

The Ngee Ann Kongsi 170th Anniversary Special Advertorial

# Inspiring the next generation

Alumni return to contribute to the schools that made them who they are today



From left: Mr Wong Britmand, Mr Mohammed Fareeq Othman, Ms Geraldine Teo, Ms Patricia Goh, Ms Nurkhalisah Kassim (front), Mrs Sarene Sim, Ms Sharon Ong, Mr Ilyas Lim Effandi and Mr Neo Guang Xian.

By May Yip

In life, sometimes the journey matters as much as the destination. For Ms Patricia Goh, the journey from student to teacher was a learning curve that enriched her world view and professional experience.

As a trainee teacher, the Ngee Ann Secondary School alumni had hoped to teach at her alma mater but was posted to another school.

"There was always some part of me that wanted to return and contribute to the school for nurturing me to be the person I am today," says Ms Goh, now head of the Science department at Ngee Ann Secondary School.

While the 34-year-old was teaching at other schools, the lyrics of the school song of Ngee Ann Secondary — "Excellence in all we do, we'll do it just for you" — reminded her to give her best in everything she did.

After six years in the teaching service in two other schools, Ms Goh finally landed her dream posting.

Now into her 11th year in education, her return and commitment to her alma mater — like many fellow alumni — is a telling reminder of the original mission of The Ngee Ann Kongsi, the philanthropic foundation that founded Ngee Ann Primary and Secondary schools.

Established in 1845 with the aim of helping Teochew immigrants who had journeyed and sunk roots in their final destination here in Singapore, the Kongsi has always fostered and encouraged a strong community spirit of camaraderie and

the selfless practice of helping those less fortunate.

## Sharing the well of wisdom

Educational initiatives have remained a cornerstone of the Kongsi's commitment to its altruistic mission of improving the overall betterment of the society.

And its beliefs and intent are not lost on the younger generation, such as Ms Goh and Ms Phua Li Xin.

Ms Phua, 28, English and Mathematics teacher at Ngee Ann Primary School, explains: "There is a Chinese proverb that says that when we drink water, we should always remember its source. This is one of the values I picked up from my time in Ngee Ann Primary School.

"The four Chinese characters of the proverb are carved in the front hall to remind us of the importance of gratitude and to honour everyone who has helped us become what we are today."

She now strives to impart the values she learnt 17 years ago to her students.

"My wish for my students is for them to be grateful to their parents, teachers and friends who have helped them and also for them to not take things for granted," she says.

Mr Ridwan Abas, 38, has also resolved to do his part for the institution that nurtured him. The Malay Language and Character and Citizenship Education teacher cites respect, integrity, resilience and commitment as values that were passed on to him when he was a Ngee Ann Primary School pupil.

He says: "I believe this set of values needs to be imparted to students as it not only shapes them to be excellent students, but also excellent global citi-

## The golden years

In keeping with its mission to contribute to society and meet the needs of the nation, The Ngee Ann Kongsi will introduce a post-graduate scholarship in social sciences for Singapore citizens in local universities. The initiative was launched in response to the country's rapidly ageing population — by 2030, Singapore will be one of 34 "super-aged" countries with more than 20 per cent of the population being elderly. As such, up to 12 full scholarships will be offered to master's students pursuing an interest in the areas of social work, gerontology and the like. Through its efforts, the Kongsi hopes to help prepare the workforce for the changing landscape of the nation, and support the welfare and well-being of Singapore's elderly.

zens in the 21st century. These values will prepare them to adapt to the ever-changing environment when they enter the workforce."

## More than paper chase

Mr Mohammed Fareeq Othman wants his students to "take pride in whatever they do, be it wearing their school uniform, completing their school work or being in their respective CCA". He says: "I always believe that, when you have a sense of pride, you will take things seriously and do it wholeheartedly."

As the Allied Educator (Teaching & Learning), Mr Fareeq works with teachers to provide teaching and learning support. He is also a volunteer adult leader in Ngee Ann Secondary School's Wichta Scout Troop.

Inspiring the next generation and equipping them with the relevant experience to keep up with the times — a key motto of The Ngee Ann Kongsi — is also a personal mission for Ms Goh.

"As a student, I respected my teachers who

were ready to go the extra mile for their students," she recalls.

"It is truly a privilege to now return to work alongside my teachers, continue learning from them and, as a team, educate the next generation."

Ms Goh cites her Science teachers, Mrs Lim-Yap Mee Lan and Mr Bakar, for inspiring her to become a teacher, and hopes to "inspire the next generation to contribute back to society".

These four individuals believe in the transformative potential of education.

"Education has played a major part in my life. It made me realise that education is not only about certificates but also the values that you learn in school," explains Mr Fareeq.

"I have learnt many values thanks to the school and teachers. Now, my role as an educator is not only to support the students in Physical Education but also to impart values to the students. The values they learn today will help them once they graduate from school."

## Grateful beneficiaries

Pathlight School is one of many schools which have benefited from The Ngee Ann Kongsi's generosity and commitment to improving the lives of others. The Kongsi's contribution has enabled us to build a Vocational Block to train our Vocational Track students on important vocational skills that will help them lead



- Ms Denise Phua, President, Autism Resource Centre & School Supervisor, Pathlight School Board

financially independent and dignified lives. On behalf of our students, parents and staff, thank you for providing our students with opportunities to make meaningful contributions to the workplace and society.

On behalf of LASALLE College of the Arts, I would like to express my deep appreciation to The Ngee Ann Kongsi for your generous support to the College. The Kongsi's gift to LASALLE has enabled us to effectively nurture the next generation of creative talent in a dynamic environment. We thank you for sharing our vision and supporting our ambition to provide excellent arts education.



- Mr Peter Seah, Chairman, LASALLE College of the Arts

On behalf of SMU, I would like to express our sincere appreciation to The Ngee Ann Kongsi as it celebrates its 170th anniversary. Over the years, The Ngee Ann Kongsi has made generous contributions to SMU. In 2007, a 300-seater conference hall at SMU was named in perpetuity the Ngee Ann Kongsi Auditorium and the Ngee Ann Kongsi Annual Lecture Series was launched in recognition of its donation. More



- Professor Arnoud De Meyer, President, Singapore Management University

recently, they have made an invaluable donation to the Kwa Geok Choo Law Library and also set up the Kwa Geok Choo Top Law Student Award. The Ngee Ann Kongsi's impactful partnership with SMU enables current and future generations of SMU students to enjoy a holistic and enriching education.