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EYES (Engaging Youths, Empowering Seniors) Photo Book



EYES

Engaging Youths, Empowering Seniors

A celebration of intergenerational ties
and lifelong friendships



YOUTH CORPS SINGAPORE

Our youth volunteers from Engaging Youths, Empowering Seniors (EYES)





Contents

02	Foreword	45	Chapter 4: Auntie Pek Choo
04	About Youth Corps Singapore	53	Chapter 5: Auntie Oi Chun
06	About Common Space for Common Good	61	Chapter 6: Uncle Lam Seng & Auntie Ah Ai
10	About Lions Befrienders	71	Chapter 7: Auntie Geok Lew
12	About The Ageing Landscape of Singapore	79	Chapter 8: Uncle Chen Hong
17	Introduction to EYES	87	Chapter 9: Uncle Ngak Boon
19	Inspirations from the Artist	92	Changed Impressions
21	Chapter 1: Uncle Lee Kuang	94	Seniors' Testimonials
29	Chapter 2: Auntie Yap Heng	96	Acknowledgements
37	Chapter 3: Auntie Qiuxi	97	Be a Befriender



[FOREWORD]

Ong Kah Kuang

Executive Director
Youth Corps Singapore

Youth Corps Singapore was set up in 2014 to champion youth volunteerism and rally youths to step forward and take the lead in solving community issues. Through their efforts, Youth Corps volunteers have touched the lives and hearts of people from all walks of life. Over time, we hope to foster a strong culture of caring and compassion that binds our society together.

Earlier this year, Youth Corps launched the Common Space for Common Good (CS4CG) initiative, encouraging the use of common spaces such as void decks to serve diverse community needs. CS4CG empowers youths to promote values such as inclusivity and social cohesion, challenging them to think outside the box and demonstrate leadership as they solve issues faced by the community.

Engaging Youths, Empowering Seniors (EYES) is a good example of what CS4CG can motivate youths to achieve. Over a span of five weeks, Youth Corps volunteers taught photography to seniors from Lion Befrienders before embarking on a heritage trail, allowing them to put their newly-acquired skills to the test. Through the interactions, our youth volunteers caught a glimpse of the enriching lives of the seniors and gained a better understanding of how the pioneer generation built the Singapore that we know today. I am also glad that many of them continue to stay in contact with the seniors beyond the five weeks.

I hope that you will enjoy the conversations and stories captured in the EYES photo book, as they reveal the warm connections fostered between our youths and seniors in the programme. As we look forward to SG100, I encourage our youths to find out even more about the contributions made by our pioneer generation. May we continue to be inspired by their resilience as we work towards building a more caring and cohesive Singapore.

[ABOUT]



Launched in 2014 by the Minister of Culture, Community and Youth and the National Youth Council, Youth Corps Singapore is a national institution that supports youths who are keen to serve the community. As the champion for youth volunteerism, it triggers collaboration between youths, community service organisations and the wider society to ignite positive change.

Youth Corps Singapore provides a platform for youths to receive life-skills training and mentorship throughout their volunteering journey, and meet like-minded peers with a strong esprit de corps who share the same ethos. It provides both breadth and depth of volunteering opportunities for youths during and beyond their school days, through a diverse range of community service events, regular sector-specific volunteering opportunities, Youth Expedition Project (YEP) and training and mentoring programme for volunteer leaders.



Youth Corps Leaders Programme



Youth Expedition Project (YEP)



Regular Sector-Specific Volunteering Opportunities



Ad-Hoc Volunteering Opportunities

[ABOUT]



COMMON SPACE *for* COMMON GOOD

The Common Space for Common Good (CS4CG) signature initiative was launched by Youth Corps Singapore on 12 March 2016 to serve the needs in our community by making effective use of common spaces.

What is a Common Space?

Any public space! These include void decks, playgrounds, parks and gardens, recreation and fitness facilities.

What is a Common Good?

Any project that serves the needs of the community.



Our volunteers taking a group selfie at the iconic Toa Payoh dragon playground.



Friendships were quickly formed as we come together, tapping on Youth Corps' Common Space for Common Good initiative!



EYES volunteers attending the orientation and training session at National Youth Council.



Celebrating our completion of the Toa Payoh heritage trail with our signature "EYES" pose!



Youths and seniors having a good time as they practise their photography skills while visiting sites during the Toa Payoh heritage trail!



Strengthening of inter-generational ties between the EYES volunteers and their seniors which took place from 28th May to 25th June 2016.

[ABOUT]



Lions Befrienders Service Association (Singapore) – LB is a Voluntary Welfare Organization which was founded in 1995 by the Lions Clubs of Singapore and a Lions District Project. LB is also a registered member with the National Council of Social Service, the local social services sector's umbrella body.

LB's island-wide **Befriending Services** reaches out to seniors who are at risk of social isolation. Trained Befrienders (volunteers) provide social and psycho-emotional support to Befriendees (seniors) through weekly home visits. Seniors aged 65 years old and above with limited or no family support are eligible for the service at no charge. The aim is to help them age in place within the community and alleviate them from loneliness and social isolation.

In spite of all the communication technology, no invention has been as effective as the sound of the human voice. The human voice resonates differently from anything else in the world which makes it magical and edifying coming from the ones that matter. Even more so for those who seek solace and comfort in the strength of our voice to calm and flutter emotions for the weakening psyche.

Befrienders epitomise the heartbeat of the befriending programme. Collectively as one, the voice we represent can light fire in the heart and mind of the lonely seniors in the community. A reminder that the voice can deftly elicit tears even from the hardest hearts and build neural bridges that bond; voice for voice, brain to brain... soul to soul.

