

A watercolor-style portrait of a young girl with dark hair, looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. Her hand is raised to her chin, with her index finger pointing upwards. The background is a mix of soft purple and white washes.

25
YEARS
Life
Community

Unlocking Imagination

Commemorating 25 Years of Empowering Children and Families



“Learning from my mentor, I don't look at the beginning; instead I look to the future – to what I can be.”

Beneficiary, Life Community Services Society

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Together, Let's Realise "Every Child's Best"

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■ MESSAGE

Building Lives Together



Congratulations to Life Community Services Society (LCSS) on its 25th anniversary! Since it was founded in 1996 by Dr Tan Kok Beng, LCSS has made significant contributions in uplifting children from low-income families and other vulnerable backgrounds, including those with incarcerated parents. In line with its vision, “Every child, the best that they can be”, LCSS provides early intervention and support, to enable every child to overcome challenging circumstances, get a good start in life, and achieve his or her fullest potential.

Over the past 25 years, LCSS’ programmes and network have grown to serve many more children and youths. In 2021, LCSS touched the lives of more than 800 children and families, with the help of more than 1,000 volunteers who generously contributed their time and effort. Through its mentoring programmes, such as the Friends of Children and Youth (FOCY) and the MightyKids, Families & Community (MKFC) programmes, LCSS helps children and youths access more diverse opportunities, so that they can build on their unique strengths and talents. Children and youths attending LCSS’ programmes have participated in sports and games events, art workshops, dance performances, outings and volunteer work, among

other activities. Its mentorship programme allows children to be inspired by role models and to learn important life skills.

As the saying goes, “It takes a village to raise a child.” All of LCSS’ efforts would not have been possible without the selfless contributions of many LCSS members, volunteers, donors, supporters and other partners from the public, private and people sectors. I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely thank everyone who has helped LCSS to further its mission. I hope that LCSS will continue to join hands with other community groups, Government agencies, corporate partners, and the wider public, so that together, we can provide even more holistic and integrated care and support to vulnerable children and youths, as well as their families.

Congratulations again to LCSS for reaching its silver jubilee, and I look forward to your continued good work in the years to come, as we nurture and build lives together for a more caring Singapore.

MR DESMOND LEE

Minister for National Development
& Minister-in-Charge of Social Services Integration,
and Patron of Life Community Services Society

“Together, we can provide even more holistic and integrated care and support to vulnerable children and youths, as well as their families.”

■ FOREWORD

Uplifting Every Child



Life Community Services Society (LCSS) celebrates 25 years!

This past quarter of a century, LCSS has striven to grow and make a difference in the area of children’s services in Singapore. The opportunity to witness our growth first-hand for the past 10 years has been my privilege and joy. Our journey has been pebbled with numerous ups and downs; to be where we are today, celebrating this significant milestone, is a testament to our wonderful “village” of staff, volunteers, donors, and partners – who have toiled selflessly and tirelessly.

We thank God for His faithfulness and provision, for sending our staff, volunteers, donors, and partners to serve alongside us to uplift the lives of His precious children, youths, and families.

Children are indeed our future and our hope. At LCSS, we believe that every child regardless of background or vulnerability can, with access to positive environments and relationships, become the best possible versions of themselves. I am humbled and pleased that we have grown a culture of mentoring within LCSS, and that we have

developed a strong and committed community of volunteer mentors passionate about nurturing these young lives.

As we look ahead to the next 25 years, the Board and I would also like to take this moment to renew our commitment to guiding and mentoring our colleagues. It is our sincere desire that all who are involved in our work feel empowered and derive a sense of purpose and fulfilment even as they discharge their duties and help unlock the imaginations of the emerging generations.

Mentoring can happen anywhere and at any time. It is a way of life. We hope you will be inspired by the stories told through this book, and learn how you too can be a part of this amazing movement to advocate for and mentor the children in our communities.

Thank you, and may God bless you and your family.

MR NICHOLAS GOH

Chairman
Life Community Services Society

“We thank God for His faithfulness and provision, for sending our staff, volunteers, donors, and partners to serve alongside us.”

