



ST. MARGARET'S CONNECT

A Publication of St Margaret's Ex-students' Association

Issue 26 : Sept -Dec 2011

St Margaret's Day 169th Anniversary Dinner – 16 November 2011

The school will be celebrating its 169th Anniversary this year. It's time for us to come together to celebrate 169 years of Charity, Patience and Devotion.

Date : Wednesday, 16 November 2011
Time : 7.00pm – 11.00pm
Venue : St Margaret's Primary School
99 Wilkie Road
Price : \$40.00 per person or \$400.00 per table of 10 persons

You may obtain tickets by completing and returning the enclosed **Ticket Purchase Form** together with your cheque before the closing date. Tickets are sold on first come first serve basis.

2011 Reunion Christmas Party – 3 December 2011

Come and join this fun filled 2011 Reunion Christmas Party organized by our Youth Wing team. There will be games, lucky draws and fabulous door gifts to be given away. There is also our Facebook Photo Contest. Please log into <http://www.facebook.com/SMESA.sg> for details of the contest.

Date : Saturday, 3 December 2011
Time : 2.00 pm to 6.00 pm
Venue : St Margaret's Secondary School Hall
Price : \$10 (SMESA member) \$15 (non-member) \$5 (kid from 3 – 11 years)

To purchase tickets, please e-mail to: enquiries@smesa.org.sg or call 81838580 (Aneesha).

News from SMPS

1. SMPS VP Mrs Ng-Tee Sook Leng has retired.
2. Teacher Mrs Elaine Yeo was promoted to take over the VP position w.e.f. 15 June 2011.
3. The School Senior & Junior Netball teams emerged champions at the zonal level. At the national level, the Senior team came in 2nd position & the Junior team, 4th.
4. Student Kinaree Adkins won Gold Medals in 2 prestigious Jiu-Jitsu competitions in North America.

News from SMSS

1. Greta Poo Xiaohui was awarded the Lee Kuan Yew Award for Outstanding Normal Course Students for the GCE "N" level Exams in 2010. She scored 7 distinctions.
2. Lee Yi Xian Rebekah won the Singapore T-shirt Design Competition and her design was used on 2011 National Day Parade bag.



Rebekah's design on one side of the National Day Parade bag, is an image of Singapore Island, composed of words naming various icons, landmarks, colloquialisms and concepts that are unique and significant to Singapore. The icon of a heart in the middle of the island represents the love that Singaporeans feel for our country.

Our Members

New Members

Welcome aboard the following new members. We look forward to seeing you at our activities during the year.

Life Members

Julie Chua
Cecilia Tan Ing Wee

(SMPS 1988)
(SMSS 1989)

Reports on Events

SMSS YW Recruitment Drive held on 3 Jun 2011

Ms Aneesha Reihana



Aneesha sharing with the SMSS graduating classes

It was indeed an honour to be once again invited by the school to give a presentation on my experience after school life.

In conjunction with the secondary school's Career Guidance day, I made my presentation titled '**Why I chose to come back**'. In summary, the presentation was about how as an ordinary student with average grades, I was driven to success by grabbing the various opportunities given to me during my secondary school days. Later, I went on to give them an account of how checkered my tertiary education was and how I managed to overcome the situation by using the values I have learnt from my days in St Margaret's Secondary School.

I also spoke about my involvement in St. Margaret's Ex-students' Association and how it had benefited me. I also spelt out both the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits one could get with their involvement in an organisation which is non academic or work related. Hence, on behalf of the SMESA board, I extended my invitation to the graduating classes to join us as Youth Wing members.

The applauses and cheers plus the active participation in the question and answer session were most inspiring. After the 30-minute presentation, the forms were distributed for the girls' to sign up as members. The forms were all collected and collated later when school reopened. We are extremely glad to report that almost half of the graduating cohort signed up as members. We hope that the others will participate in our events and eventually sign up as members too.

SMPS YW Recruitment Drive held on 21 July 2011

Lee Mian Jun

On 21 July 2011, two of our Youthwing representatives, Aneesha and Lee Mian Jun, together with members of our SMESA Board as supporters, gave a talk to the Primary Six pupils as part of the recruitment drive for the graduating batch of 2011.