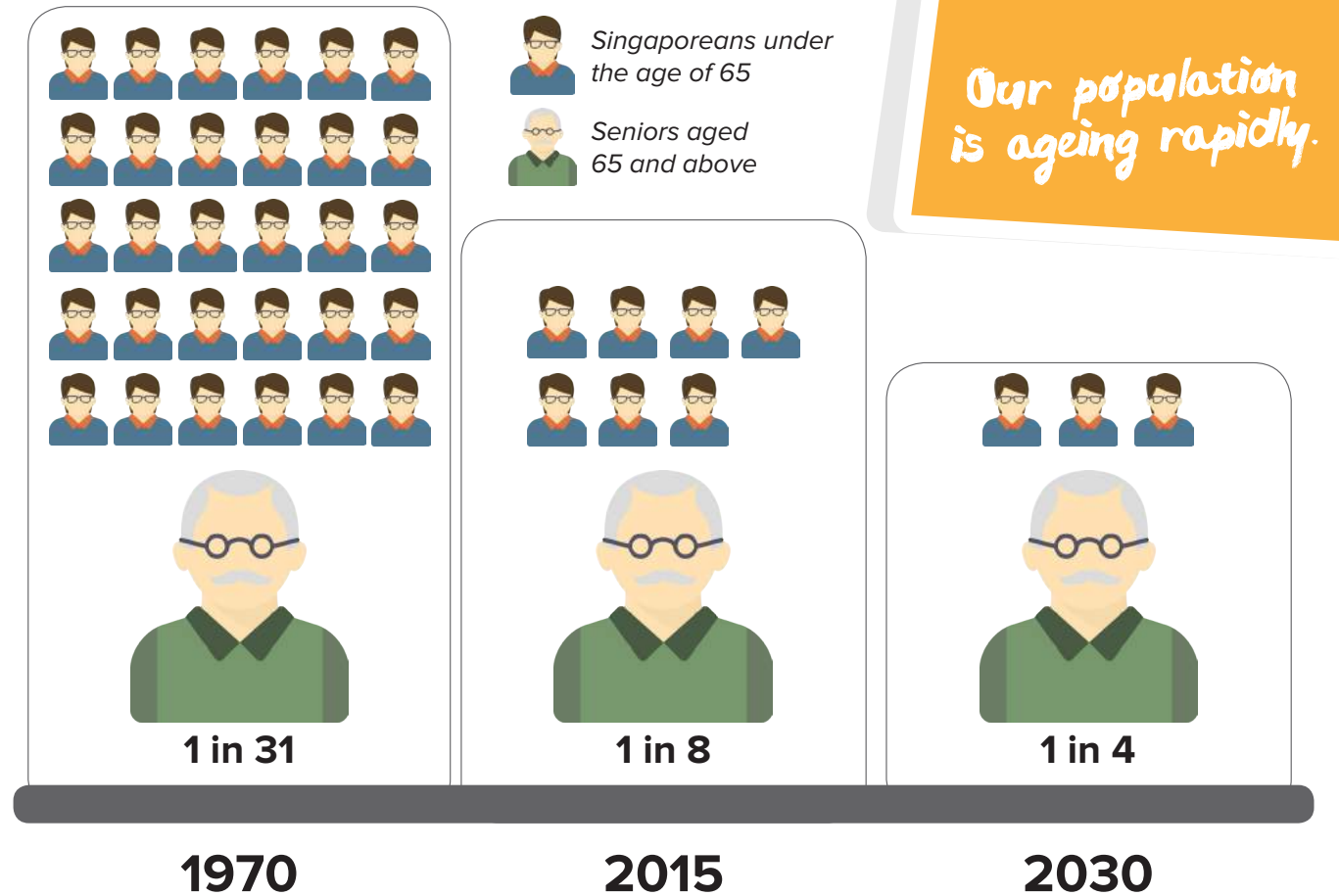


They say that if you love what you do, you'll never work a day in your life. The Befriending team is made up of fun-loving, gregarious aficionados who inspire to bring sunshine and rainbow to the lonely seniors in the community. On a day to day basis, the team is involved in:

- Conducting home visits, social investigation of older persons referred to the Association & including periodic assessments
- Recruiting, preparing and matching the Befrienders to the seniors
- Cultivating and maintaining a sound network with the community leaders & members of the grassroots

