Understanding the meaning of our work has empowered us through the growth journeys of our special ones on the autism spectrum. The purpose of our job gives us the fortitude to support our students and clients as they transit from childhood into adolescence and into adulthood. It also boosts our stamina to work alongside parents and caregivers, to help them support the autism needs of their children.

Right from the start, Autism Association (Singapore) (AA(S)) recognised the need to provide students and clients the skills to lead meaningful, independent, dignified and quality lives. The development of skills is augmented by the building of confidence and the availing of support networks. This has been the Association’s motivation and founding spirit since its inception in 1992.

This philosophy has led the Association to provide a continuum of relevant services that is appropriate for persons with moderate to severe autism.

For example, 19-year-old Muhammad Ghazali looks forward to his weekly swimming sessions with his coaches. Nine years ago, this would not have been possible, according to his mother Madam Khatija who is his primary caregiver.

Ghazali’s journey with Eden started in 2003 when he joined Eden Children’s Centre for a year before he transferred out. When he was 13 years old, he enrolled with Eden School. He was already a big boy back then. Physical activities such as walking were arduous for him. By 2012, he weighed 100 kilogrammes. Undaunted, his teachers and mother worked together to devise a healthy living...
Today Ghazali attends Eden Centre for Adults twice a week, where the coaches continue to support his autism needs, one of which is his healthy lifestyle programme. Given his health conditions, swimming was deemed as the safest and best exercise for Ghazali. “We have to be very flexible to support our clients,” says Mr Prashant, Ghazali’s coach at Eden Centre for Adults (Clementi). “For Ghazali, this means modifying his programme to include teaching his mother how to bring him to the swimming pool.”

Ghazali’s story reflects the goal of Autism Association (Singapore): even when our clients no longer access our programmes and services, their parents and caregivers would have gained the courage and confidence to bring them out into the community.

We strive to help our beneficiaries attain successful outcomes, and the Association could only do so when there are dedicated staff, steadfast volunteers and financial support.

You can make a difference today by providing our beneficiaries the financial support that they need to access our programmes and services.

The Association is dedicated to serving individuals with autism and helping them lead meaningful and quality lives through its programmes and services – Eden Children’s Centre, Eden School, Eden Centre for Adults, Eden Activity Club and Eden for Life.

The Association was set up through the initiative of a group of parents in August 1992. It became a charity under the Charities Act in January 1995. In July 1997, the Association was admitted as a member of the National Council of Social Service and granted the Institutions of a Public Character status allowing it to issue tax-exempt receipts for public donations.

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In Focus

THE REASON WE SERVE

The reason we serve is the reason we exist. It is our guiding principle and the belief that has driven us to serve the needs of individuals with autism in Singapore. This belief is what keeps us motivated to deliver the best possible services to our beneficiaries.

In 1992, a group of parents saw the need to provide support and services to their children with autism. They came together to form the Autism Association (Singapore). Since then, the Association has grown from a small group of parents to a well-established organisation that serves thousands of individuals with autism and their families.

Our mission is to improve the quality of lives of individuals with autism and their families by providing a wide range of services and support.

We work towards this goal by providing special education, therapy services, family support, and advocacy. We also promote autism awareness through public education and outreach programmes.

We believe that with the right support and resources, individuals with autism can lead fulfilling and meaningful lives.

Autism Association (Singapore)

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Autism Links

Autism Links is a quarterly publication by the Autism Association (Singapore) at 101 Bukit Batok West Ave 3 #01-01 Singapore 659168.

Opinions expressed in this publication may not necessarily reflect the official views of the Association.

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Ghazali making his own simple healthy juice.

Ghazali delighted in assembling his photo frame.

Ghazali’s smile says it all.

Ghazali enjoying his swimming session with his coaches.

Ghazali having personalised instruction by his coach.
Lunch and Karaoke at Dignity Kitchen

On Thursday, 15 August 2019, 19 clients were invited to Dignity Kitchen, a social enterprise, for lunch and karaoke session. This was the third time that Dignity Kitchen has organised such an event for Eden Centre for Adults.

