

THE  
neweurasian

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APRIL - JUNE 2018



The  
**POWER**  
of **LANGUAGE**

**PLUS**

**HIGHER EDUCATION**

Elray Cook's career looks set to soar

**THE CHALLENGES OF AGEING**

Vincent Schoon discusses Eurasian solutions

**HANNAH HENDRICKS**

My pride in my culture

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## Farewell Message

This April, I come to the end of my current eight-year stint on the Management Committee (MC). It has been a great honour for me to serve the Eurasian community, the last six years as President and two years as Vice President before that. It has also been a fulfilling tenure as we have made much progress in our key pillars of Education, Family Support Services and Community Development. We have enhanced the EA's financial governance and standing and significantly grown the financial reserves. We have also advanced our youth engagement and strengthened the Eurasian identity in Singapore.

The EA's achievements are a credit to the many MC teams I have worked with over the years and the efforts of the many volunteers who have stepped up to help and make a difference. I am privileged to have had the opportunity to meet and work with so many dedicated members of our community.

In March, I attended the last of our annual appreciation events for our volunteers (page 6). It was heartening to see so many of them who have been with us for a long time – several for more than a decade. Our volunteer pool has also been growing and more young people have been coming forward to help. I would like to thank all our volunteers; as we have a limited full-time staff, most of the work to uplift the community rests on their generously donated time and leadership.

To support them, the EA organised a special workshop for FSS volunteers and collaborated with Caregivers Alliance Limited to help them better understand the various issues surrounding mental health conditions (page 12). The feedback received from the workshop was very positive as our volunteers are now better equipped to recognise potential signs of some mental health problems, which will enable them to guide our beneficiaries to seek appropriate help when required.

Our key event for the quarter was the visit to the Eurasian Community House of President Halimah Yacob and her husband, Mr Mohammed Abdullah Alhabshee (page 5). We were honoured to host them to a community dinner and grateful to the President for taking time to visit us and meet many members of the Eurasian community. It was a delightful occasion for us and an opportunity to share with her more about the EA and the Eurasian community, and for her to enjoy our Eurasian cuisine.

Leading up to the EA's 100th anniversary in 2019, work has started on several projects and events to commemorate this important milestone. One of the major initiatives being undertaken is the revamp of the Eurasian Heritage Centre.

While most of the funds have already been raised for this, we continue to raise the remaining funds for the project and require additional artefacts and material to enrich the content. I would like to encourage all Eurasians to contribute generously to this project and to play their part in helping to preserve our Eurasian heritage for future generations.

As I conclude my last President's Message, I would like to express my appreciation to Dr Alexius Pereira for stepping forward to take over the baton from me. Alexius has been actively involved in the EA since 2001 and chaired the Education Sub-Committee from 2014 to 2016 before serving as 1st Vice President for the last two years. Alexius has also written many articles and books on the Eurasian community and recently led the project to update and edit one of our seminal books, *Singapore Eurasians: Memories, Hopes & Dreams*.

I am grateful to the outgoing MC for their efforts and achievements, and their support and friendship through the term; it certainly was a pleasure working with them. More importantly, I appreciate that they have unanimously stayed on to support Alexius and provide continuity for the EA and the many on-going initiatives. Alexius will also be bringing additional new faces onto the MC and I am confident we will have a strong team to lead us in the new term.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our Patrons, Trustees, all our volunteers and the Secretariat, who have all helped me in my role over the years. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to all the members of the Eurasian community who support the EA and attend our events; the many Eurasians who contribute to the Eurasian Community Fund every month; our corporate supporters and donors; and the various government agencies and community partners that support us in our many initiatives.

Please join me in wishing Alexius and the new MC all the very best, and continued progress and success for the EA. Please also continue to give them and the EA your full support as it will only be through your active participation and contributions that we can collectively build a stronger and more vibrant Eurasian community in Singapore.

Thank you all very much and best wishes to everyone.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Alexius Pereira', written in a cursive style.

## Friends and Rivals

*The Eurasian Association and Singapore Recreation Club, which have long-standing ties, met up for the annual Crystal Challenge Cup*

This year's Crystal Challenge Cup, a contest between the EA and the Singapore Recreation Club over a chosen indoor and outdoor game (this year, balut and football), was an event full of amicable, yet intense rivalry on 4 March as the opposing teams battled for the coveted trophy.

The balut teams fought a close battle and there was only a 27-point difference at the end of round two. The EA quickly rose to the top of the scoreboard to lead the SRC by six points. But at the end of the game, after six rounds, it was clear that the SRC had emerged as champions, tipping the scales with 8,956 points against the EA's 8,911.

Following the indoor game, the soccer teams had a less comfortable fixture as the heavy downpour had them struggling to run at speed in the rain. In the event, the honours were shared, with a 3 – 3 draw. Overall, the SRC emerged as champions and walked away with the Crystal Challenge Cup.



The EA's soccer team gets ready for action



The EA balut team (in grey) with the SRC's challengers



The EA (in orange) and SRC football teams line up before the match



EA Trustee Timothy de Souza with EA President Benett Theseira hand the cup to SRC President Dr Sarbjit Singh

## Baluteers Tot Up the Dots

Another year, another roll of the dice as more than 20 EA balut players prepared to do battle in this year's in-house tournament, which started on 7 March. Dorothy Tessensohn emerged as champion of the first session with 650 points, followed by Patrick Fernando with 635 points. The highest individual score of 150 points for a single game was also achieved by Dorothy, followed by Hyacinth D'Silva with 146 points.



Balut convenor Yvonne Pereira presents Dorothy Tessensohn with her prize bottle of wine.

## A Chat with the Minister



Minister S Iswaran (centre) with the management team

The EA's Management Committee organised an informal dinner for Mr S Iswaran, Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry), at the Eurasian Community House recently, when they discussed some of the EA's current and future projects. During the evening, EA President Benett Theseira was presented with a plaque in recognition of his invaluable contributions as President of the EA from 2012 to 2018.



EA President Benett Theseira (left) receives a plaque from Minister Iswaran

# A Presidential Visit

President Halimah Yacob, together with her husband, Mohamed Abdullah Alhabshee, visited the Eurasian Community House for dinner on 21 March, when they met the Eurasian Association's Board of Trustees, its Management Committee and other members of the Eurasian community.

The evening began with a special video montage of photos taken at important EA events throughout 2017 followed by a welcome address by EA President Benett Theseira. After dinner, Mel Ferdinands and Shanice Hedger staged musical performances and members of the Eurasian Dance Troupe performed two Portuguese-Eurasian folk dances.