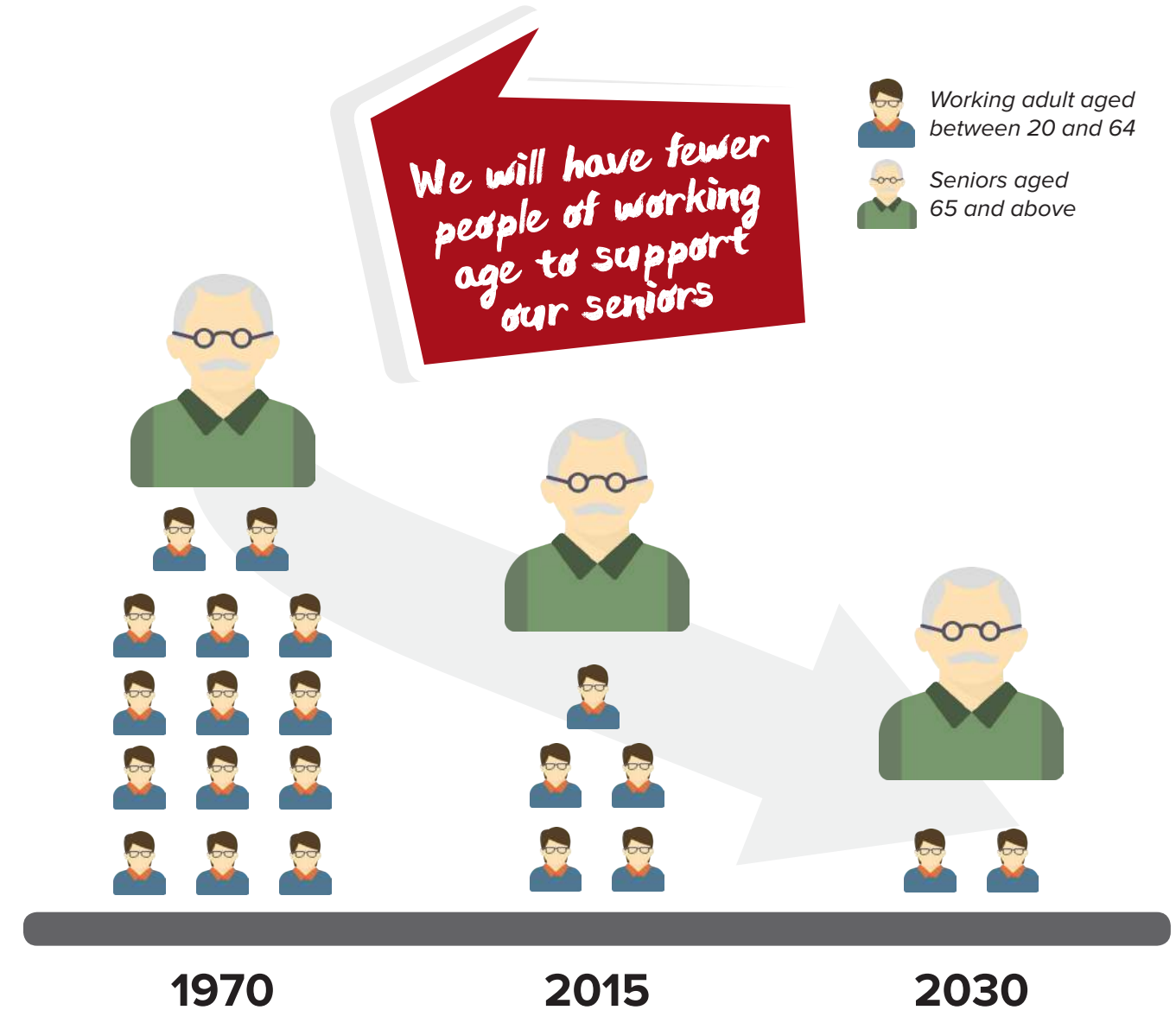
[ABOUT]

The Ageing Population



Source: Department of Statistics & Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, MOH

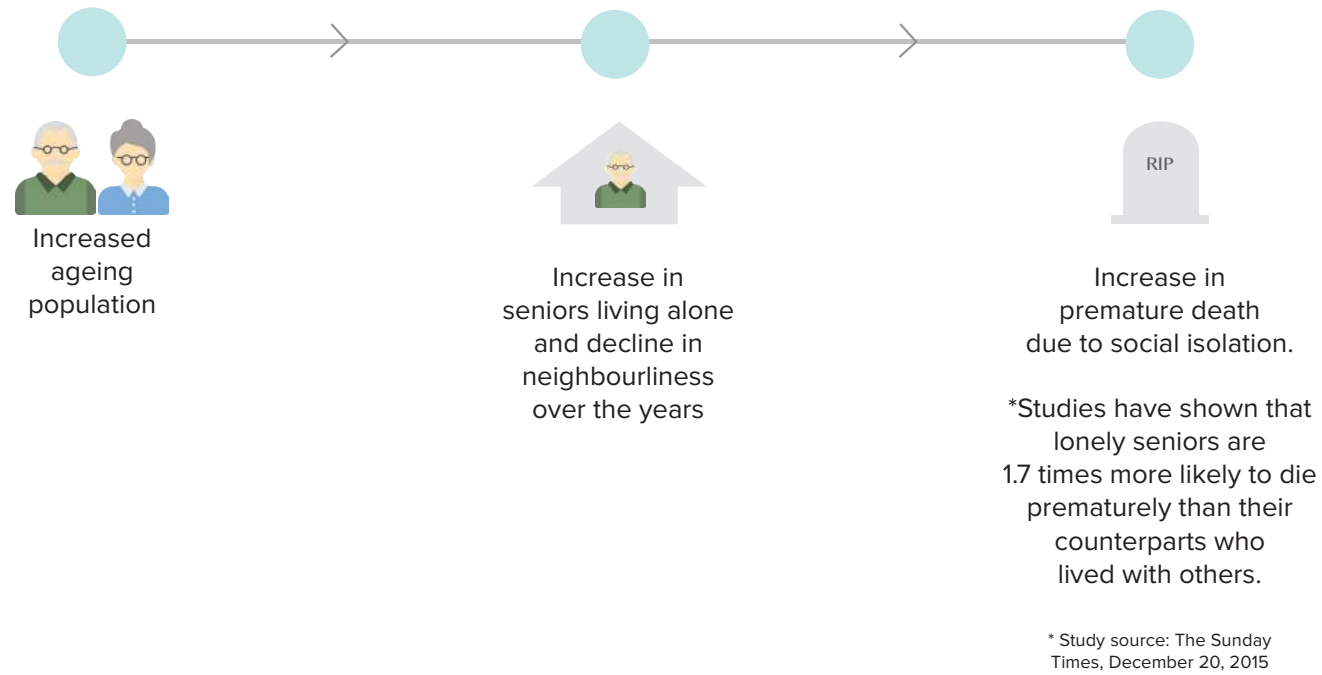
What are the effects of an ageing population?



Source: Department of Statistics & Epidemiology and Disease Control Division, MOH

[ABOUT]

Social Isolation



What can we do to combat social isolation?

