

# prisonnews

SEPTEMBER ISSUE 2021  
**CAPTAINS OF LIVES**  
REHAB • RENEW • RESTART

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## VOLUNTEERS PARTNERING SPS IN OUR REHABILITATION JOURNEY

MAIN FEATURE

Some photos in this article are taken prior to COVID-19



SINGAPORE  
PRISON SERVICE

# WE ARE EACH OTHER'S SECOND CHANCES

Everyone makes mistakes, but a second chance makes all the difference. As individuals, organisations and employers, we can each help ex-offenders break free from stigma and break through as contributing members of our community.



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### MEDIA SUPPORT

DIGITAL MEDIA UNIT

### PUBLICATION CONSULTANT

OXYGEN STUDIO DESIGNS PTE LTD

### FEEDBACK

THEPNEDITOR@PRIS.GOV.SG



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## EDITOR'S NOTE

### Dear Readers

Have you wondered what volunteers do in the prisons when they are engaging the inmates and how they support the ex-offenders after they are released? Why are volunteers crucial to the inmates' rehabilitation?

Throughout the Singapore Prison Service's (SPS) 75-year history, the work of our volunteers has certainly transformed over time. Today, SPS collaborates with our volunteers who are key to our rehabilitation efforts, and we aim to further strengthen and grow our volunteer partnerships.

We dedicate this special issue to our SPS volunteers — a group of passionate individuals and organisations that have partnered SPS to complement and strengthen our efforts to improve the lives of inmates, ex-offenders and their families.

Our **main article** looks at how the various programmes and services offered by volunteers are part of SPS' throughcare approach that mitigate the risks and address the needs of inmates inside prisons, and also facilitate the reintegration of ex-offenders into society after being released from prisons. Our volunteers also share some insights into what they do as part of their volunteering work in '**A Day in the Shoes..**'. Finally, in **#Throwback**, we pay tribute to a few of our longest-serving volunteers and share how volunteering has transformed in the prisons over the last 75 years.

To all SPS volunteers, we appreciate your support all these years. To our readers, we hope you are inspired enough to take up the call and volunteer with SPS. Read on to find out how you can start your volunteering journey with SPS! Happy reading and stay safe!

**ASP Muhammad Sadiq Bin Sa'ad**  
Editor, Prison News

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**VOLUNTEERS:**

# OUR PARTNERS IN REHABILITATION

Reported by  
RO Jasmine Oh & RO Leticia Koh

**V**olunteers play a crucial role in supporting the Singapore Prison Service's (SPS) rehabilitation efforts. In this article, we take a close look at who our volunteer partners are, and how are they contributing to help inmates rehabilitate and reintegrate successfully into society.

In 1999, SPS had less than 200 registered volunteers, and there was limited involvement of volunteers in the rehabilitation of inmates and ex-offenders. Today, SPS has more than 2,500 volunteers, offering a range of rehabilitative programmes and services both in the prisons and the community. SPS also partners with more than 1,100 grassroots volunteers from the Yellow Ribbon Community Project (YRCP) to provide support to inmates' families in the community.

Volunteers form an integral component in the rehabilitation ecosystem, which includes members of the Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders (CARE) Network, private organisations, corporate businesses, institutions of learning, government, and social service agencies.

Over the past 20 years, we have seen a significant drop in the two-year recidivism rate of inmates from 44.4% for the 1998 release cohort, to 22.1% for the 2018 release cohort. Volunteers have played significant roles and will continue to complement the inmates' rehabilitation efforts by SPS. The work of volunteers not only benefit the individual inmate or ex-offender, but also has the potential to create a positive ripple effect in society, and raising awareness to generate acceptance of ex-offenders and their families. This, in turn, contributes towards a society without re-offending, and achieves the overall mission of the Home Team to keep Singapore safe and secure.

## WHO ARE SPS' VOLUNTEERS?

SPS Volunteers generally comprise three groups, namely, Religious Volunteers, Secular Volunteers and Befrienders. SPS also partners with grassroots volunteers from the Yellow Ribbon Community Project (YRCP), to provide support to the families of offenders.

### RELIGIOUS VOLUNTEERS

Religion can be a powerful tool to inspire offenders to change for the better and continue to stay on the right path. SPS partners with volunteers from 11 religious organisations to provide religious programmes and services in the prisons.

In addition to providing a strong religious foundation, these programmes and services incorporate moral development and offer emotional support for inmates to cope with life's experiences and help them better prepare for their release.

The contributions of the religious volunteers do not end in the prisons. Many volunteers continue to extend their support to inmates upon their release, by providing befriending services and aftercare support to them in the community.



#### FUN FACT

Almost half of SPS' volunteers are from religious organisations.



Religious volunteers and leaders conducting various programmes and services in the prisons which include religious sessions, worship sessions, and motivational talks by prominent religious figures.

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## SECULAR VOLUNTEERS

Secular organisations and volunteers from various professional backgrounds and areas of expertise provide a range of rehabilitative programmes and activities to complement SPS' efforts. They range from art and craft, sports and interest-based activities, mentoring sessions, motivational talks, personal development workshops, to parenting and family-based programmes that aim to strengthen family ties.

These programmes and activities provide inmates with the opportunities to grow and develop their character, and also provide opportunities to rebuild their social capital through stronger family bonds and relationships with the wider community.



Volunteers conducting various rehabilitative programmes in the prisons, such as motivational talks, interest-based activities, arts classes and support groups.

## SPS BEFRIENDERS

To provide offenders with emotional and pro-social support before and after their release, SPS introduced the Befriending Programme in 2010.

Befrienders regularly engage their assigned inmates through visits and letter correspondences while the latter is still in the prisons. Upon the inmates' release from the prisons, befrienders continue to maintain contact with them for at least six months, guiding and supporting them in their reintegration journey.



## YELLOW RIBBON COMMUNITY PROJECT (YRCP) VOLUNTEERS

SPS also partners with the YRCP volunteers to provide community support and assistance to families of inmates.

YRCP volunteers conduct regular home visits to inmates' families and provide emotional and social support to help them cope with their loved ones' incarceration.



Find out more on how volunteers work together with SPS staff and other community partners such as SCORE (now known as Yellow Ribbon Singapore) to help offenders in their rehabilitation journey!

<https://go.gov.sg/communitypartnerships>

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## RESILIENCE AMIDST CHALLENGING TIMES



In recent times, the COVID-19 situation had brought about many challenges for volunteers to conduct their programmes and services in the prisons. Despite these challenges, volunteers showed determination and perseverance to continue engaging the inmates and minimise the disruptions to the inmate's rehabilitation efforts by innovating their engagement methods with the inmates. In addition to writing e-letters to continue maintaining rapport with the inmates, the volunteers have also used other means to provide continuous support to the inmates.

Check out some of the ways volunteers continue to engage and provide rehabilitative support to inmates!



Delivering programmes to inmates remotely via live virtual platforms.



Connecting with inmates via telephone calls.



Mr Toh Hong Seng, a volunteer from the Singapore Buddhist Federation, preparing pre-recorded videos on his religious programme, for viewing by inmates in the prisons.

