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THE NEWEURASIAN

The magazine of The Eurasian Association, Singapore

The NewEurasian is published quarterly and read by more than 17,000 Eurasians in Singapore. It is also circulated to senior government offices, various ministries, statutory boards, community organisations and self-help groups.

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President's Message



SG50 passed by quickly and over the course of the year we heard and shared so much as we reflected on the 50th anniversary of our nation. The Eurasian community played a significant part in this journey as many of our pioneers were in the forefront of building our new nation, leading many key government institutions and playing major roles in the education service and the civil service.

Yet despite our long and deep history, perhaps due to the small size of our community, we have very little in the way of historical artefacts on public display which we can share with other communities in Singapore. So I was very pleased that in December we were able to launch *The Eurasian Collection* book (see page 17). This is a unique compilation of interesting artefacts, some of which have now been confined to history. I would like to thank Kevin Aeria and Geraldine Donough-Tan, who led this project, as well as everyone who shared family heirlooms that they have treasured through the generations. It is because of their efforts that the EA has been able to make public an important part of our heritage.

Our cover story for this issue highlights one of EA's key pillars: education. The EA relies on the monthly contributions to the Eurasian Community Fund (ECF) and on numerous donors and volunteers to support the funding and operational needs of our education programmes. In October, we held our annual flagship educational event, the ECF Education Awards (page 7). Nearly 300 awards were given out to students from primary, secondary and tertiary levels by our guest of honour, Acting Education Minister Ng Chee Ming. We also used the opportunity to commemorate SG50 with our students through essays and artworks showcasing their aspirations for Singapore in the next 50 years. Fifty of these were published in a book entitled *Beyond SG50, Visions of the Future*, which was launched at the event. The cover of the book was a special painting by Ruby Elvina Wyse, who graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts, featuring prominent art styles from the Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian communities.

At the ECF Education Awards event, we also recognised five students who have come forward to serve the community through our newly launched Homework Supervision Programme. These tertiary students, who are past ECF award recipients, provide mentorship to younger students who need guidance to unlock their potential. As I have

mentioned in previous issues, I encourage more young Eurasians to be involved in the EA and to do their bit to help our community. These students are a fine example of this community spirit; after all, there are no better champions for ensuring a brighter future for the Eurasian community than our own youngsters.

I am certain that everyone enjoyed our jubilee year in 2015. It was a significant year for reflection and celebration, which has provided many Singaporeans with renewed energy and perspective as we view 2016 with renewed momentum. At the EA, we closed out the year with our series of Christmas events and the annual New Year's Eve Dinner and Dance, which were wonderful opportunities for us to come together with family and friends to celebrate the end of a significant year and beginning of a new chapter.

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the patrons, trustees, management committee, sub-committee members, volunteers, donors and our secretariat team for their tremendous support and contributions during the past year. Despite being the smallest self-help group, we were able to succeed in driving several events, projects and initiatives in diverse areas such as education, welfare, heritage and community development. If we all come together and help each other, we will be able to build a better Eurasian community and nation. I encourage all our readers to visit our Facebook page and website and join us to organise, assist and participate in our exciting community programmes.

Looking forward to your continued support and wishing you a joyous 2016.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Benett Theseira'. The signature is stylized and fluid, written over a white background.

Benett Theseira
President

Shining in the East

A sparkling tree means that Christmas is on the way and more than 100 people gathered for the annual light-up at the Eurasian Community House.

EA President Benett Theseira ceremonially flicked on the switch before Stephen Gomez led the crowd in a festive rendition of Christmas carols. The event, on 5 December, was also attended by representatives from fellow self-help groups SINDA and MENDAKI.

After the carolling session, guests tucked into a Eurasian Christmas dinner, when Stephen Gomez and his band, The Music Men, switched styles to belt out popular tunes from yesteryear, which soon had guests on the dance floor. The five lucky winners of the card draw were presented with their prizes by restaurant owner, Quentin Pereira.

Yvonne Pereira, who chairs the EA's Social Circle, says: "Our committee members would like to express their sincere appreciation to the EA management committee and Secretariat for their invaluable support, Quentin & Kristine Pereira for the sumptuous cuisine, The Music Men for providing great musical entertainment, and to all our members and guests, for making the Christmas Dinner and Dance memorable."



SINDA & MENDAKI representatives and Mr & Mrs Benett Theseira



Guests take to the floor after the light-up ceremony

Selfies with Santa

The EA's Children's Christmas Treat and Family Christmas Carnival at the ECH in December is an annual event for all the family, which sees the kids going off to visit Santa while their parents have a knees-up.

This was a multi-racial Christmas, with children from all four self-help groups invited to take part.

The youngsters were spoiled for choice for entertainment: there were games to play, balloon sculptures (such as minions, Princess Elsa from *Frozen*, Rapunzel and Hello Kitty) by the talented Russell Oliveiro, performances by Bubbles the clown and Tricky Patrick the magician plus a McDonald's meal. Then Santa and Santarina strolled into the hall handing out candies and presenting each child with a Christmas gift. Selfies with Santa were the order of the day.

Downstairs was no less boisterous as their parents tucked into Christmas fare and enjoyed a musical performance by Gerard Danker. They also had a chance to get in some seasonal shopping at stalls selling Christmas goodies, and further treats were in store for lucky winners at the tombola.

Yvonne Pereira, who chairs the EA's Social Circle, says "We would like to express our sincere thanks to sponsors South East CDC, Focus Network Agencies, vendors, volunteers, the secretariat and all the guests for making the occasion a fun-filled afternoon."



Santa and Santarina come to town



Two 3 year olds getting ready to party



Bubbles the clown produces a live rabbit for the children

Pope Francis Honours a Singaporean Eurasian

Professor (Dr) James Newton Boss has been honoured by His Holiness, Pope Francis with the Benemerenti Medal. Prof Boss received the award from Apostolic Nuncio Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli at a ceremony at St Joseph's Church on 21 October. The medal was awarded to him as a mark of recognition for his service to the Catholic Church for more than five decades.

He says: "I have received numerous awards but this is the first time that I've received such a prestigious award in the presence of my family members and close friends. The fact that it was awarded to me by Pope Francis makes it even more special and I feel a lot more connected to my faith knowing that all the years of devotion to the Catholic Church have eventually been recognised."



Photo: Dominic Wong

Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli and Professor (Dr) James Newton Boss

Rolling Home

As the EA In-House Balut Tournament neared its end on 2 October 2015, nobody was quite sure of the state of play. To create extra tension, the scores of the last game – held two months previously – were withheld from the leader board. So when the results were finally announced, it was much to the delight of the unsuspecting winners. The final scores were based on the highest accumulative score over six of the eight rounds in the championship.

Douglas Nonis scored 679 points, chalking up the highest score for October and a special prize was donated by Derrick Filmer to Rosemary Tessensohn for being the lowest scorer for the night. But the big prizes made it an all-ladies' affair as they took all five of the In-House Champion top spots.



