



14TH
ECOFRIEND
AWARDS
RECIPIENTS

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INTRODUCTION

There are many individuals around us who have selflessly put in their time and effort to contribute to our clean and green environment. They come from different walks of life, and include professionals, teachers, students, youths and community volunteers.

The EcoFriend Awards was introduced by the National Environment Agency in 2007, to recognise their good work and the important role they play in promoting environmental sustainability. The 14th EcoFriend Awards recognises 10 such outstanding individuals for their environmental achievements.

There are five categories in the EcoFriend Awards – Private Sector, Public Sector, Non-Governmental Organisations and Grassroots Volunteers, Educational Institutions, and Youth and Students. Do join us in celebrating our EcoFriends in this booklet!

For more information on the EcoFriend Awards, please visit our website at:
www.nea.gov.sg/programmes-grants/grants-and-awards/ecofriend-awards





“

Money should never be the number one motivator to do anything. If you invest in people and in the team, you can achieve anything.

”

Mr Lucas Glanville

Private Sector Category

Director, Culinary Operations
Grand Hyatt Singapore

Mr Lucas Glanville, Director of Culinary Operations at Grand Hyatt Singapore, is paving the way for sustainable sourcing and food waste management in the hospitality industry.

When Lucas first started reviewing his hotel's processes back in 2010, he realised that both the hotel and their suppliers were unfamiliar with the concept of sustainability. The hotel offered over 600 seafood items on its menu. On top of that, excess food from the buffets were discarded.

Fast forward to now: the hotel's practices have been completely transformed to become more environmentally sustainable. Under Lucas' leadership, all food waste is now processed through the world's first complete waste management food digester system, and converted into organic pathogen-free fertilisers. The number of seafood items has also been cut down to less than a fifth, of which 80 per cent is sustainably sourced.

Director, Culinary Operations | Grand Hyatt Singapore

OPENING CONVERSATIONS WITH GUESTS

Instead of using popular but unsustainably sourced food items for events such as weddings, Lucas focuses on sourcing ingredients from Singapore and the region. "If your mindset is fixed on using sustainable ingredients, then it's very easy to move forward from there," he says.

Lucas also describes his approach to communicating this mindset to the hotel's guests: "I don't expect every guest to understand every ingredient and how it's produced. If you have a guest who may not understand what we're trying to achieve, it's a great opportunity to sit down and explain it to them."

He often finds that guests are more aware and appreciative after talking to him, and some even go on to champion the cause to others.

PASSING ON THE TORCH TO NEW CHEFS

Promoting awareness is not just about reaching out to the guests. Lucas also likes to take his junior chefs to the hotel rooftop as part of their training. Originally just an empty space, the rooftop has been converted into a garden which now supplies the kitchens with 30 per cent of its organic herbs.

"A lot of chefs in the hotel who are just starting their careers have never been to a farm, an abattoir, or been through the seasons," notes Lucas. He enjoys helping them to better understand their ingredients and how long they take to grow, so that they can better appreciate the hard work that goes into producing the ingredients that they use to whip up a meal.

"I see it as part of my role as a leader to mentor the next generation as they enter the industry," he explains.

BE THE SOLUTION, NOT THE PROBLEM

To Lucas, a worthwhile career is measured by the kind of impact left behind. "I want to personally feel that I have created success," he says.

Lucas' take on the complications of balancing sustainability with the need for profits, is firm: "Money should never be the number one motivator to do anything."

Rather than chasing short-term profits, he believes in building a long-term investment with like-minded guests.

"If you invest in people and invest in the team, you can achieve anything."



“

Everybody is responsible for the environment - the pollution; the energy we consume.

”

Mr Jeremy Kong

Public Sector Category

Programme Chair,
Work Learn Programmes
Republic Polytechnic

Mr Jeremy Kong is an educator at Republic Polytechnic (RP), dedicated to raising eco-awareness and attracting youths to the environmental sciences.

For almost a decade, Jeremy has been working with flies – specifically, black soldier flies.

Together with industry partners, he and his team discovered that black soldier flies, native to Singapore, can be part of a viable waste management solution. Being native, these flies can be used as an alternative to imported ones, eliminating the danger of disrupting local biodiversity. Partnering Wildlife Reserves Singapore (WRS), Jeremy’s team is currently working on a closed-loop waste management system that can provide a sustainable solution to the over 4,000kg of waste produced by the animal residents of WRS’ facilities every day.

