

prisonnews

APRIL ISSUE 2023
CAPTAINS OF LIVES
REHAB • RENEW • RESTART

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UPLIFTING LIVES THROUGH EDUCATION

COVID-19 safe management measures were adhered to. Some photos in this issue were taken prior to COVID-19.

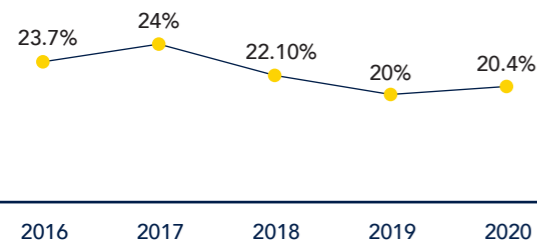


**SINGAPORE
PRISON SERVICE**

SPS ANNUAL STATISTICS | 2022

In 2022, the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) continued to keep our prisons safe and secure. The two-year recidivism rate for the 2020 release cohort remained low at 20.4%, which is one of the lowest globally.

TWO-YEAR RECIDIVISM RATES FOR 2016 TO 2020 RELEASE COHORTS

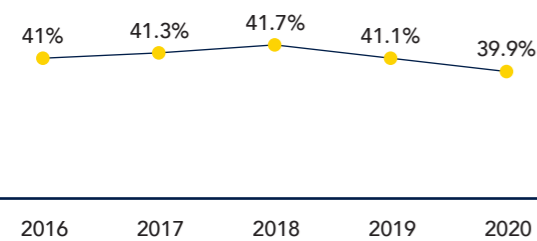


While the 2-year recidivism rate is indicative of the effectiveness of rehabilitative programmes in prison, followed by the structured community supervision and aftercare support, more can be done to support desistance in the longer term. The 5-year recidivism rate, which is a measure of sustainable community structures that support ex-offenders' desistance, has hovered around 40%.

Research on desistance by SPS shows that many ex-offenders go through multiple attempts to remain crime or drug-free before eventually succeeding. Those who successfully desist are able to **recognise and internalise the consequences of their actions on themselves and others**, make **intentional lifestyle shifts to lead more prosocial lives**, and **actively participate in structured prosocial events and activities**.

SPS and YRSG will continue to collaborate with community partners, employers, volunteers, families, and other government agencies to enhance offenders and ex-offenders' skills and employment outcomes, strengthen their pro-social support networks, enhance community corrections, and create greater acceptance for ex-offenders in the community. Together, we will **build an inclusive society with a sustainable ecosystem of support in the community to promote desistance** and lower the 5-year recidivism rate.

FIVE-YEAR RECIDIVISM RATES FOR 2013 TO 2017 RELEASE COHORTS



Read the full SPS Annual Statistics 2022 Report by clicking or scanning the QR code!

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers

Did you know that gainful employment is a critical factor that allows ex-offenders to be financially independent and reduces the risk of reoffending?

Singapore Prison Service (SPS) and the Yellow Ribbon Singapore (YRSG) recognise that education is a key component in inmates' rehabilitation and reintegration as it serves to enhance their employability potential and helps them secure jobs upon release from prisons. In our **main feature**, hear more about the thoughts of the inmate graduates who had successfully completed their year-long stint of NITEC Business Services programme! To many of them, Prison School is "more than just a place of learning [for inmates], it is a place of hope for a better future that awaits them" – as quoted by Principal of Prison School, Mr Leong Sow Phong, in **our interview with him**.

Prison News was also privileged to speak with the **Singapore Swimming Club**, a strong advocate of second chances, and discuss how they empower ex-offenders to rebuild their lives through practical work experience and career development. Read to learn more about how they foster a supportive work culture that promotes learning and ownership!

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Prison News, and remember to submit your **Pledge of Commitment** – your inspiring words may be featured in our next issue!

Chen Shuyi
Editor, Prison News

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Enhancing EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES: A PASSPORT TO BETTER FUTURE

Reported by
HTS12 Bleston Low and RO2 Justine Mok

The NITEC in Business Services Graduation Ceremony, held on the 23 February 2023, celebrated the successful completion of the inaugural year-long programme for graduating inmates from Institutions A4, B5 and TM1.

...I would like to acknowledge and thank ITE for stepping forward, to provide education and training opportunities in prison...Community Support is integral for the successful reintegration of ex-offenders. Organisations like ITE are key partners in providing opportunities for offenders, helping them stay on the right track, and becoming productive, contributing citizens. Friends and families play an important role too, in keeping them on the right track and providing support in their times of need.

Guest-of-Honour, Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim,
Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development

There were 47 inmate graduands sitting in the auditorium, and eagerly waiting in anticipation of the commencement of their graduation ceremony. Their faces lit up, breaking into smiles as they saw their loved ones and teachers streamed into the room. Spirits were high as the teachers approached the students, who repeatedly expressed their gratitude and appreciation for the dedication shown in their rehabilitation journey.

During the ceremony, Guest-of-Honour, Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development and guests, highlighted that the successful partnership between SPS and Yellow Ribbon Singapore (YRSG) in ensuring inmates' continuous upskilling would not be possible without the support of community partners like the Institute of Technical Education (ITE).

Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Minister of State, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of National Development, expressed his heartfelt appreciation to the stakeholders involved in the NITEC programmes, during his opening speech.