The invitation was a win-win situation for both Eden Centre for Adults’ clients and Dignity Kitchen. Accompanied by eight coaches, our clients had the chance to make their own decisions on the dish that they preferred: nasi lemak or wanton noodles, and the accompanying beverage. They were served by Dignity Kitchen trainees who were also persons with disabilities. It was a beneficial opportunity for both groups to interact with each other.

Our clients were also supported by Dignity Kitchen’s corporate volunteers. That presented another platform for our clients to practice their communication and social skills with new friends.

With a full belly, some of our clients took to the stage for a karaoke session. Their enthusiastic singing was full of life, reflecting their happiness and contentment with the activity.

Eden School Inter-Class Bowling 2019

As part of the Teachers’ Day celebration on Thursday, 5 September 2019, all 61 students from Eden School (Ang Mo Kio (AMK) Campus) took part in its second inter-class bowling competition that was held at Forte Bowl (Kovan). Vice Principal, Mr Stanley Chan, was the Guest of Honour.

With four additional classes in AMK campus this year, there was a greater sense of competition among the students. Educators were caught up with the excitement as well.

This year’s gold trophy was won by newcomer Howard Class (PM), that joined the AMK campus in January.

Howard Class (AM), the defending champion from 2018, also exhibited focus and skills. Even though they had to cede their top position to Howard Class (PM), they exemplified good sportsmanship towards their peers by shaking hands with the winning class and giving words of encouragement to each other.

For the other classes that were new to this bowling competition, the unfamiliar setting did not discourage the students from trying their best, and attaining progress steadily. The educators were particularly impressed by the students’ determination throughout the games.

In a nutshell, the inter-class bowling competition has given students the chance to bond with educators and forge stronger friendships with their peers.

Very Special Arts Competition

Very Special Arts (VSA) Singapore is an organisation that seeks to empower people with disabilities through the arts. This year, their annual art competition themed “See What I See - Remembering the Past, Building the Future” featured artworks by children and youths with special needs. Student artists from Eden School adopted a personal approach to reflect their physical and emotional growth over the years, as Singapore commemorates 200 years of history.

The winners are:

Winning entries
Happy Panda
Fung Cheng Zhi Darrell
1st Prize, Child Category

My Submarine
Ruan Guozhi
Merit, Youth Category

The world’s best warriors from past to future
Aw Yong Jun En Nathaniel
3rd Prize, Youth Category

City Skyscrapers in Singapore
Lai Zer Yinn
1st Prize, Youth Category

Congratulations to all the student artists!

The students, along with their parents and teachers, were invited to the opening ceremony to receive their awards. Present at the ceremony were Guest of Honour Mrs Lucy Toh, Divisional Director of Ministry of Education’s Special Educational Needs Division, and Ms Maureen Goh, Executive Director of VSA. The ceremony marked the start of a 10-day exhibition at Forum the Shopping Mall, from 20 to 29 September 2019.

Judges’ picks
Next time I will be at the Juventus stadium!
Jaylen Lai Kai Le

My future is to be a poker card designer
See Zong Xian

The beautiful now and disappointing future
Aw Yong Jun En, Nathaniel

School showcase
Protecting Singapore
Aqil Danish Bin Hisham

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Clients enjoying lunch together.

Having fun during the karaoke session.

Clients interacting with corporate volunteers.

The champion, Howard Class (PM).

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The champion, Howard Class (PM).
Long Service Award Presentation

A Long Service Award presentation was held on Thursday, 5 September 2019 as part of Autism Association (Singapore)’s STaff Appreciation, Reunion and Salute (STARS) event.

Recipients of the Long Service Award 2019 (based on Employment Joined Dates):

1-Year
- Tan Tong Xin (Eden Children’s Centre (Clementi))
- Nur Rafidah Binte Sawal (Eden School)
- Goh Wen Ping Weping (Eden School)
- Tan Wei Wen (Eden Centre for Adults (Clementi))
- Oh Shi Hao (Eden Centre for Adults (Hougang))
- Zahidah Binte Omar (Eden School)
- Seah Hui Jie Theresa (Eden School)
- Nursulhuda Binte Abdul Rahim (Eden School)
- Tay Sock Hong (Eden School)
- Yeo Hui Yi Adeline (Eden School)
- Sasi Priya d/o Kunnasegaran (Eden School)
- Tan Ming Min (Eden School)
- Fion Pang Jing Wen (Eden School)
- Tan Elaine (Eden School)
- Ong Wai Ping Charlene (Eden School)
- Masarah Binte Jalaludin (Eden School)
- Du Jiayi (Eden School)
- Norasmirah Binte Azami (Eden Children’s Centre (Clementi))
- Phua Zhi Yang Ellis (Eden School)
- Tan Shin (AA(S) Headquarters)