The President visited each table to mingle with the guests and was presented with a special token of appreciation by Benett at the end of event. He says: "We are pleased to host the President at the Eurasian Community House and members of the Eurasian community were honoured to meet her. We also had the opportunity to share with her some of the EA's key initiatives and centennial plans for 2019."



*President Halimah Yacob and her husband, Mohamed Abdullah Alhabshee, share a joke with EA President Benett Theseira*



*The President shakes hands with Melanie Rodrigues Smith as she mingles with the EA members*



*The President with EA Trustees and Management Committee members*



*The Eurasian Community turns out to greet the President*

## Plan Your Event, Eurasian Style!

Located in the heart of Katong, the Eurasian Community House's spaces and facilities are ideal for wedding receptions, family reunions, performances, corporate events and business meetings.

The ECH provides a relaxed setting for all kinds of events. Audio/visual and light/sound services are included although a technician will not be present during the event. The EA secretariat can assist with all your queries regarding renting the venue.

External catering is not permitted at our premises but food and beverages can be provided by Quentin's restaurant.

Venue	Level	Capacity (est)	Rates	Peak (Sat, Sun, Eve of PH & PH)	Non-Peak (Mon-Fri)	Optional
<b>Rates are based on a four-hour block and a deposit of \$300 is required upon booking</b>						
Platinum Lounge	1	40 to 60 pax	EA members	\$150	\$130	Projector (\$50)
			Government agencies / Non-profit / institution	\$160	\$140	
			Corporate / guest	\$180	\$160	
Meeting Room	3	15 to 18 pax	EA members	\$160	\$140	
			Government agencies / Non-profit / institution	\$180	\$160	
			Corporate / guest	\$200	\$180	
Conference Room (JH Room)	2	15 to 18 pax	EA members	\$180	\$150	
			Government agencies / Non-profit / institution	\$200	\$180	
			Corporate / guest	\$220	\$200	
Multi-Purpose Hall 50ft (L) x 36ft (W)	2	120 pax (10-seater table) 200 pax (theatre seating)	EA members	\$500	\$500	Audio / visual / light / sound / technician (\$100)
			Government agencies / Non-profit / institution	\$550	\$550	
			Corporate / guest	\$600	\$600	

For more information or to make a reservation, please contact Lestrine at 6447 1578 (ext 204) or email [lestrine@eurasians.org](mailto:lestrine@eurasians.org)

## Well-Earned Thanks

*Every year, the EA treats its dedicated volunteers to a slap-up meal and afternoon of entertainment in recognition of the invaluable contribution they make with their time and skills*

Throughout the year, the EA's loyal band of volunteers turn out to help ensure that the association's diverse programmes – in education, welfare, youth services and the arts – keep running smoothly. In return, the EA shows its thanks officially with an annual Volunteers' Appreciation Lunch held at the Eurasian Community House, where the guests can meet up socially with their fellow volunteers.

Close to 100 of them gathered for this year's event on 10 March and were greeted by EA President Benett Theseira, who outlined what their collective work had helped the association to achieve.

The volunteers then enjoyed various activities that had been lined up for them, such as games and a performance by singer Peter Diaz. For the EA Chingay dancers, a little extra volunteering 'work' was required when they gave a display of the dance routine they had performed for the Chingay Parade a few weeks earlier.

The EA always needs more volunteers to expand its programmes. If you are interested in joining them, contact [secretariat@eurasians.org](mailto:secretariat@eurasians.org) for further details.



*The band of volunteers with the EA Management Committee*

*EA President Benett Theseira presents a certificate of appreciation to volunteer Stephanie Holland*

# Turning Adversity into Triumph

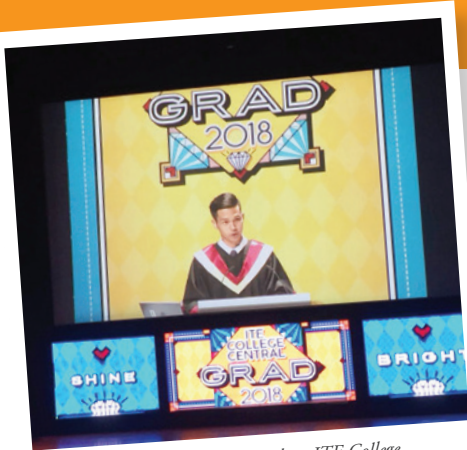
*With the right attitude, 19-year-old Elray Cook took a major setback and transformed it into the happiest of outcomes*



Bearing up: Elray's triumphant day



Elray's awards



Elray gives his Valedictorian speech at ITE College Central



Elray on graduation day with mum Ellis Sapari and brother Elmes

*"The incredible voyage was a once in a lifetime experience and every minute was about building my confidence"*

Elray Cook's early education was far from plain sailing. He struggled with dyslexia and his parents' divorce badly unsettled him and also put a strain on the family finances. In 2015, after his N-level exams, he was accepted into an Institute of Technical Education (ITE) but from stories he had heard from others, he was far from sure that attending an ITE would be the right decision. He says: "I was very anxious and did not know if it was the right path for me." He sought advice from his parents and both asked him to experience ITE for himself before listening to the views of others, and also encouraged him to use it as a stepping stone towards success.

Joining ITE's Aerospace Technology course despite his reservations, Elray decided to commit himself completely to the decision he had made. And soon, his lecturers spotted leadership potential in him and asked him to join the Student Council. He says: "Because of the Student Council, I attended several classes to improve my communication skills, grooming and leadership camps." In due course, he became President of the Student Council.

He was also selected to attend several overseas programmes and travelled to Hong Kong and Perth, where he learned more both about aviation and about the Hong Kong and Australian culture.

Elray says: "I was nominated to embark on an overseas voyage in Perth, and together with my other crew members we set sail on the *STS Leeuwin II* and learnt the techniques of manning a ship. The incredible voyage was a once-in-a-lifetime experience and every minute was about building my confidence, learning to work in a team and also learning how to lead."

He also acknowledges that many of his opportunities have been possible thanks to financial help from others: "I appreciate that the ITE heavily subsidised some of these trips so that students like me could participate. With additional help from the EA, such as its Merit Bursary Award and its Popular and Bata vouchers, I could focus all of my efforts on studying and not worry about finances. My mum could also focus more on helping out my 15-year-old brother," he says.

During this time, Elray undertook volunteer work, including spending time with elderly people with dementia at the AWWA (social services) centre. "I was also assisting the Northwest Community Development Council with their Camp Explorer initiative as they needed someone to be an instructor during the camp for students from the underprivileged group. It was a meaningful experience as I managed to put a smile on the kids and they enjoyed the camp tremendously," he says. He also kept fit as a trainer at the Calisthenics Group at ITE.