Volunteers dedicate their time and energy selflessly to give support, impart knowledge and skills, and provide guidance to the inmates in the prisons. During the aftercare phase in the community, volunteers continue to play an important role to provide pro-social support and become befrienders to the released inmates, as well as extending a helping hand to their children and families.

Regardless of their roles and contributions, SPS' volunteers represent society's willingness to give inmates and ex-offenders a second chance. The efforts from the volunteers, SPS staff and the various community partners have helped inmates releasing from the prisons to have the hope of starting afresh, reconnecting with their families and reintegrating successfully into the society.

## LET'S HEAR IT FROM OUR CAPTAINS OF LIVES!



Prison News spoke to two officers from Institution B1, ASP Ahmad Naufal Bin Amirza and SGT Andin Jairin Bin Abu Juwani, who shared about their experiences working with the volunteers who engaged the inmates in Institution B1.

### HOW ARE VOLUNTEERS INVOLVED IN INSTITUTION B1?

**ASP Naufal:** B1 has worked with several partners to offer rehabilitative programmes and services for the inmates. Recently, we partnered with ActiveSG to conduct sports activities for inmates and teach them the values of teamwork, humility, compassion and respect for one another.

### WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING WITH THE VOLUNTEERS?

**SGT Andin Jairin:** It has definitely opened up my views and mindsets about volunteers. From my experience, I can see that they are really passionate and take their work seriously.

**ASP Naufal:** For me, it has been a joy working with volunteers. For example, the Sports Champions from ActiveSG are always full of energy, creative ideas and passion during the sessions. Their positivity has definitely influenced our inmates, as the inmates always look forward to the next session.

### HOW IMPORTANT ARE VOLUNTEERS IN THE REHABILITATION OF INMATES?

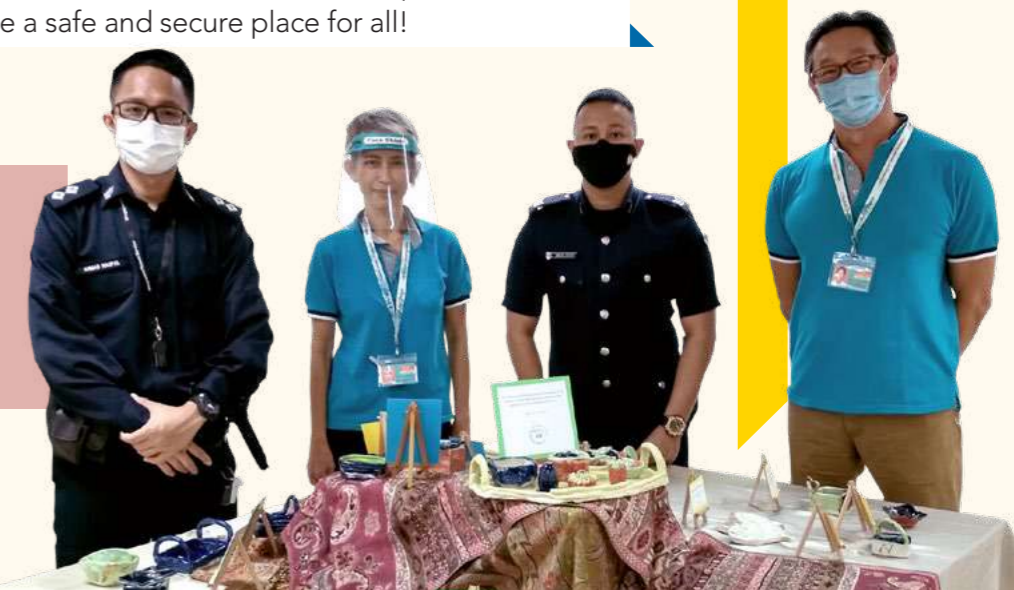
**SGT Andin Jairin:** Volunteers bring something different to help inmates rehabilitate. They are able to connect and engage with inmates in ways that we, as uniformed staff, may not be able to do.

**ASP Naufal:** I think they play an absolutely important roles in our rehabilitation ecosystem. Under the Throughcare Volunteer Framework, volunteers expand their incare role in the prisons by providing inmates and ex-offenders with the pro-social support they need, which will be crucial for those without family support.

### ANY MESSAGE TO OUR VOLUNTEERS?

**ASP Naufal and SGT Andin Jairin:** We would like to say a huge thank you to all the volunteers who have dedicated their time to come into the prisons to teach and guide the inmates to become better individuals. When the inmates become responsible citizens, Singapore will be a safe and secure place for all!

ASP Ahmad Naufal (first from left) and SGT Andin Jairin (second from right), with volunteers from Awful Grace, which partnered Institution B1 last year to conduct a pottery-based personal development programme for inmates.



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# Throughcare Volunteer Framework

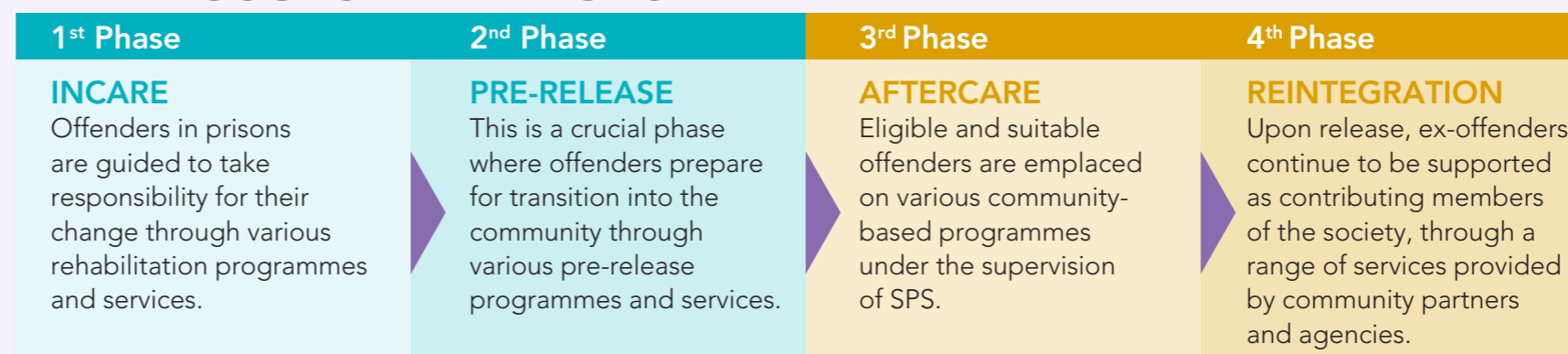
Reported by  
RO Alson Tan

**P**ositive networks and peers are important to help offenders desist from crime, and successfully rehabilitate into society. Without such pro-social support, offenders are likely to return to the company of negative peers when they are released, thereby increasing their chance of re-offending.



The TVF complements the overall throughcare approach in inmates' rehabilitation.