From left: Joyce Cordeiro, Eddie Tessensohn, Yvonne Pereira, Evelyn Rodrigues, Dorothy Tessensohn, Rosemary Tessensohn and Zoe Lazaroo



Balut convenor Yvonne Pereira with 2015 champion Dorothy Tessensohn

Balut convenor Yvonne Pereira says: "The Balut Section members would like to extend their grateful thanks to Mrs Evelyn Rodrigues, Mr and Mrs Quentin Pereira, Madam The Ban Khi, Madam May Swan Liong and the EA Secretariat for their contributions and support throughout the year." The final results were:

2015 In-House Champion:

Champion – Dorothy Tessensohn (3,625 points)
2nd place – Joyce Cordeiro (3,613 points)
3rd place – Rosemary Tessensohn (3,591 points)
4th place – Zoe Lazaroo (3,577 points)
5th place – Yvonne Pereira (3,563 points)

Other Prize Winners for the Year:

High Individual Score (Single Game)

1st place – Joyce Cordeiro (157 points)
2nd place – Dorothy Tessensohn (155 points)

High Individual Aggregate (Single Game)

1st place – Eddie Tessensohn (683 points)
2nd place – Rosemary Tessensohn (664 points)

With Respect...

More than 400 community, government and religious leaders attended the Community Leaders' Conference organised by OnePeople.sg and held at The Grassroots' Club in Ang Mo Kio on 4 October. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was guest of honour and Ambassador Chan Heng Chee was the guest speaker. The EA was represented by management committee members Yvonne Pereira, Alexius Pereira and Francesca Eber.

Speaking at the conference, Prime Minister Lee stressed that the racial and religious harmony that Singapore has achieved, while impressive, remained a 'work in progress'. He also stressed that Singapore must nurture and build its racial ties through organisations like OnePeople.sg, the National Steering Committee on Race and Religious Harmony and the Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle.

Dr Janil Puthuchery, chairman of OnePeople.sg, told the meeting: "We are a religiously and racially diverse society. We hope to be able to see that diversity as a strength in the next 50 years, not as a weakness." Foo Check Woo, president of the Inter-Religious Organisation added: "In Singapore, you cannot separate race and religion... the IRO [Inter Religious Organisation] has a part to play in maintaining and improving race and religious harmony."

The well-received conference was seen as a respectful forum to discuss matters of race and religion.



Guest-of-honour Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong with community leaders at the conference

Photo: OnePeople.sg

Food for Thought

The EA Toastmasters Club combined its Christmas chapter meeting with tea at the Eurasian Community House on 5 December. After their prepared speeches, members tucked into a Eurasian high tea, which fuelled them with ideas for the ensuing impromptu 'table topic' speeches. The wit flowed and the afternoon continued with party games and a short ceremony to present gifts and ribbons to members.



The EA Toastmasters Club ends a talkative year

Working in Partnership Towards a Better Singapore

Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth, hosted an appreciation dinner on 19 November at Singapore Marriott Tang Plaza Hotel to thank the ministry's stakeholders in the community. EA President Benett Theseira says: "The EA has always worked closely with the MCCY and we hope to continue this partnership in order to contribute to building a better Singapore for all of us."

Lest We Forget

Remembrance Sunday was held on 8 November at Kranji War Cemetery to pay tribute to those whose lives were sacrificed in the two World Wars and subsequent conflicts. The ceremony was organised by the British High Commission in partnership with the Singapore Armed Forces Veterans' League. EA management committee member Alexius Pereira laid a wreath to pay respects.



Alexius Pereira at Kranji War Cemetery

EA Education Schemes 2016

The EA supports students throughout their academic journey, offering numerous awards, bursaries and scholarships for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary levels. Below is a table of EA Education Schemes 2016, criteria and the application period.

Table 1

S/N	Education Scheme	Level	Description	Quantum	Income Criteria	Application Period
1.	Eurasian Community Fund [ECF] Education Awards	Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	A one-time monetary reward to students to encourage them to continue working hard.	\$100 - \$300	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800 <i>*Income criteria are only for Bursary Awards. Merit, Excellence and Distinction Awards do not have income criteria.</i>	Apply by 30 June 2016
2.	Project Ray Of Hope	Primary, Secondary, Tertiary	Disbursement of Popular and Bata vouchers to purchase educational items to prepare for the next academic year.	\$250 - \$350	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 June 2016
3.	Temasek Cares Education Bursary	Primary, Secondary, Junior College	Covering school fees, uniforms and books for one academic year, to encourage students to study hard.	Pri: \$450 Sec: \$630 JC: \$675 For one academic year	PCI range: \$626 – \$1,000 <i>*For students <u>not</u> under MOE FAS</i>	Apply by 28 February 2016
4.	Coral De Cruz Memorial Fund	Secondary	Covering school fees, books, uniforms and transport for one academic year, to encourage secondary students to study hard.	\$1,200 For one academic year	GHI ≤ \$,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 28 February 2016
5.	Merit Bursary Award	ITE and Polytechnic (NP, NYP, RP, SP, TP)	Covering the full cost of tuition and book stipend for the full duration of the course, to defray the high cost of tertiary education.	Cap: ITE: \$3,500/yr for a 2-yr course Poly: \$5,500/yr for a 3-yr course	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2016
6.	Edward D'Silva Scholarship	ITE and Polytechnic (NP, NYP, RP, SP, TP)	Applicants must be matriculating and commencing their course in 2016. Covers tuition fees.	One-time sum up to ITE: \$1,600 Poly: \$3,600 for tuition fees	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2016
7.	EA University Scholarship	University (NUS, NTU, SMU, UniSIM, SIT, SUTD)	Covering the full cost of tuition and book stipend for a 3-year course, to defray the cost of university education.	Cap: \$10,000 per year for a 3-year course	PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2016
8.	Oscar George da Silva University Scholarship	University (NUS, NTU, SMU, UniSIM, SIT, SUTD)	Covering the full cost of tuition and book stipend for a 3-year course, to defray the cost of university education.	Cap: \$10,000 per academic year for a 3-year course	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2016
9.	Mr Carlisle E.W. & Mrs Helena Josephine de Souza Award	Tertiary	To be awarded to a student(s) who has shown determination and optimism in prevailing over difficulties and who has eventually excelled in his or her chosen field.	Cap: \$2,500	GHI ≤ \$3,000, or PCI ≤ \$800	Apply by 30 April 2016
10.	Minnie Leicester-D'Rosario Award (for Literature in English at O-levels)	Sec 4 O-level student	A one-time award for a Eurasian student(s) who attained A1 for Literature in English at the Secondary 4 O-level examination.	\$1,000 <i>If there is more than one candidate, the quantum per student will be decided by the Education Committee</i>	Nil	Apply by 30 April 2016

NOTE: GHI = Gross Household Income : Total monthly income of all working adults in the household.
PCI = Per Capita Income : Total monthly income divided by the number of people in the household.