His crowning achievement was to score a perfect 4.0 GPA in his exams and he was invited to give the Valedictorian speech at the ITE graduation ceremony on 7 February. In his speech, he mentioned classmates and lecturers and those who played an important role in his success; and spoke lovingly of his mother, Ellis Sapari.

Elray is now eagerly waiting to begin his diploma course in Aeronautical Engineering at Singapore Polytechnic and aims to become a licensed aircraft engineer. In the meantime, he is working as a part-time barista to help to ease his family's financial situation.

He believes that while life's challenges can initially seem insurmountable, it is important to make the most of the opportunities that present themselves and to seek assistance from people who are willing to help. "All you have to do is ask."

## Free Maths and English Tuition

*Two retired teachers are offering classes for children from low-income families*

Tuition costs can be sky high and two members of the community, Edmund and Evelyn Rodrigues, have come forward to offer free Mathematics and Literature tuition for secondary-level students. To qualify, students need to meet the following criteria: they must be living in a rented HDB flat and have a maximum gross household income of \$1,800 or monthly per capita income of \$650.

The husband and wife are retired teachers, each with more than 40 years' teaching experience. For Maths, Edmund will focus on revising core concepts and has compiled practice questions so that students from all secondary levels are familiar with formulas.

For Literature, Evelyn will assist students from secondary three and four levels to learn the special skill of uncovering poetic meanings and simplifying intricate

sentences and will help students with strategic answering methods. She specialises in the O-level syllabus and is familiar with texts including *Romeo and Juliet*, *Merchants of Venice*, *The Joy Luck Club*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Death of a Salesman* and many more.

Edmund says: "We would like to ensure that the students from the lower income group have access to tuition and we do not want them to lose out. We are here to help them improve their grades and ensure that they progress in their academic journey."

The Maths classes will be held for one and a half hours per week and there will be two Literature lessons of the same length. All classes will be held at the tutors' residence in Siglap. Contact Jolvin at [jolvin@eurasians.org](mailto:jolvin@eurasians.org) or call 6447 1578 (ext 205) for further details.

*"We would like to ensure that the students from the lower income group have access to tuition and do not lose out"*

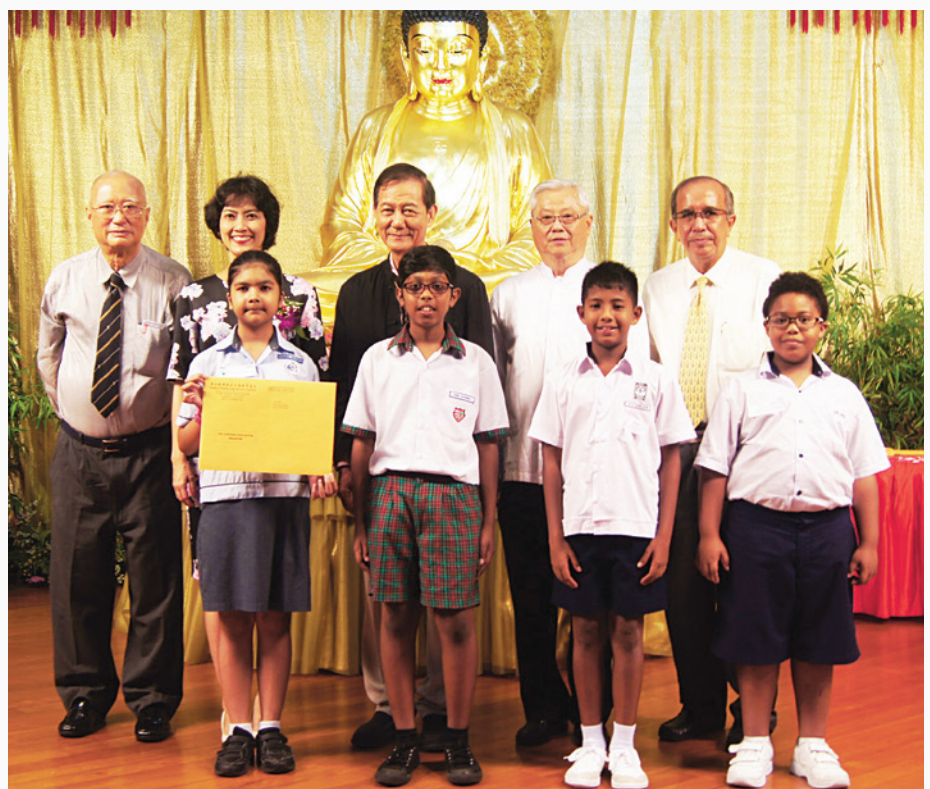


## Education Awards for Primary Students

The Singapore Buddhist Lodge awarded bursaries to four primary-level students – Joel Kristof Garnell, S C Denilson, Mueez Abiola Junior and Azalea Tiara Oliveira – at its bursary presentation ceremony on 14 April. The charitable organisation works closely with the EA to assist students from underprivileged families with their school fees, books and transportation.

*"This type of education award gives a boost to Azalea to study harder"*

Twelve-year-old Azalea said: "I am happy to receive this award as it helps my parents pay for my assessment books. I am also determined to perform well in my studies." Her mother, Maslina Abdul Malek, adds: "I am grateful to both organisations as they have helped to defray the costs of preparing for the PSLE at the end of the year. Most importantly, this type of education award gives a boost to Azalea to study harder."



*Azalea Oliveira, Joel Garnell, S C Denilson and Mueez Abiola Junior at the ceremony*



# The Joys of English

*By tweeting and text messaging, we can reduce English to a few letters and symbols. Yet a love of language not only makes it a pleasure to read but also provides us with the means to become better informed and more engaged citizens. Three experts in the English language explain why*

In colonial Singapore, one of the defining characteristics of the Eurasians was their eloquence in the English language. This advantage gave them access to white-collar jobs, in which they could work more closely with the British colonial administrators.

Most Eurasians grew up as Christians, who were able to benefit from the early mission schools, where the classes were largely taught in English. In addition to being able to obtain coveted clerical jobs, many Eurasians went into the teaching profession.

Over time, the Eurasians' linguistic advantage lessened, as a significant proportion of other Singaporeans began to use English as their primary language. Yet good English is still seen as a trait of the Eurasian community. Three Eurasians who are steeped in the language explain why they believe fluency in English is still as important as ever – and for reasons other than simple material advantage.

## Debra Ann Francisco

Debra Ann Francisco, an author and teaching specialist with *The Straits Times* (ST) Schools team since 2012, strives to ensure that parents and teachers use English news content to educate their children and develop their passion for the language. Growing up in a Eurasian household, she recalls always having books around her and says: "My Peranakan mum and late Eurasian dad both ensured that the house was filled with books." Her dad was also passionate about music and Debra developed an early love for jazz standards. "I love the way words work in lyrics. I even used jazz during my literature lessons, especially to teach figurative language and rhyme," she says.

