



CLUB NEWS

ISSUE NO.4 | 2021

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OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2021 ISSUE (AN NTUAC PUBLICATION)

*Passing
The Torch of
Volunteerism
to The Next
Generation*



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CLUB NEWS

EDITORIAL TEAM

Ms Christine Mah
Mr Emmanuel Matias

SPECIAL FEATURE

Ms Gillian Ang
Mr Dennis Foo
Mr Krishna R. Subramanyan

Management Committee 21/22

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AIS REPRESENTATIVE**
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Mr Tarn Rui Seng Willis

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HONORARY TREASURER
Mr Neo Chun How Alton

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SECRETARY/ DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON,
ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT**
Mr Ng Chong Soon

**HONORARY ASSISTANT TREASURER/
CHAIRPERSON, FINANCE/
AIS REPRESENTATIVE**
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DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON, EVENTS
Ms Tan Si Jia Sarah

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON, FINANCE
Mr Tanguenco Vicente III Tiu

COMMITTEE MEMBER
Mr Ng Kah Meng
Dr Xu Weili

Vice-President's Message



**MR. WILLIS
TARN RUI SENG**

1st Vice-President,
Chairperson,
Membership

Dear Members and Friends,

As we close yet another year, let's take time to reflect on the past and begin to plan for what lies ahead. We are very grateful to all the members who stayed with us through these trying times, especially those of you who stepped up and showed your support to the Club one way or another.

I am honoured to share with you the story of one of these members, Ms Gillian Ang. A fellow NTU graduate, a caring senior committee member, and a true friend you can count on, to all who knows her. For ten years, she committed her time to serve and help grow the Club the best she could. Let's learn more about Gillian, the Club's first female president, as she shares more about her life outside of the Club, her passion and her aspirations for the Club's future.

There are many exciting and meaningful events to look forward to these coming months. In October, members will get a chance to understand the importance of quality sleep to have a healthy mind and body. I am also encouraging members to volunteer this November and help us prepare holiday care packs for our frontline healthcare staff. You can find more details about the cause on the Club's website. Check out the complete list of upcoming events for the last quarter of the year on page 8.

I would also like to acknowledge two of our Secretariat employees who supported the Club and the Management Committee (MC) for the past 10 and 15 years. Ms Chua Ngak Huay (15 years) and Mr Emmanuel Matias (10 years). On behalf of the MC, I would like to express our deepest gratitude for your dedication and support throughout these years.

The NTU Alumni Club community gathers likeminded individuals for social and professional interaction. Through the Club's quarterly magazine, members are invited to share with us their hobbies, experiences in life and professional expertise. In this issue, fellow member Mr Dennis Foo shares with us his story on how he began his passion for Paludarium. To commemorate Deepavali, our long-time member, Mr Krishna R. Subramanyan, who is celebrating the festival differently for the second year due to the pandemic, fill us in on his family traditions and how he marks the special occasion. Check out their stories from page 14 to 17.

Finally, on behalf of the MC and the Secretariat team, I wish you and your families Happy Deepavali and Merry Christmas! May this holiday season bring us fresh hope and much joy for a better and brighter year ahead.

I look forward to see all of you again at the clubhouse in 2022!

Take care and stay safe.

Warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Tarn'.

Mr Willis Tarn

#Humansof NTUAlumniClub

Volunteerism is more than just the time you spend on a cause. It's a combination of one's passion and willingness to support the community in reaching a common goal for a better future for the next generation.

In this issue, we had the chance to talk to Ms Gillian Ang, past president and Management Committee member for the last ten years. We learnt new things about Gillian, from her days in NTU, why she joined the Club, to her most heart-warming moments during her time as the Club's president, and what she aspires the Club to be in the future.

1. Why did you choose to study in NTU?

After my A Levels, I wanted to take up a business course in my university study. During that time, NTU and NUS were the only local universities. I reviewed both curricula and learned that NTU offered business courses with specialisations while NUS focused on business administration. NTU was also nearer my parent's house, and I did not want my parents to spend more money on my campus accommodation. Therefore NTU was my top choice.

2. Could you share with us your experience as an NTU student? Did you join any CCA? Any unforgettable experiences?

It was quite an experience adjusting from junior college to university life. Most of the time, you needed to do things independently, like getting your timetable and searching for your classes and lecture halls. It was really interesting!

I joined the Travel Services sub-committee group under the Student Union. I remembered two exciting projects we accomplished. The first was a trip to Bintan, where we planned a singles event for our fellow students. We even managed to get sponsorship and grants from SDU for the event. It was an unforgettable experience for me.