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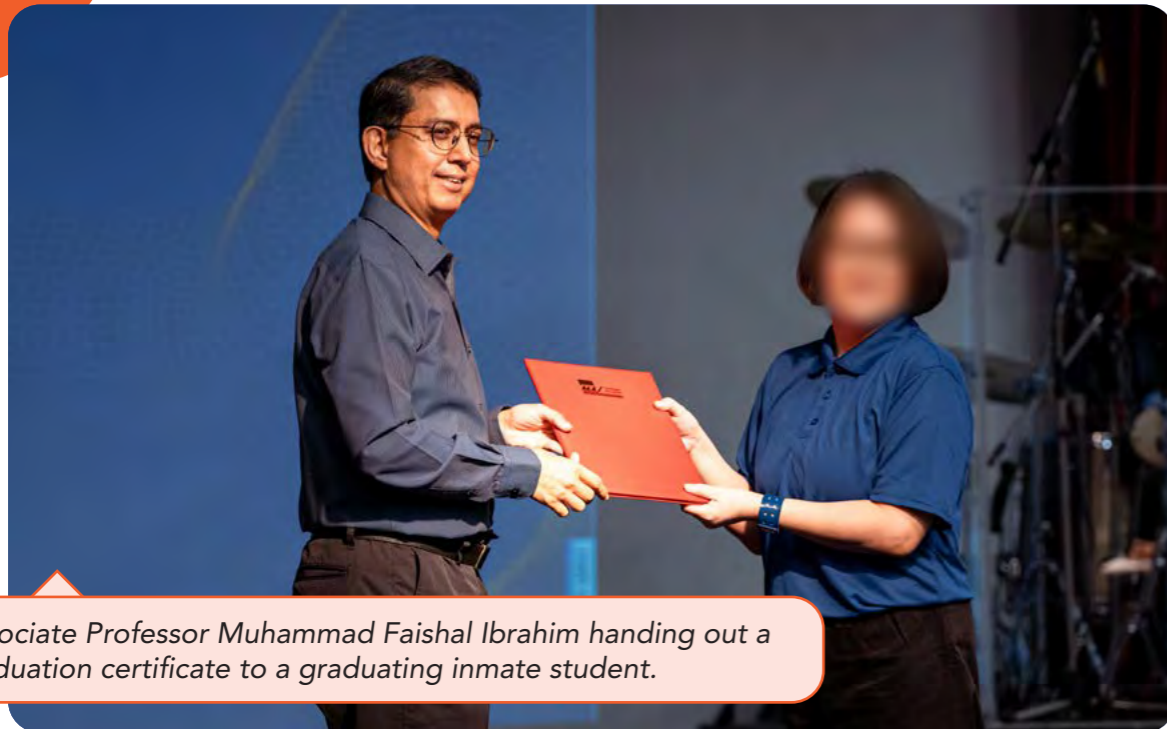
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Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim handing out a graduation certificate to a graduating inmate student.

Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal's speech was also echoed by the valedictorian of the graduating batch, who expressed her appreciation to the ITE lecturers and SPS officers who had supported her throughout her journey. Her thoughtful reflections affirmed the efforts of SPS, YRSG, and ITE as she shared that the programme had opened doors for her academic exploration and upskilling, as well as inspired her to be a steadfast individual who could contribute to society meaningfully while remaining crime-free.

Prison News also spoke to a few officers and inmate graduates at the ceremony to find out more about their thoughts and reflections.

RO Lin Yingxiu's first posting was at the Changi Women's Prison back in 2007 where she was involved in the daily management and operations of a Correctional Unit. Today, she is a Senior Correctional Unit Officer in Institution B5, leading a team of committed officers in managing a group of male inmates admitted in the Drug Rehabilitation Centre (DRC).

COULD YOU SHARE WITH US YOUR ROLE IN MANAGING THE INMATE STUDENT'S PROGRAMMES IN INSTITUTION B5?

I am currently co-managing the education programmes in Institution B5, including the ITE courses and NITEC programmes. My team of officers and I support the students through the provision of educational resources and giving them constant encouragement. We also liaise with our community partners, the educational institutes and the Prison School to ensure that our DRC inmates undergoing education programmes are receiving a similar quality of education.

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES YOU FACED WHEN MANAGING INMATES' REHABILITATION IN INSTITUTION B5?

My stint in Institution B5 does have some challenges, particularly when it comes to gender-related differences. For instance, there were times when I felt that I might not fully understand my inmates' concerns as a woman. I also noticed that inmates sometimes have trouble in expressing their emotions in front of me as they felt embarrassed confiding in a woman. Nonetheless, I do not let these challenges faze me as I have been able to successfully navigate such conversations by paying greater attention to both their verbal and non-verbal communications.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT HELPED YOU BUILD RAPPORT AND SUPPORT INMATES UNDER YOUR CHARGE?

Captains of Lives often have to perform multiple roles in carrying out the operations in the prisons and facilitating rehabilitation for the inmates. To do that, consistent engagement is most important. Even though some inmates may be hesitant to open up at first, regular engagement is useful to check in on the inmates' well-being and progress. The engagement sessions would also give them the opportunities to surface any problems or potential stressors, which would then allow me to identify the necessary interventions or support for them. At times, having a listening ear is all that an inmate requires to tide through a difficult period. A simple word of encouragement can also motivate the inmates.



RO Lin Yingxiu briefing an inmate before the graduation ceremony.