15-Year
- Ang Kheng Siang (Eden Centre for Adults (Clementi))
- Shuhaidah Abdullah (Eden Centre for Adults (Hougang))
- Nur Nadzirah Binte Hussain (Eden Children’s Centre (Clementi))

20-Year
- Sarayanan S/o Mariappa (Eden Centre for Adults (Clementi))
- Ms Tutie Noorissah Binte Alai (Eden Children’s Centre (Clementi))

Play Inclusive 2019

Play Inclusive 2019 is a platform for athletes with disabilities to collaborate with their unified partners (individuals without disabilities). Co-organised by Special Olympics Singapore and SportCares, with support from the Ministry of Education, it aims to build friendship, understanding and inclusion through shared sporting experiences.

Held from 24 to 25 August 2019 (Saturday and Sunday) at the Singapore Sports Hub’s OCBC Arena, Play Inclusive was positioned as Singapore’s largest unified sports competition. There was a total of 436 athletes and 324 unified partners who participated.

To prepare for the competitions, Eden School’s athletes trained with their partners from Princess Elizabeth Primary School (in badminton) and Raffles Institution (in football). To sweeten the mutual training experience, Eden School’s athletes came in third for both events.

Love-In-A-Bento – Food Distribution

On Wednesday, 7 August 2019, Eden Centre for Adults (ECFA) (Clementi) participated in the Love-In-A-Bento initiative that was organised by SHATEC, Touch Community Services and South West Community Development Council. This is the third time collaboration between ECFA (Clementi) and these organisations. Member of Parliament for Jurong GRC, Ms Rahayu Mahzam, was the Guest of Honour for this event.

Love-In-A-Bento is an initiative that involves the delivery of bento sets to the needy and elderly folks in the south-west areas of Singapore. Three ECFA (Clementi) clients and three staff joined forces to deliver the meals to about 10 households in Bukit Batok.

This year was the first time that SHATEC collaborated with Grab to bring clients to the destinations. It was heartening to see how the different entities have come together to serve the community, and show that people with special needs can also contribute meaningfully to the society.
Organised by National University of Singapore’s (NUS) University Scholars Programme students, We Will Dance 2019, a 10-hour dance marathon was held on Saturday, 24 August 2019 at the NUS Cinnamon College.

The event saw over 300 participants including Autism Association (Singapore)’s staff, beneficiaries and their caregivers.

Prior to the event, Eden’s alumni and clients from Eden Centre for Adults attended two customised dance workshops on 13 and 20 July 2019.

Conducted by local dance artists, the objectives of the workshops were to evoke the joy of dancing, and to provide an alternative workout that was both fun and appropriate for the beneficiaries.

The clients’ parents were delighted that their children were given the chance to learn various dance moves, get exposed to different genre of music, as well as reach out to and interact with the community.

Our Eden Children’s Centre’s Term 3 curriculum about sea creatures involved visiting two local fish farms – Qian Hu and Orto. Term outings are another way of providing parents with the opportunity to bond with their children and support them in their learning journeys.

Clients and their parents were divided into two smaller groups in order to better cater to their autism needs. To prepare clients for the outing, each group gathered at Eden Children’s Centre for some pre-event activities such as decorating fish tank, scooping toy fish, matching photos and playing fishing-related games. Parents were given goals that they were encouraged to achieve with their child during the outing.

For the group that visited the Qian Hu Fish Farm, they were given a guided tour and introduced to different types of fish (from goldfish to stingrays) and the feeding process. The last stop of the tour was a hands-on activity at the “Longkang Area” where participants had fun catching small fishes to bring home. At Orto Fish Farm, the group was literally in the water of the “Longkang Area” to also catch some fishes.

After the activities at the farms, participants were treated to a buffet of potluck items that were prepared by the clients’ parents.

We Can Bake It!