## THE THROUGHCARE APPROACH



Since 2019, SPS has partnered with the Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-offenders (CARE) Network agencies and various community partners, to conduct TVF-based programmes in the prisons. One example is the Singapore After-Care Association's (SACA) interest-based befriending programme, where volunteers build rapport with offenders through a common interest in the art of decoupage. Once offenders are released, SACA's volunteers continue to engage them in the community, ensuring that they stay on the right path. The volunteers also encourage the ex-offenders to participate in activities conducted by SACA and other community partners.

Today, the organisations that have embarked on the TVF to provide pro-social support to offenders upon their release include the various religious agencies. SPS will continue to work closely with all our partners to enhance the pro-social network for our offenders as part of the TVF.



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A recent study conducted by the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) highlighted the importance for ex-offenders to have networks of positive peers to support their reintegration efforts. The study found that:

- ✓ Individuals need a supportive and caring environment to desist.
- ✓ Individuals think and behave according to what we perceive of them.
- ✓ Individuals hope others can recognise their efforts and change.

The Throughcare Volunteer Framework (TVF) was thus introduced in 2019 to strengthen existing efforts to enhance inmates' pro-social capital. The Framework leverages SPS' volunteer pool to become positive peers and pro-social befrienders to the offenders when they are released from prisons into the community. This continues the chain of support, which volunteers have already provided to inmates when they were in prisons, to the community upon their release.



### Celebrating Singapore Prison Service's 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: An SPS Journey

From the 1990s, SPS began conceptualising the centralisation of its 16 prisons and the Drug Rehabilitation Centres into the redeveloped Changi Prison Complex (CPC). The move was successfully completed in September 2020. Watch the video today to find out more on the transformation of SPS infrastructure and how SPS leverage technology for greater operational efficiency and effectiveness as part of SPS' Corrections 2025 strategy of "Prison without Guards".



[Click here to see IG post](#)

Watch this video to learn more about **SPS' 75 years of transformation!**

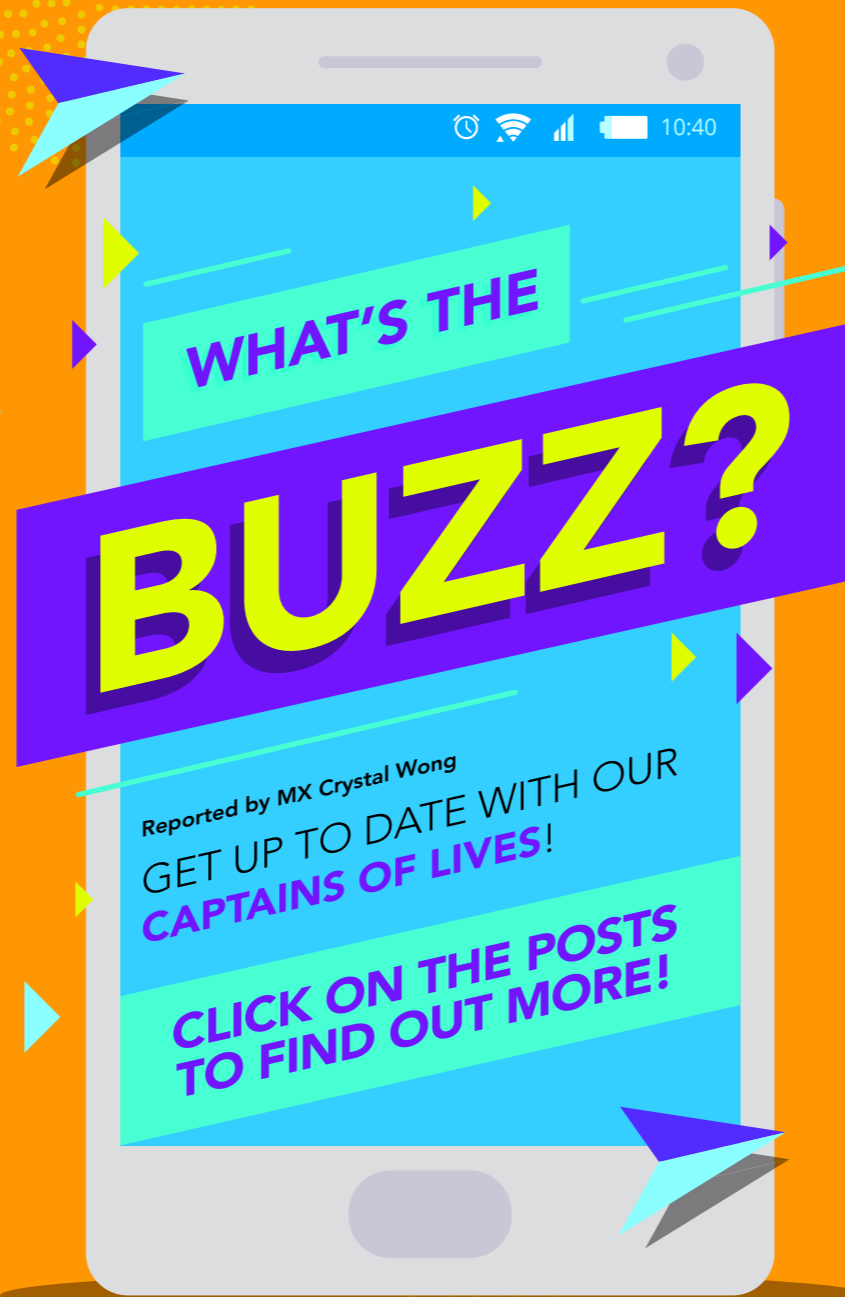


[go.gov.sg/sps75-heritage-video](https://go.gov.sg/sps75-heritage-video)

Watch this video to find out more about **Selarang Park Complex.**



[go.gov.sg/sps-video-spc](https://go.gov.sg/sps-video-spc)



Each issue, we select trending posts from our @SingaporePrisonService social media accounts to provide a peek at what our Captains of Lives are up to. #ICYMI

Follow us! @SingaporePrisonService



### International Friendship Day

A good friend is like a four-leaf clover: hard to find and lucky to have. Four Prison Officers, who became friends as Captains of Lives, recently celebrated their long-lasting friendship and continue to remain as friends years after their retirement.



### Sharing by 'Noah' on the 'Looking Forward' Programme

Listen to inmate 'Noah' as he shares about how the Looking Forward (LF) Programme and Prison Officers helped him to manage his personal issues and ultimately, improve his relationship with his family.



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**Singapore Prison Service**  
August 5, 2021

**We Are Each Other's Second Chances**

An offender's rehabilitation journey is never an easy one, but they are supported by our Prison Officers and staff, volunteers, and community partners. Our Throughcare Approach to rehabilitation prepares them during their incarceration before completing their sentences. Watch the short film featuring the struggles of an offender and the support he receives in his rehabilitation journey.



With help and guidance



The choices we make today could change a life tomorrow

Watch the short film here



[go.gov.sg/the-test](https://go.gov.sg/the-test)

**Singapore Prison Service**  
August 6, 2021

**Unboxing with Captains of Lives!**

Meet ASP Rajashekar, ASP Lim Seow Hwee and RO Syed Jufri as they come together in the very first episode of "Unboxing with Captains of Lives!". Watch the trio share about their journey with the Singapore Prison Service!