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Senior ITE Lecturer, Mr Kenneth Louis Victor, served as a Prison Officer for nearly 20 years with the Singapore Prison Service (SPS). During his time with SPS, he witnessed the success of a centralised Prison School and how education can be a social leveller. He then decided to join the ITE College Central to help in preventing possible incarceration cases if early intervention can be given. As a Senior Lecturer, he enjoys teaching youth-at-risk.

TELL US MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU DO AS A SENIOR LECTURER AT ITE.

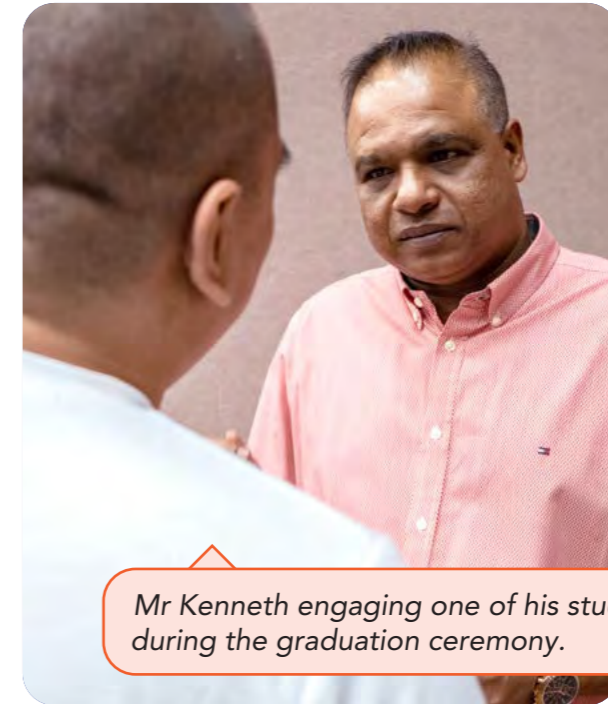
Lecturers in ITE play a myriad of roles. First and foremost, a lecturer in ITE is a mentor who is preparing his mentee to be ready in a fast-changing economy. His other role is to deliver content from the curriculum and ensure the students understand what is taught, can apply it and are competent to use the skills. Hence, a lecturer must be competent and aware of the latest trends and technological tools used in the industry. I see myself as a mentor, coach, and role model whom the students can rely on.

Lecturers in ITE also arrange for collaboration with industry partners to undertake short projects and industrial opportunities with the aim of giving our students real experiences and exposures to working life and work situations. This means that lecturers must source and secure relevant experiences for their students to be attached to SMEs and MNCs. Hence, we have to possess good networking and communications skills.

Lastly, as a lecturer, I constantly relook and revise current modules to ensure its relevance to the current context. Part of my work would be to curate new modules to ensure that I taught knowledge and skills that are relevant and practised in the industry.

COULD YOU SHARE WITH US SOME OF THE PROUD MOMENTS THAT YOU HAVE GONE THROUGH IN YOUR TEACHING CAREER?

Over my nine years with ITE, I am overjoyed and elated at many of my past students' achievements – many of them continued to study in the polytechnics to get their diplomas, and some even went to the local universities. Many still keep in contact with me, often asking me for advice or views. These experiences make me feel proud that they value my friendship and advice. A few years ago, a janitor I met at my office lift area remarked, "Teacher...you know your student's success is your greatest success". I remember her quote so vividly because it touched me and resonated well with me too.



Mr Kenneth engaging one of his students during the graduation ceremony.

HOW HAS YOUR EXPERIENCE BEEN AS A SENIOR LECTURER TEACHING INMATES UNDERGOING THE NITEC PROGRAMME?

Throughout my 20 years as a Senior Prison Officer with the Singapore Prison Service (SPS), I had many appointments and worked in the old Changi Prison, Tanah Merah Prison, Selarang Park DRC and Kaki Bukit Centre - Prison School. I thoroughly enjoyed my role in managing inmate's rehabilitation and incarceration needs. I also had the privilege to witness first-hand the success of centralising inmates' academic programmes in Kaki Bukit Centre - Prison School in 2000, Education is indeed a social leveller as there were many success stories of inmates who had studied in the Prison School, and thereafter became successful in pursuing their dreams after their release from prison. Some of them are also contributing back to society by helping other vulnerable groups. Thus, I decided to leave SPS and joined ITE as I believe that I could help in preventing some of the students from being incarcerated if early interventions could be done for them. Using my knowledge and experiences acquired from SPS, I am blessed to have the skills to engage and motivate my students, as well as to instill discipline in them.

In 2021, the opportunity to teach ITE courses in prison became a reality through the engagement with SAC Terrence Goh, Deputy Commissioner of Prisons (Operations & Rehabilitation) of Prisons. My Director of School (ITE), Ms Tham Mei Ling, gave us the opportunity to be involved in the project of bringing ITE Courses into prison for the inmates.

The collaboration between SPS, YRSG and ITE towards this project has been instrumental. The tremendous support received by ITE to run the NITEC programme is commendable. The inmate students have responded positively, and it has been a meaningful journey thus far. The collaboration has been an enriching and rewarding experience for me. The joy of watching the inmate students graduating from the NITEC programme and gaining self-confidence inspires me to do better at my job.

Mr Kenneth Louis Victor had found joy and purpose in managing inmate rehabilitation and incarceration needs during his previous stint as a Prison Officer before transiting into a career with ITE.