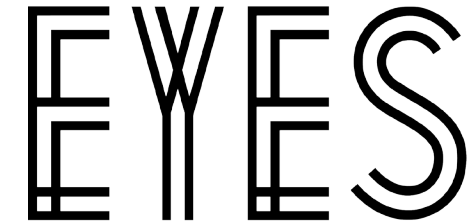
Befrienders can play a crucial role to provide social and psycho-emotional support to our seniors. At the same time, Befrienders represent the mightiest “arms & voice” our seniors seek, to ensure seniors age well and with dignity in their golden years.



“

For lonely seniors, talking to others become a privilege.
Since when does having a conversation with people
becomes luxurious?

Mr Khoo Yu
Volunteer Management & Training Executive
from Lions Befriender



Engaging Youths, Empowering Seniors

Like lens are to a camera, EYES (Engaging Youths, Empowering Seniors) is a volunteering programme where youth volunteers capture nuggets of wisdom from seniors through befriending sessions. Basic photography skills are also introduced to equip seniors to capture their own memories.

Over a span of five weeks, youth volunteers from Youth Corps Singapore embarked on a befriending journey with socially-isolated seniors from Lions Befrienders. The youth volunteers met the seniors in their home setting and taught them how to use tablets for photography. The youths and seniors embarked on a heritage trail in Toa Payoh to practise their photography skills. Many photos were taken but the most memorable moments were the heart-warming friendships formed between the youths and seniors. Photos may fade overtime but these memories remain deeply etched in their minds.

Through EYES, the youth volunteers caught a glimpse into the enriching lives of the seniors. The seniors shared a part of their lives as they talked about sentimental items and heirlooms which they held in high regard. The youths then collectively penned these stories in this photobook. Without the collaboration of all the youths and seniors, this project would not have been possible.

This photobook captures our celebration of intergenerational ties and lifelong friendships.



Inspirations from the Artist

The art piece featured on the cover page was inspired while I was volunteering for CS4CG - EYES. It was touching to witness the genuine smiles of the seniors and youths during our interactions. I was particularly impressed by how some of the youths who spoke a different language and of a different race had put in their best effort to interact with the seniors. Most importantly, they thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

I hope everyone will realise interactions with the seniors can actually be very fun and enjoyable. There is no need to be afraid of any communication barriers. As long as we open our hearts to them, the seniors will also open up to us. I hope that more youths will be inspired to serve our community, in particular, the eldercare sector.

*Cover design by Ms Lim Shiyun, 22,
Youth Corps Cohort 1 Leader & EYES volunteer.*



[CHAPTER 01]

Uncle Lee Kuang
李叔

A Moment of Happiness

Jason Lin / Oh Hui Ling / Hanna Dianah Binte Kama / Loy Yong Shin



Uncle Lee Kuang is a jovial 81 year old man who enjoys the company of friends and volunteers. He is adventurous and meticulous in everything he does. Uncle Lee worked in the construction sector from a young age for close to 10 years and in many parts of the world such as Brunei and Christmas Island. Back in Singapore, Uncle Lee took up different jobs and was undaunted by the challenges he faced. His youthful spirit serves as an inspiration for all of us.



Here we are, at the crossroads once again.

We brought Uncle Lee Kuang out to explore the iconic landmarks of Toa Payoh on our fourth befriending session. This photo was taken outside of the Church of the Risen Christ, a place where he visits monthly with his church mates. Uncle Lee has definitely been there more frequently than anyone of us, yet upon entering, he appreciated its beauty as if it was his first time stepping into the building. It was as if we were reliving his past as we walked down the path he used to walk – an extremely humbling experience.



“

It reminds me of the good old days every time I look into his eyes and this is where I found friendship.



“

*Even as time ticks away, the worth
of a clock never diminishes.*

Uncle Lee Kuang treasures every item, regardless of how old and shabby it looks. To him, as long as an object is in working condition, there is still much value to it. That is why he finds it a great waste when he sees clocks being thrown away at the corridor. He will always pick them up, clean them and hang them up on his wall. “Money can never buy time” is a saying Uncle Lee firmly believes in, and he cherishes every second of his life. This photograph is evidence of his passion for capturing every moment, for every moment is unique, and it can never be replicated.



Keep smiling.

The best trait of Uncle Lee is his optimistic outlook in life. He believes in doing things that make him happy. Whenever we tell Uncle Lee that we are bringing him out, he will dress up, comb his hair and change into nice clothes. Despite the scorching sun, Uncle Lee always wears a smile during our outings.

知足常乐

To be contented with what one has.



[CHAPTER 02]

Auntie Yap Heng

叶兴

-

The Strength From Within

Wong Yi Min / Nur Adlina Hayat Bte Mohamad Ali / Isobel Cho



Auntie Yap Heng is an independent and active senior citizen in the community. She often participates in many community activities which allow her to learn new skills such as arts and crafts, Chinese opera and even playing musical instruments. She believes in the need to leave her house to interact with friends and keep herself active in the community. Auntie Yap Heng is a cheerful and optimistic woman who is young at heart. Furthermore, Auntie Yap Heng is very independent even at the age of 84 years old. She is reluctant to trouble the people around her and tries her best to be as independent as she can.



Connecting seniors and youths through technology.

“

*Age is only a number!
We are as active as each other.*



Auntie Yap Heng may be 84 years old, but she is still very active in her daily life. Her morning often starts off with walks around her block. This would then be followed by exercise lessons conducted in the park, where she learns basic exercise routines to keep fit and to remain active.



There are no boundaries in forming friendships.

Auntie Yap Heng has made many friends in her community through her frequent and active participation in numerous community activities. These friendships help her stay cheerful. She once mentioned that she can always count on her friends to lend a helping hand! We see the joy and excitement that she has when she is on her way to meet her friends. Indeed, friendships are about spending time with each other.



House filled with Auntie Yap Heng's precious memories.