Another interesting project we planned was a journey from Singapore to Bangkok by land. There were roughly 14 or 15 of us. We took coaches and trains from Singapore and Malaysia until we reached Thailand. We approached a few travel agencies to sponsor us for the trip, and in return, we gave them a summary of our trip

experience. The trip was memorable, especially now, where most of us may not be willing to do this type of adventure trip and spend at least 14 days travelling on land.

3. What made you join NTU Alumni Club?

After getting married, my husband and I stayed near Buona Vista. He was looking for a private gym near us during that time, so we checked out the clubhouse and found that it suited his needs. Plus, since I am also an alumna, it was good to support the Club and make use of amenities at the clubhouse.

4. You held different positions as a Management Committee member. Which is your favourite and why?

The first would be being the president. It was a not-so-often kind of experience - in the stewardship of the Club and leading the communications with the alma mater.

The second would be as the Honorary General Secretary, as I needed to manage many human resource matters and ascertain how the Secretariat team could assist the Management Committee. I learned a lot from this portfolio too.



Ms Gillian Ang

President 2018 - 2020
Management Committee member
2012 - 2021

5. What is your most heartening moment during your tenure as the Club's president?

There were moments, even when I was not yet Club president, during member events or AGM when members would approach me and tell me their feedback about the Club. We may not meet these members frequently, but they always showed their support for us.

This heartens me as this shows the camaraderie and spirit of togetherness that we, as Club members, have and that we are one NTU Alumni Club family.

6. What are your thoughts on being the first female president of the Club?

It says a lot about Singapore's current position. Even companies have female leaders now and our government has a several female leaders. It shows that the glass ceiling on gender is not that apparent. It is a time where people rise to the position due to their capability and not their gender.

I am most grateful to my fellow committee members and seniors who supported me during my time as the Club president.

7. After 5 consecutive terms as a member of the Management Committee, what was your biggest takeaway?

My biggest takeaway was knowing more about my alma mater and forging a deeper NTU identity in myself. In the roles I took up, especially when I was president, I learned how the school views and handles alumni relations.

As a committee member, I found that all volunteers were very open, willing to share and support one another. These are things I learned from my seniors, and I aspired to carry on this baton when I took on the role of the Club president. I wanted to continue passing this spirit of volunteerism to new and younger volunteers when they came onboard.

8. Could you give some words of encouragement to potential future leaders/ volunteers of our Club?

☞ If you have the heart for it and your schedule permits, just step forward to contribute. Our little contribution can go a long way. ☞

If given a role or position and you have the time, just step up. We don't know what we could gain from it. If we offer our time for a cause, we will likely learn and benefit more.

We can also gather strength from one other and make our cause for the Club and University bigger than when we started.

9. Is there a person you admire the most? Who and why?

My parents, perhaps, even more, my mom. Women from their generation are very selfless, and they would dedicate their whole life to their family. Even though she is working, she tries her best to give us what we need. She also takes care of her grandchildren now. It's very self-sacrificing.

She has a good sense of humour. Nowadays, one may see elderly couples with estranged relationships. My parents will use their sense of humour to get over their problems.

They always have open communication with us, their children. I like this approach and this probably explains why our family is very loving, even extending to my siblings and their families. My parents are the greatest role model for us.

10. What is your wish and aspiration for the future development of NTU Alumni Club?

I hope the Club remains relevant to members, the alumni community and the University. In the last ten years, the whole ecosystem in the alumni community has changed. Therefore the Club needs to continuously have good succession planning to remain relevant, no matter what big or small part we play, for members and the University.

11. How do you spend your free time?

I like to spend time with friends and family. In between, I spend my "me-time" bingeing on TV series, movies and documentaries that are quite wide-ranging from geography to animals, and food to culture.

I was taking my Buddhism course for the last five years, so I spent time on that too.

During my free time, I do a lot of learning to remain abreast of new knowledge and trends. It is a humbling process for me. I find that as we age and grow, we tend to get more opinionated and ego-minded. Therefore the learning part is quite essential.

12. What goals are you actively seeking to accomplish this year?

This year, we are still plagued by the COVID-19 situation. So I have been telling myself to stay open-minded and receptive to the changes caused by the physical environment. And also, to be healthier, since most of us are working from home nowadays, I have been trying to be more active to maintain healthier lifestyle.

13. What is your favourite quote in life?

☞ Your speech, thoughts and actions bear your signature – From Buddhist Zen Master, Thich Nhat Hanh

by Ms Yeo Chuen Chuen, Founder of ACESENCE

10 Leadership Skills for Effective Leaders

As your workplace becomes increasingly complex, the bar for leaders is set higher and higher by the day. If there's one message you take away from this article today, I hope that it is that human-centred leadership skills will only become more important as time goes on. You can gain an advantage by developing your leadership skills as early as possible. Whether you've just been promoted or have a few years of experience under your belt, it pays to build these important skills for success.