With projects like these under his belt, it is no surprise that to Jeremy, science and engineering can provide solutions to environmental problems.

Programme Chair, Work Learn Programmes | Republic Polytechnic

ENGINEERING CHANGE

As co-chairman of RP's Sustainability Committee, Jeremy has introduced many innovative, eco-friendly technologies to the campus, like food waste digesters, robotic floor scrubbers, and smart toilets. He has also spearheaded other initiatives to change behaviour, such as a *Bring Your Own Mug* programme, to encourage students and staff to use reusable cups and tumblers.

Jeremy believes that tackling climate change requires a two-pronged approach. Communicating and sustaining environmental efforts is just as important as creating scientific solutions. He explains: "If the technology is there but nobody uses it – or misuses it – then it doesn't help contribute to the sustainability efforts."

ATTRACTING YOUTHS TO THE INDUSTRY

Jeremy pointed out that the average age of a waste management worker is 49, according to SkillsFuture Singapore's published statistics¹. To give the industry a manpower boost and attract more youths, he has launched Singapore's first SkillsFuture Earn & Learn Programme (now known as Work Study Programme) for waste management and cleaning services.

Often, he finds that youths are actually quite interested in the field. However, the potential recruit's romantic partner or parents may sometimes express disapproval.

To change these mindsets, Jeremy continues to drive eco-awareness in and out of campus. He spearheaded RP's partnership with the Singapore Environment Council for an *Eco-Ambassadors Training Programme*, and also helped to set up the youth chapter of the Waste Management & Recycling Association of Singapore.

Jeremy believes that everyone should be educated about the environment and waste management from young. "Everybody is responsible for the environment – the pollution, the energy we consume."

¹Published in December 2017.



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The question now appears to be: How do we shift the needle from being aware to having the desire to do more?

”

Mr Heng Li Seng

Non-Governmental Organisations
& Grassroots Volunteers Category

Founder and CEO
Green Nudge

Mr Heng Li Seng is the founder and CEO of Green Nudge, a social enterprise that champions sustainable business practices and green behaviour.

Working with event organisers, companies, and volunteers, *Green Nudge* has helped to make community and corporate events more sustainable through the minimisation of waste and carbon emission. To date, *Green Nudge* has organised more than 40 coastal clean-ups and 16 large-scale sporting and community events.

Before starting *Green Nudge*, its founder and CEO, Li Seng, had witnessed the closure of many non-profit organisations in the community sector within the span of a few years, making him realise that his desire to do good would need to be balanced with financial viability.

BUILDING A SUSTAINABLE GREEN CONSULTANCY

Hence, Li Seng set up *Green Nudge* as a social enterprise instead of a non-profit organisation. However, as the concept of social enterprises isn't well-known in Singapore, many event organisers and potential clients are still ambivalent towards his company's sustainability consultancy services. Li Seng sometimes struggles to promote *Green Nudge's* initiatives. He has met potential clients who found what he shared insightful and informative – until money was mentioned.

But more green start-ups are now entering the business landscape, according to Li Seng, a trend which has been helpful in familiarising businesses with social enterprises. With prominent clients like OCBC Bank engaging *Green Nudge's* services, it has also gotten easier for Li Seng to get the social enterprise's foot in the door.

Clients increasingly value *Green Nudge's* honesty in pointing out inconsistencies and potential challenges in their sustainability programmes and craft out an overall strategy. They recognise that their advice has helped them fill informational gaps and blind spots in their green initiatives, reduce excessive wastage and achieve cost savings.

PAYING ATTENTION TO HUMAN BEHAVIOUR

Li Seng's interest in environmental issues started when he was working in the Central Business District in the early part of his career in the public sector. During lunch, he noticed how quickly the rubbish bins would be filled up with discarded disposables.

At a fundraising event he was volunteering at, he also noted how the event had generated a huge pile of waste, but was nevertheless considered a huge success because of the money it had raised for a good cause.

Looking at the issue of widespread wasteful behaviour, he observed that "some people would say it's too big an issue for anybody to take a stand, so therefore [the status quo is] okay." But for Li Seng, there can be room for improvement. He believes that this behaviour can be changed with the right nudge.

USING THE RIGHT NUDGE

To encourage change, *Green Nudge* has used unconventional approaches, such as partnering local dating agency GaiGai to combine singles meet-ups with coastal clean-ups, allowing singles to get to know each other while doing their part for the environment.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, *Green Nudge* also worked with hotels to recycle minimally-used soap bars and make them into new ones, to be distributed as gifts to migrant workers. Li Seng has also spearheaded an online job portal with a teammate, called *Green Collar*, to match sustainability-related jobs between employers and individuals.