You might think that all houses of the seniors are boring but not Auntie Yap Heng's. During our visit, she showed us many things but what she was most proud of was a cupboard filled with photographs of her times with volunteers and performance group that she once belong to. On the ceiling were the most precious items which she holds dearly. On the top left were paintings of her in-laws' portraits. Beside the portraits was an embroidery sewn by her daughter. At first glance, they may not seem like much, but the hard work and stories behind these items were what made them extremely meaningful to her.

活到老学到老

One is never too old to learn.



[CHAPTER 03]

Auntie Qiuxi

邱 细

-

A Kind Heart
from Toa Payoh

Megan Koh / Zhou Lijing / Manonmani



Mdm Ku Si Yu, or affectionately known as **Auntie Qiuxi**, welcomed us with warmth and good cheer into her humble abode from day one.

In the beginning, we came in thinking that we were the ones doing the teaching; but over the course of five weeks, Auntie Qiuxi has taught us instead. Since the tender age of 16, she has worked tirelessly to support her family and children; first as a Samsui woman, then a housekeeper, and finally, a food hawker for about 10 years.

From the interaction with Auntie Qiuxi, we learnt to be contented with what we have, to be sensible in how we spend our resources and to enjoy life by making a personal decision to do so. It taught us that the seniors around us are filled with life lessons and wisdom as they overcame many adversities in their life.

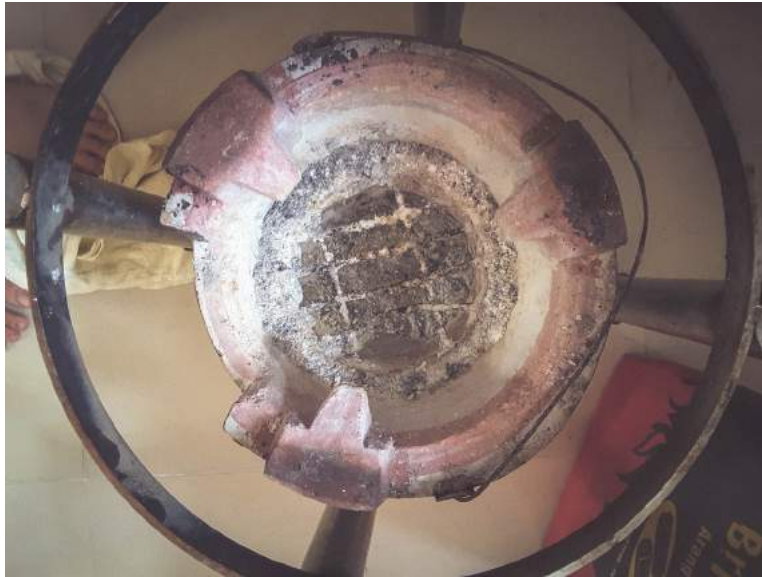


An antique sewing machine which her late mother had passed down to her. It is still kept in excellent condition.

Making clothes for people is as easy as pie for Auntie Qiuxi as she has been using this sewing machine for many years to tailor clothes as a side job to make ends meet. The sewing machine was made in China and is full of sentimental value for Auntie Qiuxi as it was a gift from her late mother. Due to her poor eyesight, she is unable to continue making clothes and she keeps it as a treasured memorabilia instead.

“

I like cooking my meat on this stove as it has a more fragrant taste to it.



Being a hawker for nearly 10 years has made Auntie Qiuxi a very accomplished cook. She holds an impressive assortment of dishes under her belt. Lor Mee (braised noodles) which she used to sell was extremely popular among customers. This is a testament of her culinary prowess. The charcoal stove has been with Auntie Qiuxi for many years, and she still uses it till this day. She says that she uses the gas stove more often to cook food like porridge for herself but still uses the charcoal stove as it makes the food taste more delicious. She knows her stuff really well!



Never a dull moment with Auntie Qiuxi as she shares her stories weekly

Auntie Qiuxi has witnessed her children and grandchildren grow up over the years and has captured these memories in photo albums that she keeps in her closet. As she shared her personal stories, different personalities stood out from each photo and captivated us. At 76 years old, she still loves to travel and is a very active explorer – she scaled the entire Great Wall of China in one day when she was 58 years old!

Though her children will pay for her overseas travels, she is always contented with what she has and never asks them for more money to spend on herself. Auntie Qiuxi allowed us to walk down memory lane with her and shared what was central to her life - her family, work, and travel. We also learnt another side of Auntie Qiuxi where she gives generously to others but is prudent when it comes to her own needs. We had a hard time saying goodbye as we really enjoyed the time spent together with her.



“

*The inner child in us emerged
upon seeing the slide near
Auntie Qiuxi's house.*

世上无难事，
只怕有心人

Nothing is unachievable as long as one is determined.



[CHAPTER 04]

Auntie Pek Choo

林碧珠

What Is Life If
We Do Not Relax

Bernice Lim / Tay Hui Juan / Tay Puay Shan



Despite being 78 years old, **Auntie Pek Choo** is very young at heart. She frequently asks us to teach her English and how to send SMSes. She likes eating roasted pork and loves durian (it's her favourite). To us, Auntie Pek Choo is a very easy-going lady. Occasionally, she goes to the activity centre to play games like Bingo or sing karaoke. She also likes taking photographs (and we must say her photography skills are really good).

However, none of these could beat her favourite pastime, watching television programmes. Her favourite idol is Li Nanxing, so we cheekily photoshopped him into a picture and gave it to her as a gift. She told us that she had watched all the shows he acted in and that she is his number one fan. Auntie Pek Choo taught us that the most important thing in life is to have a happy-go-lucky attitude.



Auntie Pek Choo's Antique Scissors

When we asked Auntie Pek Choo if she has any sentimental item, she replied that if something is old, she usually throws it away. We then happened to see this ginormous pair of scissors on her table, and decided to ask her more.