Inmate graduates looking at their graduation certificates.

'Lily' and 'Adil' (not their real names), inmate graduates from the NITEC Business Services programme, also shared their reflections with Prison News.

WHAT INSPIRED YOU TO ENROL IN THE NITEC PROGRAMME?

Lily: I was determined to spend my time wisely during my incarceration in prison. I heard from my cellmate about the opportunity to study. So I decided to apply since it was a chance for me to gain knowledge and skills. Specifically, I chose to apply for this programme as I feel that the skills learnt would be relevant to my previous work experiences, which can then help me in getting future employment opportunities after my release from prison.

HOW DID YOU COPE WITH YOUR STUDIES IN PRISON?

Adil: It has been close to 17 years since I last opened a textbook. Honestly, I initially experienced a lack of motivation to study consistently. However, it was my family who encouraged me and they visited and motivated me regularly to change for the better. My peers were also supportive in class. The cell environment also helped me to adapt better to the routines in Prison School. I could ask my cell-mates questions whenever I was in doubt. My main source of motivation was my children, as I strived to be a role model for them since they are schooling as well.

Lily: Initially, it was difficult as I had not studied for over 20 years. I even had negative thoughts of not being able to cope. But I managed to tell myself that I had been given this opportunity and should treasure it. So I maintained my discipline to study regularly. My classmates and officers were also very encouraging, which helped me to cope better. Particularly, I was very inspired by my teachers' sharing of how there was hope for us after release, and that doing well for her studies could improve her future. This support system was important to me since my family lives overseas. It helped that there were less distractions in the prison, and thus, studying served as an activity to meaningfully occupies my time.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR PLANS MOVING FORWARD? ANY WORDS OF ADVICE FOR OTHER INMATES WHO MIGHT BE THINKING OF PURSUING EDUCATION?

Lily: I would advise other inmates to enrol for these programmes if they are still thinking about it. This journey has given me a chance to improve myself and gain more confidence as I learn more about societal developments.

Adil: I look forward to a change in my life in the future, and I aspire to pursue a Diploma in Supply Chain Management. I would like to thank SPS, YRSG, and ITE for the chance to study as the programme provided me a chance to do something meaningful during my incarceration. I would encourage other inmates to make full use of their incarceration time to study too!

WHAT IS THE NITEC IN BUSINESS SERVICES PROGRAMME?

In 2021, Singapore Prison Service (SPS) and Yellow Ribbon Singapore (YRSG) partnered with the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) to offer inmates the opportunity to pursue education during their incarceration. Offered to inmates in Institutions A4 and B5, the NITEC in Services – Business Services programme consists of various modules that include Social Media Marketing, Sales Technique & Engagement, and Customer Service. Modules were conceptualised to ensure relevance to the inmate graduates upon their release as the society and economy are constantly evolving.

Graduates of the programme could gain career opportunities in more diverse industries, such as retail, food and beverage, administration, or tele-sales. They could also further their studies by pursuing a Diploma or Higher NITEC programmes.

DID YOU KNOW?

Gainful employment allows ex-offenders to be financially independent and reduces risks of re-offending. With the opportunity to pursue education and upgrade their skills during incarceration, their employability potential is enhanced, which can help them secure gainful employment upon release.

Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim giving thumbs up to the inmate students graduating from the NITEC Programme, and congratulating them on their graduation.

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PERSPECTIVE...

OF A CORRECTIONAL UNIT OFFICER

Reported by
RO2 Zelig Leong



CW2 AZRUL is currently working in Institution TM1 (Prison School), where he manages the daily operational and rehabilitation needs of inmates who are studying in the Prison School.

Ever wondered how prison officers run operations and engage inmates in a school-like setting? Prison News spoke to CW2 Azrul Faizal Bin Ibrahim, who is currently deployed at Institution TM1 (Prison School) as a Correctional Unit Officer.

DESCRIBE YOUR DAILY WORK AS A CORRECTIONAL UNIT OFFICER (CUO) WORKING IN PRISON SCHOOL.

Definitely busy! I must always make sure that I am au fait with all the relevant information that is needed to run daily operations smoothly – such as the timetables and the list of inmates who need to be unlocked for classes. I am also responsible for the deployment and briefing of the staff so that staff are aware of the tasks assigned to them on a particular day.

I also engage the inmates under my charge by initiating small talks as and when possible – for instance during inmates' recreational time, while unlocking them for school, or after their visit sessions. During my weekend shifts, I would also interview inmates under my charge in a more in-depth format – for instance, using My Action Plan (MAP), to understand their rehabilitation progress, find out about any specific needs or requests, as well as to encourage them to think of their future reintegration plans.

MY ACTION PLAN

Under the Learning Prison (LP) strategy, SPS seeks to inculcate learning and change into inmates so that they take ownership to be better individuals during their incarceration. One of the initiatives under LP is My Action Plan (MAP), which is a personal planning tool that charts the rehabilitation progress of each inmate. Correctional Unit Officers use MAP to guide inmates and discuss their personal goals and reflections to design their action plans.



Concurrently, CW2 Azrul is the Deployment Officer of his Correctional Unit, where he oversees the staff deployment to ensure smooth operations of his Correctional Unit.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES YOU FACE AS A CORRECTIONAL UNIT OFFICER WORKING IN PRISON SCHOOL AND HOW DO YOU OVERCOME THEM?