To apply, please contact Keith Kuah at 6447 1578, ext 205 or keith@eurasians.org. Application forms can be obtained from the Secretariat office at level 3 of The Eurasian Association, 139 Ceylon Road, Singapore 429744 or downloaded from www.eurasians.org.sg/education/

Honours for Young High Flyers

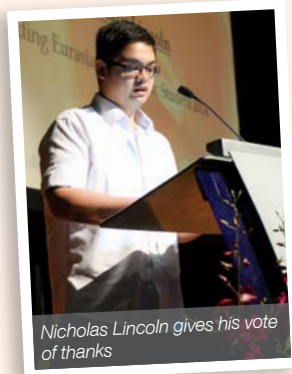
The ECF Education Awards go to outstanding students while also supporting those in financial need

Nearly 300 Eurasian students were rewarded at the ECF Education Awards ceremony – the EA's keynote annual event to recognise young Eurasians' academic success – on 17 October at Catholic Junior College. They received cash for books and transportation while grants covering school fees were given to disadvantaged students.

A special, new award was presented – the Rudolph Mosbergen Sport Bursary

In his speech, guest of honour Ng Chee Ming, Acting Minister for Education (Schools), said: "These young individuals have demonstrated that with discipline, resilience and grit we can discover what we're good at and achieve our goals."

He then revealed that a special award was to be presented by the EA: the Rudolph Mosbergen Sport Bursary, named after the late Eurasian Olympian hockey player, which was to be awarded to a student who showed potential in sport. Mr Ng described "Rudy" as a top sportsman "whose death in



Nicholas Lincoln gives his vote of thanks

February was a loss, but his legacy will last". The award was presented to Travis Joshua Woodford, 23, who is currently pursuing a diploma in Sports Coaching at Republic Polytechnic. Travis represented Singapore in the Youth Olympic Cycling 2010 and has participated in various road races in recent years.

Ruby Elvina Wyse, who graduated from LASALLE College of the Arts, had created a special painting with prominent art styles from the Chinese, Malay, Indian and Eurasian races. The work projects a future Singapore that is successful both economically and artistically. She says: "This is an art piece of our shiny little red dot in the future where every race will forever be glued together as one resilient nation." The painting was presented by Ruby to Mr Ng.

Nicholas Mark Lincoln, 22, who graduated from Temasek Polytechnic in Gerontological Management Studies and received his award for Outstanding Eurasian Polytechnic student, delivered the vote of thanks. In an emotional speech, he told the audience that his family was his biggest motivation. His father, a taxi driver, was the sole breadwinner and often drove his cab for more than 12 hours a day. His mother suffered from a rare eye condition that severely limited her vision. "I see the sacrifice my parents make and this serves as the motivation to do my best so that I will be able to take care of my parents and reciprocate the love they have shown and sacrifices they made to get me where I am today," he said. He thanked the EA for believing in him and hoped that his studies would enable him to pay forward the help he has received from the association.



Award winners gather for a group photo



EA President Benett Theseira presents *Beyond SG50, Visions of the Future* to Minister Ng Chee Ming

What the ECF Education Awards Mean

The ECF Education Awards are divided into four categories, one based on need and the other three based on educational merit.

Bursary Award: this helps students from low-income families to pay for their educational needs.

Merit Award: this is for students of all age levels who have performed well in their final year examinations.

Excellence Award: this recognises the top 25 per cent in the national PSLE, 'N', 'O' and 'A' level examinations.

Distinction Award: the most prestigious of the awards, this is given to those who have emerged as the top student in their national examinations and to tertiary students who have achieved outstanding academic results.

EA Bursaries and Scholarships: these are for tertiary students from low-income families who show potential to excel in their studies. Most of these awards are funded by donors and are of a higher value than the other awards. The recipients are selected via an interview with the EA's Education Committee.

Onwards to the Next 50 Years

In celebration of SG50, the EA has published a book entitled *Beyond SG50, Visions of the Future*, which was launched at the event. The book, a compilation of 50 essays and artworks created by young Eurasians, showcases their aspirations for Singapore in the next 50 years. Pupils from kindergarten and primary schools shared their hopes through colourful drawings while secondary and tertiary students wrote about the challenges that lie ahead for Singapore and how they intend to work to overcome them to build the nation as it progresses towards SG100.



Minister Ng meets family members

Hope for the Future

Vouchers and tea give students an educational boost

The Project Ray of Hope ceremony, which provides Popular and Bata vouchers funded by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth to help disadvantaged students with their educational costs, was held at the Eurasian Community House on 28 November. Alexius Pereira, who chairs the EA Education Committee, presented the vouchers.

Students Esmeralda Apps and Charlyn Pereira, who have themselves received educational grants from the EA in the past, spoke to the audience about how they overcame their own challenges to succeed academically and encouraged the recipients to give back to the Eurasian community in the future. The ceremony finished with tea at Quentin's restaurant.



Bursary Award recipients with Alexius Pereira

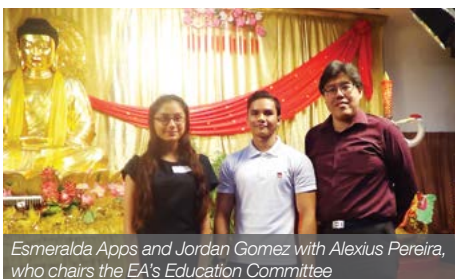
Accounting for Success

Teenage students Esmeralda Crisanta Apps and Jordan Christopher Gomez have received scholarships to help them continue their education

Promising 17-year-old Eurasian students Esmeralda Apps and Jordan Gomez were among a group of young people who received grants from the Singapore Buddhist Lodge Education Foundation at its 37th Bursary Award Presentation Ceremony on 10 October. Indraneerajah, MP for Tanjong Pagar GRC, was guest of honour at the event.

Esmeralda, who is studying at ITE College Central, has already received scholarships from the EA in recognition of her academic achievements and hopes to become an accountant and work as an internal auditor. Jordan, also an EA scholarship recipient, is planning to go to university, which he hopes will enable him eventually to help support his family financially.

Singapore Buddhist Lodge is a charitable organisation that works with partners to distribute bursaries to assist students with their daily expenses and also helps needy families.



Esmeralda Apps and Jordan Gomez with Alexius Pereira, who chairs the EA's Education Committee

Two Eurasians Fund Education Awards

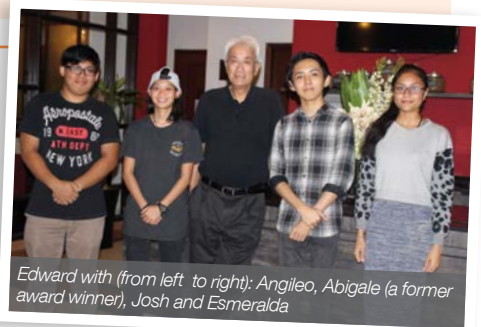
Edward D'Silva and Christopher de Souza MP have both set up educational awards for Eurasian students and met them for dinner at Quentin's restaurant

Edward D'Silva, a former EA president and an architect, is sponsoring a new Edward D'Silva Scholarship for students pursuing courses at polytechnics or institutes of technical education (ITE). The award is to encourage students to achieve good results at secondary school in order to be able pursue a tertiary education, which will lead to better career prospects.