We never expected Auntie Pek Choo to use this pair of scissors to trim her nails! To Auntie Pek Choo, this pair of scissors may seem like a normal household item but to us, we consider it to be a pair of antique scissors.

In Auntie Pek Choo's eyes, we are her pretty Saturday grand daughters. In our eyes, she is our beautiful Saturday grandmother.





For as long as one lives, one learns.

What left us in awe was how we actually spent the whole session teaching Auntie Pek Choo how to craft an SMS. All she wanted to learn was to send an SMS saying, “今天你要去哪里”, meaning “where do you want to go today.” Auntie Pek Choo found it very challenging as she repeatedly pressed the wrong keys. But she was not disheartened! Instead, she exclaimed, “不会要学到会” (“if you don’t know, you practise until you get it”). She taught us a valuable lesson, “活到老, 学到老” (“for as long as one lives, one learns”).



“

The sign of a beautiful person is that they always see beauty in others.

To Auntie Pek Choo, everyone is beautiful. When she looks at photographs, she will always compliment how beautiful other people are. She usually says that because she feels that when she is old, she is ugly. Little did she know, she is one of the most beautiful people we have ever met. During our sessions with her, she will always mention about her friends living in the other blocks. When neighbours pass by her flat, she will always say hello. Many may think that the elderly are always alone and lonely, but I honestly think Auntie Pek Choo has more friends than us because she has a heart of gold and greatly values friendship.



有志者，事竟成

Where there is a will, there is a way.



[CHAPTER 05]

Auntie Oi Chun

李爱真

-

*An Independent and
Cheerful Lady*

Valarie Teo / Chalinga Kulatunga / Clarice Teh



One may describe **Auntie Lee Oi Chun**, an 83 years old lady living in a 2-room flat, quiet and not very sociable. There's more than meets the eye. To get to where she is now wasn't an easy feat. The many lessons learnt and paths taken have shaped her destiny and crafted her own unique story.

Auntie Oi Chun has many talents. She was a hairdresser for over 60 years and uplifted peoples' moods and appearances with her creations. Beyond that, her cooking is superb! She had specially whipped up a hearty meal of Hong Kong-style chicken curry, fried chicken wings and red bean soup when we visited her. It's amazing how she can bring many separate ingredients together to create something that is so delectable. Her loved ones are so blessed!



A rite-of-passage tea set

A step into the living room and a red oak shelf standing at the furthest corner of the room was immediately in sight. Taking a few steps closer and a quick glance at the middle shelf was sufficient to pique our interest. Behind the glass window laid a distinctive tea set, spotting the traditional symbols of phoenixes and dragons. We learnt the phoenix and dragon pair is traditionally symbolic of good luck and a harmonious marriage. Not only that, we also discovered that this tea set was a gift from Auntie Oi Chun's mother, who brought it all the way from Hong Kong, when Auntie Oi Chun got married in Singapore. Her mother had specially made it in China, just for Auntie Oi Chun.

Some things stay the same

An empty Chinese porcelain vase stands in a dusty corner of the shelf in Auntie Oi Chun's home, observing the lives of the Lee family. It remained in mint condition, with its value increasing over the generations.

Having been handed from one generation to another, it saw change flowing like a breeze, changing lives and circumstances. Yet, it remained the only constant and a symbol of legacy.



How often do you see an antique salon hood dryer in someone's living room? When you do find that, you know that it must be of great value to its owner. Hair styling was a significant part of Auntie Oi Chun's life. She spent the last 60 years devoted to this profession, and up till last year, she was still helping her regular customers with their hair.

After winning her title as Miss Hong Kong, 19 year old Auntie Oi Chun decided to leave her family and friends to search for a better life in Singapore. She came alone and started working in hair salons for a few years before setting up her own salon in a market at Paya Lebar. Her passion in hair styling propelled her to attend courses in countries such as Japan. She eventually progressed to continue her business in her home salon.



白手起家

To build up something from nothing.



[CHAPTER 06]

Uncle Lam Seng & Auntie Ah Ai

柳南成
刘亚爱

-

The Apple Of My Eye

*Lim Shiyun / Ho Ser Hian / Christiana Tio /
Atikah Bte Osman / Tee Wei Lian / Ong Qi Xian*

Uncle Lam Seng and *Aunty Ah Ai* are the perfect representation of everlasting love. Even at their age, they often tease each other and bicker over the cutest issues. Through our weekly conversations and interactions, we saw how they were constantly looking out for one another. They know each other's needs, likes and dislikes very well. Uncle Lam Seng is great at navigation and remembering roads and Aunty Ah Ai has basic literacy in Mandarin, which helps them to get to places they love, such as the Kwan Im Thong Hood Cho Temple located at Waterloo Street. Uncle Lam Seng and Aunty Ah Ai rely on each other to live daily. Despite being together for decades, their love for each other just gets stronger.





Their eyes serve as the unspoken language and the bridge between Uncle Lam Seng and Auntie Ah Ai. Even though they may be bickering, there will still be love in their eyes when both their eyes meet. When asked about their love story, both of them immediately looked at each other and silently communicated through their eyes. Eventually, they shared with us albeit shyly, living under a small roof can be uncomfortable at times but the love they have for one another warms our hearts as we saw the deep love they have for each other.

“

*True love doesn't need proof.
The eyes told what heart felt.*
— Toba Beta



We have our differences but we found the same frequency

Music has always been a part of Uncle Lam Seng's and Auntie Ah Ai's life. It is timeless and everyone has their favourite tune. Uncle Lam Seng and Auntie Ah Ai are of no exception. Uncle Lam Seng's love for music can be seen from the hundreds of songs he kept over the years. There were times during our visit that they sang along to their favourite pieces of music. They also keep several models of radios.

