

FACES

A newsletter of Filos
Community Services

FROM THE ED'S DESK

The New Year is always a special time of the year. It is fresh with promise and hope for a better tomorrow. A time when the past is put behind - a chapter closed on failures and disappointments. A new chapter opens up with new aspirations and dreams to live our lives with renewed passion and purpose.

2016 holds special significance for Filos as we look forward to serving residents and clients in Kembangan Chai Chee. We have relocated to our new premises at 38 Chai Chee Avenue. Our official opening will be held on 23rd January 2016 with Minister Tan Chuan-Jin gracing the occasion as our Guest of Honour.

As we begin to serve our beneficiaries in our new location, we want to continue to strive to fulfill our mission and vision to build resilience and to empower individuals and families to see their effective functioning in the community. We have been encouraged, humbled and inspired by the tenacity of the

people we have served in the past and continue to serve in the present. We join hands and hearts with them in building together for a better tomorrow for all, young and old.

In this issue of FACES, we pay tribute to our clients and volunteers featuring their stories of empowerment and resilience. May their journeys through the ups and downs of life bring fresh insight and inspiration to us as we begin the new year. They have demonstrated by their lives what Maya Angelou has said,

"You may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them."

“

We will open the book.
Its pages are blank.
We are going to put words
on them ourselves.
The book is called
"Opportunity" and its first
chapter is *New Year's Day.*"

— Edith L. Pierce

On behalf of the Board and Staff of Filos, I'd like to wish everyone:

"A year of unfolding horizons and the realization of dreams, of rediscovering new strength and garnering resilient faith; A year of rejoicing in the simple pleasures that life has to offer, with courage to face the challenges that may come along the way."

Wishing one and all a lovely and wonderful New Year!

Dr. Foo Fung Fong
Executive Director
Filos Community Services

Amirah's Story

'The encouragement and friendship can't be exchanged or paid with anything.'

Amirah* is an Indonesian who married a Chinese Singaporean and came to Singapore 9 years ago. They were a loving couple, and were blessed with a boy, who is now 7 years old.

Unfortunately, her husband abandoned the family for another woman 3 years ago. He barely came home, but in the rare occasion when he did, it was only to 'borrow' money from her.

When Amirah sought the support and understanding from her family back home, they were unable to do so as her husband had forbidden her to visit her family in Indonesia during the early years of their marriage. The first time she visited them was when her son was 3 years old.

The drastic change in her husband's treatment towards the family was unbearable for her, and worse still, Amirah was all alone through it all. In order to provide for her family, Amirah took up any

available job. She worked as a house cleaner, picked off lime stems for a neighbour, volunteered at community services and did packing at a hospital.

Apart from the great difficulty of making ends meet, Amirah also struggled with immense guilt and shame as she felt that she was to blame for her husband's infidelity. She had to learn to walk out of her past and remind herself from time to time that what happened to her marriage was not her fault.

Amirah's son was her greatest motivation that enabled her to pull through all these challenges. She is assured that her hard work and efforts will not be in vain as she sees that her son is receiving a good education that will provide him with a brighter future.

In November 2014, when Amirah was at a very low point in her life, Filos befriended her. Back then, she was not working regularly and hence, she was very appreciative of the

emotional support and care that were provided for them. The help of monthly Food Rations were a great relief as well. She said, "The encouragement and friendship can't be exchanged or paid with anything."

Despite her suffering, Amirah believes that God is good and is keeping watch over her.

She is showered with much love and concern from her neighbours who would pop by to check in on her from time to time. Also, being in a community of people who share in her experiences has provided her with much strength and support, as their testimonies encourage her to persevere and not to give up.



"She comprehended the perversity of life, that in the struggle lies the joy."

— Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

Marcus' Testimony

I began volunteering at Filos in 2014 when a friend from Junior College introduced me to the organisation. I enjoy teaching and interacting with people, and Filos has provided me with a platform to gain experiences.