Edward says: "When I was President in 2008, it opened up my eyes to see that there were many Eurasians who had the potential to uplift themselves but came from unfortunate circumstances. This scholarship is a small way of giving back."

The recipients of the inaugural Edward D'Silva Scholarship in 2015 are: Esmeralda Crisanta Apps; Jordan Christopher Gomez; Johnston James Ong; Josh Mendel Neubronner; and Angileo Kelly Pereira.

On 18 November, Edward met some of the recipients



Edward with (from left to right): Angileo, Abigale (a former award winner), Josh and Esmeralda

for dinner at Quentin's Restaurant. He hopes that the award winners will maintain their links with the EA in the future and share their skills with others. "I hope that the students pursue their dreams and become a role model for younger Eurasians," he says.

Christopher de Souza MP also provides two awards for students as part of the EA's education assistance programmes, naming them after his grandparents. On 29 November, Christopher and his parents, Timothy and Patricia de Souza, also met the 2014 award winners for a meal at Quentin's restaurant. The 2014 recipients of the Mr Allen Reynold Patrick & Mrs Beryl Constance O'Hara Award and the Mr Carlisle E.W. & Mrs Helena Josephine de Souza Award are Petrina De Souza and Dunstan Thomasz respectively. The recipient of the Mr Carlisle E.W. & Mrs Helena Josephine de Souza Award in 2015 is Kimberley Veronica Ong.



Dunstan and Petrina with Tim, Pat and Christopher

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character – that is the goal of true education”

Martin Luther King Jr

Making *the* Grade

Singapore is often cited as having one of the world’s best education systems and is home to some of the top universities. Education is one of the three pillars on which the Eurasian Association was founded, and as we step into Singapore’s next 50 years of independent nationhood we talk to a number of people, from decision makers, teachers and parents to students themselves, to get a Eurasian perspective on the subject and discuss the challenges and advantages that particularly affect the community



Ask any parents what they want for their children and a good education will feature high, along with health and happiness. In today's globally competitive jobs market, a good education is the key to making our way in the world. It is how we discover where our talents lie and learn to develop them to realise our individual potential both in the workplace and in our private life. Eurasians in the education system give their views, and tell us where we've aced and where we could try harder.

Education and the Eurasian Association

Alexius Pereira, who chairs the EA's Education Committee, says that the association's top educational priority remains focussing on students from disadvantaged backgrounds and especially those who face learning difficulties. He says: "We have to ensure that no students are left behind due to challenging circumstances."

Edmund Rodrigues has been serving on the EA Education Committee for more than 10 years. A mathematics teacher for most of his life, he continues to tutor students. He agrees with Alexius and adds: "When we first started to provide help funding children's education, it was mainly to assist the poorer members of the community as we wanted them to catch up with the rest, who could afford to pay their school and tuition fees. However today, dynamics of employment have changed and it has become important to recognise this shift and anticipate the new demand for certain skills."



Alexius Pereira at an EA awards ceremony



Edmund Rodrigues



Esmeralda Apps

Individuals need to acquire special skills that are life long."

Eighteen-year-old student Esmeralda Apps is one of the students to benefit from an EA educational

grant. She is currently pursuing her NITEC qualification in Finance Services but admits that during her 'N' Level examinations she was close to giving up on mathematics and was struggling to understand the subject. She comes from a less well-off background and says: "I was very stressed by my situation at home and was close to giving up on my studies."

“There are many specific programmes that distinguish one school from another. If students are aware of their ambition, they will be able to find a school that provides exposure to that”

Her family could not afford the cost of extra tuition, so instead the resourceful teenager looked for other ways to succeed. She sought help from her teacher and revised daily. Esmeralda completed her 'N' levels in 2014, obtaining three distinctions. "When I collected my results, I jumped for joy as I had passed my weakest subject!" she says.

In 2015, she received a Eurasian Community Fund (ECF) Education award and also Bata and Popular vouchers during the Project Ray of Hope ceremony, which gives help to financially disadvantaged students, and this has eased her money worries.

Samuel Wittberger, 18 earned an ECF Excellence Award for being in the top 25 per cent of his cohort in the 'A' level exams. He is currently serving his National Service and aims to pursue a law degree in the UK. He is grateful for the EA's support, not only because the grant made it easier to advance in his studies, but also because it has given him a sense of belonging to the Eurasian community.

Samuel is determined to make education a lifelong mission: He believes: "Formal education provides one with a limited set of perspectives, but it is up to us to broaden our horizons."

Extra Tuition

The EA also collaborates with the other self-help groups to run the Collaborative Tuition Programme (CTP), in which tuition for English, maths and science is available at minimal costs. The CTP, launched in 2002, is held in some 70 community centres island-wide, making the scheme accessible to every student. The EA has also recently formed a partnership with the SHGs to run student care centres after school, which will run programmes to assist students' overall development.

Samuel did not need extra tuition classes during his studies and believes they should be used by pupils who need to keep up with the rest of their classmates rather than to give students an edge over their peers. "Students who are ahead must do their part by helping their classmates cope and move forward together, rather than at their expense," he says.



Samuel Wittberger (right) at the 2015 ECF Awards



Homework Supervision Programme

In June 2015, the EA rolled out its Homework Supervision Programme (HSP) to assist students who are suffering from financial or other problems affecting their schoolwork. The HSP is not a tuition programme; its objective is for students at tertiary levels to act as a mentor to younger students in primary and secondary levels, meeting them for 90 minutes a week to help them with their homework. Four families are benefitting from HSP with four mentors helping eight younger pupils.

Zahrah Abdullah, 18, is currently pursuing a Diploma in Leisure and Resort Management. A past recipient of EA education awards, she decided to volunteer as a mentor as “it was my way of thanking the EA and the Eurasian community for believing in me,” she says.

She is teaching siblings Jasmine Oliveiro, 16, and her sister Azalea, 10. Zahrah supervises the sisters’ homework in their own home and they ask her questions about topics that they are unsure about; she can also help to introduce them to their next subject so they have some knowledge of it before it is taught formally at school. Zahrah is enjoying her lessons – “It’s gratifying when they understand what I teach them,” she says.

Jasmine is taking ‘O’ levels and says the thought of the exams is “terrifying!” She says that it is sometimes hard to stay alert in class and that the HSP scheme has helped to focus her attention. “Zahrah explains to me formulas when I struggle to solve a question,” she says. Jasmine is also a past recipient of EA bursaries and hopes to be selected for the HSP Programme in 2016 to help her with the national examinations.



Mentor Zahrah Abdullah

Azalea admits she finds it challenging to keep up to the teacher’s pace in school. “Zahrah is super-nice,” she says. “She clears my doubts and I can understand my subjects better now.”