When we first saw the radio, we were fascinated. Uncle showed us how it worked and was at times, amused by our reactions. Although the radio was a blast from the past, it has modern installations like a slot for an SD card. Uncle Lam Seng is really innovative!



“

In religion we trust, in love we last.

Uncle Lam Seng and Auntie Ah Ai were really excited when we suggested visiting the Tree Shrine at Toa Payoh Central. With his good navigation, Uncle Lam Seng immediately led us through shortcuts and we were there in no time. They immediately lit up some joysticks and prayed for good health and each other's well-being. Auntie Ah Ai was a little carried away that she dropped her 'tongkat', which means stick in Malay.



Wefie master in the making... Auntie Ah Ai's very first wefie!

Taking welfies was another highlight with Auntie Ah Ai during our befriending sessions. We introduced Auntie Ah Ai to the camera function on the tablet and demonstrated how it works. We helped her take a candid video of Uncle Lam Seng who was talking excitedly with other volunteers. It took little persuasion for Auntie Ah Ai to take some pictures on her own. She was shy to see her own face in the pictures she took at first but continued to snap many welfies with us. The moments spent together were precious and full of laughter and joy!



These two drawings were specially drawn by the youths and given to the couple as keepsake.



A special shout-out from the volunteers:

“

It has been a joy spending time with the lovely folks who has so much to share with us. Thank you for making this a special journey that we will never forget. We thank you for sharing all your beautiful stories with us and we wish the seniors the best of health! Stay happy and healthy!

你们的经历与历练永远是我们最好的榜样！谢谢你们的教导！我们永远爱你们！

永结同心，
白头偕老

A harmonious union lasting a hundred years.

Auntie Geok Lew

张玉柳

-

Spick & Span Is Key

Shawn Lim / Noor Azza Binte Zulkifli / Tan Rong Ying

Despite living in a rental one-room flat, **Auntie Geok Lew** is a cheerful and easy-going person. She enjoys going to a hair salon in Ang Mo Kio (which provides inexpensive yet top-notch services) to get her hair permed and treated. Auntie Geok Lew also helps to cook for the other seniors living in the estate, showing her care and concern towards them. She participates in karaoke sessions with other seniors at the Senior Activity Centre and adores Teresa Teng. A devout Buddhist, Auntie Geok Lew enjoys spending time at the temple in Geylang at least once a week, meditating and praying. She is also involved in the activities that the temple organises. This allows her to do what she enjoys most - making new friends and helping them whenever she can.



“

A connection between two generations - through 'EYES', we overcome all barriers of communication.



Welcoming a stranger

Auntie Geok Lew was familiarising herself with taking photos on a tablet when a neighbourhood cat came along and playfully jumped onto the bench next to us, as if seeking for attention. We decided to take the opportunity to do a live demo on how to take a picture and teach her the basic techniques. What a timely encounter!

Auntie Geok Lew's first photo

On our final outing with Auntie Geok Lew, we took out a tablet and patiently showed her the steps to take photos using the tablet. To our delight, despite being in her late seventies, Auntie Geok Lew was quick in grasping photography skills. What was most memorable to us was her captivating stories such as her visits to the hair salon, tips on keeping her home squeaky clean and about her life when she was a teenager. A picture will definitely paint a thousand words for us as we look at this again in time to come.



“

Home is where the heart is.

Some might think that rental one-room flats are dingy, smelly and dirty places meant for the poor – a less than ideal environment for the less privileged. Auntie Geok Lew broke these stereotypes with what must be the neatest, cleanest, and organised home we have ever been to. She takes immense pride in what has been given to her, and she shows her independence, responsibility and work ethic through how she upkeeps her home. At the bottom of the block is the care centre where Auntie Geok Lew serves the needs of the community by preparing delectable meals for the senior citizens.



为善最乐

Doing good is the greatest source of happiness.

[CHAPTER 08]

Uncle Chen Hong 譚增汉

-

A Man of Character

Kenneth Fong / Isabel Wong / Lo Khye Bin / Kellynn Melanie Cheah

Uncle Chen Hong is a 68 year old man who had his fair share of lessons in life. Having been raised in a kampong, he has learnt to speak many languages on his own; something few of us can accomplish. Having travelled frequently during his younger days, he has also learnt to rely on grit and personal relationships to get through life's ups and downs. Although Uncle Chen Hong lives alone, he has much to share to those willing to listen.

Seeing how youths spend their money nowadays, he also encourages us to start saving now to enjoy an easier life in our older days. He believes that health is wealth and the key is maintaining a healthy lifestyle by exercising regularly and having a healthy diet. His secret in staying healthy? Eating brown rice instead of white rice, drinking tea every morning and consuming a teaspoon of his specially-made paste which promotes blood circulation. He never fails to welcome us with his hot tea when we visit. Although it was a small gesture, it really meant a lot to us.





A walk to remember

Uncle Chen Hong usually takes a stroll in the park as part of his daily evening routine. He enjoys the scenic view of the park with its serene river and thriving trees which provide fresh air. He shared that more trees have been planted along the path and in years to come, it will be shadier and more ideal for a stroll during the day. Being able to join Uncle Chen Hong for this walk was memorable for us.

“

Age is never so old as youth would measure it. – Jack London

This picture is particularly memorable because of our experience taking it. Uncle Chen Hong had preferred not to take pictures throughout our befriending sessions. However at our final session, we decided to take pictures with him as a keepsake. He was quick to share the most picturesque place in Toa Payoh – the park where he usually takes his walks. He shared ways we could get good angles, good lighting and even made sure the advertisements in the background would not be in our photo. Age is never a label. Just like us, Uncle also wanted to take a perfect picture.





That which we lack, we cherish

The marble horse and liquor are prime examples of how sentimentality differs from person to person. Having been initially thrown away by residents, Mr. Tham collected these items as he felt they were still in good condition. This has showed us that he was someone who believes that we should cherish things that we have, and not throw away those which still can serve its purpose or be used in other ways.



Health is wealth, for it should be treasured and protected

The container of brown rice is a reflection of Uncle Chen Hong's dedication to a healthy lifestyle. As a man who prides himself with being independent, Uncle has shared many ways he has maintained good health till today. He sticks to a strict diet of brown rice, herbs and tea and even cycles to work! He also encourages his neighbours to do likewise and even share his recipes with them. Many of them who have taken his advice have been able to enjoy good health and lead happier lives!

家有万贯财
不如一身健

Health is preferable to wealth.

Uncle Ngak Boon

林岳文

-

A Wealth of Experience

Lim Neng Du / Nur Hannah Jamaluddin / Sheryl Seet





Uncle Ngak Boon is 76 years old and he is a soft-spoken and amiable person. The first time meeting Uncle Ngak Boon was met with the usual awkwardness of meeting someone new. But within minutes into our conversation, Uncle Ngak Boon was already enthusiastically sharing his wealth of experience with us. From his early years as an entrepreneur selling textiles to the British Army in Singapore, to his later years as a warehouse helper, Uncle Ngak Boon's precise and clear memory made us admire his attention to detail. Not only is he a reliable repository of Singapore history, he also keeps himself updated regularly on current affairs and shares his views with confidence and openness. Uncle Ngak Boon, with his straightforward and warm attitude to others, never fails to capture our attention and respect.



One of Uncle Ngak Boon's keepsake of volunteers who visited him.

Young Friends

From our visit, Uncle Ngak Boon was reminded of the times when several students visited him. They helped to do spring cleaning for seniors living in Toa Payoh. He praised them for their empathy and dedication in serving the community. He also encouraged us to continue to take time off our busy schedules to give back to society.

Uncle Ngak Boon has a personable character and we are certain that all his young friends enjoyed spending time with him. Knowing that one of our volunteers, Hannah, is Malay and unable to understand Mandarin, Uncle Ngak Boon took time to translate the conversation for her. We were touched to see his sweet gesture.

Before meeting him, some of us had the perception that seniors are unfriendly. But after meeting Uncle Ngak Boon, our views on seniors changed! Uncle Ngak Boon is an expressive story teller and we were so absorbed when listening to his stories that we didn't notice the time. He is a really nice and cheerful senior and we feel blessed to know him and learn from his wealth of experience!



学习是永远 跟随主人的宝物

Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.

[CHANGED IMPRESSIONS]



Chalinga

*29 years old. EYES volunteer
Currently working as an
electronics engineer*

“

To this very moment you have had certain perceptions of the world, shaped by your skills and experiences. Those around you are like-minded – idealistic, forward-looking youths with a thirst for excitement and fulfilment in life. There is a group of people whom you don't mix around with that often. Sometimes, in our pursuit for success, they are forgotten, cast aside. They may have been your parents' parents. They guided the people who guided you. Their values and beliefs have transcended through time, to you. They are the seniors.

Talk to them and it will bring you through a journey back in time. Learn about their childhood, school days, love and parenthood. They used to face the same problems as you do. Mingle with them long enough and you will come to realise that problems are just part and parcel of life. And as you think back on how they overcame adversities to be where they are today, you will come to realise that above all else, despite whatever you are going through, life will go on.

Embrace them in your lives and you will see life in a bigger picture, from a different perspective.

[CHANGED IMPRESSIONS]

Hui Ling

*19 years old. EYES volunteer
Currently an university undergraduate*

“

The common misconception that most people, including myself, have of seniors is that we see them as lonely individuals leading an austere and solitary lifestyle. However, as much as they enjoy spending time alone, they also relish the company of their friends and even volunteers. I discovered that the one thing most seniors are craving for is a listening ear.

They want to talk to someone, share their stories and we volunteers will act as messengers to tell the world their stories. Each senior has had their successes which they take pride in and it truly enlightens me as I pick up certain learning points, such as their never-dying spirit and perseverance



in whatever they do.

As the saying goes, “The greatest wealth is to live content with little.” After this programme, I realized that the wealthiest people are the seniors with their life stories to tell because those are things one can never buy with money. Also, even if life does become a little dull for these seniors, they are contented with what they possess and they cherish every moment.

CS4CG - EYES was indeed an eye-opening experience for me.

Seniors' Testimonials



I am happy that the volunteers came to visit me. Their presence reminded me of the days I spent with my children.

—
Auntie Ku Si Yu



The volunteers are patient and kind. They taught me how to use my hand phone.

—
Auntie Lim Peck Choo



I am able to share stories from my younger days with them and it brought back fond memories.

—
Uncle Lim Ngak Boon



很好! (Very good!)

—
Uncle Tham Chen Hong



The youths are like my children. Besides visiting, they made me a card with our photos on it.

—
Auntie Yap Heng



I wish the youths can visit me weekly!

—
Auntie Lee Ooi Chun



I am very happy that the youths will be visiting us even after the end of the programme. My wife, Low Ah Ai is looking forward to their visits!

—
Uncle Liew Lam Seng



My Saturdays became more lively! My house was filled with laughter and warmth. It was packed but I love having visitors. They even taught me how to take photos with a tablet. I got to take photos with my best friends too! I look forward to their visitation again.

—
Uncle Lee Kuang



The youths were patient and very willing to have conversations with seniors.

—
Auntie Teo Geok Liew

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Thank you for extending a warm welcome to our youths and allowing them to enter your homes, hearts and world.

Once again, we thank you all for making Engaging Youths, Empowering Seniors possible.

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