[Click here to see Video](#)

[Click here to see IG post](#)

**Singapore Prison Service**  
August 19, 2021

**For A Safe Singapore Series #1**

This is a 4-part series where we share the experiences of Prison Officers and inmates on how they remain resilient to keep prisons safe from COVID-19 transmission. #1 shares the story of RO Putri Nasriyah Yunos from Institution A5, who was among the first group of Prison Officers activated to look after the well-being of the A5 inmates when some inmates working at the A5 Kitchen tested positive for the virus in May 2021.



**Singapore Prison Service**  
September 8, 2021

**Sharing by Mr Patrick Chin, Board of Visitors (Drug Rehabilitation Centres and Anti-Inhalant Abuse Centres)**

Mr Patrick Chin shares on his role as the Chairman of the Board of Visitors (Drug Rehabilitation Centres and Anti-Inhalant Abuse Centres) or BOV (DRC & AIAC) in short, in ensuring that the prison institutions are well managed.



**Singapore Prison Service**  
September 3, 2021

**Happy Teachers' Day**

Ms Shirley Ng joined the Prison School as an educator to be part of the inmate-students' rehabilitation journey. She teaches them the newly introduced Computer Applications course at Tanah Merah Prison School. The course was introduced to promote digital literacy and equip inmate-students with ICT skills that prepare them to be technologically ready upon their release. Thank you to all teachers for your contributions and guidance to our inmate-students!



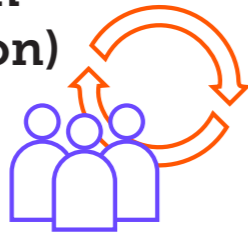
[Click here to see IG post](#)

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# AC CAROLINE LIM

Director (Rehabilitation & Reintegration Division)



Reported by  
RO Alvin Tan



**D**id you know that AC Caroline Lim, Director for the Rehabilitation and Reintegration Division, was recruited as a uniformed psychologist when she joined the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) in 2001? She shares with Prison News on her experiences as a Captain of Lives, and on SPS' mission to inspire everyone, at every chance, towards a society without re-offending.

**Q1** WHAT IS ONE THING MOST OFFICERS MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU?

In 2001, I was recruited by SPS as a uniformed psychologist! The plan was for me to complete my basic training, have a quick foundational posting, and subsequently join the then-Psychological Services Branch.

I changed my mind after I had a glimpse of what my experience might be as a 'generalist' uniformed officer, when I was in the then Changi Women's Prison / Drug Rehabilitation Centre. I told my then-Head Operations (and our current Commissioner) Mdm Shie Yong Lee, about my career preference and I have been a generalist ever since.

**Q2** WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO PURSUE A CAREER AS A CAPTAIN OF LIVES (COL)?

I wanted to help inmates. Before joining SPS, I was doing research for my Master's degree in psychology and it involved interviewing 200 inmates at Jalan Awan Prison. As I spoke to the inmates, I realised that they were not 'bad people' and more often than not, they had made 'bad choices' (or only had such choices to begin with).

I felt a growing desire in my heart to do something to help them, and I resolved to join SPS after I completed my Master's degree and that was precisely what I did.

I did not realise it then, but the work in prison turned out to be a calling for me. Every post I have been in has allowed me to continue to help the inmates, directly or indirectly. Of course, the postings in the Programme Branch (the precursor to the current Rehabilitation & Reintegration Division — RRD) and RRD now have been the most meaningful for me because of the direct contributions I can make to rehabilitation policies, programmes, and partnerships. But really, I find the work that we do as COLs is so meaningful and I always say that I am blessed to get paid to do something I love.

**Q3** WHAT WERE YOUR FIRST MEMORIES AS A YOUNG PRISON OFFICER?

My first memories are of my training days at the old Prison Staff Training School (now known as the Singapore Prison Training Institute located at the Home Team Academy) at Admiralty. Those were carefree days, but they were also stressful for me since I was not athletic, nor did I have any prior experience with uniformed groups in school. Fortunately, the women officers in my training squad got on well and with their support and encouragement, I was able to make it through the training in one piece!

I also remember having a bit of a culture shock when I first stepped into the women's prison after completing my basic training. I took some time to adapt to my operational duties as a Housing Unit Officer. Being somewhat timid and shy, I had to really step out of my comfort zone to learn how to handle the inmates in a firm and fair manner, in my own way. I also remember being rather affected by their problems at times and had to mentally and emotionally disengage once I left the prison at the end of the work-day. That said, I enjoyed the working relationships and friendships I made, the great teamwork in the Housing Unit, and also, listening to the inmates share their stories.

**Q4** WHAT WAS ONE CHALLENGING TASK YOU FACED IN YOUR CAREER, AND HOW DID YOU OVERCOME IT?

To be honest, no one challenging task comes to mind and in every posting, I have had to deal with my fair share of challenges. If there is a common theme of what I find most challenging across all my postings, it would have to be managing staff. I have received my greatest joys from nurturing staff and also experienced my greatest heartaches when staff don't live up to the expectations we have of them as COLs or as leaders.

We are in the people business and managing staff requires intentionality, suspension of judgment and the ability to listen deeply. There isn't a special formula, but I suppose I treat my staff how I would like to be treated by my bosses. I have been blessed to have had good mentors and bosses throughout my career and they have been my role models in how to care and coach my teams.

Another lesson I have learnt is not to shirk from difficult conversations. If you genuinely care for your staff, you owe it to them and the organisation to have that conversation, to give feedback, or to broach a tough topic that is needed. Don't kick the can down the road to the next supervisor. I

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have found that even with very difficult and heavy topics, and even when the outcomes are not what the staff expects, what can make all the difference is the care and sincerity that you approach with.

**Q5 HOW HAVE INMATES' REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION EVOLVED OVER THE YEARS?**

This is a really tough question and I can write a whole book on this! To some extent, it is 'same same but different'. What do I mean? On a broad level, many of the building blocks for our rehabilitation approach had already been laid when I joined SPS in 2001, such as our Risk, Needs and Responsivity approach, using a throughcare lens; sentence planning based on needs, etc. These approaches continue to this day for good reason. Over the years, it was in the 'doing' that we learnt many lessons on 'being': being responsive to what works in



our local context, being aware of the kind of skills and mental model changes our staff would need, and most importantly, being aware of the roles that the inmates themselves need to play in the process of change.

We have always been very keen to learn from other jurisdictions and evidence-informed approaches and that ensured that we did not stagnate. Hence, along the way, we learnt about the Good Lives Model, desistance theory, and many other evidence-based concepts which we have been able to infuse into the next iterations of rehabilitation policies and initiatives. We also had very good organic research and evaluation capabilities which allowed us to deep dive into what really worked and how to tweak our programmes to get optimal outcomes.