A brain tumour was discovered when I was in Secondary Three. The tumour caused my right limbs to tremble and made learning difficult. Being a right-handed person, I struggled to keep up with school work and was insecure of my disability.

I am definitely unable to get to where I am today if not for my teachers' continual love and encouragement. Despite my shortcomings, they never stopped believing in me and even spent time out of curricular hours to help me improve. They are my inspiration to teach and help others who may be facing difficulties in their studies, as

well as those who are facing obstacles in life.

Working with the students at Filos has trained my teaching ability and also taught me to care for my students beyond the academic scope. Spending time with them out of school hours is my favourite activity as I get to know them personally.

As a teacher, the greatest satisfaction I can receive is to see students go 'Ohh...' when their doubts are cleared after clarifications. I was moved to tears when a student wrote in a Teachers' Day card, 'Sorry for sometime I asked too much questions but you helped me a lot with my science. I wish you will forever be my science teacher.'

Compassion is the best thing you can ever give. I read a quote that keeps me going as a volunteer:

'Compassion hurts. Your destiny is bound to the destinies of others. You either learn to carry the universe or be crushed by it. You have to be strong enough to love the world but empty enough to sit at the table with its horrors.'

I would like to thank Filos for giving me this opportunity to teach. I hope the students will continue to persevere and improve themselves as gratitude towards what Filos has provided for them.

'filos has provided me with a platform to gain experiences.'

* Names have been changed to protect their identities.

HIGHLIGHTS OF 2015



JAN Blessing Project @ Chai Chee



FEB Chinese New Year Celebrations Outing to Chinatown



MAR Children & Youth School Holiday Outing @ Alive Museum



APR Elderly Outing @ River Safari



MAY Active Minds Outing @ Gardens by the Bay



JUN Children & Youth Holiday Outing @ Gardens by the Bay



JUL Total Recall Workshops @ Primary Schools



AUG Filos Office Ground breaking @ Chai Chee



OCT Glamour Shots @ Chai Chee



NOV Bursary & Scholarship Award cum Volunteer Appreciation

Pillars of Resilience

PRESSING ON WITH PURPOSE

Mdm Teoh* grew up in a poor family. At a tender age of 10, her mother passed away and her father turned into an abusive alcoholic. As the eldest child, she had to undertake household chores while protecting and caring for her younger siblings. She never had the opportunity to go to school as her father believed that girls are family liabilities.

Subsequently, as a young girl, she married into a traditional Chinese family in hope for a better life. However, her mother-in-law was mean and harsh especially after her 5-month-old son unfortunately died after being bitten by a rat. Her husband was often absent due to work. One day, she received news that he died in a work accident. Her life with her abusive mother-in-law became unbearable. She chose to remain as a widow living with her mother-in-law as she was unsure if a new spouse would be kind enough to regard her children as his own.

For years, Mdm Teoh supported her family by taking on odd jobs to work from home. However, she found it hard to make ends meet and had to approach the social services to appeal for a waiver of school fees. However, she is illiterate and had to ask her brother who could read a little, to help her with the documents.

Mdm Teoh's life seemed to improve after the passing of her mother-in-law, but shortly after, she tragically lost her eldest son in a traffic accident. Mdm Teoh became depressed. Her sole comfort and purpose was to care for her son's adorable toddler. Unfortunately,

her grandson grew up and fell into bad peer influence and repeatedly gets into trouble with the law.

Now in her 80s, Mdm Teoh continues to persevere despite her sad past. She takes comfort in the support of her loving daughters and the friendships forged within the church community for the past 20 years. Today, she takes pride in ensuring that her daughter comes home to a clean and comfortable house with home-cooked food after a tiring day at work. She finds peace as she prays daily for the well being of her loved ones.

JOY WILL BE MY STRENGTH

Mdm Nee* and her younger brother were both adopted. Her father was a fierce and demanding man who would abuse his family. Mdm Nee grew to be a strong-willed girl who stood up for her mother and brother.