In Prison School, we manage all the different categories of inmates under one roof. We understand that there is no one-size-fits-all-method in managing them. Therefore, my team and I always must remain agile and empathetic to the inmates' needs and feelings when we engage them.



Apart from the day-to-day operations, CW2 Azrul makes sure to find time to engage inmates under his charge and checks in on their well-being. He ensures that the inmates' well-being is looked into during their incarceration so that they can focus on their studies and rehabilitation journey.



WHAT IS ONE OF THE MOST MEMORABLE EVENT OR EXPERIENCE YOU HAD ENCOUNTERED AS A CORRECTIONAL UNIT OFFICER IN PRISON SCHOOL?

My most memorable experience is to witness inmates who have proved me wrong by achieving good results. There were many of such inmates. In 2022, two of the inmates who were undergoing NITEC course got into a scuffle due to a misunderstanding. As they were isolated temporarily for investigation purposes, they missed a few classes and did not manage to do their project presentation with their respective teams. However, they were not deterred by the incident and instead, continue to catch up and push forward in their studies. Eventually, they did exceptionally well in their results and are currently awaiting to be accepted to further their studies in the Diploma course!

STUDIES IN PRISON

Over the years, SPS continues to enhance the education pathways for inmates by partnering with more institutes of higher learning and expanding the variety of courses offered.

In 2018, Prison School collaborated with Ngee Ann Polytechnic to offer the Diploma in Business Practice (International Supply Chain Management) Course to inmate students. Since 2020, a self-study and self-funding Degree Programme has also been offered as a progression opportunity for those who have completed their Diploma Course. Eligible applicants are funded for their studies in prison through the Yellow Ribbon Fund STAR Bursary.

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Knowing that if given proper guidance and opportunities, there are inmates who would eventually realise the importance of a good education and strive further. It is meaningful to know that Captains of Lives, along with our community partners and volunteers, play an important role in collaborating with one another and enabling the inmates to start their desistance journey positively!

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Singapore Prison Service
January 9, 2023

Dads Do Care


Families play an integral role in the rehabilitation journey of inmates. In collaboration with our community partner, Awful Grace, incarcerated fathers got the opportunity to reunite with their children during a family-joint session in Changi Prison Complex. The programme, themed 'Dads do Care', aims to help inmates maintain and improve their relationships with their children through parent-child bonding activities.



Singapore Prison Service
February 14, 2023

Happy Valentine's Day!


They first bumped into each other at the lift of their housing estate, and this fateful encounter had since blossomed into a happy marriage of 12 years and counting! Click the post to find out how CW2 Cleve Mu and CW2 Joann Chen shared how they motivate each other to stay fit and support each other in their work.



Singapore Prison Service
January 19, 2023

Hello Doctor!

Did you know that SPS leverages technology to enhance our operational effectiveness and efficiency? SPS collaborated with Changi General Hospital to facilitate virtual medical teleconsultations for inmates who require specialist follow-ups at Public Healthcare Institutions. This ensures that the inmates' medical needs are met while reducing risks of external escorts!



WHAT'S THE

BUZZ?

Reported by RO2 Cythia Lim


GET UP TO DATE WITH OUR CAPTAINS OF LIVES!

CLICK ON THE POSTS TO FIND OUT MORE!

Singapore Prison Service
February 17, 2023

Paying it Forward


Follow DSP2 Eddy Asmara as he takes you on the reintegration journey of the supervisees who are currently emplaced on the Work Release Scheme! SPS empowers them to give back to society through various meaningful activities, such as beach clean-up and grocery distribution to the vulnerable families.



Singapore Prison Service
February 3, 2023

#Throwback of SPEAR

Did you know that the Singapore Prisons Emergency Action Response (SPEAR) Force started as the Special Action Prisons Unit (SAPU) in 1977 with only 20 Officers? Walk down the memory lane on our throwback series, starting with the exciting history of SPEAR!



Singapore Prison Service
March 8, 2023

Positively Impacting Lives with Art

This International Women's Day, find out more about the story of CW Ragini D/O Anpazhahan, a Correctional Unit Officer who has been with SPS for nine years, and how she has been a testament to the many contributions that women make in the field of corrections.



Each issue, we select trending posts from our @SingaporePrisonService (SPS) social media pages to provide a peek on the happenings in SPS and what our Captains of Lives are up to! #ICYMI

Follow us! @SingaporePrisonService



MR LEONG SOW PHONG

Principal
(Prison School)

Reported by
RO2 Aaron Tan and RO2 Chung Yu Xuan



Mr Leong Sow Phong, Principal of Prison School, oversees the academic programmes for inmates in prison.

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Education is one of the key factors that can contribute to the inmates' rehabilitation and facilitate their reintegration into society upon their release from prison. Over the past decades, the Prison School system has evolved and expanded, and now provides inmate students with learning opportunities in various General Certificate of Education (GCE), diploma courses, and even a degree course! This would not be possible without a village of support, including teachers, prison officers, community partners and volunteers. Prison News spoke to Mr Leong Sow Phong to find out more about his role and asked him to share memorable experiences as the Principal of Prison School.

Q1 TELL US MORE ABOUT WHAT YOU DO AS THE PRINCIPAL OF PRISON SCHOOL.