Our directory of programmes has certainly expanded over the years, in no small part due to the efforts of our psychologists, Correctional Rehabilitation Specialists and community partners. For example, now we have a range of paid as well as volunteer-led family programmes that aim to upskill the inmates in their communication and help foster closer bonds with their family members. That came out of a better appreciation of the positive roles that the inmates' families can play in supporting the inmates as they undergo rehabilitation in the prisons and how family can be that source of motivation for change. We have also made progress in the array of touchpoints to support inmates' families, from the Family Resource Centres and Yellow Ribbon Community Project (YRCP), to now working closely with the Family Service Centres to ensure that the inmates' families are supported right from the start of their loved one's incarceration until his or her eventual return to their families.

In recent years, with the 'Prison Without Walls' initiative, we have focused our efforts on preparing the inmates for their re-entry into society because we recognise that the application of rehabilitation gains is best done in the community, in a real-world setting. The process of reintegration is eased for the ex-offenders through the scaffolding and support offered by our Community Corrections Command colleagues, our case managers and our volunteers. We know that the challenges of life in the community can be overwhelming for some of the ex-offenders and having a gradual step-down through the Community-Based Programmes (CBPs) helps with reintegration and reducing reoffending. Hence, we are emplacing more inmates on CBP and before that, ensuring that they have been able to benefit from programmes that target their risk and needs.



AC Caroline Lim (left) with SUPT Cammy Teh during basic training in 2001.

Lastly, we have always said that our staff are at the centre of the ripple of change. We can have the best Learning Prison initiatives but without our Housing Unit staff on the ground being the facilitators of the change, we would not be able to make such an impact on inmates' lives. While we have high expectations for our staff, I do believe that we have passionate, committed and able staff who can take on the role of 'way-maker' for the inmates under their charges.

So... back to my point about 'same same but different'. Some things seem to be the same, but from an outside-in perspective, public expectations have changed, and we have also continued to improve on how we deliver rehabilitation. From an inside-out perspective, today, we are able to serve from a position of strength, with more competent and highly professional staff as well as technology that helps us do more with less. I am confident that we will continue to innovate, evolve and transform rehabilitation and reintegration within prison walls and in the community in the coming years.

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A DAY IN THE SHOES OF...

# PRISON VOLUNTEERS

Reported by  
RO Gary Loh

Prison News caught up with two of our volunteers, Mr Azman bin Osman, a Befriender, and Mr Baldev Singh, a Religious Volunteer with the Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC). Mr Azman is the pioneer batch of Befrienders when the programme was first implemented in 2010. Mr Baldev has been volunteering since 2015, and as the Senior Welfare Officer for SIWEC, he oversees the Prison Volunteers under the agency and work closely with the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) to implement programme and initiatives for offenders both in care and in aftercare.

Mr Azman and Mr Baldev shed some light on their typical day as an SPS volunteer.



**- TELL US MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU DO AS A BEFRIENDER.**

Prior to COVID-19, I would come down to prisons at least once a month, to have a one-to-one befriending session with my inmate befriender. It usually lasts for about an hour or so. During the session, I provide moral support and a listening ear to any matters or concerns that the inmates may have.

If there are any issues, I note them down and after the session, I will liaise with the Prison Officers for assistance. If it is within my means, I would help to make referrals to other resources in the community. The sessions in prisons also help to build trust and rapport with the inmate. Hopefully, he feels that he has a genuine friend in me who cares for his well-being. With COVID-19, physical interactions with inmates are limited, but I do keep in contact through other means, such as writing e-letters!

When inmates are released, I continue to be there for them. We will meet up to have a chat or call each other every now and then. Usually, I will maintain contact with them for a few months or until I see that he has stabilised and doing well on his own.

**- WHAT ARE YOUR CHALLENGES?**

Unfortunately, sometimes there is no continuity when the inmates stop contacting me after they are released. My hope is for them to stay away from crimes as they reintegrate into society. I continue to try my best to be a strong source of pro-social support for the inmates during their in care and aftercare phase.

I also have to balance my full-time job with my Befriending volunteering duties. I ensure that my schedule is well-planned, so that I will always have time for my befrienderes.

**- WHAT DO YOU ENJOY MOST?**

I enjoy interacting with the inmates. The sense of fulfillment felt when I see inmates change for the better, cannot be measured. Knowing that I have helped spark the change in them is what makes me satisfied.



MR AZMAN BIN OSMAN,  
54 YEARS OLD

**- TELL US MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU DO AS A RELIGIOUS VOLUNTEER.**

My main responsibility is to provide religious and spiritual guidance to Sikh inmates in prison. By strengthening their faith, we hope that inmates can learn from their past mistakes, and leave prison stronger in their faith and in their decision-making abilities, than when they first came to prisons.

**- WHY DID YOU CHOOSE TO VOLUNTEER WITH SPS?**

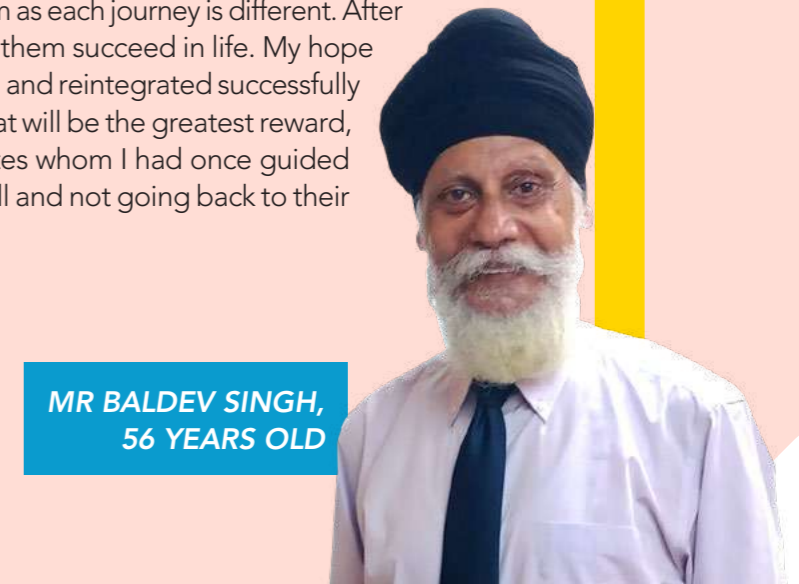
I wanted to give back to the community and help make a difference by motivating inmates in prisons. At the same time, I find the cause of helping inmates reintegrate into society a very meaningful one. I enjoy engaging and interacting with inmates during the religious sessions I conducted. I have deepened my knowledge and understanding of my own religion when I conduct the sessions, and I also get to improve my inter-personal skills along the way. I recently completed my Diploma in Counselling Psychology to help me engage inmates better. Volunteering has benefited me, as much as I hope that I have helped the inmates under my care.

**- WHAT GOES ON BEHIND EACH RELIGIOUS SESSION?**

Typically, I conduct weekly religious classes in prisons. This lasts for about two hours. I lead inmates in prayers and provide religious guidance. For each topic, I will also bring in worksheets to facilitate discussions. Inmates also take the opportunity to share some of their issues and personal struggles. I lend a listening ear and offer advice and encouragement. We advise inmates that there is no easy way to break free from the vicious cycle of addiction and crimes, but only preparation and hard work anchored in faith.

