

NEWS RELEASE

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Singapore, 16 October 2004**NTU STUDENTS MAKE THE GRADE BY CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY**

A group of third-year NTU students applied their skills and knowledge to plan and execute a fund-raising and awareness campaign for Villa Francis Home for the Aged. This campaign, involving two ice-cream drives in NTU and two flea market sales of exquisite handicraft and artwork by the residents of the home, culminates in a grand finale dinner, where Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Acting Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports will be the guest of honour.

The project, named "SilverLining", took the six-person team from NTU's School of Communication and Information (SCI) more than 10 weeks to plan and execute. The project comprised events aimed at raising public awareness of the Home and its residents as well as providing opportunities for the NTU student community to experience being volunteers. The campaign also managed to raise \$1,500 which will benefit more than 100 elderly residents at the Home. Besides marking the end of the awareness and fund-raising campaign, the dinner also serves to spread the message of caring for the community as the team invited fellow NTU students who expressed interest to be volunteers to also attend the dinner and interact with the elderly.

All the effort stemmed from a unique syllabus implemented by NTU professor, Dr Krishnamurthy Sriramesh. While simulated campaigns are widely used to allow students to try their hand at planning communication campaigns, Dr Sriramesh's public communication campaign class requires students to form groups of five or six to plan

and more importantly, execute the communication campaigns for non-profit organizations (NGOs).

After selecting the NGO they wish to work with, students proceed to liaise directly with the organization to understand its needs before mapping out the campaign plan. The challenge lies in achieving optimal results for the NGOs, given the limited resources of the organizations. The students leverage on their knowledge of different media platforms, which they learnt in their communications class, to raise awareness for their NGO's cause. So their tasks for the NGOs include designing websites to producing brochures and flyers, to pitching their ideas to the media and running roadshows for publicity.

"I believe that in having students execute campaigns for NGOs, we not only expose them to real-world experience, but also encourage them to contribute to the community while they learn," said Dr Sriramesh, who has taught similar public communications courses at US universities. "This sort of project work instills, and helps further develop, altruism among students."

To April Moh, one of the NTU students involved in the SilverLining project, planning and executing this project has been an enriching experience.

"This started out as a school project but along the way, it wasn't the grade I was interested in. I wanted to use what I know to make a difference. So apart from gaining real-world experience, this NTU course made me realize the importance of contributing to the community", she said.

"Projects like SilverLining definitely help groom caring leaders of the future. When these students participate in community projects, the experience instills in them a certain quality of caring for others which helps to enrich the lives of the volunteers and the old folks they befriend", said Mr William Teo, Administrator for the Villa Francis Home for the Aged.

For this semester, five other NTU student community projects for NGOs such as Food from the Heart, Mercy Relief, and Man Fut Tong Nursing Home have been done. As part of their campaigns, the students organized activities from food donation drives, to joint promotions with retailers and companies, to sales of meaningful handicrafts and gifts.

Besides the appreciation from the various NGOs, many of the NTU student community projects have also gained recognition from the local communications industry. In 2003, NTU students won the Institute of Public Relations' Public Relations in the Service of Mankind Award for their project on Club Rainbow Singapore, an NGO that helps families with children suffering from chronic and life-threatening diseases.

About Nanyang Technological University

The Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is a top-tier university, ranked among the best science and technological universities in Asia. It has a business school that is consistently ranked among the top ten in Asia.

Established in 1991, the university has since been positioning itself to be a global university of excellence and is committed to its mission of *Educating Leaders and Advancing Knowledge for Singapore and Beyond*. NTU has an undergraduate and graduate enrolment of about 25,000 and an international faculty of over 1,500. It offers a broad-based curriculum, which focuses on the development of global views, entrepreneurship and adaptability, through the following schools:

1. College of Engineering, which consists of five schools:
 - Civil and Environmental Engineering
 - Computer Engineering
 - Electrical and Electronic Engineering
 - Materials Engineering
 - Mechanical and Production Engineering
2. Nanyang Business School
3. School of Biological Sciences
4. School of Communication and Information
5. School of Humanities and Social Sciences
6. School of Art, Design and Media (*to be established by 2005*)
7. School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences (*to be established by 2005*)

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