The talk started with a presentation by Mian Jun on SMESA Youthwing and its mission and goals. Mian Jun began by introducing the members of the Executive Committee. Pictures of some of the Youthwing's activities, both regular and ad hoc, were shown to reinforce the message of why they should join the Youthwing. Mian Jun also emphasized on an acronym that represented what being in SMESA Youthwing's Executive Committee meant - LIGHTS : Leadership, Inspire, Grow, Honor, Tangible, and Service.

After Mian Jun's presentation, Aneesha also gave a short speech on the tangible rewards of being in the Exco. The most encouraging part of the talk? Many girls completed forms in support of being a member of SMESA Youthwing.



The SMPS Primary 6 girls at the presentation



Mian Jun presenting at the SMPS YW Recruitment Drive

SMSS Speech & Prize Giving Day on 22 July 2011

Ms Pixie Ho

The Secondary School held its Speech and Prize Giving Day on 22 July 2011. The Guest of Honour was none other than our very own ex-student, **Dr Ling Moi Lin**. Dr Ling is the Director, Infection Control, Senior Consultant, Pathology of SGH and Adjunct Asst. Professor of Duke-NUS Graduate Medical School.

At the ceremony, she enthused that just being at the school brought back many fond memories to her and that the school had played a big role in making her what she is today. She said that one can easily be a good student "But to be a fine or outstanding lady would usually require something else".

And she shared with the audience on 3 pointers taken from the Scripture verses read earlier:-

“I have fought the good fight”

Each day, each year, each generation brings with it challenges. I find it more challenging now to live as a Christian now than when I was a youth. It would have been impossible to remain as a Christian now if I had not learnt to be a soldier and do what I should do as one. A trained soldier would do far better in war than one who is untrained. And so, the formative years in Christian fellowship and school assembly messages did help to prepare me. When you meet the enemy, you have several choices: - scream and run away, face him and fight, or surrender. I made a decision at a young age that I will fight the good fight and not give up. How did I do it? Thank goodness that we have an army i.e. the fellowship of Christians. I do not fight alone in the battle. So, Christian friends and even the school chaplain then were wonderful supporters. I remembered we had regular meetings at the chaplain's house for several years after school until she returned to New Zealand. The time spent in sharing and supporting each other in prayer helped in easing us into the next phase in our respective lives.

“I have run the race”

Now, I was never a great runner. I remembered when I had to run the cross-country race at college that it was a real struggle. When one gets tired, one can choose to stop running, then continue to walk or have a slow jog. The important thing is to complete the race. In the Christian race, there is no competition for placing. Thank goodness for this. Instead, all runners are meant to complete the race. It is within one's decision to run or go off track. I choose to continue on the race and will continue to do so until the end. Running requires training. It is even better when one has a coach or personal trainer. Because when one slackens, the coach pushes us on. My personal trainer paces me at the gym and as I build up my stamina, it gets easier. I find that I do not get so breathless. So, the training as an athlete in the Christian race – WORD and prayer – like breathing out and breathing in – helps to build the stamina we need to run in the Christian race and complete it triumphantly.

“I have kept faith”

This is the main reason for fighting the fight or running the race. What awaits me is the crown of righteousness, the reward from God Himself. It will be a treat for me to hear His greeting, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant.’ I believe in God and I have a personal relationship with Him. That is the key. Relationships – in life, I trust you have and will continue to make many more in the years to come. Some relationships stay, some get broken along the way. It takes two to make a relationship work. I know that my God is faithful. So, it remains for me to keep my relationship with God going.

Although I may have collected many titles after my name, its value cannot be compared with what we Christians, hope for. “Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:13-14). “I have fought the good fight, I have run the race, I have kept faith.” (2 Tim 4:7). That has been my life verse as a Christian from my youth. It has helped me to remain focus on what I need to do in my life to continue to be God's channel of blessing to those I meet. “Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding. In all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.” (Prov 3:5,6). Our God is a faithful God and a generous God. I encourage all to get to know Him and allow Him to lead you every step of the way in your life. “

In conclusion, Dr Ling advised the graduates present to “Put to full use the education and skills you received here at St Margaret's Secondary School and proceed with full confidence in your careers. Succeed for yourselves and your family but also give back to the larger Singapore community.”

After Dr Ling's speech, it was followed by the presentation of prizes for academic excellence and CCA achievements and other awards.

We are proud indeed to have 4 students, namely, Teo Li Lian, Tan Fang Fang Sarah, See Cheng Hui Cassandra and Foo Jing Ying achieving **9As** in the 2010 GCE “O” level Exams and 21 students achieving **8As**. This year was also the first time that **SMESA Awards for the Arts** were awarded to students who achieved excellence in Chinese Dance, Indian Dance, Malay Dance, Modern Dance, Choir, Drama, String Ensemble, Symphonic Band and Creative Art Club.