**- WHAT ARE YOUR CHALLENGES?**

Working with inmates is not all a bed of roses. Just like any one of us, inmates have their good and bad days. We have to empathise and be patient with them as each journey is different. After all, we are here to help them succeed in life. My hope is to see them reformed and reintegrated successfully to the community — that will be the greatest reward, knowing that the inmates whom I had once guided in prisons are doing well and not going back to their old ways.



MR BALDEV SINGH,  
56 YEARS OLD

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A typical day in office differs from one group of volunteers to another. It really depends on the type of programme the volunteers are conducting for inmates in the prisons, and for their beneficiaries in the community.

One example is the 'Project Relate' programme by the Singapore Children's Society. This is a programme that focuses on improving parenting skills and building closer family bonds for inmates with children between the ages of 7 and 16.

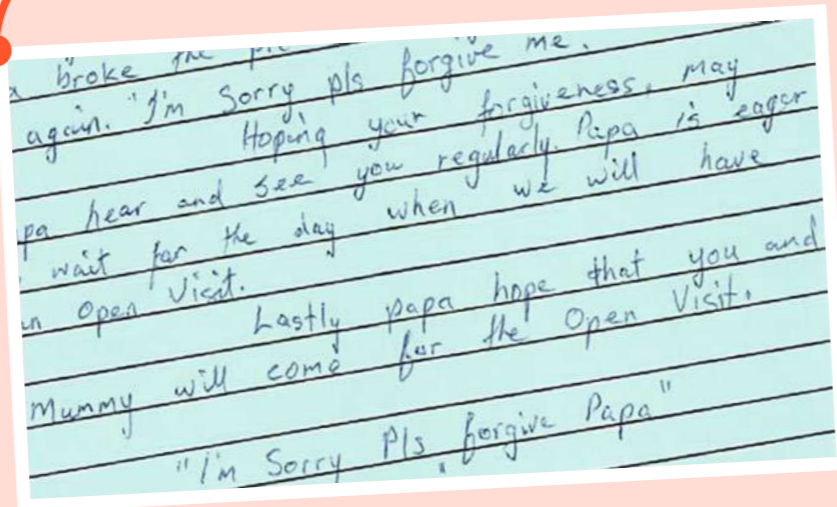


Singapore Children's Society volunteers and staff facilitating a session for children to express their feelings about their parent's incarceration.

During the programme, volunteers from the Children's Society guide inmates to explore topics, such as love languages, parenting styles, communication, conflict resolution and seeking forgiveness. The programme helps to increase inmates' confidence in parenting and help them to fulfil their roles as parents to their children, even while they are incarcerated in the prisons.

In the community, volunteers engage the children to share on their personal experiences and challenges, while also teaching them relevant coping skills. At the end of the programme, volunteers facilitate an open visit session for the inmates to reconnect with their loved ones and reaffirm their commitment to change for the better.

A sample letter written by an inmate participant to his child, as part of the programme's letter writing session.



Another example is the work done by volunteers from New Life Stories, who run the 'Dear Papa and Mama' programme. During this 20-week programme, volunteers guide inmates on personal development and how they can work to improve their relationship with their children. Volunteers also guide inmates to write a children's story and express values that they would like to share with their kids. These stories will then be published as a book for inmates to bring home and share with their loved ones after their release. Volunteers also befriend the inmates' children to provide mentorship and guidance through reading stories to increase socio emotional learning, for a better start in life.



The team from New Life Stories.

Volunteers contribute in diverse areas, with some of the work extending beyond the prison walls and into the community.

One thing that can be said to be common for all volunteers is that there is never a dull moment when working with offenders and their families. The work is as exciting as it is challenging, and volunteers truly create the ripples of change in the lives of others.

A beneficiary of New Life Stories, reading the book 'Power of Faith' which she wrote during her incarceration, to her son.



The team from Singapore Children's Society during a virtual meet-up session held recently.

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# EMBODYING THE SPIRIT OF CONTINUOUS LEARNING



Reported by  
RO Ryan Christopher Lee

The Public Sector Transformation (PST) Awards is an annual Whole-of-Government pinnacle platform organised by the Public Service Division, to recognise and reward public officers and public agencies for excellence in their work and organisational practices.

This year, the PST Awards recognises the contributions and innovative spirit of 84 public officers across 11 award categories.

Two of our very own Captains of Lives (COLs) clinched the Exemplary SkillsFuture @ Public Service award. This award recognises officers who have embodied the spirit of continuous learning and skills upgrading of themselves and others.

The proud winners are MX Norriyanah Binte Omar and CW Mohamed Alfian Bin Ahmad! Over a virtual session, the two officers shared with Prison News about what motivates them to adopt a learning-for-life mindset.

## THE PST AWARD CATEGORIES

- 1 One Public Service Award
- 2 Star Partner Award
- 3 Business Transformation Award
- 4 Service Delivery Excellence Award
- 5 Citizen Engagement Excellence Award
- 6 Regulatory Excellence Award
- 7 Exemplary Leader Award
- 8 Exemplary SkillsFuture @ Public Service Award
- 9 Exemplary Innovator Award
- 10 Dare to Do Award
- 11 Exemplary Service Excellence Award



### MX NORRIYANAH BINTE OMAR

Assistant Director (Community Corrections, Halfway House/ Home Detention, Intervention), Community Corrections Command

MX Norriyanah adopts a positive attitude towards continuous learning to deepen her skills as a Correctional Rehabilitation Specialist. In 2018, she completed her Masters in Social Work degree and actively applies what she has learnt at the work and, even at home!

#### WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO CONTINUALLY UPGRADE AND UPSKILL YOURSELF?

I'm fortunate to be in a work environment that encourages continuous development and skills upgrading. My colleagues are always sharing new knowledge and continuously looking into areas where we can further develop. This inspired me to take up my post-graduate studies in social work a few years ago.

As Captains of Lives, it is important for us to invest in deepening domain knowledge. For me, advanced training in social work helps me to effectively carry out my responsibilities as a Correctional Rehabilitation Specialist, and in my current role as an Assistant Director.

The other benefit is that whatever I have learned is also applicable in my personal life as a daughter, wife and mother. Through my social work training, I learned to suspend judgment and focus on the strengths; what is there instead of what is missing.

#### HOW WAS THE EXPERIENCE IN PURSUING YOUR ADVANCED STUDIES THEN?

Initially, I had quite a lot of worries and reservations before embarking on the post-graduate programme. I was worried about juggling work, family and school. However, I decided to brace the challenges and took the first step to apply for the post-graduate programme. It turned out to be an enjoyable and enriching experience.

I encourage those who are in similar positions to shrug off their uncertainties and venture forth. Take the first step and do it. Things will eventually fall into place. If not, it is okay because we can always adjust our plans along the way and rope in support from those around us. The important thing is to get started!

#### IS THERE ANYONE WHOM YOU LOOK TO FOR INSPIRATION?

My parents are my main inspiration. Growing up, my parents were not highly educated. But, they worked hard for the family and never failed to support my siblings and I. My parents encouraged us to excel in what we do.



