sustain a long-term partnership with them.

Thank you to DSA management and AEP team for the opportunity and support!



Contributor: Nur Shuhada, Training Officer

Dear Friends,

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

Your support will enable us to support our children and adults with Down syndrome through various educational, developmental and social programs 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 DSA Board of Management, staff and our community of persons with Down syndrome!

### DONATION FORM (NEWS/2021/09)

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

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**All outright donations are 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".



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



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