Before joining ST, Debra taught English language and Literature for 14 years. She was inspired at an early age by her dad's sister, who was also an English teacher, and she would encourage Debra to sit with her and spot errors in her students' compositions. When Debra was in secondary four, her literature teacher inspired her further as she opened her eyes to how words are woven together to create inspiring stories, plays and poems. "The words in books have the remarkable ability to take you away to other worlds," she says.

Most of Debra's current work involves creating teaching and learning resources for both teachers and students using news stories in the student publications of *The Straits Times*. She also conducts student workshops, parenting forums and professional development programmes for school teachers in order to promote the news as a learning resource. She says: "By using current affairs to teach, we are also encouraging active citizenry among students. They become aware of their world and move away from mere consumption of the news."

*"I loved the way words work in lyrics. I even used jazz during my literature lessons"*

She recalls a particular occasion that proved to her that 'news' helps students make authentic connections with life. She recalls: "I was sharing with my class a news story about the Japan earthquake and tsunami of 2011 and the resilience of the Japanese. Then, a student raised her hand and said that one of her family members, who was working in Japan, couldn't be contacted."



Debra Ann Francisco

Debra was faced with a choice – to continue with the content of the lesson, or to talk about the trauma of losing loved ones. She chose the latter and spent the next 30 minutes of the lesson in a heartfelt discussion with the rest of the class. Debra defines this moment as an eye opener: “This is the nature of current affairs; it encourages conversation and creates opportunities for real emotional connections with people.” She describes the incident as a ‘teachable moment’ that educators must recognise and embrace.

She adds that parents should also curate news content and use materials that they are comfortable discussing with their children. “Use even the headlines, advertisements or photographs in newspapers to share with your children that the news is real and grasp the

opportunity to teach them values. Even stories with negative behaviour provide your children with an authentic way to learn values.”

One of Debra’s quick tips is to use the refrigerator as an evolving noticeboard. “Stick clippings of news stories about politicians, current affairs, tragedies, riveting photos, comics on it. Also, be open when talking about current affairs. Because of this simple habit, my three sons know that I am passionate about heritage buildings and I also learned about one son’s interest in military history and another’s about saving sharks. News can not only improve language skills but can also enable parents to learn more about their children’s interests,” she says.

*“By using current affairs stories to teach, we are also encouraging active citizenry among students”*



*Debra as a child, with her parents, Dorothy and Cyril, and younger sister, Cheryl*

## William Grosse

*“We sang songs while we went on drives in my father’s car and my love for English developed”*

William Grosse is a master teacher of the English language at the English Language Institute of Singapore (ELIS). His great grandfather was a sailmaker, who migrated to Singapore from Holland, and his grandmother was Chinese.

Growing up, William was always surrounded by books and comics. He loved playing word games with his siblings and recalls: “We sang songs while we went on drives in my father’s car and my love for English developed and deepened over the years.” He and his friends discussed books and he was also passionate about the stage, which gave him a more nuanced understanding of the power of language. He found his vocation, he says, because “I wanted to ensure that whoever I taught would enjoy coming to school every day; it was as simple and challenging as that.”

*“I wanted to ensure that whoever I taught would enjoy coming to school each and every day; it was as simple and challenging as that”*

During his stint as a teacher at Rosyth School in 2010, he won the Inspiring Teacher Award. Asked about his teaching techniques, he thinks carefully and answers: “I am not sure if teaching the English language is simply a matter of technique. I can only enthuse and engage my students by living out my interest and passion for the English language.” William strongly believes that students can immediately detect authenticity and hopes that his deep affection for the language rubs off on them.

To show his students the power of the language, he often reads aloud with them and also shares with them his interest in etymology (the study of the origin of the words). He chuckles and says: “For example, the word ‘cosmetics’ comes from the Greek word ‘kosmos’ or ‘cosmos’, which means ‘order’. So when people use cosmetics, they want to put their faces in order!”

He also believes that parents should read with their children to help them to develop a passion for language. He quotes a passage from Roald Dahl’s book, *Matilda*, which aptly demonstrates the power of books and reading: “So, Matilda’s strong young mind continued to grow, nurtured by the voices of all those authors who had sent their books out into the world like ships on the sea. These books gave Matilda a comforting message. You are not alone.”

Currently, William facilitates programmes offered by ELIS to schools, learning with and from teachers and students in their classrooms as well as contributing to the different aspects of inter-division work at the Ministry of Education.

He concludes with a quote by celebrated cellist Yo-Yo Ma that resonates with him: “Every day I make an effort to go toward what I don’t understand. This wandering leads to the accidental learning that continually shapes my life.”



*William hopes his enthusiasm transmits to his pupils*

*Inspiring teacher William Grosse*

## Charles Matthew Peters

With close to 30 years in education, Charles Peters is an assistant director and senior specialist for English Language at the Curriculum Planning Division (Ministry of Education).

Having experienced more than 15 years in the classroom before moving to HQ, Charles has taught pupils from primary one to secondary four. He believes he has always had a penchant for curriculum work and remembers his principal tasking him to raise the profile of English. He developed pockets of literacy activities around mainstream lessons and chose a small group of hand-picked students to make English 'cool' to their peers.

"The interaction with the kids at every level has been enriching. Whether with eight-year-olds or 16-year-olds, I always wanted my English lessons to engage my students. I think the Eurasian in me championed 'talk'. Although a noisy class was not so welcomed in the past, I strongly felt that purposeful talk would lead to better writing, and overall learning that endures," he explains. This has become his philosophy as an educator and now, as a curriculum specialist, he can advise schools to value oral interactions in the classroom.

*"I think reading should never go out of style"*

Both of Charles's parents are of Eurasian Portuguese and Anglo-Indian descent. His mother, Monica De Souza, and father, Percy Peters, belonged to the earliest cohorts of Katong Convent and St Patrick's. His mother passed away a year ago and he fondly recalls her Kristang conversations with his aunts. Growing up, he was immersed in English, having his elder siblings and parents around him. Emblazoned in his mind is an image of his father seated cross-legged, with face hidden behind his big open newspapers. He reminisces: "There were books and magazines lying around and I also remember loads of old vinyl records. I used to pore over the lyrics provided in the sleeves."