Their mother, Maslina, says the children were finding the subjects tough and she was unable to assist them. “I could not send them to tuition classes as they were expensive and HSP helps me to ease my mind as I know that they are in the good hands of the mentor.”



Michael de Silva



Sara de Souza

Head Teachers’ Perspective

Michael de Silva and Sara de Souza are the Principals of Innova Junior College and Cedar Primary School respectively.

Michael has been a principal for nearly 18 years. He says that while some elements of education have evolved, others have remained unchanged over the past 50 years. He believes that since independence, the system has maintained its stand of equipping each child with the skills needed to ensure that they are prepared to excel and create economic progress. “These values are instilled in the child via our national curriculum.” However, he points out that the needs of the workplace are ever changing – “many jobs such as being a typist have disappeared” – and the expectation of beginning and ending your career in the same occupation is no longer there.

He believes that it is critical for institutions to anticipate the changing landscape of the workplace and is pleased that many schools

are already focussing on this, providing career guidance and also partnering with organisations to provide students with work experiences in the corporate world.

Sara de Souza says that today education is more focused on building people with character and that with programmes planned for holistic development, a concerted effort is being made to ensure that students are supported from primary to university level. “It’s quite exciting that students are graduating and also continuously exploring new learning in order to thrive.”

Michael de Silva underlined the importance of the partnership between the school and a supportive home environment for the development of the child. Studies have shown that when this collaboration is strong, the child benefits with better learning, healthy self-esteem, and more positive attitudes and behaviour in life.

“I would like to see a Singapore where young people don’t limit themselves as no dream is ever too big to live”



A Question of Language

In colonial days, many Eurasians achieved high standing in the nation, not least of all because English – the official language – was also their native language.

With the post-colonial government's focus on multiculturalism, a second language became a key component in the nation's education system. While most students had a grounding in both English and their ethnic Asian language, many Eurasians spoke only English. It was a problem addressed by Timothy de Souza when as President of the EA he steered the association's move to self-help group status in the early 1990s. Edmund says that in those days, most Eurasians opted to learn Malay, which was seen as the easiest option for a second language. However, he feels that with China's emergence as a major economy, Eurasian students should now at least be able to converse in Chinese.

Thoughts on the Future

As a parent, Maslina Oliveiro suggests that in addition to the EA's programmes on home tuition, the association could provide group counselling for children and youngsters who are facing financial difficulties. She says: "I feel that they can achieve great results if they do not have to think about their financial challenges." She also feels that much more could be done to provide emotional support to students from disadvantaged families: The younger generation needs to know that there are people who are willing to assist them. I believe that it will give them confidence in life and make them realise they can reach great heights."



Maslina with husband Royston, Azalea and Jasmine

Alexius says that the EA may be able to help with special cases and that parents are welcome to approach the association if their child is suffering particular educational problems.

Samuel says that while Singapore's education system has been successful in catering to a broad spectrum of students in society, he would like the system to move further away from excessive focus on academic achievement to create a system where students could feel comfortable about exploring their other talents. He says it's important to present the students with opportunities to pursue their passion without the stigma or the constant fear of sinking grades. I would like to see a Singapore where young people don't limit themselves as no dream is ever too big to live," he says.

Sara de Souza says that not all Singapore schools are the same. "There are many specific programmes that distinguish one school from another. If students are aware of their ambition, they will be able to find a school that provides exposure to that. It's possible to develop a unique skill set in any school that you go to."

Michael de Silva says that more importance should be given to ensuring that students have a home environment that is conducive to study and should have a quiet area in the house as a designated study location. Parents also needed to pay increased attention to their children's interests. A good partnership and exchange of information between parents and teachers is also the way to go. "The future of education must lead our youngsters to become part of something larger such as a family, community or nation," he says.

If you would like to enrol your child for any of the EA's educational programmes, visit <http://www.eurasians.org.sg/education/> to discover what is available this year.

“The future of education must lead our youngsters to feel they are part of something larger – a family, community and nation”



Packed and Ready to Go

FSS volunteers turned a room full of groceries into a pile of festive food hampers for the needy

Each year, the Eurasian Association organises a festive box of Christmas goodies for members of the community who are struggling to make ends meet. A room in the Eurasian Community Houses takes on the role of a factory conveyor belt as a team of volunteers work to fill each box with an identical set of items.

Cash for the hampers is raised by the community, well-wishers and donors each year



Goodies galore

This is the Christmas spirit at its best with cheerful workers enjoying the chance to help others in need as they set to work with brisk efficiency, filling the hampers with food items including, biscuits, candies, chocolates, jam, cakes and even a special jar of salt fish pickle from Quentin's restaurant. Once the boxes were ready, it took two days to deliver them all to 84 beneficiaries throughout the island.

Burton Gerard Koek, 53, has been volunteering to pack hampers for the past three years. He says: "I love to volunteer during the festive season as it is a joyous time of the year and I am pleased to have an opportunity to share my time with these families."



A volunteer sets up the food ready for packing



The festive package



Stalwart volunteer Burton Koek: job done!

Francesca Eber, who chairs the FSS Committee, says: "Cash for the hampers is raised by the community, well-wishers and donors who support the hamper fund-raising each year. The committee would like to specially thank The Silent Foundation charity for its contribution.

Fun, Skits and Songs at the FSS Christmas Bash

Guests let their hair down during the yuletide party

For many Eurasians who receive aid from the EA, the FSS Christmas party is one of their annual social highlights. This year, more than 100 guests turned up to make merry at the Eurasian Community House on 6 December, where they were greeted by adult and student volunteers decked in Santa and reindeer hats. Events got off to a hearty start with a Christmas buffet by Quentin's restaurant, including Eurasian stalwarts such as devil's curry and shepherd's pie, as well as a sponsored turkey; and there was a glass of wine for those who wanted a tippie.

EA President Benett Theseira and FSS Committee's chairperson Francesca Eber gave speeches to thank the organisers, volunteers and students for their efforts, before the afternoon's programme of entertainment began.

ISS International School students staged a skit entitled Seasons of Love. Schezin Azmina Masud, 14, and Amber Lily Dunstan, 13 – both volunteering for their second year – said the sketch took them six weeks to create. "Our team came up with the script, staging, props, costumes and songs," says Amber. Schezin admitted: "I was nervous as I thought the audience might not like the skit. However, I saw everyone laughing and realised that they found it funny and began to enjoy my performance." The girls said they hoped to volunteer again as they found the event inspiring and it helped

them to gain a better understanding of other people's lives.

MC Paul Rodrigues and Ron Pereira entertained the crowd with Christmas trivia games and also led the carol singing. The Music Man band had guests singing along and clapping, and plenty took to the dance floor.

At the end, there were even bigger smiles from the winners of the lucky draw session – especially from Collin Winston De Mello, who walked away with the top prize of a Philips 32" LED Television sponsored by Quentin's.