Li Seng comments that Singaporeans are now much more aware of environmental issues. "The question now appears to be: How do we shift the needle from being aware to having the desire to do more?"



“

When everyone is on the same page, and we do the same thing - that's when we are going to move the needle.

”

Mr Dennis Chee, PBM

Non-Governmental Organisations
& Grassroots Volunteers Category

District Councillor/Co-Chairman,
Green Living Standing Committee
*North West Community
Development Council*

Mr Dennis Chee, PBM, District Councillor at the North West Community Development Council (CDC), plays a leading role in promoting environmental ownership in the North West community.

Dennis has helped to guide many green programmes in North West CDC, from reducing energy consumption to cultivating green living habits. Yet, he always feels that what he does is not enough. “I always wish that I can do something more revolutionary on a larger scale,” says Dennis, who serves as North West CDC’s Green Living Standing Committee Co-Chairman.

He empathises with the feeling of helplessness that many individuals can have in the face of the planet’s massive environmental problems, but he urges people to come forward and just do what they can.

“Even if they want to do something perfunctory,” he says, “it’s still fine. After a while, they will realise: Hey, we can really do something.”

Mr Dennis Chee, PBM

Non-Governmental Organisations and Grassroots Volunteers Category

District Councillor/Co-Chairman, Green Living Standing Committee |
North West Community Development Council

BUILDING NEW NORMS

In 2018, Dennis participated in a behavioural change study as part of the Bukit Panjang Green Committee to develop a green checklist for grassroots activities, with the intention of reducing resource consumption. However, he quickly encountered unexpected resistance from the volunteers, who were reluctant to do the extra paperwork.

Dennis was frustrated at first, but put himself in their shoes as a fellow volunteer and realised that it was natural for them to oppose administrative work that they had not signed up for. So, he found a workaround, using a softer approach instead.

At the very first meeting of every newly formed organising committee, he would start by taking out the checklist and talking the volunteers through it. They were very forthcoming, he noted, as long as they weren't asked to formally document anything.

Over time, his efforts have paid off. He says, "Because we kept conscientiously talking about it, we could see a distinct change in behaviour." He revealed that performing what is on the checklist has now become second nature to the organisers of Green Living events in the North West District.

CROSS-POLLINATING IDEAS

Dennis has also been co-chairing steering committee meetings for the North West CDC's *Sustainability Plan 2030*, which serves to rally and recognise volunteers and organisations for their sustainability efforts towards a common goal. He was instrumental in expanding the Sustainability Report coverage beyond just Green Living initiatives to include all other facets of North West CDC including Healthy Living, Social Support, Skillsfuture, and Corporate Communications.

By documenting all the sustainable efforts of the various Standing Committees, Dennis has brought the whole CDC together and created cross-pollination opportunities: "I think it's time for people to collaborate and start their own ground-up projects, however small. If we have a lot of small projects, it does make a difference."

To reach out to youths, he has also helped to plan and moderate the *North West Youth Forum – Sustainability* initiative, which acts as a platform for young people to exchange ideas while learning from green changemakers and field experts.

"When everyone is on the same page, and we do the same thing – that's when we are going to move the needle."



“

It comes down to how you live your life, rightly and wisely. Be kind to not just the people around you. Be kind to your whole eco-system; your whole environment.

”

Mr Tiew Chew Meng, PBM

Non-Governmental Organisations
& Grassroots Volunteers Category

District Councillor/Chairman,
Environment Functional Committee
*South West Community
Development Council*

Mr Tiew Chew Meng, PBM, District Councillor at the South West Community Development Council (CDC), is promoting mindfulness and building community bonds through green initiatives.

Before Chew Meng starts thinking about any new initiative, he always starts with the question: How can we help our neighbours?

Chew Meng, Chairman of the South West CDC Environment Functional Committee, says, “The way a lot of people look at environmental initiatives – it’s very clinical.” Hence, instead of statistics, Chew Meng prefers to talk to residents in terms of their personal values and what concerns them.

Mr Tiew Chew Meng, PBM

Non-Governmental Organisations and Grassroots Volunteers Category

District Councillor/Chairman, Environment Functional Committee |
South West Community Development Council

LIVING A MINDFUL LIFE

Growing up, being “environmentally friendly” was about being frugal and not wasting electricity and water. So, to Chew Meng, being sustainable is about treasuring what we have and being mindful.