**Congratulations for winning this award. 'Learning is a treasure that will follow its owner everywhere.' May you continue to multiply the gift of the treasure through training and coaching others."**

MX Norriyanah's supervisor, **SUPT Serena Lim**, Senior Assistant Director (Community Corrections, HWH/HD), Community Corrections Command

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I would also like to add that support from my family, bosses and colleagues were crucial in helping me to complete my further education. I'm also grateful for the platforms and opportunities to share my knowledge and skills with others.

### WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING AT WORK?

I love supervising student interns. I find it a very refreshing experience as they usually have a lot of questions that challenge me to think critically. They also have a lot passion and drive, which spurs the team to do better and push further.

### GIVEN THE EVER-CHANGING COVID-19 SITUATION, HOW DO YOU THINK WE CAN CONTINUE TO DEVELOP OURSELVES?

Although we are grappling with the COVID-19 situation, I do not think that learning opportunities are restricted. In fact, it is the opposite! Courses and conferences are now conducted virtually. As things change, we also need to adjust our mindset and adapt to the changes.



MX Norriyanah with her daughter at her Master of Social Work convocation ceremony in 2018.

### WHAT INSPIRES YOU TO CONTINUE UPGRADING YOURSELF?

I have always been someone who believes in continuous learning and an avid believer that it is never too late to learn. On a personal note, I became a father not too long ago. I had to learn the ropes quickly, and I soon found out, that being a father is an ongoing learning process! At work and at home, we never stop learning to perform our roles better and we must be able to adapt to changes. The important thing is to have an open and willing attitude towards learning.

### HOW DO YOU INSPIRE YOUR COLLEAGUES TO ENHANCE THEIR LEARNING AND UPGRADE THEMSELVES?

Firstly, by acknowledging my colleagues' interest to upgrade themselves. If needed, I will help them to visualise a development plan and understand their purpose that can help them to stay on track.

### WHAT ARE YOUR LEARNING PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

I am very appreciative of my superiors who have been supportive in my career. They have never failed to impart invaluable advice during our coaching sessions, which in return, I am able to demonstrate as an example to my peers.

I hope to be given the opportunity to take up suitable courses in data analytics, which I believe can help me in my project management. Also, there is always room for me to improve my leadership and soft skills.

### GIVEN THE EVER-CHANGING COVID-19 SITUATION, HOW DO YOU THINK WE CAN CONTINUE TO DEVELOP OURSELVES?

I am certain that COVID-19 has taught most people, if not all, to be agile. I find that with proper time management, I am able to juggle work and family commitments, and set aside time to attend online classes from the comfort of my own home!



CW Alfian's positive attitude and willingness to learn has helped him to adjust to his new role while embracing a new chapter in his life — fatherhood.

**I'd like to say a big thank you to all our winners. First, for working so hard over the last year to help take care of fellow Singaporeans through the difficult times of the pandemic. Second, despite your busy schedule, you have continued to work on new ideas to take Singapore forward."**

**Mr Chan Chun Sing,**  
Guest-of-Honour for the PST Awards 2021,  
Minister for Education and Minister-in-Charge of the Public Service



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**CW MOHAMED ALFIAN BIN AHMAD**  
Team Leader (Estate Management), Cluster C

CW Mohamed Alfian is currently a team leader in Cluster C's Corporate Services. He is responsible for ensuring that building projects in Cluster C are delivered in a timely manner. CW Alfian is someone who has always believed in continuous learning and that it is never too late to learn! With his can-do attitude, CW Alfian hopes to inspire others around him.

### WHAT ARE SOME OF THE NEW SKILL AND COURSES THAT YOU HAVE TAKEN UP RECENTLY?

Most recently, I attended the Essential Project Management workshop, which I applied through our Human Resource Management System (HRMS) portal.

The knowledge acquired through this workshop, coupled with the many others I had attended so far, had allowed me to demonstrate better project management skills and setting objectives with a clear end goal. I have also gained a better understanding on the technicalities and constraints faced by our contractors and facilities management vendors. This, in turn, allows me to communicate and manage the expectations of our internal stakeholders better.

**"Congratulations to Alfian who is an exemplary figure for continuous learning and work efficacy. What he learns, he applies to work processes and what he applies, it benefits us all."**

CW Alfian's supervisor,  
**DSP Low Hwee Huang,**  
OC Logistics, Cluster C

# #Throwback

## Volunteering in prisons, then and now

Reported by  
MX Muhammad Hariz Bin Husaini

- It is not uncommon for volunteers to encounter offenders with difficult personalities and with seemingly overwhelming issues. It can also be disappointing to see offenders relapse, despite all the efforts and energy put in to help them rehabilitate.
- It takes courage and determination, and a never-give-up attitude mixed with a generous dose of passion, to serve as a volunteer with SPS and to serve well!
- Join our seasoned volunteers as they recount their volunteering experiences in the prisons, then and now!



MR A SRIYANANDE DE SILVA, 82 YEARS OLD  
Muneeswaran Community Services (MCS)

### WHEN DID YOU FIRST START VOLUNTEERING?

I started volunteering in the prisons in the 1980s, almost 40 years ago! I was officially registered with the Muneeswaran Temple Society (whose community service arm is now under Muneesaran Community Services Ltd) in the 1990s. I provide Hindu religious programmes and services to the inmates in the prisons.

How I started was quite simple. One day, an acquaintance of mine who was a Senior Prison Officer, asked if I wanted to volunteer to become a prison religious counsellor. I had known some friends who were serving sentences in the prisons, and I realised then that if I did not help them in their rehabilitation journey, no one would. At that time, there were not many volunteers in the prisons providing religious services to inmates. So, I said yes, and I have been volunteering ever since.

### HOW WAS VOLUNTEERING WORK LIKE BACK THEN?

We did not have the technology and facilities like we have today. I remember that we used to conduct classes all around the prison compounds, wherever there was space available, even in the workshops. It was not ideal, but we made do with what we have.

### HOW DIFFERENT IS THE VOLUNTEERING WORK NOW?

SPS has changed so much over the years. We have much better facilities now to aid us in conducting our sessions. I also work very well with the Prison Officers, and they give full support for me to carry out my responsibilities. I believe the partnership between SPS and volunteers has grown from strength to strength.

### WHAT HAS KEPT YOU MOTIVATED ALL THESE YEARS?

Volunteering must come from the heart. In order for one to have a long and meaningful volunteering career, one must have the passion to serve the community, and to help others. Everything else will fall in place.

Personally, I also find the volunteer work in the prisons to be an enriching one. I do get approached by strangers on the streets, only to be told by them that they were former inmates under my care, and they expressed gratitude for all that I had done. This makes me happy. Yet, many inmates also ended up back in the prisons. We must not be disheartened by this. Often, inmates ask me if there are any mantras that I can teach them to stop taking drugs. I remind them that there are no magical formulas. The change is in them, and we encourage them to man up and fight the good fight.

I hope to continue guiding inmates on their rehabilitation path, for as long as I am able to.