Here are 10 leadership skills you can start to develop today to give you a good head start in leadership – Strive to navigate complexities and uncertainties with a sense of ease and authenticity.



1. Communicate and Connect Effectively

The list of leadership characteristics or soft skills may change with time but one skill stood out consistently in my professional coaching practice. John Maxwell said, a good leader communicates; a great leader connects. Effective leadership often begins with the knack for working with people. Communicating effectively with diverse team members and the senior leadership team is not an easy job. I am sure for those of you who are managers now will fully agree with this statement.

One simple way to start displaying this leadership skill is by genuinely showing interest in others and actively listening to their stories. In other words, make your conversations more about your employees because good leaders communicate but great leaders connect.

2. Inspire Confidence

Effective leaders help employees and team members sail through crisis so another important leadership skill good leaders need to develop is the ability to inspire confidence.

To inspire confidence in others, a leader first needs to have self-confidence. That means the leader is authentic and driven by values. A confident leader is not afraid to take risks or face changes. He or she is also open to try out new ways of

working (and make mistakes along the way) because he(or she) knows he(or she) can emerge stronger and better with every experience. All that shows up in his(or her) leadership style as executive presence as he(or she) communicates with employees appropriately in volatile times.

3. Demonstrate High Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand your emotions and the emotions of others. It is also the ability to manage those emotions in yourself and others. This is one of the most fundamental leadership skills that can speed up your success. That is probably why many leadership development programmes begin with a 'personal mastery' segment because increasing self-awareness for leaders is an ongoing process.

4. Build Trust

"Leadership is an honest business," said one of my clients and indeed it is.

One of the important leadership skills you need so that you will become a successful leader is lead with integrity and honesty. Many leaders I know are guided by these great leadership values. Where they can easily accelerate their progress is to communicate such that these values are seen, felt and understood by employees.

5. Promote Healthy Failures for Disruptive Innovation

Successful companies are innovative. At the same time, the world's largest companies are facing the threat of increasing rate of constructive destruction. What this means is only the businesses that can learn fast, fail fast and innovate will survive the constant waves of disruption. Nurturing innovation and continuous improvement must be a leadership imperative for every business.

If you're looking for sustainable competitive advantage, innovation should be your focus. To do this, companies need to build an environment where it's safe to make mistakes and push boundaries while still considering the customer's perspective.

6. Expand Common Ground

A good manager understands the need for a diverse workforce. Multiple studies have shown that companies which employ people across genders, ethnicities, age groups, sexual orientations and educational backgrounds operate more successfully than those that limit employees to one demographic. The ability to find common ground where all stakeholders can contribute their strengths is a leadership responsibility that current business leaders must commit themselves to achieving.

7. Make Difficult Conversations Easy

Managing conflicts in the office and difficult conversations are vital for leaders. That is why many leadership training programmes include conflict management. Undue bias, gender disparity, equality and just workplaces need open and transparent conversations. Leaders may be reluctant to confront deep-seeded biases that are part of their organisational culture, but working on yourself first increases your courage for resolving such issues in the workplace.

8. Manage Attention (not Time)

We hear time management all the time. In my opinion, attention management raises leaders' performance far more than time management. Prioritizing and focusing your attention on what's most important to your strategy will give you the long-term strategic advantage.

9. Empower Employees for Success

Delegation and empowerment might look like the same skill, but they are definitely not identical.

Delegating and empowering are both important when in a business environment, but have different functions. When delegating out tasks, it's obligatory to assign people what they need to do. When you empower someone they become more motivated and creative. They learn from mistakes better and are more accountable, which becomes an underrated trait in the workplace these days.

Empowering employees is a key leadership skill that requires more than assigning tasks. Employees today want development that will build skills and careers, so every task you assign must serve this purpose.

10. Deliver Constructive Feedback

Do you like to hear constructive feedback? How often do you want to receive these? Perhaps a first question for you as you are reviewing your leadership development needs is: "What feedback will make my employees feel empowered?"

Constructive feedback should be specific, timely and recognize the good work that was done. When you are specific, you show that you are paying attention. Use growth mindset to frame constructive criticism in a positive light by saying something like, "I've noticed you doing this.. and I wonder what's your thinking behind that. Will you share with me?"

Similar to communication skills, delivering constructive feedback is both art and science. Find the best time – you definitely do not want to do it during a company party or when an employee is dealing with a personal problem like a death in the family, a sickness, etc. One thing is certain – employees who are looking for growth will appreciate that you are noticing them and giving them regular, constructive feedback that helps them grow.