“It comes down to how you live your life, rightly and wisely. Be kind to not just the people around you,” he urges. “Be kind to your whole eco-system, your whole environment.”

With this guiding philosophy, Chew Meng led the development of the Sustainable South West Masterplan as Chairperson from 2018 to 2019, co-creating and putting into motion green initiatives, with input from representatives from the People, Private and Public (3P) sectors.

CONNECTING WITH RESIDENTS

As a leader, Chew Meng likes to get directly involved with what needs to be done. “What you really don’t want is to just be brainstorming in the board room. ‘Ah! This is a very good initiative!’ but actually you don’t really know how it happens on the ground. I enjoy going down to the people – to the residents, the uncles and aunties, to really see what sustainability means on the ground,” he explains.

It warms his heart to see the same aunties and uncles he speaks to coming down every year to help collect recyclables at the annual *Clean Up South West!* He also recalls how volunteers at *Green Spaces @ South West*, the CDC’s community gardening programme, would make kueh from their produce and offer them to their neighbours.

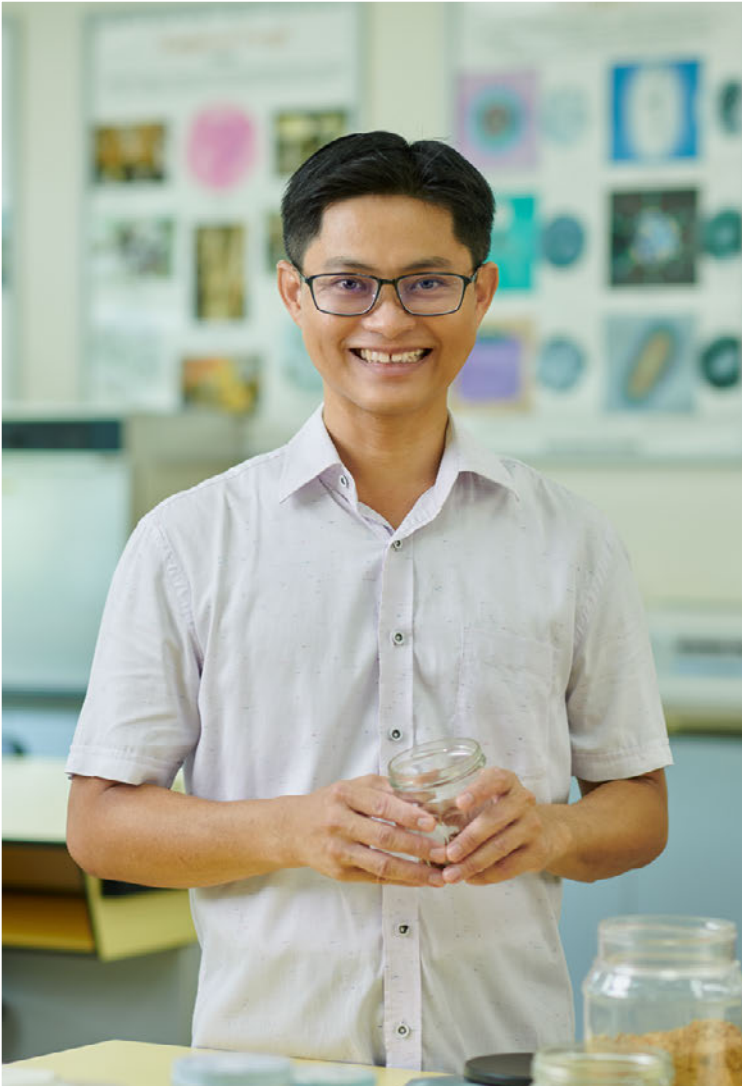
Chew Meng takes every opportunity to build connections with volunteers. “I really treasure those times. It’s really a privilege,” he says.

MAKING A REAL IMPACT

Juggling a full-time job with his work as a volunteer, Chew Meng often burns weekends and weekday nights preparing for programmes and gathering feedback from community partners. Sometimes, he even chooses to take leave from his job to prioritise his volunteer work.

But he believes it is all necessary, to build trust and ensure that he’s making a real impact. The most important thing, to him, is to see how the programmes are translated into people’s daily lives.

“When you talk about community outreach, it’s all about bonding. It’s people to people, heart to heart.”