The *Dare* to Believe



Unlocking *Imagination*, a commemorative book for our 25th anniversary, chronicles the joys and pains of real-life Singaporean children in their growing up years, and how they have benefitted from the mentoring support of Life Community Services Society.

While most of us may not have to fret over necessities (such as safe water, sanitation, medical care and quality education), these children face the challenges of living in modern-day Singapore where their need to be heard, understood, and loved could be drowned by factors beyond their ability to control, such as broken marriages, parental incarceration, pre-mature parental death, etc.

Through this book, we hope to unlock every child's imagination and help them discover what truly counts in their lives. We hope to inspire and build a community of care through the voices of children and mentors who have been providing a guiding light during those difficult childhood moments.

Childhood is crisp and short – that mere 12 years, yet it is also a period that marks the greatest number of major developmental milestones compared to any other life stage. Children really grow up too fast, and we have no time to waste. The call is urgent, and the call is now. While there is light, let us put our hands to the plough and make it work. Together, let us make a difference and an impact so that that which is being taught to them shall not depart from them when they are older.

May our children look back and say, "There is someone who cared enough for me, who believed in me so that I can be where I am today."

God bless.

MS LAM MOI KWAI
Chief Executive Officer
Life Community Services Society

“We hope to inspire and build a community of care through the voices of children and mentors.”

Okay to Be Different



*"You're no less capable than the other kids.
It's okay to be different."*

These words from my mentor, Simon, remind me that despite the difficulties and disability I face, I can live a life just as fulfilling as that of others.

We have all had our fair share of struggles as children. For instance, studies were never my strong suit. I lacked guidance and discipline. As a kid, I had trouble listening to adults and preferred to play and run around with my friends.

Simon helped me understand why some things are worth learning. He spurred me on in my studies and coached me in my homework when I encountered roadblocks. He helped me believe in myself; that I could do it, just like everyone else.

It may sound cliché, but having Simon as my mentor changed my life. If you are struggling like I once was, don't be afraid to take the first step to seek help and get to know someone new. Everyone faces problems, and sharing your situation with someone you trust can help.

There are many organisations, community centres, teachers and counsellors in school who are willing to extend a helping hand. I was first introduced to LCSS through the Singapore Prison Service as my dad was incarcerated then. That was

when I joined LCSS's Friends of Children & Youth (FOCY) programme, and sought guidance from the caseworkers and was introduced to Simon.

And if you are an aspiring mentor, go for it! Having now myself become a mentor to youths with disabilities, I now understand Simon better. As mentors, we need to persevere and have patience even when the journey is not smooth-sailing. At the end of the day, there is plenty of fulfilment to be found in helping those who struggle in life!

I am now happily married, have graduated with a Higher Nitec in Human Resource and Administration, and am pursuing my dream of running a business. To all the mentors out there, thank you for doing what you do. And to LCSS and Simon, your presence in my life has made my days better – I really appreciate it!!

Finally, my heartiest congratulations to LCSS on this significant 25th Anniversary milestone. Whether you are someone who is struggling, already a mentor, or aspiring to become a mentor, may the stories you read in this book inspire you in your journey through life.

MR MOHAMED SYUKUR
Former Mentee
Life Community Services Society

“I can live a life just as fulfilling as that of others.”

Unlocking Imagination

Undergirding the logo of Life Community are the words “to live and leave a legacy”. Each and every one of us is wonderfully created with his or her own uniqueness and each has an amazing destiny waiting to be discovered.

It is with this steadfast belief in the potential and intrinsic value of every child that Life Community Services Society (LCSS) reaches out to empower children and families through care and mentoring. We sow on, in patience and hope, to bring out the best in each child.

From Bleakness to Sunshine in My Future

**Jayden was falling behind in grades and often failed his exams. He felt like giving up and was unmotivated, since he thought he was never going to be “good enough”. LCSS then provided many opportunities for him to try new activities and build his confidence and resilience.*

One defining moment that changed his mindset was a rock-climbing session. Jayden was having great difficulty trying to reach the top and was about to give up. Everyone kept cheering him on and he eventually did it! Jayden was exhilarated! He realised that he was strong enough to reach

his goals if he persevered. Over the years, this experience has helped push him on whenever something seemed too hard for him. If not for the support and encouragement of people who believed in him and reached out to lift him up, he would have given up in hopelessness and despair.