Michael Nonis enjoys his first EA Christmas

Eye on the Ball

Teenage tennis enthusiast Joshua Vestal was delighted to be chosen as a ballboy at the recent international tennis matches held in Singapore – and aspires to be a champion himself

When tennis superstar Roger Federer plays at the Basel Open in his Swiss home town, he treats the ball kids to pizza afterwards. He does it, he says, because he remembers his own days as a young ball boy, when he ran around chasing after the balls that his own idols had played.

“I was exhausted as we trained vigorously. There were many rules that we had to adhere to”

Fourteen-year-old Eurasian Joshua Vestal is an avid tennis player, who was selected by Singapore Tennis Association (STA) to support court-side services in the SEA Games last June and WTA (Women’s Tennis Association) Finals last October and November.

More than 40 youngsters who are passionate about the game took part in the Singapore Ballkids Programme, which trains and equips them with the skills to do their job on court. Through organised training, they developed



High standards: the ball boys and girls at a training session

the discipline, patience, teamwork and resilience needed to do their part in ensuring the smooth running of the matches. The Ballkids Programme is sponsored by lifestyle furniture company Lorenzo International, which is collaborating with STA to finance the training for five years.



Ball boy and budding tennis player, Joshua Vestal

Joshua moved to Singapore when he was three years old and started playing tennis when he turned seven. His mother had introduced him to the game and he now trains several times a week. He says: “I enjoy tennis so much that I wouldn’t even mind playing it daily!”

In 2014, many of his friends had decided to join as ball kids, but at the time Joshua was sceptical. However, when he heard their positive reviews about how fun the training sessions were, he decided to sign up. He attended the open recruitment and was excited to find out that he had been selected. Joshua attended the compulsory training camp and says: “I was exhausted as we trained vigorously. There were many rules that we had to adhere to. However, I saw myself improving tremendously!”

Although his initial aim was to participate only in the SEA Games, he enjoyed himself so much that he decided to take part in the WTA finals, too. The two events enabled him to make new friends and watch tennis up close. “On the first day of SEA Games, there was a huge line to get in. The atmosphere was really cool and I would do it all over again,” he says.

Joshua feels that being selected for the WTA Finals was a huge honour and that all the training he did paid off. As for playing tennis himself, he has already set himself a goal – winning the National School Games.

Showing Who’s Best

In today’s competitive business world, simply being the best candidate for the job isn’t enough – you’ll need to persuade your prospective boss that you are. And that takes special skills

Preparing for your interview for that longed-for job is major task in itself and Charlene Lee, who chairs the EA’s Youth Committee, recently held an intimate resume writing and interview skills workshop at the ECH for three young jobseekers.

After hearing their ambitions (Ruby Wyse and Shanice Scully both want to teach while Victoria is aiming for a career in finance), Charlene provided them with tips on how to write a CV (resumé), the importance of a covering letter

and tailoring it according to the organisation’s expectations.

Afterwards, the workshop tackled the important questions that are usually asked during an interview, such as “Tell me more about yourself” and “Where do you see yourself in five years’ time?” – as well as the sensitive subject of negotiating a salary. They also learned how to search for a job using portals such as LinkedIn. At the end, the young women agreed they felt better prepared to beat the competition!



Victoria, Charlene, Ruby & Shanice



Charlene provides tips on putting your best face forward



Running a workshop for Words Go Round, the Singapore Writer's Festival school tour

A World of Creativity

Deborah Emmanuel is a multifaceted artist, who has enjoyed acclaim around the world. But success hasn't come easy

Deborah Emmanuel's CV sounds impressive. The writer, poet, musician and actor has studied acting and applied theatre with Singapore Repertory Theatre's Young Co, LaSalle-SIA College of the Arts, Singapore Polytechnic and Griffith University in Australia. She has read her poetry at major literary events. She is a published author and is currently working on a new book. She performs in two bands. And she'll soon be shooting her part in a new TV film.

The 27-year-old, whose heritage is a combination of Dutch, Portuguese, Indian and Baba, describes herself as "colourful, creative and contemplative". She started writing when she was just 10 and recalls writing poetry to her mother for her birthday.

“Although it's difficult, take a moment to reflect on how your actions are affecting others”

At secondary school, her artistic leanings extended to the theatre, when her best friend convinced her to join the English Literary Debate and Drama Society. At 16, Deborah played the lead role of a 53-year-old woman in a school play. "I felt the greatest sense of achievement in my life. I learned the freedom of being around an audience, was trained to be confident and also let go of my inhibitions," she says.

Her career plan was to pursue an acting degree at La Salle-SIA College of the Arts but family difficulties forced her to drop out of the course. She took a job as a guest relations officer at a hotel and spent her evenings partying. The partying included recreational drug-taking, an offence which resulted in a year's imprisonment and provided her with plenty of time to reflect

on her life. Her family stood by her and she decided that she wanted to develop her poetry and performances to help people – and that the first step was to begin by educating herself. She joined Singapore Polytechnic's Applied Drama and Psychology course and helped to support herself by working.

Sadly, her mother passed away from cancer two years ago; Deborah was devastated, but pushed on with her studies. She moved to Brisbane, Australia to complete her Bachelors degree in Contemporary and Applied Theatre.

She turned her life around. She has emerged out of hardship as a motivational speaker, educator, writer, musician, poet and actor and believes her life's experiences have enabled her to take life more seriously and more positively.

She has read her poetry on major platforms such as TEDx – which holds events to help communities, organisations and individuals to spark conversations and inspire ideas – performing in 2011 and 2013, and was a featured author at the Singapore's Writer's Festival last year.

In addition, she is a professional singer and has performed internationally. She sings with a band in Australia named Mojave, which plays funk and soul, and has a band based in Singapore called Wobology, which plays dub music.



Christmas with the family



The multi-talented Deborah Emmanuel



Deborah (right) with her sister and grandparents

She is emotionally very involved with her poetry: "I feel what my poem discusses," she says. "For example, I recently wrote about my friend who is a construction worker. He shared with me that he felt that he deserved to live in poverty. Writing and reading the poem made me feel helpless about inequality."

She has also written a book entitled *When I Giggle in my Sleep*; which is a compilation of 15 of her poems. Her biggest inspiration is writing about issues that she feels strongly about and systems that she wants to change. She is currently working on a new book, *Rebel Rites*, which she describes as creative non-fiction, which deals with her experiences in prison. She has also just finished shooting a small role as a pregnant woman in a new television film, *Baby Bumps*. Amid all this, she recently received a Market & Audience Development grant from the National Arts Council to help fund her solo poetry tour in Australia.

She advises people who are facing challenging times: "Sometimes all we feel like doing is thinking about ourselves and our problems. Everything around us will be tough and we do things that hurt people and the environment. Although it's difficult, take a moment to reflect on how your actions are affecting others. Always remember that positivity will produce positivity and negativity produces negativity."

A Way with Words

Linguistics student Kevin Martens Wong wants to spread the joy of languages – not least, his ancestors' native Kristang

Kevin Wong is passionate about languages – his own (English), his ancestors' (Kristang) and many others, and wants to share the joys of how we express our thoughts and feelings in words.