“

They know that I'm not just here to say words, but I do get my hands dirty and work with them.”

”

Mr Benny Koh

Educational Institutions Category

Teacher
Nanyang Girls' High School

Mr Benny Koh, a teacher at Nanyang Girls' High School, inspires students to do more for sustainability and the environment.

Benny grew up in a kampung in the '80s, climbing trees and being around animals. His love for nature fuels his passion for teaching, because he wants future generations to be able to enjoy the environment the way he does.

At Nanyang Girls' High School, Benny serves as the driver for the school's Environmental Education Council Committee. He pushes numerous initiatives aimed at creating a zero-waste school environment, and spreads the message of sustainable living.

Teacher | Nanyang Girls' High School

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

Benny is a big believer in hands-on learning. When asked about his teaching methodology, he says, "I like to bring students out to do something, participate in something." Through seeing the real world and hands-on methods, he has taught his students innovative ways to go green, how to repurpose fruit peels into eco-enzymes, insect repellents, and fragrance bags.

He likes to be creative and does not rely on off-the-shelf teaching guides. This allows him and his students to explore and discover possibilities. "There's no quick answer, no ready-made formula," he quops, "that's where it gets exciting."

Benny has also gone out of his way to work out partnerships with businesses such as bubble tea companies and Sheng Siong supermarket, to give his students opportunities to get out of their comfort zones and spread eco-awareness beyond the school.

WORKING HARD BEHIND THE SCENES

What most people are not aware of is the hard work Benny puts in to make his sustainability initiatives a reality.

To get the orange peels needed for hands-on workshops, he had to personally load and transport over 200kg of orange peels from a company in the far north to school. He was glad to see students enjoy making eco-enzymes with the orange peels collected. And it would not be the last time Benny would go out of his way for the benefit of his students.

Benny shared how he had once spent three months staying back after school every day to collect and weigh the canteen's total food waste in order to collect data for the school's newly purchased food waste composter.

"I would literally carry the food waste in pails," he recalls. "Pouring it inside the machine – sometimes it would splatter a bit here and there."

NOT GLAMOROUS, BUT MEANINGFUL

Benny always tells his students that if they want to do something for the environment, it is usually not glamorous and they'll have to be prepared to get their hands dirty: "I tell them that many of the things that we do – it may not bear fruit immediately. But we'll go ahead and explore, and it does take time to see the fruits of our labour."

He is encouraged by the interest shown by his students, particularly since these initiatives do not influence their grades. When his students do not see results after putting much effort and get discouraged, Benny reminds them of how meaningful their work is.

"They know that I'm not just here to say words, but I get my hands dirty and work with them."



“

Using technology, you can unlock untapped potential in society.

”

Mr How Jun Yao, Jonathan

Youth and Students Category

Founder
Sharetings

Mr How Jun Yao, Jonathan is a university student promoting the sharing of pre-loved items through a Telegram channel and a new mobile app.

From young, Jonathan was taught not to be wasteful. Every few weeks, his mother would ask him for any unwanted items that could be donated to the Tzu Chi Foundation.

Therefore, it was quite a shock when he saw many of his platoon mates throwing away new, usable hangers during his national service. Later, as a university student, he noticed dormitory mates throwing away usable books, board games, and sporting equipment.

Most Singaporeans are too pre-occupied with their own busy schedules to recycle, observed the 25-year-old student at Nanyang Technological University (NTU). But he believes digitalising recycling and donation drives can address this challenge and create a local sharing culture.

“Using technology, you can unlock untapped potential in society,” says Jonathan.

Founder | Sharetings

REDUCING WASTE & HELPING THE NEEDY

Inspired by this, Jonathan started a group on Telegram during his freshman year, titled *Singapore Freebies by Sharetings*, to facilitate decentralised peer-to-peer sharing. Through the group, donors and recipients are match-made to making sharing easier and more convenient. By end-2020, the group had gathered over 5,400 subscribers.

Beyond just reducing waste, Jonathan wants to improve the lives of low-income families by making pre-loved items digitally accessible to them.

He recalled how his own volunteering experiences in the past have shown him that low-income families often live in rundown conditions without good household fittings. "I thought having a channel for them to get stuff for free would be helpful," he explains.

DEVELOPING A SUPER-APP

More recently, Jonathan has taken the leap to go beyond Telegram and develop a mobile application. He plans to develop his *Sharetings* app into a super-application – one that enables people to swap items, exchange ideas, and become part of a community. He is currently working on bringing in corporate partners to introduce a reward system that could help incentivise users.