In your decision-making process, carefully identify any gaps in skills or abilities in your existing programmes and close the gaps. Ensure the new programme you now design truly helps you develop your leadership pipeline, because a strong core built upon the right vision, attitudes and mindset will future-proof your organisation.

About the Author

Ms Yeo Chuen Chuen is an NTU alumna from the Class of 2003. She is a multi-award-winning executive coach who raises the quality of leadership in every organisation by developing agility. She is the author of the international best-selling book "8 Paradoxes of Leadership Agility". Honoured with accolades and praise for her outstanding work over the years, she was named "Woman Super Achiever" and one of the "Top 101 Global Coaching Leaders" at the 28th World HRD Congress. She was also named "Best Agile Leadership Development Coach" 2020/21 by Corporate Vision Magazine.

To know more about this article visit, <https://acesence.com>.



October – December Calendar of Events

OCTOBER

13 **Quality Sleep For A Healthier Life**
| 优质睡眠, 健康一生*
WED 8:00 pm – 9:30 pm
**Talk will be conducted in Mandarin*



NOVEMBER

Every **Project Appreciation @ South West**
SAT 9:00 am – 4:00 pm



DECEMBER

10 **Family Carnival Day**
FRI 9:00 am to 12:00 pm



VISIT OUR WEBSITE
WWW.NTUALUMNI.ORG.SG
FOR MORE EVENT INFORMATION

Events are subject to changes.
Email events@ntualumni.org.sg to RSVP.

Recognising Our Staff in the Secretariat Team



Long Service Awards were presented to Chua Ngak Huay and Emmanuel Matias, in recognition for their valued contributions and dedicated service to the Club and members. Ngak Huay was conferred the award for her 15 years of service and Emmanuel for his 10 years of service, respectively.



Chua Ngak Huay

Manager, Finance
Admin & HR
(15 years with NTU
Alumni Club)



Emmanuel Matias

Events Executive
(10 years with NTU
Alumni Club)

Hello, my name is Ngak Huay. I started working at NTU Alumni Club in 2005 as an Accounts Executive. I feel fortunate working in the Club as it gives me an excellent opportunity to learn new skill sets and I am no longer restricted to simply working with financial numbers.

As part of the Secretariat team, I participated in several major events organised by the Club. The Club's 20th Anniversary and A Spectacular Jewel Christmas Experience in 2007 and NTU Alumni Club Student Bursary Fund Raising Golf Tournament in 2008 were my most memorable events.

The Club and Management Committee gave me many opportunities to advance my career throughout the years. As a result, my duties expanded to include administration and human resources. In 2013, I got promoted to Finance, Admin, and HR Manager.

I enjoy making crafts during my free time, particularly paper quilling - an art of manipulating and arranging small strips of paper into detailed designs. I use this technique to create birthday cards for teammates and holiday decorations for the office and Recreation Room, which you might have seen when you visited the clubhouse.

The last 15 months were challenging for everyone due to the pandemic, but I am still thankful for everything. It has been a real privilege to work in NTU Alumni Club, supported by the Management Committee and my teammates.

My journey with NTU Alumni Club started in late 2010. I began as a Bartender for the Club's exclusive bar lounge. After six months, they offered me an opportunity to be the Club's Events Coordinator. I learned how to plan and execute events, how Club operations worked and learned membership sales over the years as a coordinator.

By the end of 2019, I was offered the position of Events Executive, which would allow me to handle more significant tasks and responsibilities. Unfortunately, the pandemic happened. Hence, on-site events popular with members were postponed. Despite this, new opportunities came! I was the first to successfully run our first virtual Club event in 2020 and continued to run such events until today. In 2021, I was given the opportunity to support the Alumni Development Subcommittee, allowing me to expand my skill sets planning and organising professional development events.

As a foreign talent coming to live in a country with a different culture, I felt at home here at NTU Alumni Club. I was fortunate to have met colleagues and members who were very welcoming and sincere throughout these years. I am thankful meeting so many supportive people who helped me improve my work and life.

It is a privilege to work here at NTU Alumni Club, and I thank my seniors and mentors for encouraging me and believing in me. I am also thankful to the members who continuously support the Club and the events we plan for them.

Here's to more fun memories with the Club!

The Management Committee extends its heartfelt congratulations and appreciation to the award recipients for their commitment and role in the Secretariat's operations.

19 June 2021, Saturday, 4:30 pm, Online Session

Welcome to My Kitchen 2

Welcome To My Kitchen 2 was back by popular demand on 19 June. The Club invited our Management Committee member and MasterChef SG S2 runner-up, Mr Leon Lim to conduct a virtual live cooking demonstration.



During the session, Leon guided participants and their family members through kids-friendly recipes, specifically Claypot Chicken Rice and Herbal Chicken Soup. He also shared and introduced our new Interest Group – Foodie Interest Group.*

Overall, the event was well received with more than 80 participants attending the virtual live cooking demonstration. We have garnered positive feedback from participants, who commented that the recipes were simple and easy to follow, and that Leon was friendly and detailed when answering questions. At the end of the session, we selected one lucky member who walked away with a \$50 grocery voucher.

*Drop an email to us at events@ntualumni.org.sg if you are interested to join our Foodie Interest Group.

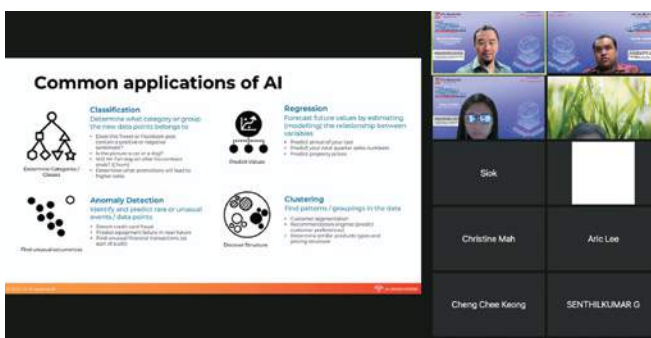
29 June 2021, Thursday, 8:00 pm, Online Session

Accelerating AI in Singapore

Technological advancement has been a key factor in improving our daily life in the modern age. These advancements hastened when companies needed a solution to limit human interaction, brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

To demystify how Artificial Intelligence (AI) has vastly improved in Singapore, Mr Koo Sengmeng, Senior Deputy

Director at AI Singapore was invited to share with the webinar participants the common applications of AI in the country, and the latest innovation in the AI sector that helps to enhance our daily tasks. Mr Koo also provided information on some programmes that AI Singapore developed, for those interested in taking up Artificial Intelligence as a career.



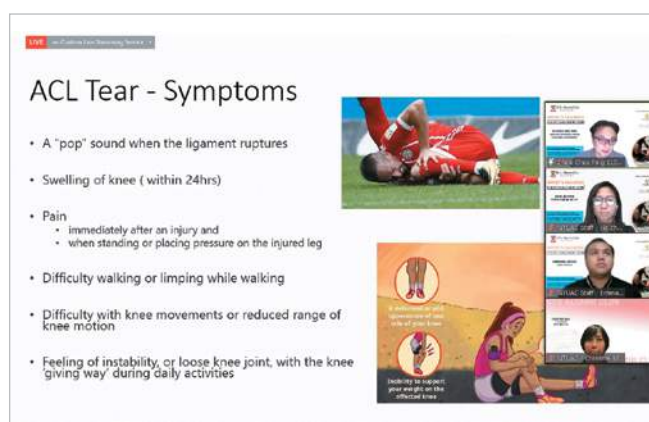
The information shared is valuable to individuals interested in AI and is a good starting point to the sea of oysters for AI professional aspirants.
– Cheng Chee Keong,
Ordinary Member

6 July 2021, Tuesday, 8:00 pm, Online Session

Sports Injuries

The Club collaborated with one of our merchant partners – Fullerton Health for a virtual sharing session with our members on 6 July. We were pleased to have Dr Chew Chee Ping, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon, Alpha Joints & Orthopaedics to share with us some common shoulder, knee and elbow injuries that may result from common sports such as badminton, tennis, golf, and cycling, etc.

During the session, Dr Chew shared on the definition, causes, and treatment for Anterior Cruciate Ligament Injuries, Shoulder Impingement Syndrome, and Elbow Lateral Epicondylitis. Overall, we garnered positive feedback from participants, commenting that the session was insightful and provided them a better understanding of the injuries.



The online session concluded with a giveaway, where one lucky participant walked away with a limited edition NTU Alumni Club A5 Notebook and Felt pouch.