*“Often, inmates ask me if there are any mantras that I can teach them to stop taking drugs. I remind them that there are no magical formulas. The change is in them, and we encourage them to man up and fight the good fight.”*



USTAZ ISMAIL BIN TERIMOH, 58 YEARS OLD  
Family and Inmates Throughcare Assistance  
Haven (FITRAH)

### WHEN DID YOU FIRST START VOLUNTEERING?

I started volunteering in 1991, at the age of 28. Back then, the Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (also known as MUIS) was looking for volunteers to conduct religious programmes for Muslim inmates, and lead in the Friday prayer sessions in the prisons. I was young and eager to contribute back to society then, and I did not hesitate to answer the call.

### HOW WAS VOLUNTEERING WORK LIKE BACK THEN?

I had the privilege of working in various prisons and with different inmate populations in the past — Queenstown Remand Prison, Bedok Reformative Training Centre, Abingdon Prison, just to name a few. They were standalone prisons with unique infrastructure that was very different from what we have today! I recall conducting Friday prayers at the multi-purpose hall in one of the prisons, and it had zinc roofing. As our prayers were held in the afternoon, it got very hot and everyone was sweating!

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### HOW DIFFERENT IS THE VOLUNTEERING WORK NOW?

I think it is much more convenient to volunteer today compared to the past — thanks to the modern technologies and facilities in the prisons today! Nevertheless, while a lot of the prisons 'hardware' had changed, the 'heartware', more or less remains the same. The inmates we meet in the prisons come from various backgrounds. As volunteers, we need to be prepared and equip ourselves with the skills and knowledge first, before we can work with them. Also, we must be mindful in our engagements with the inmates and the way we deliver our messages to them. We want to remind them that change is not impossible, and we are here to help them in their rehabilitation journey.

*"We want to remind them that change is not impossible, and we are here to help them in their rehabilitation journey."*

### WHAT HAS KEPT YOU MOTIVATED ALL THESE YEARS?

I enjoy engaging and interacting with inmates. I can see that the work I do has an impact on them. I am grateful to SPS and FITRAH for putting their trust in me all these years.



**MR PHILIP LIM, 70 YEARS OLD**  
*Christian Counselling Services (CCS)*

### WHEN DID YOU FIRST START VOLUNTEERING?

My volunteering with SPS started in early 2000. Through CCS, we provided Christian religious programmes and services to inmates in the prisons.

### HOW WAS VOLUNTEERING WORK LIKE BACK THEN?

In those early days, volunteering work was quite routine. Every week, we went to our assigned Housing Unit, conducted our sessions for about one to two hours before time was up. Back then, there were minimal interactions with the Prison Officers. I did not even know who the Superintendent of Prison was! There were not many appreciation events for volunteers. It was also a hassle for us to bring in equipment, such as musical instruments, to complement our sessions. Times have indeed changed, and it is so different now.

### HOW DIFFERENT IS THE VOLUNTEERING WORK NOW?

There is a lot more engagements between SPS and volunteers today. There are dialogue sessions with the SPS senior management, and also various appreciation events organised for volunteers. Importantly, there is a lot more engagements in terms of discussions on how to scope our programmes. There is more focus on helping inmates when they are released to society, and that is something that my agency, together with the rest of the religious agencies partnering SPS, is focused on doing.

Today, CCS has in place a programme to meet and greet ex-offenders upon their release. We follow up with them, assist them in their job search, help reconcile them

with their families and encourage them to live a new life and ultimately, have a fresh start. CCS has different fellowship programmes to bring them together and have them encourage each other. We have also partnered with 'Jobminute.com', an online job portal, to help ex-offenders in their job search and to match them with full or part-time job in the F&B industry.

### WHAT HAS KEPT YOU MOTIVATED ALL THESE YEARS?

It is very challenging to work with inmates, but the satisfaction is beyond words. It is very gratifying to be able to see some of them successfully turn their life around. Personally, I have many success stories that keep me motivated to continue with my volunteering work in the prisons.



**MS CLARA YAP, 57 YEARS OLD**  
*Singapore After-Care Association (SACA)*

### WHEN DID YOU FIRST START VOLUNTEERING?

I started volunteering since 1999. Then, I worked at the Workforce Development Agency (now known as Workforce Singapore). I felt that I could make use of my knowledge of the employment sector and provide advice and guidance to others in need. Hence, I decided to be a volunteer with SPS to make a difference and help inmates in their reintegration journey.

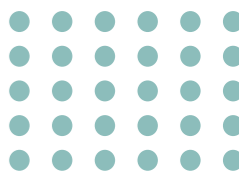
### HOW WAS VOLUNTEERING WORK LIKE BACK THEN?

Despite our burning desire to reach out to inmates, there were limited opportunities for us as volunteers to contribute and help them. Also, the various standalone institutions were spread all over Singapore! I had to travel all over the island to conduct my counselling sessions with the different groups of inmates.

Over time, SPS has worked closely with SACA to implement many more programmes and initiatives. For example, in 2010, SACA and SPS developed an initiative called the Community Integration Programme. It was an effort to provide positive peer support to inmates with little or no family support. I was matched with several inmates to provide befriending support to them during in-care, and followed up with them when they were released. Throughout the years, I am very fortunate to be involved in many of SACA's programmes for inmates and their families.

### WHAT HAS KEPT YOU MOTIVATED ALL THESE YEARS?

It is a privilege for me to be given the opportunity to help inmates and their families. I enjoy engaging and interacting with inmates, and I truly believe that my efforts do play a part in helping them to successfully rehabilitate into society.







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As part of the SPS75 commemoration, we are inviting you to send your well-wishes to SPS. This can be messages of congratulations, appreciation, or hopes and dreams for SPS as we forge ahead into the future. Feel free to share with us your photos too!

We will compile your messages and feature them in the December 2021 issue. Also, the top 3 most inspiring posts will receive a set of SPS75 commemorative stamps from us!

If you would like to contribute, please drop us an email at [thePNeditor@pris.gov.sg](mailto:thePNeditor@pris.gov.sg)

# ♥ THANK YOU, Volunteers!

The road to successful rehabilitation and reintegration cannot be walked alone. Volunteers play an important role as a positive influence by bringing in their expertise from various fields and imparting their knowledge to inmates and ex-offenders through many ways — be it religious services, academic programmes or social activities.

As agents of change, volunteers often inspire many offenders to turn over a new leaf and contribute to a society without re-offending. Some offenders even go on to become volunteers themselves after they are released!

For being part of the ripple of change in countless lives, Prison News extends our sincere appreciation to all volunteers — past and present, who have dedicated their hearts and minds to the rehabilitation and reintegration of our inmates and ex-offenders. Watch the two videos below to learn more on how volunteers have touched the lives of those they have lent a helping hand!



## Interested in BECOMING A VOLUNTEER?

Click [here](#) to find out more about what the volunteering journey entails! Alternatively, you may also email your enquires to [PRIS\\_Volunteers@pris.gov.sg](mailto:PRIS_Volunteers@pris.gov.sg).



**TOUCHING LIVES THROUGH RELIGIOUS VOLUNTEERING**



**A VOICE OF HOPE: SECULAR VOLUNTEERING**