A self-confessed amateur when it comes to technology, none of this comes easily to the NTU business student. "All the features, logics, computational thinking are really tough for me," he admits. Before writing his proposal to agencies for funding, he had to first download 20 to 30 other applications and study them.

But his efforts paid off. Jonathan acquired the necessary funding support from the National Environment Agency and South West Community Development Council. Launched in August 2020, the app is now available on the App Store and Google Play.

DON'T GIVE UP & BE SINCERE

When asked on the advice he would give to an aspiring youth in the sustainability sector, Jonathan says, "Go for it if you really believe in it."

He noted that his own journey has not been easy, and he was rejected many times in his first year. However, people will be supportive, he points out, "as long as you show that you're serious about your project".

"Just be true and be sincere."



“

Every day, your choices make a difference. And when you come together collectively, it's even more powerful.

”

Ms Melissa Low Yu Xing

Youth and Students Category

Research Fellow,
Energy Studies Institute
National University of Singapore

Ms Melissa Low Yu Xing, Research Fellow at the Energy Studies Institute (ESI), National University of Singapore (NUS), is helping youths and educators form informed views about environmental policies.

Melissa attended her very first United Nations (UN) Climate Change Conference as a bright-eyed young third-year university student. Back then, she had no training and no idea what to expect. “Everything was a blur,” she recalls. “We were just winging it while we were there.”

Nevertheless, seeing diplomacy at work during the Conference of the Parties (COP) meetings was fascinating to her. After graduation, she joined the ESI at NUS, it got her thinking about the kind of skills and training she would have hoped to have before attending such conferences.

Research Fellow, Energy Studies Institute | National University of Singapore

Motivated by this and following years of research and tracking the COP meetings, Melissa started the *Climate Change Negotiations Training Workshop* for Singapore Youth in 2018, and subsequently expanded it to include educators in the following year. She also partnered the Geography Teachers' Association to conduct similar workshops for pre-service upper secondary teachers to help fill any knowledge gaps they had about climate change negotiations and domestic environmental policies.

PROVIDING BALANCED VIEWPOINTS

Melissa points out that she is a researcher, not an activist. Her training as a researcher leads her to always consider the pros and cons of different policies in a rational manner, and ask provocative questions, even if this sometimes triggers strong reactions. She always reminds her workshop participants that they do not have to take her word for it – and in fact, they should not. Instead, they should do their own research, come to their own conclusions, and take action to make a positive change.

She hopes that her training can encourage participants to think issues through from different angles and “go out there and engage someone when they say something generalised about the environment.”

ENCOURAGING ACTIVE CITIZENRY

Melissa's deep interest in COP is also partly fuelled by her own pride in being a Singaporean. She observed that the UN delegates at the meetings have a lot of respect for Singapore because of how well our ambassadors and negotiators lead. “I'm really, really very proud of what we've achieved over the years,” she says.

That pride in Singapore is what drives Melissa to try and raise environmental awareness and give more citizens a voice. “I just want to encourage more active citizenry,” she concludes. “Every day, your choices make a difference. And when you come together collectively, it's even more powerful.”



“

Recycling is more than a circular economy. Recycling is a circle of good.

”

Miss Lee Ru Ye Laura

Youth and Students Category

Student
Hwa Chong Institution

Miss Lee Ru Ye Laura, founder of ToiletRollSG, is a student from Hwa Chong Institution promoting a circular economy by driving a nation-wide recycling movement.

People often laugh when Laura introduces herself as the founder of *ToiletRollSG*. But she does not mind, because she knows it means people will remember her and her recycling initiative – collecting toilet rolls for recycling.

Laura's toilet roll-collecting habit first started when she was a child. At 15, inspired by Ang Zyn Yee from Straw Free Singapore, she resolved to turn her little quirky habit into something much bigger.

After sending out countless emails that went unanswered, Laura finally received a positive reply from waste disposal and recycling company VEOLIA. They agreed to arrange for toilet roll collections at her (then) school, Nanyang Girls' High School, but gave her the daunting target of 1,000kg – approximately 150,000 toilet rolls.