15 July 2021, Thursday, 8:00 pm, Online Session

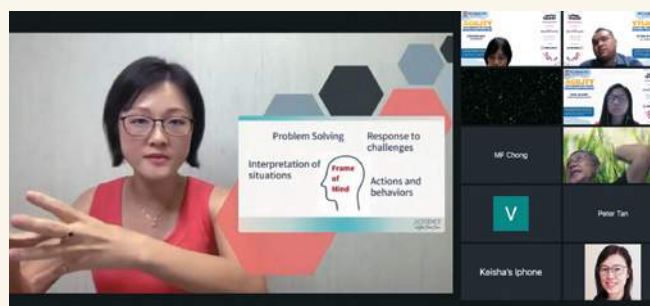
Agility – The Mindset to Thrive

What does it take to be an agile leader? Why is it important to have an agile mindset? To address these questions, we invited fellow NTU alumna, Ms Yeo Chuen Chuen, a multi-award-winning executive coach and author of the #1 International Best-Selling book, 8 Paradoxes of Leadership Agility to give members a lowdown on the topic. She shared with members and guests how having an agile mindset is essential to improving our work and life.

Attendees from around the globe who joined us in this sharing session learned from Ms Yeo the importance of agile leadership to future-proof an organisation. At the end of the session, our member, Ms Ng Lee Lee, won a signed copy of Ms Yeo's Best-Selling book, 8 Paradoxes of Leadership Agility.

We thank our partners SkillsFuture SG and Acesence by Yeo Chuen Chuen for making this webinar possible. This event is part of the SkillsFuture Month, organised in support of SG Jobs & Skills.

“I like the pro-active life-long learning approach by NTU Alumni Club in encouraging the club members to upgrade.
– Ng Lee Lee, Associate Member”



27 July 2021, Tuesday, 8:00 pm, Online Session

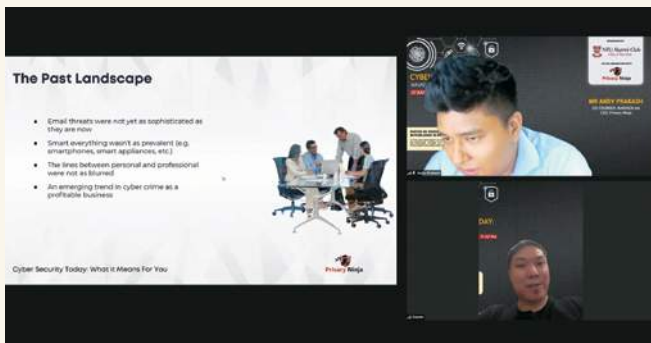
Cyber Security Today: What It Means for You

In this new normal that we live in, knowing how to safeguard personal data is not just for businesses or organisations, but also for every individual who uses digital platforms or devices for their day-to-day transactions and communications.

To share the importance of data protection for each individual and organisation, Mr Dexter Ng, founder and CTO of Privacy Ninja and Mr Andy Prakash, co-founder and

CEO of Privacy Ninja kindly accepted the Club's invitation for an exclusive webinar for members.

By the end of the session, participants learnt how to have proper cyber hygiene and potentially prevent cyberattacks from various case studies that our speakers presented.



“The speakers provided an insightful and thorough overview of the current security risks and the measures to mitigate them. Definitely worth the time! – Vicente Tanguenco III, Management Committee member & Deputy Chairman, Finance”

28 & 29 August, Saturday & Sunday, 9:30 am, Singapore Emergency Responder Academy

Standard First Aid Course

The Club conducted a 2-day on-site Standard First Aid Course, in collaboration with Singapore Emergency Responder Academy (SERA) on 28 & 29 August. During the session, our members did hands-on practical such as bandaging techniques, etc. One of the members shared that the course was good, and that the content was sufficient and manageable. Overall, the members enjoyed the session and they are now equipped with the knowledge and skills to perform adult CPR and use of the AED.



Step-up Your Gift Giving Game This Christmas

Can you hear those bells ringing? Year-end sales are happening everywhere, and people are rushing to buy that perfect Christmas gift for their loved ones and friends. But what happens after that? For some, after finding the right present, they encounter a new challenge – how to make it presentable for gifting?

We got you covered! If you are looking for a way to spruce up your gift, try these two quick gift decorations that are not just easy to make, but will make anyone feel that it's the most wonderful time of the year!

ORIGAMI SANTA

Materials Needed:

- Origami or art paper (red or any Christmas colour on one side recommended)
- Pen/Marker (Black & Red)
- Glue
- Small cotton ball

Step 1

With the white side facing up, fold paper into a triangle to make a centre line, then open it up.



Step 2

Following the centre line, fold each side towards the centre to make a kite shape.



Step 3

Fold the top (red) corner towards the bottom (white). Then flip it over.



Step 4

Fold the top of the paper to make a white triangle with at least 1 cm of red showing at the bottom. This would act as the face and the beard of your Santa.



Step 5

Fold the paper down again to create a small strip. This would be the brim of Santa's hat. Then flip it over.



Step 6

Flip it over and fold both sides towards the back to create a triangle shape.