The 23-year-old Eurasian, who has Danish, Portuguese and Chinese roots, is currently studying for a degree in Linguistics (the scientific study of languages) at the National University of Singapore with a view to teaching English, and together with like-minded students runs an online linguistics magazine, *Unravel: The Accessible Linguistics Magazine*.

He says he has often been asked: "Linguistics? What do you do?" and realised that the subject and the issues that it deals with are not well understood by the general public. He is on a mission to change that with his online magazine: "I want to make linguistics available to everyone in an engaging way and decided that the magazine would be free and not for profit," he says.

He admits that although he is at ease with words, he didn't actually know how a magazine works. What were they going to publish? How often? Who would be willing

to write it and assist with the editing and web design? He started coordinating these issues with his team and after several months of hard slog, published the first quarterly issue in November 2014.

“It was extremely difficult locating Kristang speakers as there are so few remaining”

He is now editor-in-chief of the magazine and loves the job: "I really enjoy editing. It's probably the thrill I get when I untangle a particularly knotty sentence, or polish an already shiny expression to perfection," he says. He also has five other assistant editors and describes them as more like fellow editors-in-chief as they keep the website running as a team. In just one year, the magazine has attracted nearly 100,000 views.

Kevin discovered Kristang when his grandmother mentioned it to him, and the team featured the language in two issues of *Unravel*: as an endangered language and as one of the languages in Singapore. The language has been a formative element of the Portuguese Eurasians but Kevin says: "I think many Eurasians in my generation have no idea that Kristang exists and it's very much in danger of disappearing."

He spent several months researching the language – work that will go towards his thesis and degree – and discovered that very little written material is available on



Kevin Wong is on a mission to unravel languages

Kristang. He decided to get in touch with experts on the subject and went to Seremban, Malacca and Kuala Lumpur to collect data from Kristang speakers. "It was extremely difficult locating Kristang speakers as there are so few remaining," he says.

Meeting Kristang speakers has enabled him to meet many wonderful people, says Kevin. One of his most memorable experiences was visiting Sara Santa Maria, a Eurasian teacher of Kristang living in the Portuguese Settlement in Malacca, with whom he enjoyed fascinating conversations. "I think the thing that stood out the most for me was how close-knit the older generation in the Eurasian community are wherever they are in the world, and how we're losing that with people my age."

From a linguistic point of view, Kevin feels that Kristang is interesting as it's an endangered creole language, being a hybrid of Malay and Portuguese. As a mainly spoken, rather than written language, it does not have a fixed spelling, which has implications for how it might be taught in the future.

When people ask Kevin why they should bother to learn it, his answer is that the language is an immense cultural and historical treasure. He says: "I travelled through Portugal in the summer and told all my hosts about Kristang. Every single one of them said that Kristang is awesome! They asked me why we are not doing more to protect it." Find out more about Kristang – and a lot of other interesting languages – at www.unravellingmag.com



Kevin (right) with his family



Kevin (in orange T-shirt) and some of the Unravel editorial team with Joan Marbeck, a noted Kristang writer

Seeing a Culture through its Artefacts

As part of the SG50 celebrations, the Eurasian Association published a beautifully illustrated new book

The Eurasian Collection, launched at Singapore Art Museum on 12 December, is the result of a collaboration between the EA and the Eurasian community at large to research the memorabilia that goes to make up the Eurasian story in Singapore.

Each item featured in the book reveals its own tale of Eurasian history. Many of the items have been treasured by individual families for decades. The artefacts are divided into themes: family and home; jewellery and apparel; sports and music; religion; weddings; and World War II.

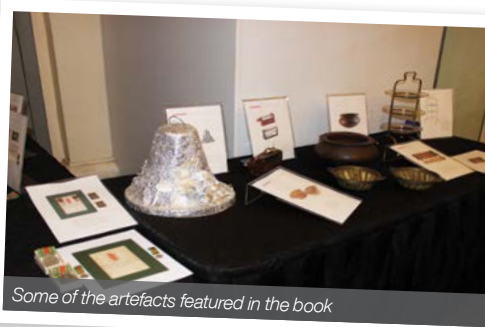
Guest-of-honour Lawrence Wong, Minister for National Development, said at the launch: "The Eurasian community is one of the smallest in Singapore but also one of the oldest. The community itself embodies the cultural diversity which is



Minister Wong with the book's contributors

the very essence of Singapore. They will always have a special place in our multicultural society."

Each item reveals its own tale of Eurasian history



Some of the artefacts featured in the book



Minister Lawrence Wong puts the first two pieces of the puzzle into place

The minister, together with EA President Benett Theseira, Kevin Aeria, the EA Heritage Committee chairman, and the donors came together on stage to piece together a puzzle, which represented the book's cover.

Kevin says: "I would like to thank the book committee for successfully launching *The Eurasian Collection* and all the guests who attended the event. I hope that the project will inspire more Singaporeans to appreciate memorabilia, and provide them to museums so that they are not lost over time."

Bygone Buys

Treat yourself and your friends to some mementos from the Eurasian past

The Eurasian Association is now selling a range of souvenirs to raise money for the Eurasian Heritage Centre at the Eurasian Community House.

These charming gifts depicting Eurasian culture, which include handicrafts, bookmarks, magnets, umbrellas, mugs and other useful items, can be a treat for yourself or are ideal for gifts that also educate your friends about Eurasian traditions.

Most importantly, the proceeds will go towards maintaining the Eurasian Heritage Centre and other cultural programmes. The souvenirs can be purchased from the EA secretariat office at level 3 between Monday and Friday 9am-6pm, or from the EA lobby on Saturdays from 11am to 7pm.

The Eurasian Association is under the Care & Share Grant until 31 March 2016. All donations received before then will be matched dollar for dollar by the government. Help us to preserve and share our unique Eurasian culture! For more information on the souvenirs, contact Jacqueline at 6447 1578 ext 202, jacqueline@eurasians.org

Get Your Groove On!

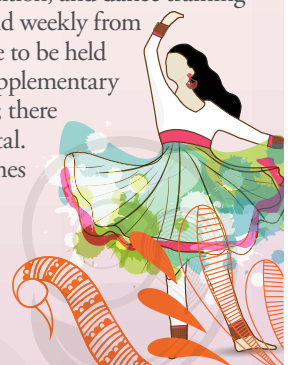
The Eurasian Association is looking for dancers to join this year's National Day Parade

If you've got the dance moves – or think you can learn – the EA is recruiting dancers for this year's National Day Parade at the new National Stadium.

As well as the fun of dancing – and toning up those muscles – being part of the Eurasian dance group will put you in touch with fun-loving people and offers a chance to meet new friends.

Those interested will be invited for audition, and dance training will be provided. Rehearsals will be held weekly from late March to August 2016 and are due to be held on Sundays from 4pm to 8pm with supplementary sessions on Tuesday from 7pm to 9pm; there will be approximately 25 sessions in total. (Please note that rehearsal days and times are subject to change.)