A proven hit from our inaugural series in Term 2, Eden Activity Club (EAC)’s baking programme, “We Can Bake It” was back in Term 3 with four pairs of members and caregivers.

Drawing on the basics of dough-making acquired from the previous term, the sessions in Term 3 focused on the preparation of burgers. Instructor Chef Jun imparted kitchen secrets and recipes that were both tasty and simple. The varied burger menu covered in the 8-week programme included cajun chicken, beef rendang, Korean beef, teriyaki chicken and vegetarian options. Each session invariably ended with mouth-watering treats for both members and caregivers.

Beyond just being a recreational activity, “We Can Bake It” series has enabled our members to learn basic food preparation. It heralds our members’ progress in baking their way to independence which is an integral aspect of daily living activities.

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Billy was a 12-year-old boy with autism. He refused to wear his dental retainer. His parents tried to prepare Billy to use the retainer. They thoroughly explained the process of being fitted for a retainer. His parents tried to prepare Billy to use the retainer. His parents tried to prepare Billy to use the retainer.

The process of being fitted for a retainer is a complex one, involving multiple steps and procedures. It is important to understand the process and to show patience and diligence in order to ensure that the retainer is fitted properly. Billy's parents tried to explain the process to him, but he was not willing to cooperate. As a result, he refused to wear the retainer.

The retainer is a small device that is worn in the mouth to help align the teeth. It is an important part of treating certain dental issues, such as overcrowding or spacing. However, it can be difficult for some individuals to wear the retainer regularly.

In Billy's case, he was afraid of swallowing the retainer. In his thoughts, anything in his mouth could be swallowed. This was a common concern among children with autism, as they often lack the understanding of the context. In order to address this, the parents tried to use various strategies, such as visual aids and real-life examples, to help him understand the process.

For instance, the parents showed pictures of retainers and people wearing them. They explained the process of being fitted for a retainer. They also showed them photographs of retainers and people wearing them. Still, Billy refused to wear his retainer.

To remove his fear, there was a need to clarify the context. For example, by using an anatomical model of the head, Billy could be asked to put the retainer through the throat of the model. In that way, he would find out that swallowing the retainer is physically impossible, through the visualization and the experience.
Nanyang Khek Community Guild Raises $130,888.00

Nanyang Khek Community Guild (南洋客属总会) celebrated its 90th anniversary this year. As part of its celebrations, it held a Nanyang Khek Community Gift of Warmth Charity Concert 2019 (客逢狮城献温情慈善演唱会) at the Esplanade Theatre on Wednesday, 12 June 2019, in support of Autism Association (Singapore)’s Eden Endowment Fund.

Recognising the lifelong learning support needs of children and youths with moderate to severe autism, the Nanyang Khek Community Guild leveraged its joyous occasion to provide financial and moral support for persons on the autism spectrum. 

“Autism Association (Singapore) was chosen as the sole beneficiary because we feel that we should help to raise greater autism awareness in Singapore,” said Mr Ho Khiam Seng, President, Nanyang Khek Community Guild. “This is why we, as a socially responsible organisation, want to reach out to more members of the public to let them be better informed about autism, and to help persons with autism integrate into our society.”

The charity concert was a star-studded event with performances by Taiwan’s singer Chyi Yu, China’s young artiste Zhou Shen, China’s elite Hakka Singer Huang Hong Ying and Singapore’s very own composer-singer Roy Loi Fey Huei.

At the community guild’s gala dinner on Saturday, 5 October 2019, it was revealed $130,888.00 was raised for the Association’s Eden Endowment Fund. The dinner was attended by 1,300 members and friends of the Hakka associations in Singapore, with Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Mr Heng Swee Keat as the Guest of Honour.

“The Autism Association (Singapore) is deeply grateful to the Nanyang Khek Community Guild for their strong support and understanding of this need. We are inspired by the support. Through the fund-raising campaign, they have painstakingly helped to provide funds for our programmes and services for our adult clients with moderate to severe autism,” said Mr Ho Swee Huat, Autism Association (Singapore)’s Chairman. “It takes a village to make a difference and the Nanyang Khek Community Guild has indeed made the difference.”

Our Eden School student Zulkhairi’s artwork was selected as the token of appreciation for DPM Heng Swee Keat!