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Headline: How one Gen Z student made a difference with care packs

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When COVID-19 derailed some of Ms Victoria Tammy Neo's plans, she used the opportunity to benefit the working elderly. Photos: Mediacorp Photo Unit

Amid the unprecedented events of 2020, many Singaporeans have risen to the challenge, displaying resilience, optimism and grit in their response to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the run up to the new year, we profile 21 individuals, who share more about their respective journeys, as well as their hopes and aspirations for 2021.

At the start of her final year of studies at Singapore Management University (SMU), Ms Victoria Tammy Neo was looking forward to completing a six-month internship with Adidas Singapore, and embarking on an exchange programme with ESCI-UPF (Escuela Superior de Comercio Internacional, Universitat Pompeu Fabra) in Barcelona, Spain.

COVID-19 put paid to her plans. Though she was originally slated to work in a brand activation role, Victoria, 23, was tasked to manage Adidas Singapore's social media page instead as campaign launches were cancelled. Struggling to transition to a new job scope, she also had to deal with unhappy customers complaining online about delayed deliveries due to the pandemic.

"My internship was a period with a lot of uncertainty, but I feel that it actually helped me to grow," she said. "Although I didn't get to perform many of the tasks that I was interested in, the experience of working dynamically and remotely was very enriching."

Victoria, who will graduate from Singapore Management University's Lee Kong Chian School of Business with a Bachelor of Business Management in 2021, admits that the cancellation of her exchange programme was the most upsetting, as she was looking forward to living abroad for five to six months.

"But that's life. I decided to use the money saved from my internship that I had planned to spend in Spain on projects that would make me feel fulfilled," she reflected.

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Read on to find out more about a project close to Victoria's heart, #STAYSAFEAHMA.



Items in the care packs include hand sanitisers, wet wipes, masks and a toilet roll.

You used the unexpected downtime in your studies to start an initiative, #STAYSAFEAHMA, which raised funds through social media to provide care packs for the working elderly. What motivated you to do so?

One night over dinner, my father shared about a migrant worker he knew who was struggling and stuck in Singapore due to COVID-19. That story struck a chord in me, and it was then I felt that I had to do something for the people who were hit hard by the pandemic. Unlike many of us, migrant workers were not able to work from home.

I reached out to a good friend of mine, Jaslyn, and we started putting plans in place together. Growing up, both of us were very close to our grandmothers, who taught us the importance of love. We both have a soft spot for the elderly, and decided that they would be the most deserving beneficiaries for our cause. We wanted seniors to feel recognised for their hard work during this tough period.

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Can you share more about the care packs, and how successful the initiative was?

We wanted to bring smiles to faces, and to provide some items for the elderly who still had to work despite being more susceptible to the virus. The care packs we gave out comprised S\$10 in cash, masks, thermometers, hand sanitisers, a toilet roll, snacks and more. We travelled all over Singapore, identifying senior beneficiaries working at petrol kiosks, markets, hawker centres, shopping centre toilets and other locations.

Both Jaslyn and I decided to raise funds through our personal Instagram pages. We aimed to raise S\$2,000 in one week. However, word spread and we raised almost S\$10,000 in three hours, much to our amazement. We believe that it's because of the hashtag we coined, #STAYSAFEAHMA, which resonated well with others. After raising the money, we ordered the items to be included in the care packs.

With a final sum of S\$10,291 raised, you put together 320 care packs and donated S\$384 to the Ling Kwang Home for Senior Citizens. What did this experience teach you about yourself, and your fellow Singaporeans – both donors and beneficiaries?

It really showed me that Singaporeans are willing to help one another. I also never knew how one small action could impact so many people.

Seeing the faces of the beneficiaries was extremely fulfilling. We tend to neglect people who work hard for the community – sweeping the floor, helping to refuel our cars – and take many of them for granted. The whole experience taught me that I should never forget my blessings, and to do good in whatever ways I can.

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Victoria hopes to work on further personal development in the coming new year.

What are your hopes and aspirations for 2021?

I hope I'll be able to enter the job market without too much difficulty. I hope to also find time to work on myself, and be a better person. Jaslyn and I are working on coming up with our own brand, and we'll also find some side projects that we can take part in to give back to society.

What message would you like to share with your fellow Singaporeans as we enter the new year?

We shouldn't feel that we're just individuals who can't bring about change. Let's do whatever we can to help others, because even if the virus is gone, the issues still exist. The ability to impact lives and inspire change goes beyond traditional definition.