I have been the Principal of Prison School since 2010. I work closely with Superintendent of Institution TM1 to oversee the inmate students' learning needs as well as the well-being of our teachers and staff.

Prison School is more than just a place of learning for inmates. It is a place of hope for a better future that awaits them. What drives me to work every day is the thought of giving some hope to inmates who may feel that they have lost hope.

Q2 HOW DO PRISON SCHOOL STAFF AND PRISON OFFICERS WORK TOGETHER TO PROVIDE A CONDUCIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT FOR THE INMATES UNDERGOING STUDIES?

In Prison School, the Correctional Unit Officers and our teachers work hand in hand to ensure that the inmates' academic and rehabilitative needs are met. Every class of inmate students is assigned a Form Teacher and a Correctional Unit Officer who will work closely to address the learning needs and overall well-being of the inmate students.



Mr Leong engaging a group of inmate students with Superintendent TM1, SUPT1A Teo Sze Ying.

At the beginning of each academic year, there will be an orientation programme where we introduce the assigned Form Teachers and Correctional Unit Officers to the classes. Our Form Teachers and Correctional Unit Officers will also meet up regularly throughout the academic year to discuss on the inmate students' progress and work together to address any issues.

Q3 WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES FACED BY TEACHERS IN PRISON SCHOOL, PARTICULARLY HAVING TO TEACH STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT AGES WITH A CONDENSED CURRICULUM?

Unlike the mainstream schools in Singapore with the luxury of four years to complete the GCE syllabus, our teachers are hard-pressed for time to impart as much knowledge and skills to the inmates within ten months. Teachers try their best to apply differentiated teaching and learning strategies to inmates who vary widely in age and learning abilities. Hence, we encourage Prison School inmate students to be more motivated and self-directed in their learning if they wish to achieve better results.



Mr Leong giving a motivational talk to the inmate students in Prison School.

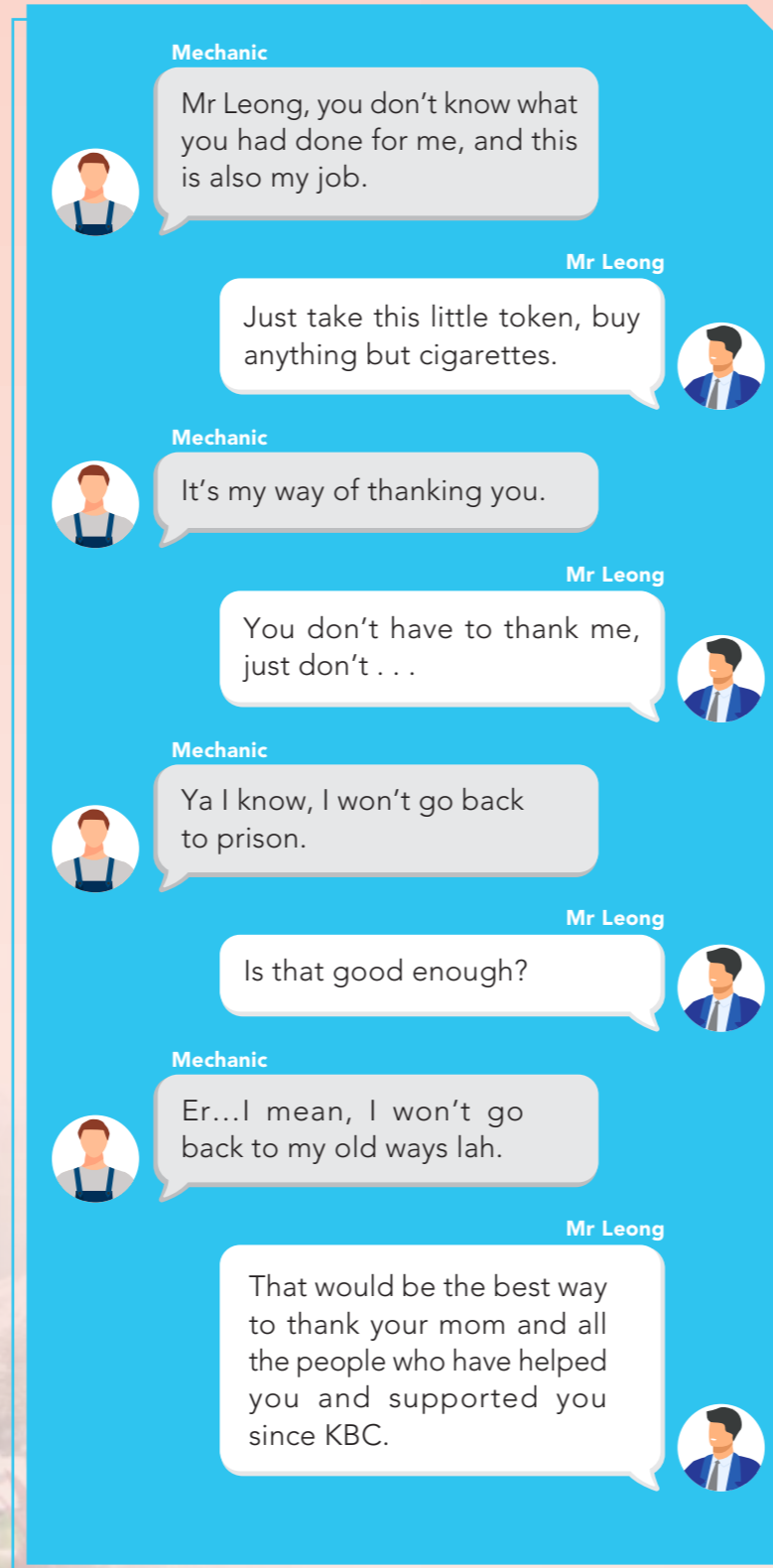
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Q4 WHAT WAS THE MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE DURING YOUR STINT AS A PRINCIPAL OF PRISON SCHOOL?