The attentive graduating students



Dr Ling Moi Lin delivering her speech

Teachers' Day Dinner – 1st Sept 2011

Ms Bridget Choy

A "Bling Bling" dinner in celebration of Teachers' Day 2011 was held at the Swissotel Merchant Court. Many of us gathered to show our appreciation to the teachers and staff for their patience and dedication in nurturing our future generation of good citizens of Singapore.

The majority of the teachers, staff and guests came brightly attired with sparkling gems, sequins etc which added lustre to the "Bling Bling" occasion. To enliven the occasion, various games were played. There was the competition for the six best dressed teachers (three teachers each from the Secondary and Primary schools). The selected teachers had to parade on stage and the winners were chosen based on the volume of applause. The teachers were also very responsive to the other games and met all challenges with great enthusiasm.

The PSG and PTA undertake the organising of the yearly Teachers' Day event in rotation with SMESA as co-organiser. Support is also obtained from the Primary and Secondary schools and the SMC. A big **THANK YOU** to all of you who have helped to make it a very enjoyable evening of fellowship, fun and laughter. God Bless All of You.



Line-up of the best dressed contestants



SMESA's members at the dinner



SMESA INTERVIEWS ...



Mrs. Chua Yen Ching

I first met Mrs. Chua through the kind introduction of a friend whose son simply adored Mrs. Chua. I was intrigued by the stories told by my friend over the years of this super-duper dedicated woman who appeared to have inspired so many people.

Mrs. Chua is a petite woman, dressed very simply in a plain shirt and trousers and very practical walking shoes. I knew the reason for the practical walking shoes when I followed her as she went up and down the stairs, classroom to classroom and around the gardens to give us a tour of the premises while simultaneously regaling me with stories of the students, ideas she had implemented, things she had noticed and improvement ideas she had thought of.

I welcomed the opportunity to be inspired by Mrs. Chua again when the SMESA president asked if I could do a short interview with her for the newsletter before she speaks to the secondary students as a speaker for the SMESA Speaker Series program on 18 October 2011. Mrs. Chua very quickly agreed to the date and time and below is but a snippet of what she has shared with me. There is much more but I will need a whole newsletter dedicated to Mrs. Chua and the school if I wanted to convey all that I had learnt and benefitted from the conversation.

Conducted by Ruby Lee

Were you a student in both St Margaret's Primary school and St Margaret's Secondary school?

I was in St Matthew's kindergarten and although my father was not a Christian then, he wanted me to be in a mission primary school as he believed that such a school would be values-driven. The Pastor of the church had kindly written to ask St Margaret's Primary school to accept me. After 6 years in the Primary school, as with all students, my group of close friends chose to go to Raffles Girls' School and a few of us felt that we would like to continue our secondary education with St Margaret's. I finally decided to stay in St Margaret's. I still have the autograph books that were signed by my classmates and teachers.

What do you remember most vividly about the schools and do you have a memorable teacher?

The Principal constantly shared with us the history and mission of the school, i.e. why St Margaret's was started in the first place. I will always remember that the school was set up to provide girls with an education so that they can glorify God and make a difference to their families and society. I was on the Prefectorial Board in the secondary school and the discipline mistress was Miss. Isabel Low. She was very strict with us and we were always reminded to look at ourselves to first ensure that we were not flouting any rules before we try to impose our authority on the other students. I remember I was in charge of playing the record for the National Anthem for the flag raising ceremony every morning and I needed to be early, test the equipment and not to take things for granted. Many of the prefects were afraid to take on my role of playing the National Anthem. At times, I found Miss Low unreasonable but when I looked back, I knew she was trying to teach us self-discipline. When I was older and later visited Miss Low at the old folks home, I realized that she only wanted to teach us the value of excellence.

Immediately after graduating from the science faculty in NUS, you went into teaching. Did you always want to be a teacher and an educator? Were you inspired by any teacher or did any incident or event convince you that teaching was your calling?

After St. Margaret's, I went to Hwa Chong Junior College. I had a most difficult time at Hwa Chong Junior College and was very discouraged with my Preliminary Examination results though I passed all the subjects. A teacher encouraged me and I realized then that a teacher could make or break a student. It motivated me to teach. My father wanted me to be a doctor and although my results were good enough for medical school, I opted to go into the science faculty in NUS followed by NIE. It was only after I won the Ruth Wong medal in the Diploma in Education Administration was my father convinced that maybe I did like teaching after all.