Charles with his wife, Selvi, and son Gideon



Charles conducts a methodology workshop for English language teachers

The love for reading is evident in Charles's home. The choice of name for their three-month-old labradoodle is testament to that, thanks to his 14-year-old son, Gideon and wife, Selvi. Charles explains: "Gid and Selvi named Scout after the protagonist in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird!*"

In his dual role as both assistant director and senior specialist, he says there are no dull days. On some days he is conducting a methodology workshop; on other occasions, meeting foreign delegates; or at times, holed up writing a paper for senior management. As assistant director, he and his team oversee the implementation of the English curriculum in all 190 primary schools. This involves working closely with teachers to raise the quality of English learning by providing stimulating age-appropriate materials coupled with new, engaging ways to teach them.

*"Eurasians demonstrate a playful dexterity with their repartee, sharp wit and fast banter"*

As senior specialist, he works with other specialists and academic experts to develop the English Language syllabus which spans across primary and secondary levels. "To do this kind of work, I need my bifocals; this means to be future-oriented while having a keen sense of what's happening now. I am deeply involved in charting out what language learning will be right up to 2030."

"I think coming to MOE HQ in 2005 was quite a significant step. At that time, I was also a new father and wanted to do something that would benefit my boy when he entered school." During the first year, Charles worked on the initial drafts of a new English syllabus and was roped in to start a 'little reading project'. Over six years this project grew into a curriculum model that has eventually become the national curriculum known as STELLAR (Strategies for English Language Learning and Reading) for all primary schools.

When asked about his convictions about the language, he asserts: "Reading should never go out of style." He wants parents to encourage their kids to read more and asks them to do more of it themselves too. "I know Gid is partial to reading online and that's fine, but he also knows how to curl up with a good book - enjoying the feel and smell of the pages. Looking larger, if you are reader, you are better informed and more self-reliant. This is a 21st-century skill, yes?"

Charles further highlights that Eurasians demonstrate a playful dexterity of the language with their repartee, sharp wit and fast banter. "This is a distinctive characteristic indeed that points to our stronger hold of the English language". He adds: "I think it's really fortunate for us that there's such a premium on English; frankly I owe my job to it!"

## Lifting the Taboo on Mental Illness

*A workshop for volunteers and befrienders from the EA's Family Support Services team helped them to better understand the problems surrounding mental health*

*"Our perception as a society regarding mental health is mostly based on misinformation and this leads to stigmatising those who suffer from mental health issues"*

Mental illnesses often go unrecognised in the community. In conducting a recent workshop to unlock the mysteries of these often misunderstood conditions, Renay Pereira, a caregiver support specialist from Caregivers Alliance Limited, focussed on four key areas: An Introduction to Mental Health and its Misconceptions; Symptoms of Mental Illness and Dealing with Crisis; Challenges and Coping Strategies; and Communicating with Empathy.

FSS Sub-Committee member Misha Monteiro-Benson has been volunteering with the EA for more than a year and says: "Our perception as a society regarding mental health is mostly based on misinformation and this leads to stigmatising those who suffer from mental health issues. I've learned from the workshop that it's important to understand mental illnesses and how we can work with them to the best of our ability."

He adds: "It drove home how extensive mental health issues in Singapore are and I also hope that the workshop can be offered to all volunteers at the EA so that we as an organisation can play our part to raise awareness about mental health and assist those who suffer from mental illnesses."

Renay says: "I was heartened to hear that participants learned more than they had expected to by attending this workshop. Even if someone does not have mental health conditions or does not know anyone who does, I strongly encourage them to attend these types of workshops." She believes that this will make people more aware of those exhibiting signs and symptoms: "It could even be your neighbour, a colleague, a classmate or a family member, and having a better understanding is critical to lending an appropriate helping hand."



From left, Misha Monteiro-Benson, Renay Pereira and attendees of the workshop

### Facts about Mental Illnesses in Singapore

The Singapore Mental Health Study (SMHS) conducted in 2010 by the Institute of Mental Health – the most recent Singapore research on the subject – revealed that:

- Among the illnesses assessed in the study, major depressive disorder (MDD), alcohol abuse and obsessive compulsive disorder emerged as the three most common in Singapore.
- Most of the people with mental illnesses were not seeking help.

## The Challenges of Ageing

*Representatives of the four main ethnic groups in Singapore met with other community caregivers to discuss the problems facing elderly people in their respective communities*

An event themed 'Challenges Facing Elderly Singaporeans in the Different Communities' was organised by the Centre for Research on the Economics of Ageing (CREA) on 14 March at Singapore Management University.

The panel of speakers, Rahayu Mohamad, President of Perasatuan Pemuda Islam Singapura (PPIS), Lim Chiu Loo, Manager of Family and Worker Support at the Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC), S Devendran, Chief Executive Officer of Sree Narayana Mission and Vincent Schoon, EA Management Committee member, shared their thoughts on the challenges facing the elderly in their own ethnic groups.

The speakers informed the attendees that many problems were common to all the communities, among them healthcare, transport and, not least, filial piety, a role that has become less easy to define in the modern world.

In his speech, Vincent explained the work of the EA's Family Support Services team, including its delivery of monthly food rations and provision of basic necessities to the homes of underprivileged Eurasians.

### Finding Help at the Touch of a Button

The meeting heard that beneficiaries often have difficulty in finding the subsidies and grants provided by the various organisations.

In response, speaker S Devendran drew attention to 'AICare Link', a handy mobile app that the public can use to find a list of schemes for which they may be eligible. The app can also be used by organisations to find public financial subsidies and grants to help seniors live and age well at home and in the community. To find out more, visit: <https://www.silverpages.sg/tools/AICare%20Link%20App>



The panellists, from left: Vincent Schoon, Jiaming Ju, associate director of CREA and moderator for the event, S Devendran, Rahayu Mohamad and Lim Chiu Loo

Photo courtesy of Joel Lee, CREA

He said: "For the Eurasian Association, providing the elderly with a sense of hope is an important priority. This has become part of the mission statement of the EA's Family Support Services. We can't give them 100 per cent of their needs, but we want to give them sufficient assistance, service and hope. Hope is a magical ingredient that we have to give people at all times."

Later in the discussion, he added: "There is nothing so sad as when we visit houses and see what we call an amputated spirit". Vincent drew attention to the EA annual FSS Christmas party, which was much anticipated by the elderly as for many it was a rare chance for them to enjoy a hearty meal, dance and have a good time with fellow Eurasians.

The event ended with an open discussion between the panel and the audience.

*"There are often times when we can't locate the children of the elderly or they have migrated and refuse to assist"*

## A Helping Handing in Emergencies

*The EA has set up a fund to help the under-privileged when fate hits them with a costly emergency*



The Special Emergency Fund was set up last year to help out underprivileged members of the Eurasian community with sudden emergencies. All applications are reviewed by a special team and a means test is conducted to check that recipients are eligible to benefit.

*"This funding is especially for those whom we are not able to assist with any of our current schemes"*

Funding is provided thanks to donations from well-wishers. Chairperson of the FSS Sub-Committee Edmund Rodrigues says: "This funding is especially for those whom we are not able to assist with any of our current schemes and we see it working very well, especially for those who have one-off expenses to deal with such as their child needing spectacles or sprucing up their HDB rental home."

Julie Helen Ess, 81, who benefited from this fund says: "I am very thankful to the EA's FSS team as they helped me to repair my front door, which was not closing properly, and the lock, which was not working. My situation was made known to them by a volunteer and I am very grateful for all that they've done to better my situation."

If you wish to donate to the fund or think you qualify for help, please contact Ram at [ram@eurasians.org](mailto:ram@eurasians.org) or call 6447 1578 (ext 210).

# Searching for Your Rainbow

*You're never too young to make a positive difference. The key is passion*



*Both young Eurasians and older EA members participated in the Youth Dialogue session*

The late Mr Lee Kuan Yew once said: "There is a glorious rainbow that beckons those with a spirit of adventure. And there are rich findings at the end of that rainbow. To the young and not too old, I say: look at the horizon, find that rainbow, go ride it."

It was in this spirit that the EA's youth wing held a youth dialogue session on 3 March at the Eurasian Community House themed "Empowering Youth to Create Change". Two prominent young change-makers spoke about their experiences of driving change in their areas of passion. Lawyer Josephus Tan, from Invictus Law, spoke of his commitment to undertaking pro-bono legal work focusing on young people from broken families and underprivileged backgrounds.

Crystal Goh, a singer-songwriter, recounted how in 2012 she woke up one day to discover that her voice had gone – and was subsequently diagnosed with a rare neurological condition. She has now made a significant recovery and during her convalescence her eyes were opened to the possibility of actively using adversity to bring about a more positive outcome. This led her to start Diamonds on the Street, a social enterprise that works with individuals and communities to turn their wounded histories into stories of hope. Over six months, Diamonds on the Street worked with girls living in a shelter and the children of prison inmates to produce inspiring songs that are now part of an album. Proceeds from album sales support the organisation's mission. To learn more, visit [www.diamondsonthestreet.com](http://www.diamondsonthestreet.com).

Following the inspiring speeches, the young audience were then split into groups to share their thoughts on how they could use their passion to make a positive difference to Singapore and the world. The enthusiastic discussions

led to interesting ideas, such as using legal expertise to advance causes such as environmental protection and sustainability.

In the afternoon, the participants had an engaging dialogue session with the Minister for Home Affairs and Law, Mr K Shanmugam. Mr Shanmugam spoke about various national challenges facing Singapore, including maintaining Singapore's economic relevance, enhancing social cohesion and confronting threats to our national security. He also encouraged the audience to step up and find ways to make a positive difference to their communities and to Singapore.

Dylan de Souza, 18, who attended the session and is looking forward to a career in education, says: "The dialogue put into perspective some of the issues that we have today. It was enlightening to hear the Minister's thoughts. I remember some of the questions asked and they helped me to think more about the career that I would like to pursue." Ryan Shawn Phillips, 18, added: "I absolutely enjoyed it. I learned a lot from Minister Shanmugam and the young change-makers. I hope the EA hosts more of such events in the future."

EA Youth chairperson Christopher Gordon said that his committee will plan more such dialogues in the future to deepen engagement with and empower young Eurasians. He said in his speech: "Never stop searching for that rainbow which Mr Lee Kuan Yew spoke about. It can be tempting to get caught up in the fashionable chase for the material wants or the societal definitions of success. Don't be fooled into thinking that achieving those will bring you happiness, for true happiness is not found outside but deep within, when we are connected to our inner most passion."

*"Some of the questions asked helped me to think more about the career that I would like to pursue"*



*Josephus Tan discusses his pro-bono legal work*



*The participants during the group session*



*Finding her voice: Crystal Goh gives a musical performance*



*Minister Shanmugam gives his views to the meeting*

# Learning Redesigned Using Neuro-Linguistics Programming

*Young Eurasians learned that there is more to studying than sitting at a desk for hours*

A group of Eurasian students learned how to improve their exam and study skills when the second run of the Mentorship Programme organised by the EA Youth Sub-Committee kicked off on 24 March with a workshop on neuro-linguistics programming (NLP) techniques.

The four-hour workshop was conducted by study and performance coach Humphrey Conceicao, who taught the students how to organise their time and manage stress and the importance of focussing on the relevant things in life to fulfil their dreams.

Shannon Fernandez, 17, says that she was taught several learning styles to use to perform better in her studies. "The trainer taught us that we have to make the best use of the resources around us for self-development."

*The workshop taught the students how to organise their time and manage stress*

Danni Danis, an EA Youth Sub-Committee member, encouraged more young Eurasians to participate in the Mentorship Programme. He says: "The EA has organised many youth programmes throughout the year which focus on more than improving one's academic abilities. Our aim is to provide a platform for youth that provides them with adequate support to successfully take them through school, their first job application and eventually be paired with mentors. There's so much benefit one can receive from our programmes and I hope to see more youth participating and new faces at the Eurasian Community House."

The EA's Mentorship Programme is a comprehensive series of workshops that help young Eurasians to identify their career passion, maximise success and realise their aspirations. For further information about the Mentorship Programme, please contact Vinitha at [vinitha@eurasians.org](mailto:vinitha@eurasians.org) or call 6447 1578 (ext 212).



*Humphrey explains techniques to make the most of studying*



*Now, we're motivated! Humphrey (third from left) with the students*

*"The trainer taught us that we have to make the best use of the resources around us for self-development"*

## A Question of Friendship

*There was nothing trivial about the bonds formed at the EA youth wing's recent event*

Young Eurasians tested their knowledge of random facts and figures when they attended the first trivia night on 5 March at The Bait organised by the EA's Youth Sub-Committee. The evening included dinner, when the participants had a chance to get to know their new-found Eurasian friends.

Organiser Andrew Pang says: "The event was exciting and helped young Eurasians to meet new Eurasians. Attendees have provided feedback that they hope to see more community events being organised by the EA – and we hope to see more of them supporting our initiatives!"

Details about the upcoming youth events will be updated on the EA website: <http://www.eurasians.org.sg/events>



*Quizzers enjoy a drink during a break on trivia night*

# Putting Together a Global Picture

*NUS students celebrated a world of cultural diversity at a recent event*

The National University of Singapore (NUS) is abuzz with communities from all over the world and to celebrate this diversity, the Office of Student Affairs organised a 'mOSAic Fiesta' on 31 January and 1 February. A smorgasbord of activities highlighted special elements of various cultures including their contributions to gastronomy, sports and music.

As part of the event, the EA set up a booth to display the Eurasian history and culture through banners, books, traditional costumes and brochures. Four members from the EA Dance Troupe also performed to the *Jinkli Nona* and *Patuscada*. Siblings Natalie and Wesley Gordon, who were present at the booth, said afterwards: "It was a wonderful opportunity for us to share with both local and foreign students from NUS the unique Eurasian culture and heritage and they said that they valued our explanations. It was good that we could play our part to create awareness about the Eurasian community in Singapore."

*The EA displayed the Eurasian history and culture through banners, books, traditional costumes and brochures*



*Learning about the Eurasian heritage*



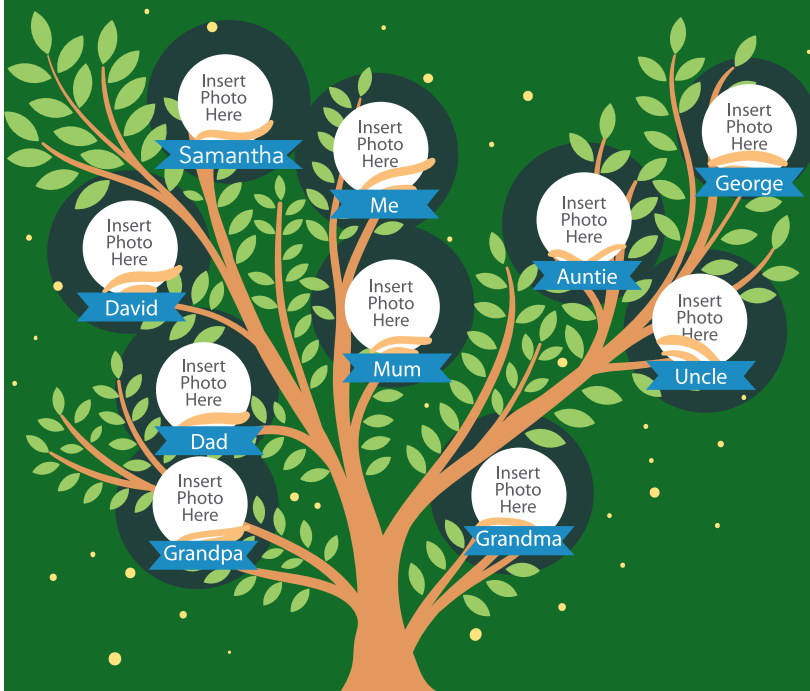
*The Eurasian booth is ready for visitors*



*A performance by the EA Dance Troupe*

## Create a Book of Your Family Tree!

*If you've been delving into your ancestry – or are planning to do so – help is now at hand to make your research into an attractive book*



Retired publisher Patrick Mowe, who has tracked down his own ancestors and produced books on his family tree, is now offering to help others record their own Eurasian family histories.

Patrick says: "For this project, I am willing to assist families to compile their family trees into illustrated books. However, I will need them to provide me with the information for at least four to six generations per family. They will need to submit photos, picture captions and short accounts of family stories."

The Family Tree Book Project will help build a collection of Eurasian family trees in Singapore and is an ideal opportunity to get families to start tracing their roots and educate the younger generation about their ancestors.

For more information about and costs for this project or to submit a family tree, please contact Patrick Mowe at [pmowe@singnet.com.sg](mailto:pmowe@singnet.com.sg)



## Speaking of the Past

*A division of the National Archives of Singapore is looking for people to help expand its oral library with their stories*

Do you have interesting Eurasian memories? Or know somebody who does? The Eurasian Association is partnering with the Oral History Centre of the National Archives of Singapore to strengthen the national oral history collection and ensure that it represents all of Singapore society. As part of this, the Eurasian Community Oral History Committee is seeking to collect the stories of diverse Eurasians on topics ranging from their growing up, school years and careers to the contributions they have made to pre- and post-independent Singapore.

The EA is requesting the public's help in identifying Eurasians who have a good story to tell that pertains to Eurasian history, traditions, heritage and culture. The project began last year and to date interviews have been conducted with eight Eurasians.

If you would like to contribute or identify an individual suitable for the interviews, please contact Jacqueline at [jacqueline@eurasians.org](mailto:jacqueline@eurasians.org) or call 6447 1578 (ext 202).

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*The EA is requesting the public's help in identifying Eurasians who have a good story to tell*

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*Participants undergo training to act as interviewers in the oral history project*

## Buy a Piece of History

*Souvenirs and collectors' items are going on sale to help fund improvements to the Eurasian Heritage Centre*

Housed within the Eurasian Community House, the Eurasian Heritage Centre is the only museum in the country that presents the history and culture of Singapore's Eurasians, and it includes a large range of collections telling the Eurasian story. It comprises three galleries. The first heritage gallery, 'The Eurasian Showcase', introduces the history and culture of Singapore's Eurasians, including many of its prominent citizens. The 'World War II – The Eurasian Story' exhibit gives accounts from Eurasians who survived the war, both in Singapore and Bahau. Thirdly, the 'Roots Of Our Community' gallery delves into the European roots of Eurasians in Singapore and their influences on society through trade and inter-marriage.

As part of the EA's centennial celebrations, the EHC is to be upgraded to improve its visitors' experience. As a self-help group, the EA relies heavily on donations made by individuals; and it therefore needs the community's help to improve the way it showcases the contributions the Eurasian community has made to Singapore's history. Any donation, big or small, will be valued by the association, and the EA hopes that Eurasians will play their part in preserving the Eurasian heritage and its stories. The EA will also be selling merchandise to raise funds for the upgrading work.

Julia D'Silva, who chairs the EA's Heritage Sub-Committee: "I hope members of the Eurasian community will take ownership of the EHC as it's an integral aspect of the Eurasian community and the strongest foundation that we have to exhibit our story to the world. I hope more people will come forward to do their part and help us to preserve and share our unique culture and heritage. I encourage them to donate artefacts or purchase the merchandise and would like to thank them in advance for their support."

Purchases can be made at the EA Secretariat office from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5.30pm. If you would like to purchase these items, please contact Jacqueline at [jacqueline@eurasians.org](mailto:jacqueline@eurasians.org) or call 6447 1578 (ext 202).