His mentor also noticed his helpfulness in the kitchen and so she decided to teach Jayden some cooking skills. Very soon, we began to discover his hidden passion. Spurred on by the praises of his mentor and endorsement from the other children who had tasted his cooking, Jayden began to teach others what he had learnt. Jayden’s willingness to give back by teaching others is a positive outcome as we saw how he grew from being empowered to empowering others. Jayden’s parents marvelled at the confidence and capabilities of their son.

Today, Jayden is enrolled in ITE’s Nitec in Asian Culinary Arts course, and is working towards his goal of becoming a chef. He is presently doing his internship in a Japanese restaurant. Through the various opportunities given and our constant affirmation to him, Jayden is looking forward to a bright future of being a chef.

“As surely as the spring follows the winter, in time, a glistening gem, once hidden, is found. Wisdom is to await the right moment!”

A. F. Friend

One life impacted can have a positive ripple effect on many others. From one life touched and transformed, we look forward to multiplied yields in future generations. Truly, to live and leave a legacy is about unlocking the imagination of the lives we nurture, and those who give of themselves – the families/caregivers, mentors, social workers, volunteers and staff – aspiring to realise dreams while enriching both the generations to come and our own personal experiences.

We would like to acknowledge the unreserved contributions and collaborations of every corporation and individual volunteer in partnering with LCSS to uplift the children under our care. With the support of our donors and volunteers who give selflessly, about 800 children each year receive the benefits of our programmes, and are empowered to empower others!



My Heartbeat for The Little Children

I was born in Singapore before the Second World War, and lived through the Japanese Occupation. Thereafter, our family of seven children suffered much in terms of financial and material lack. Like many people of those days, we not only saw but experienced poverty – often going to bed on an empty stomach.

We were so poor that my parents could not send us to school. Three of us siblings (boys) went

to stay and live with my uncle (my mother's brother) who then sent us to school. I attended Primary One when I was 11 years old.

The memory of living in poverty and want had stayed in my mind for years and later as a Christian pastor. Thus, it had always been my vision to start a charitable organisation to help poor children; to empower them so that they could have a better life and future.



“It is only by the grace of God – His divine strength – that I was able to remain sane and functional. With prayer and faith in Him, and under the wings of His sustaining blessing, I kept going.”

DR TAN KOK BENG ▪ Founder, LCSS

That vision was realised with the creation of Life Community Services Society (LCSS) as a community service division of the Asia Pacific Mission Ltd (APM), an organisation I helped found.

LCSS started with some seed money from APM, as at least some founding members were from the parent organisation. They were Dr John Tay, Pastor Wan Chee Wan, the late Elder Tony Lim and I.

We did not have much experience running a community service organisation and struggled to learn the “ropes”. Also, our funding was very limited and things were moving very slowly. Nonetheless, we thank God for the team of dedicated Board members, among whom was Elder Goh Kng Yan, who pressed on with much prayer and faith. Truth is, LCSS was actually a challenge of faith for all of us. I thank God for their resolve and stamina to persevere in spite of the many difficulties we faced.

As for me, it was a most difficult time in my life: as the first CEO of LCSS on a voluntary basis, while being the CEO of APM, pastor of my new church and chairman and lecturer of a new Bible school, then known as Bethany School of Missions (the training department of APM). I was also travelling

extensively for APM because of our mission work. It is only by the grace of God – His divine strength – that I was able to remain sane and functional. With prayer and faith in Him, and under the wings of His sustaining blessing, I kept going.

The past 25 years have not always been easy for us – whether as leaders or staff of LCSS. There were distinctive challenges along the journey. But when I look at the important milestone we have all arrived at – LCSS’ 25th Anniversary – I can only give thanks to God for the team of dedicated Board members under the leadership of our Chairman, Elder Goh Kng Yan, and recently our new Chairman, Mr Nicholas Goh. They have worked tirelessly to make LCSS what it is today. Praise be to God!