When she got married, she struggled to raise a family of five as they were poor. She would go door-to-door to ask for odd jobs in order to supplement the family income.

Her youngest son developed mental illness and needed someone to care for his everyday needs. Mdm Nee became his primary caregiver. After being widowed in her 50s, she continued to support her son and her elderly mother until a social worker helped her apply for financial assistance.

Now well in her 80s, Mdm Nee continues to be socially active in the community. She is well-known as a helpful and cheerful lady.

JACK OF ALL TRADES

Mr Tan* is not afraid of life's hardships for he has overcome many. He was the only child of a poor couple and sadly lost his mother when he was two years old. He grew up with little attention, and had to fend for himself while his father worked long hours.

He left school early to work and took on jobs of varied natures. He started work as a coffeeshop boy, went on to slaughter chickens, did house painting, and did packaging in a factory. Work in the early days was hard and arduous with long working hours but paid little. After years of over-taxing his body, he developed hypertension.

4 years ago, Mr Tan came down with stroke. Knowing that he is without kin, his friend stayed with him to provide care and support.

Now that he has recovered, he remains active to maintain his health and wellness. He goes to a seniors' activity centre daily near his house, and meets with friends for exercise or other activities. He also keeps himself spiritually strong as an active member of a church.

He is glad to be receiving a free lunch box and donated groceries by volunteer welfare groups. He confessed that the cost of living is getting high for a retiree, but he is thankful for the good work the Singapore government is doing for the country.

He lamented that strong traditional values like making good effort for quality results are not as highly valued as before. He knows a recipe for a good traditional soup dish, but regrets it might just be lost as he has yet to find someone who does not mind the tedious process of its preparation.

THE SCHOOL OF HARD

KNOCKS

Ah Moi* quit school in her teens as her parents were unable to pay for her siblings' school expenses. She became a ship repairer.

Ah Moi would leave house at dawn to travel to her workplace around Chinatown to carry out maintenance on ships, often staying out at sea for a week. The work was tough, accidents were common, and she was expected to perform as well as the male workers. There were days when she wished to quit, but persevered on for her family.

After the birth of her first child she stopped working and became a homemaker. However, life continued to be a series of hard knocks. After her second child was born, her husband started to suffer health issues and was soon unable to work.

Once again, Ah Moi became the family's sole breadwinner. Her husband helped to take care of their children, but many chores awaited her completion at the end of each day. The daily demands were back-breaking for her, yet Ah Moi persisted to make her own living and did not depend on getting hand-outs.

Today, she has retired and enjoys catching up with friends at the coffeeshop. She chuckles as her friends often sing praises of her generosity and helpfulness.

* Names have been changed to protect their identities.

*'we make a living by what we get.
we make a life by what we give.'*

- winston s churchill

Join us to build resilience & empower individuals!

Filos' programs and activities are funded largely by contributions from donors. Your contribution will help Filos improve the well-being of the less fortunate in our midst as we endeavour to reach many more individuals in the community.

HOW DOES YOUR GIVING HELP?



Buys a supply of bread for a needy family for a week



Enables a student to have tuition / enrichment programmes for a month, or enables a parent to be equipped in parenting skills.



Provides an elderly with befriending services / dementia intervention activities for a week



Supports a needy family with groceries for 3 months.

Cash / Cheque Donation

Cash donation can be made at our office.

For cheques, kindly make cheques payable to "Filos Community Services Ltd" and mail to: 38 Chai Chee Avenue #01-177 Singapore 461038

Online Donation

Please visit our website: www.filos.sg or donate through Giving. Sg website: www.giving.sg/filos-community-services

*All donations to FILOS are tax deductible.

Upcoming events

FILOS OFFICIAL OPENING 23 JANUARY 2016

Filos @ Chai Chee will be officially opened on January 23rd 2016. We look forward to serving the community at Chai Chee.

FILOS FLAG DAY 19 MARCH 2016

Join us as a volunteer to raise funds for Filos' beneficiaries.



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