

Term 4: Celebrating Success (Our Frontliners!)

This term's Thematic Reading is on the theme of "Celebrating Success." Success is not just narrowly defined as academic or material success; it is also seen in the impact one has in other people's lives. Values in Action (VIA) Representatives Erin Yap, Valerie Tan, Al-Nicole and Jun Hong interviewed two former students who have touched the lives of others and we celebrate their success with them.

Celebrating our Frontliners!

By Erin Yap and Valerie Tan, J3-5

Ms Andrea Yap is a GMS(S) alumni who graduated in 2004 and is currently working at Parkway Shenton as a nurse. She shares with us her experience as a frontliner and what success means to her.



Q1: Could you briefly introduce yourself?

Hello, I'm Andrea. My aunt gave me this name, and I've been using it since I left GMS(S). To my teachers and my former classmates, I'm known as Lay Ping during my school days. After graduating from GMS(S) in 2004, I studied at Nanyang Polytechnic, completing my Diploma in Nursing. Soon after, I worked at Thomson Medical Center for 4 years before moving to another private healthcare institute – Parkway Shenton. At that point of time, I had also started pursuing my Bachelor's Degree in Nursing at Curtin University. Today, I'm a nurse and also a manager in the Screening Department. To enhance my competencies as a middle-level health service manager, I decided to pursue a Master's Degree in Health Administration at Flinders University.

Q2: Just out of curiosity, is there any special memory that you have of GMS(S)?

Having Chapel every Wednesday after recess is something I can't forget!

I also have endearing memories of teachers like Mr Michael Koh who challenged me with tough Mathematics questions when I was in Secondary One, and to my joy, I managed to achieve a distinction in the subject. Mr Kelvin Tay was another teacher who inspired me. He was very patient in clarifying any Physics questions that I had and gave me so many questions on Physics to make sure I understood the subject! All the teachers around me were always supportive. Even now, I still remember the way they teach and their voices!

Q3: Could you share what were your motivations for wanting to be a nurse? (Has it always been a childhood dream?)

Being a nurse wasn't my childhood dream. My grades weren't good or bad. I didn't know what to study until my grandma asked me to be a nurse, like my aunt. Grandma said to me that if I became a nurse, I would not need to ever worry about not having a job. This was partly due to the 1997 Asian financial crisis when many lost their jobs. So I thought, why not?

Q4: Do you enjoy your work? Could you share a memory or event that had a big impression on you in your line of work?

I enjoy my work. It is interesting from all points of view. Besides job stability and getting to help people, nursing is also a lifelong learning profession. I am constantly afforded the opportunity to explore new ways of doing things. Also, the constant evolution of healthcare means that I am challenged to keep learning and developing new skills.

I remember once when one of my patients from the Philippines was critically and terminally ill. Her children wanted her to go back to the Philippines as soon as possible. I spent the morning with my team leader preparing the oxygen tanks needed, arranging the tickets and journey for the flight and so on. Everything went well, but unfortunately, before she could fly off, she passed away. The next moment, I was removing plugs and cleaning the deceased's body. Sometimes, things just don't go the way we want. When one passes away, everything just stops. This serves as a reminder that our time here is limited and precious.

Q5: Would you consider yourself as someone successful?

Success is when I make every day of my patients a journey worth living. Being diagnosed with a certain illness can be distressing. Patients are rarely at their best physically, and they are constantly worried about the treatment they need. Nurses are the first touchpoint who can alleviate their stress and anxiety, and help them get on the road to recovery.

Q6: Is there any advice that you may have for students in general?

Enjoy your work and school. I think of life as opportunities, "not problems". Your choices are endless and your opportunities to create the life and the world you want are at your feet. Below is something I tend to follow to encourage myself to look beyond my failures.

Cope – Cope with failures and learn from mistakes

Help – Help each other to grow and learn with the right mindset

Optimistic – Be optimistic

Identify – Identify new skills

Chances – Chances only come to those who help themselves.

Excellence – Excellence is not a skill, but an attitude that defines success.

Celebrating the Unseen Workers in our Community!

By Al-Nicole and Jun Hong, J3-6

Mr Victor Goh is a GMS(S) alumni who graduated in 2004 and is currently working at Habitat for Humanity (Singapore), a non-profit organisation in Singapore. He shares what he does at the organisation and what inspired him to go down this road.



Q1: Could you briefly introduce yourself?

My name is Victor and I'm currently working at Habitat for Humanity Singapore (Habitat Singapore). In Habitat Singapore, my role is to oversee the youth programmes, one of which includes our Campus Chapters¹ (which is similar to a CCA). Right now, we have six campus chapters in educational institutions, ranging from secondary schools, international schools, juniors colleges to universities.

Q2: Just out of curiosity, is there any special memory that you have of GMS(S)?

I have fond memories of teachers like Mr Johnny Joseph, Ms Lam and Ms Ng Peck Suan. Another thing I'm grateful for are the friends I made during my secondary school days. Some of my closest friends now were actually my former schoolmates.

Q3: Could you introduce what Habitat for Humanity (Singapore) is?

Habitat for Humanity is an international housing charity. We are a non-profit organization that seeks to eliminate poverty housing worldwide. Overseas, we have been working alongside low-income communities to increase their access to improved living conditions such as building homes for them. Whereas in Singapore, we don't physically build homes but we figuratively build homes. We work with the low-income (rental) poor. We help them clean their homes because a lot of them live in conditions that are pretty unsafe and unsanitary.

Q3.5 Are you a social worker?

Those working in Habitat for Humanity aren't exactly social workers as social work is very focused on specific individuals. In Singapore, a social worker usually works with a family or works with a person who has various vulnerabilities like financial, social and/or

¹ **Campus Chapters:** Campus Chapters are student-initiated organisations that partner with Habitat Singapore to run programmes Project HomeWorks sessions, as well as organise their own Global Village build trips, fundraise for these activities, as well as raise awareness about what they do through advocacy programmes.

emotional vulnerability in order to connect them with resources – and Habitat is one of these many resources they get in touch with. Habitat for Humanity works very closely with social workers. When social workers identify that their beneficiaries need assistance from us, we provide assistance in the form of home rehabilitation, because their home is in a bad condition. Habitat Singapore is just one of the many organisations they turn to.

Q4: Back in your secondary school days, or even your primary school days, did you expect to be where you are today?

Not exactly, but looking back, several experiences during my school days have probably inspired me to take on this path. Mr Michael Koh was the coordinating teacher then of the volunteering experience where students volunteered at Geylang Polyclinic, helping the elderly with their various physical exercises. That was probably the spark that started my passion to serve the elderly. This first experience helped me make sense of my later experiences as a student in JC, where I had the opportunity to serve in old folks' homes, volunteer there, perform magic tricks there, and so on. From then on, I knew for certain that I wanted to do something that was related to the community directly.

Q5: What is your definition of success?

For me, I think what is most important is the work you do to serve humanity. I chose this line of work because I saw myself wanting to do something that gives back to the community directly. Being able to directly see the real changes that are happening around me is something that constantly encourages me to do what I do.

Q6: Is there any advice that you might have for students so that they can achieve success?

This is a really big question. I think it depends on what the students define success to be. The first thing to consider is to understand what success means to them. Some people deem success to be “As soon as I earn a million bucks by 30, I’m successful” while others might feel that “As long as I’m someone who has good character and morals, then that’s successful”. Thus, I think what's most important is that each person must know his or her own definition of success since different people have different measures of success. Success is not a one-faceted kind of thing. There are different aspects of success and there are different ways to be successful. That is something that I think society has to be comfortable with.

Reflection

What is your idea of success?