I believe and thank God also for the dedicated staff under the leadership of the former CEO Mr James Wong and the present CEO, Ms Lam Moi Kwai. They have sacrificed much to contribute to the success of the ministry of LCSS. Their vision to empower the poor and disadvantaged children and youths has driven them to excel in their labour of love. Thank you staff and God bless you.

We also thank God for a host of faithful and generous donors as well as the many volunteers who have willingly and cheerfully joined hands with us to make LCSS a viable organisation. Thank you, friends, for your support and encouragement. Without you and your help, we would not have been where we are today. May God bless you all.

In closing, may I encourage our LCSS staff with a few thoughts that have helped me in my service for God and others.

- Be sure of your calling to serve God and others.
- Be passionate about your ministry and in whatever you do.
- Always keep in mind that “It is more blessed to give than to receive” as you minister to people in need.
- Have faith in God and in yourself because “It is God who is at work in you to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil 2:13).
- Trust God and pray always.
- Let your motive always be to glorify God.

“Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do all to the glory of God.”

1 Cor 10:31

Testimonial for Dr Tan Kok Beng

“Dr Tan continues to lead and serve faithfully, upholding the staff and work before the Lord. Through his stewardship, LCSS has grown from strength to strength, with many doors opened to serve the community. He has been an exemplar to the Board and staff.

We thank God for Dr Tan’s labour for His kingdom in LCSS. I take this opportunity to wish him many more fruitful years in his other endeavours.”

GOH KNG YAN

Former Emeritus Chairman
Life Community Services Society

Envisioning Transformation

Mentoring can lead to transformative outcomes in a person's life. A strong and healthy relationship enables one to grow in social and emotional resilience, bringing about lasting and positive impact. Regardless of background, we all need a sounding board in our lives when there are difficult questions or decisions to be made.

Unfortunately, children may not always have someone whom they can turn to for guidance. This is especially so in low-resource families where parents may have to work long or odd hours just to meet their basic needs.

At LCSS, we believe that every child can be the best he or she can be – for themselves, their families, and their communities. We believe that we can empower children to thrive through positive and

supportive relationships, and intentional mentoring. Mentoring children is about having an adult role model to encourage, cheerlead, and reinforce positive learning. Mentors focus on building a relationship that is genuine and congruent, non-judgmental, and empathetic.

A mentoring session could look like an outdoor activity focusing on teaching values through play, or an indoor activity that focuses on reading or arts and crafts. Regardless of the activity, there are ways to strike conversations and help the child explore new possibilities and perspectives.

The following feature story highlights how our mentoring principles and paths have transformed the lives of Rob and Ri through the foster care of Ru, and the steadfast mentoring of Daniel Gan.

“A strong and healthy relationship enables one to grow in social and emotional resilience, bringing about lasting and positive impact.”



Unleashing a Child's Fullest Potential

"It takes a village to raise a child."

An African proverb, this statement embodies the spirit and *raison d'être* behind all that LCSS believes in, and works unceasingly for – that every child under its care can be nurtured to his or her fullest potential through a community of care – family, mentors and friends. Literally, a village!

The children, many of them challenged by the absence of their biological parents – either due to incarceration for crimes committed or are no longer present – need delicate guidance.

Daniel Gan, a volunteer mentor with LCSS for 14 years, observes, "Through no fault of their own, these children are bearing the unfortunate consequences. They are the ones who are emotionally, mentally, psychologically and socially

'trapped'. Unless something is done to help them, they will most likely end up directionless, and lost in life."

Siblings Rob* and Ri*, aged 18 and 16, are prime examples of what is possible when collective belief, vision and hard work take root.

At a very young age, they were deprived of their biological parents.¹ Thankfully, their auntie Ru* came to the fore.

Recalls Ru, "Rob was only 4, and Ri 2 when I took them under my care. There was no alternative. I had to care for them. It was sad to see them without their father and mother. I'm just glad I'm able to be their 'Daddy' and 'Mummy'."

¹ Background information of their family is kept confidential to protect their identity and privacy.

“LCSS believes that every child under its care can be nurtured to his or her fullest potential through a community of care.”

