

Helping newcomers fit in

As a constituency manager, Mr Edwin Yap's job is to integrate new immigrants into the community

by Lynn Seah

IT MAY seem like a simple ceremony at which new citizens receive their citizenship certificates and National Registration Identification Cards (NRICs), but the organisers spare no effort to make sure it all runs smoothly as it is a significant event for each of the new citizens attending.

"We have to ensure that no mistakes are made during the Citizenship Ceremony. Staff on duty needs to be very meticulous especially during the registration process.

Mr Edwin Yap Chee Kian, from the People's Association (PA) says: "We need to take note of any absentees and latecomers as well as the sequence of the certificate presentation so as to ensure that no recipient gets the wrong NRIC by mistake."

The PA organises the Citizenship Ceremony at the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) level on a quarterly basis.

Mr Yap is a constituency manager (Integration) under Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC. He is based in Bishan Community Club and his job involves coordinating, planning and executing integration programmes in the constituency to engage new immigrants.

The aim of these outreach efforts is to integrate these newcomers into the community and promote social cohesion. He also works closely with Integration and Naturalisation Champions, who are grassroots leaders, to spearhead integration programmes.

"Citizenship Ceremonies provide an excellent platform to engage the new citizens and their families to be active participants in the community," he says.

Before each ceremony, Mr Yap and his colleagues will visit the new citizens with grassroots leaders to introduce themselves and encourage



PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

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— Mr Edwin Yap (above)

them to participate in community activities, to help them settle better into their new home.

"During the house visits, we will share with them the upcoming community activities and events which they can participate in and make new friends. On some occasions, we have newcomers who express their interest to volunteer and play a part in their community, which is very encouraging," says Mr Yap.

The 32-year-old accountancy and finance graduate from Singapore Institute of Management-University of London has been with PA since January 2008. Prior to that, he was working in a bank.

"I decided to join PA in 2008 when the economy was on the edge of recession. Both my spouse and I were in the banking sector and we decided that one of us should join the public sector for the stability. I have not looked back since," he says.

PA provided him with training at institutes such as the National Community Leadership Institute. "All these courses equipped me with the necessary and appropriate skills to excel in this career."

He has been enjoying his new career so far which allows him to meet new people every day from all walks of life. "All the people I meet bring something new to my life and I hope I can help them in one way or another," he says.

Sometimes, he has to work late or work during his days off when there are meetings or events to attend. Despite this, he has been able to balance work and life because PA supports a flexible work environment.

"Definitely, PA has always been a pro-family employer," he says. "I'm very grateful to my management for supporting me when I needed more time to take care of my parents when they needed me."

While he has been able to manage the erratic hours, he finds that the greatest challenge of the job comes from the ever-changing situations faced in each project which truly stretch the ability of staff to cope.

"The challenges actually encouraged me to persevere during the tough times. Every project that I handle is unique although similar projects may exist. Thus I look forward to learning something new from every project that I am involved in," he says.

Special

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