The merchandise for sale includes:

1. Mugs with EA logo (\$10)
2. Mugs with Portuguese azulejo tiles fresco design (\$10)
3. Bookmarks with a laser engraved British suit and its description (\$8)
4. Bookmarks with a laser-engraved Breudher mould and its description (\$8)
5. Cards with the male and female Portuguese costume designs (\$10 for 2)
6. Tote bags with the male and female Portuguese costume designs (\$15)



# Lord of the Dance

*Gabriel Emmanuel Teo learned to enjoy his role as a volunteer, step by step*



IRIR 2015 - Gabriel (third from right) with the Eurasian Dance Troupe

When Gabriel Teo was 12 and his mother suggested to him that he consider joining as a volunteer with the Eurasian Dance Troupe, he was far from keen.

Gabriel's idea of a good workout was something sporty and his exercise of preference was a vigorous game of football or basketball. The arts scene was for other people, not him – and anyway, he felt he was too big to be a dancer. He found plenty of reasons why he and dance wouldn't mix. But mothers can be persuasive; and Veronica Gomes, a Eurasian (his father, Randolph Teo Boon Hwee, is Chinese) reminded him that the EA had helped him with his education through bursary awards and he had a duty to give back to the community.

So Gabriel reluctantly agreed, and at first it seemed that his reservations were justified. During the first few weeks, he struggled to cope and admits: "I had absolutely no interest and found the steps complicated." However, he began to make good friends with the other members of the troupe and they took time to guide him slowly through the routines. It wasn't long before he realised he had made tremendous improvements and the steps were coming naturally. He says: "I am very grateful to all of the dance troupe members who were very patient with me."

Over the years, he has volunteered at many EA events, either dancing or otherwise helping out at year-end festivities, the Chingay Parade, President's Star Charity, SEA Games and more, and feels that he is playing a part in helping Singaporeans to learn about the Eurasians. "The Eurasian community in Singapore is small and volunteering helps me to understand more about my heritage as a Eurasian," he says. He also continues to dance actively as he wants to spread awareness about the Eurasian culture and says that he will continue to do so for as long he can keep up with the commitment. He has also expanded his dancing repertoire, trying his hand (and feet) at hip-hop dancing in his spare time.

Today, 19-year-old Gabriel is waiting to pursue a Hospitality Operations course at ITE College West. He remains one of the senior members of the Eurasian Dance Troupe and enjoys performing to Portuguese-folk songs such as the *Jinkli Nona* and *Patuscada*. His favourite performance was when he performed during the Inter Racial Inter Religious Harmony Nite in 2015. He recalls that it was the first time he had danced in front of a large crowd – and with the added pressure of the then President Tony Tan being

*"The training for such large-scale performances is always tiring but the satisfaction afterwards is immense"*

the guest of honour. "The training for such large-scale performances is always tiring but the satisfaction afterwards is immense," he says.

The teenager juggles his dancing between school and his CCAs. He says that most of his volunteering work is during the weekends and all it takes is some time management. He laughs and says, "I even have time to play basketball, soccer and go on occasional fishing trips with my friends!"



Gabriel (extreme right) before his performance at a 2017 Christmas Party in Sunset Way RC

# A Youthful Approach to Heritage

*Being a fully paid-up member of Singapore's millennial generation doesn't mean you can't also have your feet planted firmly in your roots*

Twenty-five-year-old Hannah Hendricks grew up immersed in the Eurasian culture – she recalls her Eurasian father, George, telling her stories of running around the kampong in Katong, searching for birds or hearing the rev of his uncle's motorbike and rushing home in the hope of an exhilarating ride.

And, of course, there's Eurasian food. Hannah's mother, Patricia, is a Chinese Singaporean, but she soon became adept at cooking the Eurasian favourites. Hannah jokes: "I'd like to think that every Eurasian is an expert food critic, especially when it comes to the favourites such as sugee cakes, feng or devil's curry." She believes that food enriches one's culture and that it's important to ensure that Eurasian family recipes are passed down, shared among the community and also published on websites and in cookbooks. She says: "Food, most of the time, is the foundation upon which any culture is formed."

*"Food and love for family are the language of a Eurasian"*



*Sporting days with the dragon-boat team, Hannah (third from right)*



*Hannah, left, at the age of four, with siblings Reuben, 13, and Adeline, nine*

Hannah says that another element that plays an important role in her Eurasian identity is the close-knit Eurasian family. "No matter the distance or the lack of time spent together, a Eurasian family will always come together to laugh and boogie the night away, especially at weddings. As such, both food and love for family is the language of a Eurasian."

It's not surprising, therefore, to find that Hannah believes in doing her part to ensure that her favourite Eurasian traditions are passed on to the younger generations. In 2012, when she was at university, she joined the EA's dragon-boating team as she was keen to meet fellow Eurasians. "I was able to connect with the community by being a part of the sports team and I guess it planted the seed in my curiosity of the community. I then decided to focus on the Eurasian community in Singapore as a part of my history thesis.

"My research brought me into contact with a myriad of Eurasians from different generations; it truly enriched my understanding of who we were within the Singapore society." After the dragon boat team disbanded and her thesis came to a finish, she realised that she had only started to scratch the surface of the community "I was determined to reconnect and contribute to it."

Following her graduation, she joined the EA's youth wing. In three years, she has seen how the team works together to uplift the Eurasian youth. She alludes to the Harry Potter novels: "Remember how

Dumbledore's phoenix rises from the ashes?" Similarly, she says, the committee has climbed from close to point zero and now its commitment and enthusiasm is simply inspiring. "One thing I've learnt is that the EA is very welcoming to those who are keen to participate in its various activities and committees.



*Hannah's parents on their wedding day. Her mother soon learned to cook Eurasian food*

One of the Youth Sub-Committee's first initiatives was the Mentorship Programme, (in which she is involved), and we have seen how the workshops provide youth with the extra guidance they need to navigate through their plans for the future and best achieve their existing goals."

*"I decided to focus on the Eurasian community in Singapore as a part of my history thesis"*

Hannah encourages Eurasians to come together to do what they can to help each other out, to learn from each other – and also inspire. "It's easy to get caught up in our daily lives, but let's all slow down and see how we can best move forward as a united community together with the Eurasian Association," she says.



*Hannah facilitated at an EA youth dialogue session last year*



# Prize Performance

After six months' intensive practice, the EA's dancers were ready to step out for the Chingay Parade. Decked out in bright turquoise and gold, they staged an upbeat performance of the song, *Singapore Town* – which took the 'Outstanding Display' award in their category.

Their routine, choreographed by Syarul Ezuan, beat 17 other groups to take the prize. The dance appeared in the Cultural Diversity segment, which focuses on the nation's different ethnic groups. During this section, siblings Natalie and Wesley Gordon held the EA banner aloft.

The parade, themed on 'Cultural Fantasy', was held on 23 and 24 February at the F1 Pit Building.

