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PEOPLE'S ASSOCIATION

BRIGHT VISIONS FOR A CLOSE-KNIT SOCIETY

The People's Association plays a key role in fostering ties within Singapore's communities. Two PA Youth Leaders Scholars share with us how the scholarship has allowed them to help realise this vision.

By Priya Sunil

Formed in 1960, the People's Association (PA) is a statutory board that promotes racial harmony and social cohesion in Singapore.

Through its network of 1,800 grassroots organisations (GROs), over 100 Community Clubs, five Community Development Councils, National Community Leadership Institute and Water-Venture, as well as community engagement events such as the National Day celebrations and the annual Chingay Parade, the PA aims to achieve its mission To Build and To Bridge communities in achieving One People, One Singapore.

In our racially-diverse society, everyone plays a part in maintaining harmony within the society. With the PA Youth Leaders Scholarship, young adults have the chance to engage various communities to foster greater ties. PA Youth Leaders Scholars Jessica Tan and Angela Tan tell us more about the exciting prospects they look forward to.

TELL US MORE ABOUT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PA'S ROLE IN COMMUNITY-BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT.

Jessica Tan: Singapore is a potpourri of many different beliefs and cultures and this is one thing Singaporeans can be proud of. The PA plays an important role in ensuring that the residents in Singapore can come together through various engagement platforms, such as interest groups. I am excited to be able to contribute to its mission!

Angela Tan: The PA's significance lies in building trust and bond among Singapore's residents. Only when the society unites as one can the nation progress, both economically and socially. In addition, the PA helps to bridge the gap between residents and the government by communicating government policies to the residents and carrying feedback from residents to the government.

WHAT ATTRACTED YOU TO THE PA YOUTH LEADERS SCHOLARSHIP?

Jessica: The PA encourages their scholars to be exposed to different areas of interest, such as youth and social development. The PA's vision also resonates with my hope for Singapore to become a great home with a caring community. I relish working with people and for the community – these provide

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me with a sense of purpose in a career, which is very important to me. Joining PA fulfils all that and offers me the opportunity to make an impact on the lives of people in my community.

Angela: I’m a strong believer of the maxim ‘live to work’ and I feel that it is important to work for an organisation that I am passionate about! The PA’s scholarship’s career prospects also strongly appeal to me. Being an extrovert, I enjoy interacting with people and through the scholarship, I will be involved in community projects and job placements in various strategic units.

HOW IS THE PA YOUTH LEADERS SCHOLARSHIP PREPARING YOU TO CONTRIBUTE TO PA AND THE COMMUNITY?

Jessica: PA offers its scholars plenty of opportunities for community engagement. I underwent an internship at the Youth Division to support the PA Youth Movement (PAYM) Loves Red Campaign and will be going for another internship at a Constituency Office. We scholars have also been invited for regular engagements with the PA Senior Management and major events such as the Chingay Parade and various National Community Leadership Institute (NACLI) Leadership Dialogues.

In addition, the scholarship offers structured job placements for us in its different units. I have gained a better understanding of the different functions in PA and these experiences will value-add to my future roles in the organisation for the good cause of community development.

Angela: I attended the Preparatory Seminar (PrepSem) for Public Sector Scholarship Holders prior to departing for my studies and this allowed me to network with scholars from various Ministries and statutory boards. I believe there will be opportunities for collaboration in future when we are in the service. I will also be interning with PA at the South West Community Development Council this year, where I will be involved in the planning and implementation of several events such as the SG50 CDC Celebrating Communities.

I believe that with the hands-on experience and fundamental knowledge of PA’s operations, I will be better prepared to hit the ground running and value-add to my future roles for PA and the community.

SHARE WITH US SOME OTHER HIGHLIGHTS OF YOUR SCHOLARSHIP JOURNEY.

Jessica: The PA Youth Leaders Scholarship has contributed to a fulfilling and enjoyable university life and allowed me to pursue various interests as part of my character development. Living independently at one of NUS’ residential halls is certainly daunting, but has certainly been one of the best moments of my university life.

Angela: The PA Youth Leaders Scholarship allows me to pursue my studies in the University of Warwick. I get to be a member of the Warwick Handball Women team, and we were the champions for the plate tournament last season! I also joined a couple of societies like the Raise and Give society which, through its exciting fund-raising activity line-up, really opened my eyes to how the British can make the best out of a seemingly mundane task.

I am also actively involved in the Singapore Society at the University of Warwick, where I was the emcee for the Chinese New Year (CNY) Dinner last February and also helped out at the Hwa Chong Alumni CNY booth in London. Last but not least, I’ll be embarking on a 3-week volunteering programme in Uganda this year!

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU HAVE FOR ASPIRING PA SCHOLARS?

Jessica: While the PA Youth Leaders Scholarship offers many exciting opportunities and benefits, it is definitely not a one-size-fits-all scholarship. It is important for you to have the passion to serve the community and be able to work with residents from all walks of life to fully reap the benefits that the scholarship can offer. If you are interested in community development, then the PA Youth Leaders Scholarship is definitely the way to go!

Angela: If you like to plan and execute events to engage the community, this scholarship might be the one for you. More importantly, never treat the scholarship solely as a sponsorship for your university fees – you must always consider if the career prospects provided by the scholarship truly excite you. If so, be bold and apply for it! ■



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