For further enquiries or to register, contact Lestrine at 6447 1578 ext 206, lestrine@eurasians.org



A Friend in Need

Stephen George De Souza, a principal instructor at Singapore Red Cross Academy's First Aid Training Centre, talks about his passion for caring for the sick and injured and the experiences he encounters while on duty

Stephen De Souza's interest in first aid was sparked during his National Service in 1978 when he signed up for the Combat Medical Orderly Course. Soon he was caring for those who fell ill in the army. In 1982, he enrolled as a student nurse and began his career as a state-registered nurse in 1985. After graduating, he took up a post-basic nursing course in Critical Care Nursing to specialise in intensive nursing for critically ill patients. His attitude towards continuous learning and caring for others has led him to his current position as a principal instructor with the Red Cross.

“The Boxing Day 2004 tsunami was an eye-opener to see how nature can cause terrible destruction”

The 57-year old says that his daily routine consists of conducting and assessing first aid training courses at Red Cross House or external venues. If he is not involved in actual training, he will be in his office developing or updating the course curriculum.



It's a wrap! Stephen oversees a lesson in bandaging



Stephen at home with his wife, Cynthia, and daughter, Seraphina

When asked about his most memorable experience, he doesn't hesitate: "It has to be the great Indian Ocean tsunami that struck Asia on Boxing Day 2004." Stephen was a part of a medical disaster relief team sent to Sri Lanka in January 2005 and says: "It was an eye-opener to see how nature can cause terrible destruction. I recall watching a video clip that was taken just after the tsunami hit the country. It was not released to the media because it was too graphic. After watching it, the room was silent and some of us were crying. It was an emotional moment and it was saddening to see people suffering after losing their loved ones and homes."

He recalls another occasion back home: "Once a fellow instructor was breathless and perspiring and I informed him that he might be having a heart attack." Stephen and a colleague rushed him to the nearest clinic where the instructor collapsed. An ambulance was called and luckily, he reached the hospital on time.

Only recently, a young girl fainted in his church. With assistance from another member of the congregation, Stephen managed



Stephen wears his Red Cross badge with pride

to assess her condition and discovered that she had fainted owing to low sugar levels. He says: "I elevated her legs to promote blood circulation and also gave her sweet drink." He was pleased that she became better and a doctor concurred that his treatment was accurate. Stephen has many such experiences and is always thankful to possess valuable skills that might save someone's life.

“Learning first aid is like buying an insurance policy. You don't know when you will need it”

He believes that learning first aid is important as we are not able to predict when an accident might happen – "It will be heart wrenching if that someone is a family member." He adds: "It's like buying an insurance policy. You don't know when you will need it and your family will be the main beneficiaries."

First aid courses are easily available and you can find out more about them here: <http://redcross.sg/learn/first-aid> or call 6664 0565.

In a Pickle at Christmas

Melissa Dragon's book aims to show children the true meaning of the festive season

Melissa Joan Dragon's recently published book, *Christmas with the Pickles*, is a beautifully written and intricately illustrated book that captures the essence of Christmas celebrations and conveys the timeless message of the season; and it has captivated both children and adults alike.

Melissa, 33, who has a Masters degree in Popular Literature and has read many European children's books, chanced on one that tells the legend of Cologne in Germany. She says: "It was hand-drawn and coloured and influenced the vision for my own book. Hence, the illustration style is more colourful and organic than in most books these days. This is childlike in a way and draws my young readers."

"It brings me great joy to see that a child has truly learnt about kindness, respect and gratitude through my poems and stories,"

Melissa has always worked with children, teaching and writing children's educational materials and writing for children's magazines, and believes that reaching out to young children enables her to make a difference in the world. "It brings me great joy to see that a child has truly learnt about kindness, respect and gratitude through my poems and stories," she says.

The concept for the book arose when, many years ago, a young parent told Melissa that she would not be buying a present for her own children at Christmas as it was not their birthday. Melissa started reflecting on Christmas and decided to create a special book that would convey the reasons behind many of the Christmas traditions, as many children – and even some adults – were not aware of the reasons behind them. Why are gifts exchanged? Why is Christmas a particularly important time for Christians to attend church? Why is the sharing of the Christmas meal important? *Christmas with the Pickles* answers these questions in five parts, but it took her almost a decade before the book was published.

There are countless books explaining the nativity story but Melissa asks: "How many children in this day and age are able to relate to the night that Christ was born in an intimate and empathetic way?" In addition, she introduces Catholic notions in the book, ensuring that Christmas is more than a fairytale to her young readers.

A particularly interesting aspect of the book is that there is a hidden angel in each scene for the readers to find. Melissa says: "I am subtly trying to remind everyone that there are hidden angels in our lives and every moment of our life should not be taken for granted."

She says she recently received a message from a parent to say: "Hey just to share, your book saved me today." Her son had been given a toy company catalogue to choose a present "and he was getting really carried away. I was quite disturbed and couldn't find the right words to explain to him the focus of Christmas. So we just read the last chapter of your book. At the end of the story, he asked if there



Melissa Dragon is on a mission to explain the true meaning of Christmas

"There is a hidden angel in each scene of the book for the readers to find,"

was more! Thereafter, he still picked out his present but in a less self-indulgent way.

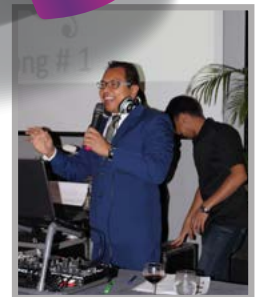
The book, which Melissa says is aimed at children from "one to 100" can be purchased at \$18, of which \$3 goes directly to charity if ordered via the author's Facebook Page: <https://www.facebook.com/Christmas-with-the-Pickles>



ROCKIN' AND ROLLIN' INTO 2016



The driving rain did nothing to dampen the spirits of the guests arriving for the EA's New Year's Eve Dinner and Dance at the Concorde Hotel. Dressed in their finest, they gathered for cocktails as MC Robert Chitty got them in the party mood by encouraging them to take selfies as a souvenir of the fun-filled night to come.



After a buffet spread, Riem De Wolff of the Blue Diamonds band helped the guests to see out SG50 with 1960s music in keeping with the party theme of 'Rolling Good Times'. DJ Bernard Jeremiah spun tunes for the younger generation and the action continued with seven-piece band Broadband.



The crowd danced and sang along to favourite tunes and EA President, Benett Theseira presented prizes to 11 lucky draw winners.



At midnight Father Time (aka Peter Rodrigues) ushered in the New Year as an array of balloons cascaded from the ceiling – and the crowd continued merrymaking into the early hours.

Organising chairperson Yvonne Pereira says: "Everybody had a great time and committee members Dorothy Tessensohn, Charlene Lee and I would like to thank all the sponsors for their generous contributions. Thanks, too, to the EA secretariat, entertainers – and, of course, the guests themselves – for supporting this annual event."