I had an encounter with one of my ex-students back in 2017 which I can still vividly remember until today. It was two weeks before the Chinese New Year and I brought along my own lightbulbs to the workshop to have the faulty headlights replaced. As I was a regular at the workshop, the boss did not want to accept payment, but since Chinese New Year was around the corner, I decided to give a small Ang Pow (red packet) to each of his two staff instead.

However, the younger mechanic refused to take the Ang Pow and I can still recall the conversation we had:

The Kaki Bukit Centre (KBC) was a Prison School established in 2000 that centralised all teaching resources and provided a conducive learning environment for inmate students. It has since been relocated to Tanah Merah Centre.



This young mechanic was a student in my previous school under Ministry of Education (MOE) and was a well-known 'terror'. Subsequently, he committed an offence and was sentenced to Reformative Training Centre (RTC), and I happened to teach him when he was enrolled into Kaki Bukit Centre (Prison School). He went on to complete his GCE 'N' Level at KBC, followed by his GCE 'O' Level when he was undergoing Release on Supervision (ROS) in 2009. He shared with me that he had always aspired to be a car mechanic and thankfully, I managed to convince the boss of my regular car workshop to take him in as an apprentice!

It was really gratifying to see how he had transformed from an 'incorrigible' secondary school student to a young mechanic who was waiting for the keys to his Build-to-Order (BTO) flat, registered with his fiancée. What was even more rewarding was to see the gratitude in his eyes... it was priceless!

"I am thankful to be in a privileged place where lives can be rebuilt and hopes awakened together with like-minded colleagues and volunteers."

**- Mr Leong Sow Phong,
Principal of Prison School**



OUR Reflections

Reported by
Reported by RO2 Hiram S/O
Thanasegara Rajah

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The work of Captains of Lives (COLs) is a multi-faceted and invigorating one. Prison officers carry out multiple roles - they are teachers, cheerleaders, disciplinarians, coaches, and even confidantes to inmates under their care. Prison News caught up with four of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) National Day Investiture Award recipients and asked them to share about their most memorable experiences as COLs!

“ Organising the Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competition during COVID-19 pandemic was an experience I will never forget. When I was appointed as Chairman of the Organising Committee in 2020, I had to quickly form the committee and propose a plan. It was difficult to arrange physical meetings. Quite often, we had members who had to be quarantined too. There were also restrictions such as safe distancing measures, which made it difficult for the committee to engage vendors to do filming of the competition inside prison premises.

Despite the challenges at hand, every committee member had stepped up and demonstrated unwavering commitment to carry out their tasks diligently. From personally delivering food cooked by the inmates to their families at home, to filming and producing in-house video, and to carrying out the first virtual Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competition in Singapore! **It was truly heart-warming to see how passionate our COLs are. They had demonstrated strong teamwork, creativity, and the can-do attitude to make it a meaningful event for the inmates and their loved ones.**

Through organising this competition, I am personally touched by what each one of us can do to help mend and strengthen inmates' relationships with their family members! ”



SUPT 1A Ronald Pang In Tai

Assistant Commander, Staff Development & Corporate Services

Operations & Security Command

Recipient of the Commendation Medal

“ Working in a Quarantine Centre during the pandemic was definitely an unforgettable experience. The daily routine of putting on and taking off Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) gear was physically and mentally exhausting. **Despite the challenges, I was reminded every day of the importance of our work and the potential impact it could have on saving lives.** The thought of having to show up to work in full protective gear was something I never imagined I would have to do in my career, but it was a testament to the unprecedented times we were living in. The sense of purpose and dedication of my team to carry out our duties despite the difficulties was truly inspiring. It was a difficult yet rewarding experience that I will never forget. ”



SCW Herjinder Kaur d/o Kaka Singh

Correctional Unit Officer

Institution S1

Recipient of the Efficiency Medal

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“ Speaking of memorable experiences definitely brought me back to my training days, where we were trained to be tactically proficient and physically fit. In order to complete any mission assigned to us, we had to work together closely, collaborate and execute our plans carefully and seamlessly. I remember there were days where trainers would throw us unexpected curveballs and we had to train ourselves to do things differently. The key learning takeaway was that we had to stay agile, relevant and adapt to our current operating environment. **Such dynamism during our mission really had a great impact on our training.**”

Besides the scorching sun and sweat, the laughter shared between my fellow trainees and I was one of the most memorable moment during my training as a newly recruited prison officer! ”



CW1 Zulfika Bin Abdul Latiff

Team Leader

Singapore Prisons Emergency Action Response (SPEAR)

Recipient of the Efficiency Medal

“ When I was at the former Changi Women's Prison (now relocated to Institution A4), there was an inmate under my care who was feeling stressed as her family was going through financial issues, and she was unable to provide much assistance. She was so affected by her family's difficulty that she started behaving aggressively. As her then Personal Supervisor (PS), I helped her as much as I could by putting up requests to various agencies who could support her family financially. After the inmate was released, she sent me cards to show her gratitude for the assistance I had rendered. **Upon reading the cards, I felt a sense of pride that I had played a part in helping her family to overcome their difficulty. This is one of the most meaningful aspects of my job as a prison officer.**”