Step 7

Flip it over and draw your preferred Santa face to finish and add the small cotton ball on top.



PAPER CHRISTMAS TREE

Materials Needed:

- Origami or art paper (green or any Christmas colour on one side recommended)
- Scissors

Step 1

Cut your origami paper into a circle. Then cut it in half.



Step 2

Take one of the half circles (white side up and curved side on the right). About 1/3 from the bottom, fold the circle side towards the straight side.



Step 3

Fold the flap back towards the right, lining the fold with the straight edge.



Step 4

Fold the flap again until you form a Christmas tree.



TIP:

- You may use glue to put the flaps in place.
- To make it look more like a Christmas tree, cut out a star or use a star sticker and paste it on top of your decoration.



Play around with different Christmas colour paper and use these decorations to spruce up your Christmas gifts! After that, feel free to share with us a photo of your masterpiece and stand a chance to win a **\$10 gift voucher**. Submit your entries to clubnews@ntualumni.org.sg.



by Mr Dennis Foo

Bringing Outdoors Indoor

Some people say it's challenging to find the right hobby that enriches and provides fun. The perfect hobby for yourself can become a passion that helps you recover from a long day, and even propel you in your professional life!

Sometimes your hobby bring you under the sea or will need you to get your hands dirty, literally. But if you like to do both, taking care of a paludarium may be the ideal hobby for you!

We had the opportunity to chat with our member, Mr Dennis Foo, a paludarium hobbyist, to share more about how he started with this hobby and the challenges he encountered along the way.



1. Why this hobby?

Greens, the sound of flowing water, small aquatic animals appeal to me. So I looked around and decided a paludarium best fit my appetite. And like they say, "The rest is history".

2. How did it feel when you first started this hobby?

I was excited to see the results. Knowing that if they did not turn out right, I had no one else to pin the blame on to. Haa Haa!

3. Does anyone in your family also share the same interest?

Everyone else is more an onlooker, although my dad offers to feed the aquatic creatures every day. My mom provides suggestions once in a while, like: "So dull. Can you add more colourful fishes?". However, I always get very nice comments from guests and visitors.

4. What's the most challenging aspect of this hobby? Why?

The initial aquascaping plan is the most vital part of the journey. Once you have figured out what you would like to achieve, that's when you get the materials to make it work. The rest is the fun part of rolling up your sleeves and getting your hands dirty, literally.

5. What is one meaningful piece of advice you received from a fellow hobbyist?

"Why don't you try a marine tank?", said someone. I took his advice and ignored him. I have not much time to tend to my hobby, so a freshwater tank is an obvious choice (less tedious than taking care of a pet bird or a hamster). The freshwater setup is easy to upkeep, convenient to re-scape and when the water level runs low, just turn on the tap!

6. Could you share with us some tips on how you maintain your paludarium?

I need to care for both the terrestrial (above water) and the aquatic (below water) worlds. Lighting for the terrestrial and aquatic plants is most important. I use a timer for misting, rainfall and a chiller to keep the internal temperature sufficiently low. As for the rest, it is nothing too different from having a freshwater aquarium at home.

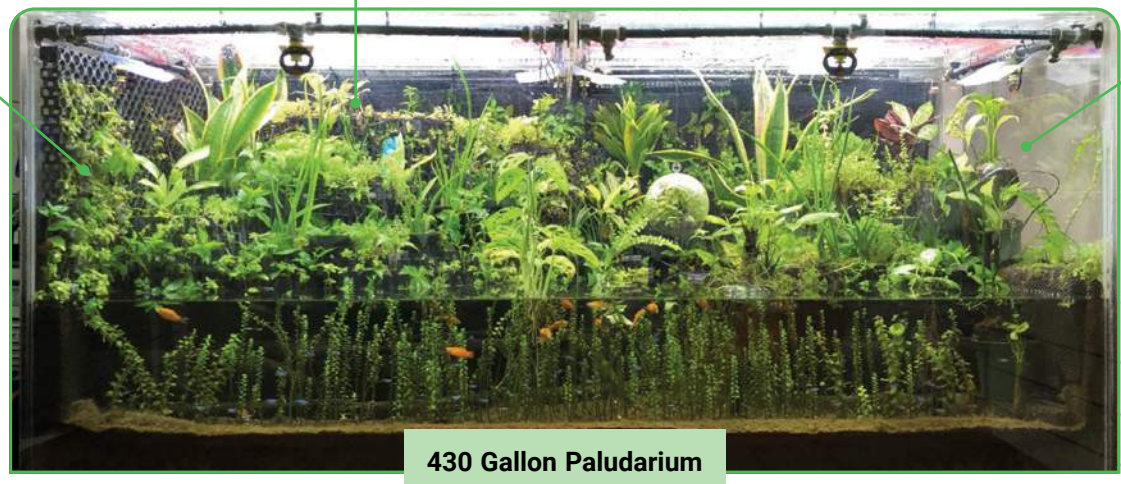
7. What would you say to someone considering starting this hobby?

Welcome to the club!

8. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

Pictures tell a thousand words ... some of my creations for sharing.

280cm Vertical Paludarium



430 Gallon Paludarium

by Mr Krishna R. Subramanyan

A Celebration of Hope and Light

Deepavali (also known as the "Festival of Lights") is one of the cultural celebrations here in Singapore. To further understand the festival, we invited our member Mr Krishna R. Subramanyan, to share how he celebrates Deepavali with his family.

Mr Krishna revealed his family traditions and some delectable traditional dishes he and his loved ones enjoy during this festive season. He also shared how he hopes to celebrate this year's Deepavali.



1 Is there a tradition/custom that your family does during Deepavali?

Our preparation starts about a month ahead of the date with a lot of shopping for this grand festival. Since everyone else is doing the same, shops are full of people purchasing the latest designs.



On the eve of Deepavali, we decorate the house with flowers and 'Rangoli' (colourful floor drawings made by using coloured rice flour. Usually placed at

the entrance of our home and right in the middle of the living room). Everyone is also encouraged to apply 'henna' (a coloured paste made of a particular kind of leaf from a specific plant) on their hands, including men. But these days, only the kids are excited about it.

On the day itself, there is a custom of everyone waking up very early (usually around 3:00 am) and having a traditional bath with scented natural oils, sandalwood paste and rose

water before putting on new traditional outfits. This ritual bath is called "Ganga snan" – referring to the equivalent of a sacred bath in the sacred and far away river Ganges in India.



We also will light up traditional and rather tall oil lamps and place them next to the deities. Firecrackers must be set off very early in the morning and late into the night – pretty much all day.

We usually gather with our extended family, preferably in our family's ancestral home. For family members abroad, we contact them and chat about how their celebration went on.

Traditional, multi-course all-vegetarian meals are prepared for breakfast and then for lunch. Since the family has been up pretty early, breakfast starts early too, as if it was a full working day. Both meals involve the entire family with all the sweets and savouries to go with it.

2 What usual places do you visit during Deepavali? Why do you need to visit this place/s?

During the mornings, we exchange our homemade sweets with our neighbours. We visit friends and relatives to wish them good fortune and prosperity in the years to come and have a fun and joyous Deepavali celebration along with them.

Temple visits usually happen in the evening. It is a tradition for our family to visit the nearest temple, attired in new clothes to pray for good health, fortune, longevity and prosperity throughout the year.



3 Do you prefer wearing traditional outfits or modern clothing when celebrating Deepavali? Do you have a recommended/preferred shop to buy these clothes?

The preference is to wear a traditional outfit, but we also wear modern outfits due to the lack of availability. You can buy traditional clothes from the various shops in Little India.



4 What is one dish that can't go missing in your celebration? Why?

Home-made vegetable fritters and coconut sauce/chutney is a MUST!



Over the years, the skill sets to make traditional sweets from scratch has drastically dropped. Therefore some manufacturers have released 'easy-to-make' packets for certain famous dishes. 'Gulab Jamun' is one of these dishes. I assure you, most homes would always have this on their table!

5 Is there a traditional sweet that you like to buy during this period? Is there a specific vendor that you usually buy these from?

Yes, we usually buy most traditional South and North Indian sweets from Komala Vilas (Serangoon Road). Commonly made from milk, nuts and dry fruits, these sweets are pretty aromatic and rich in taste that makes them irresistible.

TIPS:

1. The sweet shop has now moved into a by-lane behind the main Komala Vilas restaurant.

2. Some high-end restaurants such as Rang Mahal (3rd floor of Pan Pacific Hotel) and Yantra (Tanglin Mall) also offers the option to order multiple sweet packages that they will deliver to homes here. These places have mastered the variety in taste and visual experience well.



6 What will Deepavali look like for you and your family this year?

The pandemic has placed severe restrictions on many of the traditional activities described above that make Deepavali the amazingly exhilarating festival that usually is for children and adults alike. Travel and other safety measures will make this year's Deepavali a private affair.

One of our wishes is to celebrate Deepavali with our extended family members again and soon. We hope travel eases a bit come November.

Suppose that does not happen – then, considering that it is a festival that turns most adults into kids themselves, we will have to use different means like online communications platforms to celebrate this festival with our family and relatives.



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