

Seeing migrant workers as inspiring role models

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They are mostly construction workers by day. But what do they do on their days off?

One volunteers at the non-profit Healthserve, which provides medical care and aid for migrant workers like himself.

Another exercises his passion for photography and a third writes poetry and short stories.

Yet another, inspired by the good education system he has seen in Singapore, decides to use some of his savings to set up a college offering courses in computer science and engineering in his hometown.

"I saw that Singapore has a very good education system and very good job opportunities. If you have good education, you'll have a sound mind. Education can change the world," he says in a video celebrating the lesser-known sides of migrant workers in Singapore.

The construction worker, who introduces himself as Joy, aged 39, in the video, has worked in Singapore for 15 years.

His story is one of a handful featured in Migrant Heroes, a roving exhibition that aims to help Singaporeans see migrant workers in a different light.

In particular, visitors can explore five of these stories, told in video format, on three 55-inch touch-screen panels that double as mirrors.

The panels are designed this way to inspire users to draw parallels between themselves and the migrant workers they come "face to face" with.

The exhibition, which combines art and technology, is housed in a scaffold that resembles a cut-off of a construction site.

Inside the structure, the resin walls are adorned with safety helmets and iridescent panels that appear to glow at night, as well as por-

TOP MARKS FOR EDUCATION

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traits of migrant workers and written messages of their hopes and dreams.

"People are afraid of construction sites. They don't generally get positive feelings when passing by one," Ms Kari Tamura Chua told The Straits Times.

Ms Chua, 29, is spearheading the Sama Sama campaign, which hopes to show that migrant workers can be inspiring role models who impact our communities positively.

"We hope that people are able to move past those negative feelings associated with a construction site, and start looking at the migrant community beyond what they do for a living," she said.

The exhibition is on at the Singapore Management University's Li Ka Shing Library until Feb 9.

Those who want to find out more about the Sama Sama campaign can go to www.samasama.sg.

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