Student | Hwa Chong Institution

A YOUTH ON A MISSION

Undeterred and with the motto “roll trash into treasure”, Laura started actively initiating school challenges and giving talks at schools, ranging from primary schools to junior colleges, to canvass their support for her collection drive. She also reached out to the wider community at public events, such as the monthly recycling drive by Tzu Chi Foundation and the 2019 *Plastic-Less July* event at West Gate Mall.

Now 18 years old, Laura recounts the struggle she had when she first started and had no credentials. “When I was giving talks – especially to working adults – it was very hard to convince them I was doing something legitimate,” she confessed.

There were even those who were puzzled by why she wanted to be an advocate for recycling. She says, “I think the sentence that always struck me most is: You are still young.”

CREATING A CIRCLE OF GOOD

Refusing to be discouraged, Laura continues to collect and contribute toilet rolls even after graduating from Nanyang Girls’ High School. To date, *ToiletRollSG* has collected a total of over 800kg, with more toilet rolls continuing to be collected.

To Laura, recycling is more than a circular economy; it is a circle of good. Leveraging on her existing audience, she has also started a livestream series called *On A Roll*, interviewing other advocates and spreading awareness about other social causes. By broadening her focus, she hopes to engage an even wider audience online.

Laura always tries to engage her audience one-on-one after her talks, asking them to support youth champions as much as they can. She wants them to know that youths like her “really care for what we advocate for, and we want the best for society”.



“

Every day, I can wake up and see how much energy has been generated in the last hour. And to me, that's a tangible impact that I can look back on and be proud of.

”

Mr Hemal Arora

Youth and Students Category

Student
UWC South East Asia

Mr Hemal Arora is a student at UWC South East Asia (UWCSEA)'s East Campus, and has keen interests in climate change and renewable energy.

Hemal was only 14 when he came up with the idea of installing solar photovoltaic panels on his school's rooftops.

Together with a team of seven other students, he embarked on the *Solar for East* project that would, over time, eventually evolve to become a multi-year undertaking for several UWCSEA cohorts, with an ambitious fundraising target of over half a million dollars.

Student | UWC South East Asia

DIVING IN HEADFIRST

Starting off, Hemal and his peers worked with a local solar energy company and his school's facilities team to analyse its technical and financial viability.

They had to address difficult questions, such as whether the panel parts could be recycled after degradation and if their solar energy partner was bankable enough to support the project through the panels' full lifespan. To raise funds, the team also had to learn to pitch effectively and get people excited about the project.

"There were just a lot of new things that we'd never done before," Hemal admits. "We were almost running a small business."

BOOSTING AWARENESS ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

Beyond just reducing the school's carbon footprint, the team has always seen the project as an educational opportunity to spread awareness about climate change.

As it will take a few years to raise funds for and install the full target of 1,130 panels, Hemal's team knew they could also pass the project to successive cohorts of UWCSEA students, strengthening the school's sustainability education programme.

Every month, Hemal and his team deliver presentations and workshops to students, parents and teachers. They have also gone a step further to take on the challenge of getting students to take on the actual panel installation.

ENGINEERING A BRIGHTER FUTURE

Currently, the *Solar for East* team has already installed 180 solar panels on the school's rooftops. "Every day, I can wake up and see how much energy has been generated in the last hour. And to me, that's a tangible impact that I can look back on and be proud of," says the now 18-year-old.

Outside of UWCSEA, Hemal works on new battery technologies under a mentor at the labs of the Nanyang Technological University School of Materials Science and Engineering, pursuing his interest in energy storage technology. The young climate advocate has also given a TEDx talk and written a public consultation submission to the National Climate Change Secretariat of Singapore.

He sees all these projects as a testbed for his future career, where he hopes he can become a technopreneur tackling climate change, the "single greatest challenge that my generation is going to face."

SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks to the following partners from the 3P sectors for their invaluable support of the 14th EcoFriend Awards:

Professor Leo Tan Wee Hin, BBM, PPA(E), PBM (Chair)

Professional Fellow, Lee Kong Chian National History Museum,
National University of Singapore

Mr Puvan Ariaratham

Director (Character & Citizenship Education).
Character & Citizenship Education Branch, Ministry of Education
Chairperson, Schools Sub-committee, Public Hygiene Council

Mr Kwong Kok Chan

Deputy General Manager (Maintenance), PacificLight Power Pte Ltd

Mr James Soh, PBM, MBE

Executive Director, National Youth Achievement Award Council

Ms Jen Teo

Executive Director, Singapore Environment Council

Ms Clarin Wee

Director (Grassroots Policy & Programmes), People's Association



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