SSGT Annapuranam

Cluster Control Centre Officer

Cluster A

Recipient of the Long Service Award

FROM

Passion TO Action

Reported by
RO2 Kong De Ren and Ms Abigail Lee

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Singapore Prison Service (SPS)'s community partners play an integral role in an ex-offender's journey of rehabilitation and reintegration. With gainful employment and training opportunities, ex-offenders can be financially independent, thereby reducing risks of re-offending. In this issue, we speak with General Manager Mr Brenden Gurusamy, Human Resource Director Ms Eileen Chern and representative at Supervisory level, Senior Executive Mr Ashiek Ashary, from the Singapore Swimming Club (SSC) and find out how they promote the Yellow Ribbon cause by nurturing a supportive culture and transforming lives at work.

AS AN EMPLOYER, WHY DO YOU THINK THERE IS A NEED TO GIVE SECOND CHANCES?

Everybody makes mistakes, and deserves a second chance in life. Nobody is perfect and as a society, we should not be judgemental. As a Club, we can play a part in providing that second chance and putting in place supportive colleagues, superiors, and mentors. We cannot change their past but we certainly can help them shape their future by providing them a stable income. The key is to look forward and be progressive in our thinking.

As an organisation, everyone has equal opportunities to succeed. As long as our employees are willing to learn and perform, we will provide them with the career development opportunities.



SSC holds the philosophy that all employees should be treated equally and given opportunities to share their ideas and learn from their mistakes.

HOW DID DISCUSSIONS ABOUT HIRING EX-OFFENDERS START?

At the back of our mind, we have always known that Corporate Social Responsibility would be an integral part of the Club. Over the past years, SSC has forged a strong partnership with YRSG. With the labour challenges brought about from COVID-19, we felt that this was one way to give back to society in a small but meaningful way, while supporting our manpower requirements.

We treat our ex-offender hires via the Yellow Ribbon Project as regular employees without revealing their background. This is in line with our belief of looking forward and treating them as equals.



The SSC is an advocate of second chances, working with Yellow Ribbon Singapore (YRSG) to empower ex-offenders to rebuild their lives through practical work experience and career development.

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SSC's Management engaging in an Operations and Technology Roadmap Consultation with NTUC's Training and Transformation team. SSC aims to increase productivity by upskilling their employees through technology improvement.



Staff from SSC work hard and play hard! Smiles and laughter were aplenty at SSC's Annual Dinner and Dance 2022.

HOW DO YOU FOSTER A SUPPORTIVE CULTURE AT YOUR WORKPLACE?

It takes a collective effort from everyone at SSC. Our senior management team walk the ground every day at work engage the staff. We also have weekly informal tea-break sessions with the staff - and lots of ideas come out of it. When (these ideas are) implemented, that gives the staff a sense of ownership and pride.

Even at management level, we eat at the staff canteen at least once a week to bond with the staff. Those are the moments where we can bond together.

We also foster a culture of learning, where it is okay to make mistakes, as long as you are willing to learn from them.

Ultimately, there is no perfect formula for this, but we try to make things enjoyable so that our colleagues look forward to coming to work.

DO YOU HAVE ANY WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT OR ADVICE FOR OTHER EMPLOYERS WHO ARE CONSIDERING PARTNERING WITH YRSG IN PROVIDING CAREER MATCHES FOR EX-OFFENDERS?

Companies which are considering partnering with YRSG must first banish the thought that these prospective employees are "ex-offenders". It is important to start with a clean slate. Trust is important. Do it for right reasons - to change someone's life, to make things better for them, to help them. It is also important to have accepting bosses who are fully supportive of this journey. Ultimately, there is no perfect formula for this, but we try to make things enjoyable so that our colleagues look forward to coming to work.

WHAT IS THE MOST FULFILLING PART OF WHAT YOU DO?

It is fulfilling to see the ex-offenders embark on a new path and be better able to take care of their family. Most of our candidates are in their mid-thirties and have families to support. It is extremely fulfilling to be able to play a role in giving them a second chance in life, to make something out of themselves. Before they can start to believe in themselves, we must believe in them first and help them cultivate the positive mindset. Positive thinking leads to positive habits and ultimately positive outcomes.

It is also rewarding to see them take on more responsibilities and be willing to upgrade themselves, which shows that our efforts have paid off.

Help unlock the career potential in reintegration journey of desistors. Click or scan the QR code to find out more about how you can partner YRSG to make a difference today!



Yellow Ribbon Pledge of Commitment

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Dear Readers, Prison News invites you to share your pledge of commitments or messages to support second chances. Your sharing may be featured in the next issue of Prison News!

Simply share with us how you would like to support second chances in your own way by scanning or clicking the QR code. It will only take less than a minute!



Want to lend a helping hand but not sure how?

Check out the various volunteer opportunities with the Singapore Prison Service (SPS) and Yellow Ribbon Project (YRP) below!

Volunteer with SPS



Volunteer with YRP





#WHYNOT

be fulfilled beyond the ordinary?

Join us in a career that transforms lives.



Click on the links below to find out more:

