

# DSA NEWS

Serving the Down syndrome community since 1996



## 03 Mystique 2024

DSA's Mystique Charity Gala Dinner was held on Saturday, 5 October 2024 at Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention with an attendance of more than 300 guests.

## 07 Purple Parade 2024

DSA partnered with Standard Chartered Singapore as an inclusive contingent for the highly anticipated Purple Parade 2024.

## 05 Charity Transparency Award 2024

DSA was awarded the Charity Transparency Award 2024 in recognition of our good standards of governance and transparency.



# From the ED's Desk

Dear members and friends,

Happy 2025!

It has been an amazing start to 2025 and before we journey further into the year, let's review our journey in the second half of 2024.

In the second half of 2024, we witnessed several milestones in our refreshed strategic plans. Guided by the three key objectives to deliver quality programmes, build positive long lasting relationships and to enhance sustainability, DSA worked to ensure that we truly serve our mission to achieve our vision to be the Centre of Excellence for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and the community.

To support our plans, DSA started a new Department, the Support and Advocacy Services in July 2024. The department, a development from the project, Leave No One Behind, furthers our commitment and effort to reach out to the community and support every individual with Down syndrome and their caregivers. Since its formation, the department has supported more than 50 families and engaged with numerous caregivers to support them in their caregiving journey.

The Children Education Services and Adult Education Services were renamed as Children Development Services and Adult Development Services respectively. The changes reflect DSA's efforts to support the holistic development and wellbeing of our members.

Together, the three services departments conducted various programmes and activities. A highlight would be DSA's new senior programmes to meet the ageing needs of our members.

DSA also achieved a significant milestone in our commitment to good governance. DSA was awarded the Charity Transparency Award 2024, a testament to the high standards of governance and transparency in DSA. We are grateful to receive the award and motivated to continue to strengthen DSA's capability to fulfill our vision and mission.

The support of our donors, sponsors, volunteers, members, and general public are critical for DSA. In 2024, DSA received good support from our donors and sponsors, opportunities for our members to showcase their talents and abilities and platforms for individuals with Down syndrome to be meaningfully engaged and included in the community.

Through this edition of DSA News, we hope to share our journey with you and invite you to join us in support the Down syndrome community and creating a more inclusive society.

Thank you.

Yours faithfully,  
Evelyn Lai  
Executive Director

# DSA Open House

02  
HIGHLIGHTS



DSA inaugural Open House on Saturday 21 September 2024 was a resounding success. The event brought together families, advocates, and community members to celebrate inclusivity, awareness, and the incredible potential of individuals with Down syndrome.

There was an air of excitement and anticipation from the moment guests arrived. The Open House, held at DSA's Bishan Centre, had activities to engage the participants, informative presentations from various departments, and heartfelt conversations among stakeholders. Our members, guests and all participants were warmly welcomed and there was a palpable sense of belonging and community.

kido, Baking, Zumba, Speech and Drama, Fusion Dance and Bowling. In addition to the trials, the Open House featured a series of informative sessions led by the managers from our Children Development Services, Adult Development Services and Support and Advocacy Services. Attendees left with valuable information and resources, empowering them to navigate the challenges and celebrate the joys of raising a child with Down syndrome with the close support of DSA.

We would like to thank everyone who attended and supported our Open House. Your presence made a difference in creating a stronger support ecosystem for the Down syndrome community.

Throughout the day, participants enjoyed a variety of trials from DSA's Enrichment Programmes, from Ai-

*Contributor: Iris Sim (Manager, Communications & Engagement)*

# Mystique

Charity Gala Dinner



DSA's Mystique Charity Gala Dinner was held on Saturday, 5 October 2024, at Marina Bay Sands Expo and Convention with an attendance of more than 300 guests. Gracing the event was our Guest of Honour, Mr. Seah Kian Peng, Speaker of the Parliament of Singapore. The theme of the event, "Embracing the Becoming", highlighted the achievements of our members with Down syndrome community and their different abilities and infinite possibilities.

The event started on a high note with performers from DSA's Drums and Percussion group leading an interactive performance with our guests. This was followed by an inclusive runway show jointly presented by DSA beneficiaries and models from Platinum Angels Management. The models generated much excitement as they strutted down the runway together, expressing their solidarity with the Down syndrome community. The evening also featured performances from DSA's Creative Dance, Fusion Dance and Speech & Drama groups. Over 70 performers worked hard and prepared for the different performances and present their best for this big day.

# Mystique

Charity Gala Dinner

Mystique 2024 would not have succeeded without the unwavering support of our donors, sponsors, volunteers, members, performers and their families. On behalf of DSA's Board of Management, staff and the Down syndrome community, we would like to express our deepest gratitude and thanks to all for being a part of Mystique 2024 and we look forward to your continuous support in the years ahead.

*Contributor: Amelia Sim (Senior Executive, Communications & Engagement)*



## DSA MEMBERS' TOWN HALL



DSA Members' Town Hall 2024 focused on self-advocacy and the aspirations of individuals with Down syndrome. The session commenced with an introduction speech by Deputy Chairperson, Ms. Li Shu Yun, followed by a sharing of DSA's programmes and plans by Executive Director, Ms. Evelyn Lai, and then a topical discussion on self-advocacy and aspiration by Ms. Sandra Loo, Manager Support and Advocacy Services, and Ms. Viemala Davie Kelaver, former Manager of Children Development Services.

Our members demonstrated their self-advocacy efforts by expressing their views and wishes through speech, dance, music and storytelling. Their sharing will help us to plan better programmes and services to support our members in achieving their best potential and enhance their quality of life. Members and their family members were treated to a buffet lunch after the engaging dialogue with DSA's board members.

## CHARITY TRANSPARENCY AWARD

DSA was awarded the Charity Transparency Award 2024. The Award recognises charities with good disclosure practices and aims to promote good transparency and governance in the charity sector. The award is testament to DSA's commitment to good governance. DSA's Deputy Chairperson, Ms. Li Shu Yun proudly received the award on behalf of DSA. We thank DSA Board members for the strong stewardship and our staff for the collective effort contributing to this achievement!

*Contributor: Iris Sim (Manager, Communications & Engagement)*



# Festive Appeal

As we start 2025 and reflect on the past year, we are filled with gratitude for your unwavering support. Your commitment has enabled us to better serve individuals with Down Syndrome, their families and the community.

In 2024, we started new services and programmes to meet arising needs and fill critical service gaps. They include our newly formed department, the Support and Advocacy Services, and new senior programmes. Support and Advocacy Services supports the psychosocial needs of individuals with Down Syndrome and their caregivers and aims to reach out to those in the community who are facing challenges and require support. DSA's senior programmes cater to the ageing needs of our beneficiaries and their caregivers, addressing the critical concerns of individuals with Down Syndrome and their families as they live longer lives their care needs may change and increase over the years.



Every month, it takes about \$2,800 to provide early intervention support for each child to meet their developmental and educational needs and \$1,000 to support each adult to develop essential life skills for independent living and support their employment.

Every year, DSA serves about 700 members. As a significantly self-funded charity, DSA aims to raise about \$2 million annually. We hope to raise \$80,000 through our Festive Fundraising Campaign to be held from 1 Dec 2024 to 28 Feb 2025. The funds raised will go towards DSA's general funds for the critical operations and programmes to support our beneficiaries and enhance our capability to serve our members better and meet the community's changing needs.

We seek your continued support and generous donations to help us provide critical care and opportunities for individuals with Down syndrome, their families and the community to develop their fullest potential and have a quality life.

*Contributor: Amelia Sim (Senior Executive, Communications & Engagement)*

# Purple Parade 2024



One of the signature annual events that DSA looks forward to is Purple Parade. 2024 was no exception, and this time, DSA partnered with Standard Chartered Singapore as an inclusive contingent to march in solidarity. In addition to forming a contingent to march in support of an inclusive society, DSA also set up a booth at the Carnival and presented performances for the event. Each segment contributed to the event in the sea of purple, radiating waves of love and inclusion as we celebrated the abilities of persons with disabilities.

Through the fun, DSA emerged victorious and was awarded The Purple Parade's Eco-Friendly Contingent Award – our 3<sup>rd</sup> year in a row! The award recognised our members and volunteers' joining sustainable efforts in using sustainable materials to design and make our props for the contingent march. We are proud to be part The Purple Parade 2024 and we look forward to another amazing one in 2025!

*Contributor: Nur Sulyanna Sumali (Executive, Communications & Engagement)*



# Asia Pacific Down Syndrome Federation – AGM 2024

The Asia Pacific Down Syndrome Federation (APDSF) Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2024 had 16 representatives from the region coming together to share their journey with the Down syndrome community for the year. The team from DSA comprised of two staff, three self-advocates and two parents.

Representatives from each country shared about the new services, programmes and strategies in getting resourcing to support the various efforts. While the discussion were going on, members with Down syndrome participated in self-advocacy art sessions.

DSA shared about our efforts to reach out to the Down syndrome community to ensure that no one gets left behind and our new senior programmes to support the ageing needs of individuals with Down syndrome and their caregivers and to support them in continuing to live meaningful lives in the community as they age. DSA's Advisor, Dr Bhavani, also hosted a Medical Committee session. She shared the importance of communication from the medical faculty to parents and is working on a framework for all the countries next year.



The sharing from the various countries were inspiring. The event also provided opportunities for us to strengthen our relations with other APDSF members to promote mutual learning and support in enhancing support for the community.

The next AGM will be held in Bangkok in 2025.

*Contributor: Sandra Loo (Manager, Support & Advocacy)*



# Children Development Services Conducts

In July 2024, Children Development Services organised a series of three engaging parent workshops on enhancing primary school readiness for children with special needs. Each workshop lasted more than two hours and provided parents with practical tips and resources to support their children's learning journey at home.

The first workshop, 'Fostering Primary School Readiness at Home and Creating a Home Learning Environment', featured a guest parent speaker who shared her personal experience. Her daughter, who has Down syndrome, would be sitting for her PSLE in 2024. The guest parent discussed how she created a supportive home learning environment and the challenges and triumphs they experienced throughout her daughter's primary school years. Her insights deeply resonated with parents, as she offered firsthand advice on fostering independence, building routines, and balancing academic and emotional development.

The second workshop, 'Supporting Read-Aloud & Literacy at Home and Monitoring Your Child's Academic Progress', provided strategies for developing reading habits and literacy skills. Parents were introduced to interactive read-aloud techniques and methods to track their children's academic progress.

The third workshop, 'Turning Everyday Activities into Learning Opportunities and Cultivating Successful Learning Habits', emphasised the importance of using everyday tasks to teach foundational skills such as counting, problem-solving, and communication. Parents explored how simple household activities, like meal preparation or grocery shopping, could be turned into rich learning experiences.

During the first workshop, two key speech and language development techniques were introduced: OWL (Observe, Wait, and Listen) and Total Communication, each offering significant benefits for children with Down syndrome.

The OWL technique encourages parents to become more attuned to their child's communication by observing their behaviours and body language, waiting patiently without interrupting, and listening carefully to their cues. This approach fosters a deeper understanding of the child's needs and interests, allowing parents to respond in a way that supports the child's natural communication abilities.

The Total Communication strategy takes a holistic approach, integrating speech, gestures, visuals, and sign language to support a child's communication. This method is particularly beneficial for children who may have difficulty expressing themselves solely through speech.

Both techniques—OWL and Total Communication—are valuable for fostering meaningful interactions and enhancing language development in children with special needs, creating a more inclusive and responsive environment at home.

Each session was packed with insightful discussions, hands-on activities, and resourceful materials, including research articles, learning videos, and guides. Feedback from parents indicated increased confidence in supporting their children's learning at home.



*Contributor: Viemala Davie Kelaver (Former Manager, Children Development Services)*

# Celebrating Alisha:

## A Star Camper at the School Camp



Alisha, a Primary 5 student with Down syndrome, showcased her remarkable spirit and resilience during her school camp at Bukit Timah Nature Reserve. Her participation in the camp was not just about exploration; it was a testament to her growth and development, culminating in her being awarded the "Most Improved Camper" award.

Alisha's character shines through her ability to adapt to new environment and connect with her peers. With the support of the DSA's Integration Facilitation Support Programme (IFSP) since 2020, she has developed essential social skills that have helped her engage with classmates and build lasting friendships. Her cheerful disposition and willingness to participate actively in group activities have made her a beloved member of her school community.

Despite her lower muscle tone, Alisha persevered to overcome obstacles and challenges, demonstrating not only physical resilience but also mental fortitude. Alisha's journey reflects a broader narrative of empowerment for children with Down syndrome, emphasising that with the right support and encouragement, they can achieve great milestones.

Her experience serves as an inspiring reminder of the potential within every child, regardless of their challenges. Alisha's story is one of courage, growth, and the joy of learning—qualities that will undoubtedly guide her as she continues to thrive in both academic and social settings.

*Contributed by: Viemala Davie Kelaver (Former Manager, Children Development Services)*

# Children's Day Celebration: A Day to Remember



On 4 October 2024, Children Development Services hosted a vibrant Children's Day Celebration that brought joy and laughter to the hearts of all present. The event was filled with excitement, unity, and moments of happiness for the children and their families.

The day started with lively music and movement games, where the children and parents demonstrated their energy and enthusiasm, dancing and playing together. The Piazza was transformed into a mini wonderland with a bouncy castle, which quickly became a favourite among the little ones.

A special highlight of the day was the presentation of goodie bags to all the children by DSA Executive Director, Ms. Evelyn Lai. Each bag was filled with thoughtful surprises that lit up the children's faces as they received the gifts. The thoughtful gifts truly made the children feel cherished.

This joyous event was a reminder of the importance of creating inclusive spaces where every child feels celebrated and loved. It was a day of shared laughter, cherished memories, and strengthened bonds within our community.

We thank everyone who contributed to making this Children's Day a success and look forward to more opportunities to celebrate our wonderful children.



*Contributed by: Viemala Davie Kelaver (Former Manager, Children Development Services)*

# AEP Camp 2024

18 AEP learners and trainers had an exciting stay at the Kampung Siglap Lifeskills Training and Retreat Centre from 4 to 6 November 2024. The annual AEP camp presents opportunities for our learners to consolidate their learnings through the year and showcase their progress and achievements in the year while having fun with their friends. They had the chance to prepare their own breakfast and even create a delicious dessert under the tutelage of AEP Trainer, Mr. Vincent Choo, for the buffet dinner that evening.

During the camp, learners enjoyed a variety of outdoor games. They also had fun practising new cheers and drum skills which they presented to their family members during the family dinner at the end of Day 2. The caregivers were delighted to see their loved ones having such a wonderful time. Both learners and their caregivers are looking forward to joining the Camp again in 2025!

Special thanks to our AEP Team who worked hard to ensure the success of the camp, as well as the volunteers who came to support them.

*Contributor: Vincent Choo (Training Officer, Adult Development Services)*



# WRAP Candle Making



On 23 July, 15 learners from the Work Readiness Assisted Programme (WRAP) attended a candle-making workshop conducted by Candle Collective Co. During the session, they explored blending and choosing scents and pouring the molten wax into jars. The hands-on experience was both educational and enjoyable, and each learner left with their very own handcrafted candle, feeling much joy and accomplishment.

Following this enriching experience, the learners put their newfound skills to good use by assisting to make candles as door gifts for the guests attending DSA's Mystique Charity Gala Dinner. The candles were also sold to raise funds to support DSA's various programmes.

*Contributor: Tan Yan Ru (Job Coach, Adult Development Services)*

# Loving Heart Active Ageing Centre

Every Tuesday afternoon, a heartwarming scene unfolds at the Loving Heart Active Ageing Centre in Jurong. From 2 to 4pm, learners from DSA's Enhanced Independence Programme (EIP) gather together to volunteer, serving tea and snacks to the seniors. The programme is designed to provide a supportive environment for both the learners and the seniors. As our Learners prepare and serve tea and snacks, they engage in lively conversations and share stories. This interaction is not just about serving food; it's about develop social skills, building relationships and creating a sense of belonging.

For the EIP learners, volunteering offers invaluable opportunities for personal growth. Each week, they develop essential life skills, such as communication, teamwork, and empathy. The seniors at Loving Heart Active Ageing Centre look forward to these visits every Tuesday. The tea breaks become a cherished routine, where laughter and companionship flourish. Many seniors have expressed their appreciation for our learners. This heartwarming collaboration is a testament to the positive impact that community initiatives can have.

The initiative exemplifies the power of community service. As EIP continues to enhance our learners capability to live independently in the community, we will introduce more structured activities to promote interaction between our members and the community.

*Contributor: Uthaiyan S/O Ellangovan & Shannon Goh (Trainer, Enhanced Independence Programme)*



# Empowering Connections: ADS Hosts Parent-Trainer Conference 2024

The Adult Development Services (ADS) hosted its annual Parent-Trainer Conference (PTC) 2024, offering a valuable platform for parents, trainers, and key stakeholders to collaborate in supporting learners. The event provided an opportunity to share insights, review progress, and explore innovative strategies to empower learners to achieve their fullest potential.

The focus of the conference was the importance of collaboration between home and centre environments. Trainers emphasised that consistent and aligned efforts between parents and the center play a pivotal role in facilitating learners' progress and holistic development. "When parents and trainers work hand-in-hand, we create a cohesive support system that empowers our learners to succeed," shared Senior Trainer Shu.

A highlight of this year's PTC was the introduction of the new Allied Health Therapy Service, encompassing Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy. During the session, trainers presented insights from recent assessments conducted under this initiative, demonstrating their commitment to enhance the learners' quality of life. These services aim to deliver personalised interventions to address physical and functional challenges, which empower learners and build independence and improve their daily living skills.

Additionally, trainers shared detailed overviews of each learner's progress, providing parents with personalised feedback on the child's strengths and areas for growth. The sessions also included actionable tips, best practices, and practical strategies that parents can implement at home to complement their child's developmental journey.

This year's conference reaffirmed ADS's dedication to fostering a collaborative and supportive ecosystem for its learners. Through initiatives like the Parent-Trainer Conference, ADS continues to empower individuals to achieve greater independence and reach new milestones in their development.

*Contributor: Nur Shuhada Suhaimi, (Senior Training Officer, Adult Development Services)*

# Christmas with the Temasek Trailblazers



The celebration kicked off with a delicious buffet featuring festive delicacies such as roast beef and turkey, delighting all participants. The fun continued with an array of exciting games, including a life-sized tic-tac-toe, a spin-the-wheel challenge, and even a fishing activity where participants could win prizes. Creativity was in full swing as learners were invited to craft their own Christmas trees using colourful materials.

The festivities didn't stop there! Temasek Trailblazer volunteers were treated to a musical showcase. Learners from the Enhanced Independence Programme (EIP) dazzled the audience with a lively dance to the hit song by Bruno Mars and Rosé 'APT', while participants from the Adult Enhancement Programme (AEP) brought everyone together in joyous Christmas carol sing-along.



Learners from the Adult Development Services had a wonderful time at a festive Christmas party hosted by the Temasek Trailblazers on 12 December 2024.



As the party wrapped up, each Temasek Trailblazer volunteer received a thoughtful token of appreciation: a handmade marbled coaster paired with a charming clay Christmas ornament, a perfect memento of a truly memorable day.

*Contributor: Angeline De Cruz (Senior Training Officer, Adult Development Services)*



# FSS–RSVP National Day Baking

There was a palpable sense of anticipation from our Learners, Caregivers and the Senior Volunteers for the National Day Baking event. All came with the spirit of learning a new recipe and having a good time.

Participants shared very good feedback about the event and thanked the Instructor, Elaine, whom they found to be very creative and patient with our Learners. Elaine and her team of volunteers were from RSVP. Despite their age, the volunteers demonstrated high levels of energy and care, as they skilfully guided our Learners and engaged with our Caregivers through the activities.

Our DSA centre was filled with the delicious aroma of baked chicken patty and shepherd's pie, as the Learners prepared the National Day meal, consisting of chicken patty burger, shepherd's pie popsicle and milo dinosaur, all of which are our local favourites!

All of them enjoyed the session including the volunteers and staff. Everyone was able to bring home the bakes for their National Day holiday to share with their families and friends.

*Contributor: Dzakirah Binte Rosli (Social Work Associate, Support & Advocacy Services)*



**Figure 1. Preparing Milo Dinosaur**



**Figure 2. Preparing Shepherd's Pie Popsicle**



**Figure 3. Sarah and her mother Christina, with their completed National Day Bakes**



**Figure 4. RSVP volunteers guiding our learners and their parents in preparing the meal**



**Figure 5. A group photo with Elaine (center), RSVP volunteers and our learners**

# Parents/Caregivers Tea Session

DSA held two Parents and Caregivers' Tea Engagement sessions on 28 August and 6 September 2024. Parents got to know one another and the new team from the Support and Advocacy Services and shared their personal experiences and valuable tips to support their children with Down syndrome and ensure their personal wellbeing. Our teachers and trainers from the Children Development Services and Adult Development Services were also present to address any concerns about their children's development and wellbeing.

## Some of the Feedback for the sessions

- It was a good discussion. Well moderated. I gained more knowledge, especially on how to manage stress.
- We just started. We should foster more togetherness among parents n caregivers in DSA community
- The session is well-organized and facilitated. I am grateful for the effort to connect parents, and for us to share our thoughts openly. This session helps to build trust among us and with DSA.

Figure 6. (28 Aug 2024) Tea Session Opening by Sandra (Head of Support & Advocacy)



Figure 7. (28 Aug 2024) Parents and caregivers sharing their thoughts and experiences through Bingo!



Figure 8. (28 Aug 2024) Our SUSS and NAFA interns assisting our learners with quill artwork in the other room, while the parents/caregivers are engaged



# Parents/Caregivers Tea Session

Figure 9. (28 Aug 2024) Our learner, Hana with her completed quill artwork



Figure 10. (06 Sep 2024) The Tree of Hope, where parents pin their hopes and wishes for themselves and their children.



## Some of the wish list for future sessions

- Deputyship, Advance Care Planning
- Health tips, Self-care skills for children
- Parent child bonding activities.
- Any relevant topic regarding managing down-syndrome children.
- Deputyship talk on how to get the docs done up, support on where our child can do next.
- If they reach 18yrs old, medical talk on where our child can go for health check-up specially cater for DS.



Figure 11. (06 Sep 2024) Answering the parents/caregivers' queries on DSA services

Figure 12. (06 Sep 2024) Group photo with parents and learners



The concerns for the group above 18 years old were more of ageing issues and future care planning for their adult children with Down syndrome. Parents of children with Down syndrome under 18 years old, included Deputyship and transition to Adult's phase.

We hope to have more such platforms to engage the parents and caregivers so that DSA can understand their issues and concerns and seek solutions together with the parents and caregivers. Feel free to give more ideas to our staff when you meet them or drop us an email.

Contributor: Dzakirah Binte Rosli (Social Work Associate, Support & Advocacy Services)

# HDB Fusion Dance Performance



On Saturday, 31 August 2024, DSA Fusion Dancers took center stage at the Housing Development Board (HDB) Toa Payoh Hub during the HDB & HDBSU Joint Bursary Award Presentation Ceremony and HDBSU Long Membership/Retirement Award Ceremony. The event, which honoured recipients of bursaries and recognized long-serving members of HDBSU, saw a heartfelt performance from the Fusion Dancers, who brought joy and inspiration to the audience.

The event's Guest-of-Honour, Mr. Tan Meng Dui, Chief Executive Officer of HDB, graced the occasion and delivered an encouraging speech celebrating the hard work and dedication of the awardees. After which, DSA Fusion Dancers, a vibrant and talented group, captivated the audience with their energetic and graceful performance. Their routine was a mix of expressive movements, choreographed to highlight their abilities and the power of inclusivity. At the end of the ceremony, DSA Fusion Dancers were honoured with a plaque and certificate for their outstanding performance.



The inclusion of the Fusion Dancers at such a prestigious event highlighted the important work that DSA continues to do in fostering talent, self-expression, and confidence among individuals with Down syndrome. Their participation in the ceremony was a true testament to the strength of collaboration between community organisations and public institutions like HDB, reinforcing a message of inclusivity and shared celebration of success.

*Contributor: Saarah Abdul (Programme Executive, Adult Development Services)*

# Hiking Holiday Programme

Our recent Hiking Holiday Programme was a wonderful blend of outdoor exploration and artistic expression, bringing together families a memorable experience in nature.



The day began with a scenic hike, where participants engaged in nature photography, capturing stunning images of the lush surroundings. During the hike, participants explored their creative sides with a leaf printing activity.

They collected leaves and transformed them into vibrant prints, which were later designed as bookmarks!

The programme encouraged families to bond over shared experiences, supported by the enthusiasm and assistance of our volunteers. From capturing the perfect shot to designing leaf-print bookmarks, every activity was filled with laughter and learning.

## What's Next?

This event was such a success that we are already brainstorming our next outdoor creative programme. Whether it's another hike, a new craft, or both, we're committed to fostering moments that combine nature, creativity, and community.

A big thank you to the families and volunteers who joined us and made this day so special. We can't wait to see you on the next adventure!

*Contributor: Saarah Abdul (Programme Executive, Adult Development Services)*



# Art Workshop: Mark-Making Postcards

Our Art Workshop Holiday Programme brought creativity to life with an engaging session focused on mark-making postcards. Participants came together to explore the endless possibilities of artistic expression through this simple yet captivating technique.

The session began with a brief introduction to mark-making, where participants learned how various tools and materials can create unique patterns, textures, and designs. Guided by Saarah, everyone dived into experimenting with marks, using cotton buds, sponges, and unconventional tools like twigs and leaves.

The highlight of the workshop was designing personalised postcards. Each participant transformed their mark-making experiments into stunning, one-of-a-kind pieces. This workshop was more than just an art session—it was an opportunity for participants to relax, bond, and express themselves. The finished postcards became cherished keepsakes or gifts for loved ones.

Given the joy and success of this programme, we're excited to plan more art workshops in the coming year. Thank you to everyone who participated in making this workshop a vibrant and inspiring experience!

*Contributor: Saarah Abdul (Programme Executive, Adult Development Services)*



# NEW Senior Programmes: Music Therapy and Occupational/ Physiotherapy

DSA launched two exciting new initiatives tailored for seniors: Music Therapy and Occupational/Physiotherapy (OT/PT) sessions. These programmes aimed to enhance the well-being, mobility, and emotional health of seniors through engaging and therapeutic activities. Here is a glimpse of what happened during these sessions and how they can benefit those who join in the future.



## Music Therapy

Music Therapy sessions have been nothing short of magical. During these sessions, seniors engaged in activities such as singing along to nostalgic tunes, playing percussion instruments, and even gentle movement exercises set to music.

One highlight was where participants worked together to create rhythmic patterns. This not only brought smiles to everyone's faces but also fostered a sense of community and teamwork. Many participants shared how the music provided a sense of relaxation.

Music Therapy is known to improve cognitive functions, reduce stress, and enhance mood. For seniors, it also provides a wonderful opportunity for social interaction.

## Occupational & Physiotherapy

The OT/PT sessions were designed to help seniors maintain and improve their physical abilities. Led by experienced therapists, these sessions focused on strength-building exercises, flexibility routines, and balance training. Each session was carefully tailored to suit the participants' individual needs and abilities.

These sessions are invaluable for seniors looking to improve their mobility and independence. Regular participation can help reduce the risk of falls, alleviate chronic pain, and enhance overall physical health. These programmes are gateways to a healthier and more fulfilling lifestyle.

The initial sessions have already made a significant impact. The therapists and facilitators ensured that everyone felt included and valued, creating a safe and nurturing environment. Looking ahead, we plan to expand these initiatives, bringing even more opportunities for seniors to thrive.

*Contributor: Saarah Abdul (Programme Executive, Adult Development Services)*

## Outing to Qian Hu Fish Farm

On 18 November 2024, our members visited the renowned Qian Hu Fish Farm for a memorable day of experiential learning. The staff warmly welcomed our members and opened the tour with an informative walkabout of the farm. We had the chance to see and learn about the many different species of fish housed in their tanks. They let us go right up to the tanks to get a proper, up-close look at the eye-catching fish.

One of the highlights of the day was meeting the terrapins, which the farm also cares for. The staff kindly allowed us to touch and interact with the reptiles, making for some fun moments.

Next, we headed to the longkang, a series of small drain-like rivers where everyone was able to try their hand at fishing. Our last stop was the koi pond, where we were able to feed the majestic koi fish.



We were provided with fish food and scattered it around the pond, as we watched the colourful fish swim up to feast.

As a wonderful surprise, the farm gifted us with a complimentary fish tank, complete with small, glowing neon fish that light up in the dark. It was a perfect end to a day filled with learning, laughter, and new experiences.

*Contributed by: Katriya (ASRJC Intern, Communications & Engagement)*



# Crocodile Farm

On 2 December 2024, we had the incredible opportunity to visit Long Kuan Hung Crocodile Farm. The farm is the only operational crocodile farm in Singapore, and is home to 20,000 crocodiles of varying ages. We were hosted by Robin, the second-generation owner, who, along with Ken, one of the farmers, guided us through an exciting and educational day at the farm.



Our adventure began with a visit to the adult crocodiles, where we learned how to distinguish between males and females. We were fascinated to learn that mother crocodiles can go without food for up to three months after laying eggs to protect their young.

Next, we got the chance to feed the young crocodiles. Our members enthusiastically participated in feeding them, getting an up-close view of these fascinating creatures. This was followed by a special meet-and-greet session with two baby crocodiles, Sammy and Timmy, both just two months old. Holding and touching these tame and gentle crocodiles was a proud and thrilling moment for everyone.

Overall, it was an unforgettable day filled with learning, excitement, and new experiences. We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to Robin, Ken, and the team at Long Kuan Hung Crocodile Farm for being such gracious and knowledgeable hosts.

*Contributor: Elisya Johan (Executive, Communications & Engagement)*



# Merchandise Booths



As the end of 2024 approached, DSA was excited to set up our merchandise booths at various fairs celebrating the festive spirit! We are deeply thankful for the opportunity to collaborate with an incredible range of partners—both new and longstanding.

Our booths were featured at several wonderful events, including the Standard Chartered Christmas Pop-up, I'mable Gift Market, Stevens Residents Network Booth, Park Royal at Beach Road Festive Village of Love, Woodlands Health Retail Pharmacy and NEA Christmas Fair.

We hope our learners' creative and heartfelt work would add a touch of happiness to the season. We are truly grateful for the continued support and opportunities that allow us to showcase the amazing talents of our learners. Here's to sharing even more exciting and inspiring merchandise in 2025!



*Contributor: Elisya Johan (Executive, Communications & Engagement)*

# Year-end Staff Party



Our staff year end festive party was an unforgettable celebration of joy, teamwork, and the holiday spirit! It was a time to come together, reflect on the year's accomplishments, and enjoy each other's company in a relaxed and festive atmosphere.

We kicked off the festivities with a secret gift exchange, where preparing thoughtful gifts for one another gave us a chance to learn more about one another. As we enjoyed a delicious Christmas dinner, we reflected on the wonderful memories created in 2024.

We are deeply grateful for the hard work and dedication of every team member, and we can't wait for more moments of celebration, collaboration, and success in 2025!

*Contributor: Elisya Johan (Executive, Communications & Engagement)*



# New Staff Welcome



## **Saarrah Abdul (Programme Executive, Adult Development Services)**

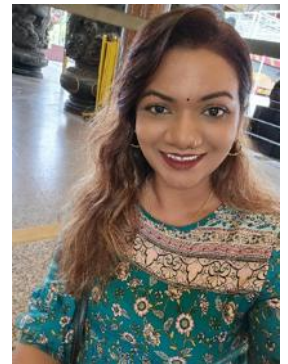
Hello everyone, I'm Saarrah, yes with double A's and R's! I'm so excited to join the DSA team as your new Programme Executive in Adult Development Services. I started in July and I'm already loving it here!

I've freshly graduated from Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts with a Diploma in Art Teaching. I'm passionate about using art as a tool for expression and learning and working with children.

When I'm not busy planning and implementing engaging programmes at DSA, you'll likely find me exploring new destinations, discovering cozy cafes, or simply indulging in my love for painting. I'm looking forward to getting to know you all better and working together to create a vibrant and inclusive community!

## **Renuka Sarmugam (Executive, Finance & Admin)**

Hey there! I'm Renuka, your friendly finance whiz by day and crochet queen by night. When I'm not crunching numbers, I love adventures and helping those in need. To sprinkle the world with warmth and colourful place, one crochet hook and travel passport at a time! Oh, and I'm a Manchester United fan and soccer aficionado, so you know I'm always up for a good match and a bit of team spirit! Cheers!



## **Rema R (Special Education Teacher, Children Development Services)**

Hey there! I'm Rema, a Special Education Teacher who took a big career leap because I'm absolutely crazy about kids. My husband and son are my biggest cheerleaders, which naturally means I'm all in for Liverpool FC—family loyalty, right? I'm a huge foodie and I hit the gym once a week to balance it all out. I'm super excited to join this dynamic group and gear up for a rollercoaster ride of fun!



# New Staff Welcome



## **Nor Dyana Azira (Programme Executive, Support & Advocacy)**

Hello! I'm Dyana, a Programme Executive with the new Support and Advocacy Services, and I am thrilled to be part of the team. I started working in DSA in October 2024 and it has been amazing thus far!

Having an aunt with Down Syndrome myself, my passion for helping persons with Down Syndrome and their families grew. Seeing their excitement and anticipation while attending our workshops and educational talks makes everything worthwhile. I love to see what's trendy and new online to see how it can be implemented during future programmes!

## **Elisya Johan (Executive, Communications & Engagement)**

Hi there! I'm Elisya, your new Communications & Engagement Executive! Stepping into an exciting new chapter in my career while staying deeply connected to my roots in the industry. As a former special education teacher, I've developed a passion for making meaningful connections and fostering growth—a perspective I'm eager to bring here to my new journey in DSA!

Beyond work, I'm all about enjoying life's little joys, whether it's attending K-pop concerts or expanding my collection of cute Pop Mart figurines and vintage Hot Wheels cars. I'm also a food lover—whether it's café hopping or enjoying hearty Asian dishes, I'm always up for discovering something new to try!

I'm excited to see where this new chapter at DSA leads and can't wait to connect with all of you as we work together to build a vibrant, inclusive community.



# Upcoming Events

## Activities To Look Forward To In Q1!

We have various activities for beneficiaries and caregivers. Details of each event will be shared closer to date. Mark your calendars first!

JANUARY	
11 Jan 2025	SMU Project Bloom @ Gardens by the Bay
18 Jan 2025	New Year Party
24 Jan 2025	SMU Project Bloom 'CNY Celebration'

FEBRUARY	
7 Feb 2025	SMU Project Bloom
14 Feb 2025	Movie Night: Valentine's Day
21 Feb 2025	SMU Project Bloom
22 Feb 2025	NUS Raffles Outing to ECP

MARCH	
3 March 2025	SAS Caregivers' Appreciation
7 March 2025	SMU Project Bloom
15 March 2025	WSDS 2025 Celebration
18 March 2025	[March Holiday Programme] Candle Making
19 March 2025	[March Holiday Programme] Create Your Own Porcelain Piece Experience + Asian Civilization Museum Tour
21 March 2025	World Down Syndrome Day

## DSA Membership

Down Syndrome Association (Singapore) provides a range of services for persons with Down syndrome, caregivers and siblings. Refer a friend for new sign-up or renew your membership with DSA by scanning the QR code below!

To find out more about our programmes and benefits for members, please call +65 6500 9321 or email [membership@downsyndrome-singapore.org](mailto:membership@downsyndrome-singapore.org).



DSA seeks your continued support so we can better serve our members and do more for the Down syndrome community. With their increasing lifespan, more support will be required to ensure that our persons with Down syndrome and their families, especially those facing financial challenges receive the support required to continue living lives with dignity and purpose.

Your donation and support will allow us to provide the necessary means to meet their developmental, social and emotional needs so they can achieve their potential and 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.

#### **DONATION FORM** (NEWS/2025/01)

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

Contact no: \_\_\_\_\_ NRIC/FIN/UEN\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to make a donation of:

\$50 / 100 / 500 / 1,000 / Others: S\$ \_\_\_\_\_

#### **By Cheque:**

Made payable to "Down Syndrome Association (Singapore)"

Cheque no.: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **By Credit Card:**

One-time  Monthly Contribution

Visa/Mastercard Credit card no.: \_\_\_\_\_

Card holder's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Expiry date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

#### **By PayNow to UEN:**

UEN Number: S96SS0170K

#### **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 CE".

*\*NRIC/FIN/UEN is required for tax deduction purpose.*

*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 THE COMMUNITY.**

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