What would you say is the most important aspect of education?

That success does not equate to achievement, power or wealth. Success is not what we have but who we are. One of my students in Northlight received the Lee Hsien Loong award and he shared that his defining moment was when he and a group of friends together with a group of NIE trainees produced a series of audio tapes for Lighthouse School (a school for the visually challenged). He saw 3 students taking the PSLE exams in Braille and it was a wake-up call for him. He shared with me that if students who are visually handicapped could pass the exam, how could he with the ability to see fail the PSLE? He was motivated to study hard and managed to attain a perfect GPA score of 4.0. He is currently in ITE pursuing the NITEC course on Service Skills (Retail). His mother has seen a positive transformation in him and he comes back to school often to encourage the juniors.

How did you decide to take on a project like Northlight which has not been done before in Singapore or elsewhere?

After graduation from NIE, I first went to Dunman Secondary and after a few years, I was the HOD Science. I was posted to Tanjong Katong Girl's school as Vice Principal. Following that, I was Principal of Zhonghua Secondary. Thereafter, I spent 5 years as Deputy Director (Sciences Branch), Curriculum Planning and Development Division, Ministry of Education.

In 2003, I went to Shuqun Secondary as Principal and I appreciated the opportunity to be able to experience both policy formulation and policy implementation. In 2006, Northlight was conceptualized and I was asked if I would like to serve in Northlight. My father was concerned as Northlight is a school where the students have failed PSLE two times or more and he was afraid that I would not be able to empathize with the students but my husband asked if I know it was a calling and I believed it was. His response was, "If your internal GPS asks you to do something, you must do it."

We made a few overseas study trips but could not find a model which we could adapt so we needed to be the trailblazer for such a mission. However, the then Permanent Secretary asked me two questions: "Do you think this is good for our students? Do you think this is good for our country?" I responded, "Of course". He said that we must at least have the courage to try because if we do not, everything will just be at status quo.

What is your most humbling experience?

The students in Northlight come mainly from humble homes. Education is the great equalizer and helps the students to break the poverty cycle. Meritocracy is a mountain peak and not a mountain range. To serve in Northlight is the best decision I have made and it is also my most humbling experience. I have learned a lot from the students in my school and they have taught me the true spirit of humility.

What is your most rewarding experience?

To see the smiling faces in the students. One student shared that she has found back the joy of learning and now she looks forward to come to school. The teachers and support staff are a wonderful group and they show the students the meaning of love and hope. Many students stay in the north, quite a distance from where Northlight is, and yet they are coming to school regularly. One visitor from the United States wrote her reflection: "Today I visited a wonderful home which the children called school."

What is your typical day like? Would you say you have a good work life balance?

I usually like to be present for the flag-raising ceremony at 8.00 a.m. in the school though I have a morning meeting to attend. I am usually in school by 7.15 a.m. so that I can connect with the staff and clear my emails within 48 hours. I would work on other projects with the Ministry of Education. I also spend much time speaking to visitors as many visitors end up being partners of the school. I also like to share the school's experience with teachers from other schools so that they can benefit from some of the practices and address the problems upstream.

If you like what you are doing, you always have time for all things. I try to spend the weekends with my children and once a week, on Wednesday; my whole family including my siblings would go back to my parents' home for dinner.

What drives you and what would you share with us so that we too can do work which inspires others?

I believe that no one is at a place by chance and there is a purpose why we are in the leadership position. Northlight was conceptualized by the Ministry of Education and we, the teachers of Northlight are stewards, working towards igniting the fire in our children so that the fire of education will continue to burn in the students even after they leave the school. This is very important as it is very easy for the fire to be blown out as students face all kinds of changes and challenges in the world outside of school. I do not see us as being great. We are doing our best to address a national problem. The work in Northlight is life-giving .

The important thing is to have the courage to do what is right though it is difficult. I was very touched when I received this note from a group of students: **"The most bitter word is 'failure' but the most important word is 'teachers' because they have let us experience two important words - 'Love' and 'Hope'."**

SMESA Speaker Series – 2nd Speaker

Talk by Mrs Chua Yen Ching, to be held on **18 Oct 2011** at 12 p.m. at the SMSS Hall.

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