DANIEL GAN ■ Volunteer Mentor



“Through no fault of their own, these children are bearing the unfortunate consequences. They are the ones who are emotionally, mentally, psychologically and socially ‘trapped’. Unless something is done to help them, they will most likely end up directionless, and lost in life.”

DANIEL GAN ■ Volunteer Mentor



It wasn't without heartbreak when Rob and Ri realised their family background. Ru continues, “It was heartrending, to say the least, on that momentous day. I had to ask their mentor Daniel to be with me, so they were assured as they opened up to him and me. Most importantly, we didn't want them to be adversely affected. We need to protect them psychologically, and emotionally.”

As time passed, thankfully, Rob and Ri have grown to be responsible teens. Rob is today a second-year student at Temasek Polytechnic, studying logistics and business management, and Ri is studying at CHIJ, taking her 'N' Level examination later this year.

Rob, also an avid fan of football club Manchester United, quips, “I remember Daniel Uncle guided me in improving my mathematics and science subjects when I was younger, then my 'O' Level exam and in selecting the course of my further studies. I'm deeply grateful to him for walking with me for the last 12 years. His words to me: 'keep persevering in life' will always stay with me. I hope to keep studying hard and eventually enter university.”

Continues Ri, “At first, I didn't think much of Daniel Uncle and his wife Patsy Auntie, as I had not fully understood the purpose of 'mentoring', a concept alien to me. Regrettably, as I used to be self-focussed and bad tempered, I treated them only as my 'punching bags', against whom I would rant and complain about life. But they would tell me, 'Tell God your issues. Remember you're not alone, and there are people who care about you and your problems.' These words somehow impacted me. They calmed me.”

Daniel adds, when asked how he overcomes the challenges of mentoring, “It takes time to build a relationship, there is just no shortcut. We shouldn't expect a child can connect with us on the very first day of meeting. It may take three to six months to build rapport and strengthen the relationship. To last, we need to have deep desire to see children mentored well and not be deprived of any opportunity to be successful in life. Personally, I tell myself I must not give up just because of challenges, or I shouldn't volunteer at all.”

For Ru, seeing where Rob and Ri are today gladdens her heart, “I fondly remember in 2009, the year I enrolled them for LCSS' Friends of Children programme, I received two lovely cards from Rob and Ri, who were just six and four years old respectively. It was written with 'Happy Mother's Day!' It was an emotional moment. Then, I realised I truly embraced them as my 'children', and they accepted me as their 'Mummy'. I thank God for the grace He has given me to raise them up, despite all the ups and downs of life.”

The journey continues for Rob and Ri as they embark on new life chapters. Rob envisions, “I dream of being a teacher, a professional logistician or doing business in the logistics sector. Let's see!” While Ri adds, “I've yet to decide what's next. But what's certain is that I want to keep studying and doing well, and one day secure a good job, and perhaps a nice home!”

In unison, Ru, Rob and Ri, gratefully extol, “We can't thank LCSS enough. The staff, volunteers,

and mentors – they are our extended family. We don't feel alone, and we're assured we will always have help when we seek. The work of LCSS must continue – to guide many more children who come from disadvantaged family backgrounds.”

Daniel concludes, “Believe wholeheartedly in our heart that any child can make it. Tell the child eyeball to eyeball 'I believe in you'. It is powerful because when the child knows someone trusts and believes in him/her, that will give him/her the extra motivation, the extra zeal, the extra fire to work harder . . . Persevere and do not give up until the picture in our mind becomes a reality.”

All said, there are no magic formulae to unlock a child's imagination – maximising his/her potential and fulfilling his/her dream. It can only be realised amid a constellation of conviction, commitment and community care.

This embodies LCSS' quest and its unrelenting pursuit of seeing every child thrive in life.

“We can't thank LCSS enough . . . We don't feel alone, and we're assured we will always have help when we seek. The work of LCSS must continue – to guide many more children who come from disadvantaged family backgrounds.”

RU, ROB AND RI ■ Beneficiaries

■ THE “3Ps” OF MENTORING

Nurturing A Child's Best

COVID-19 has made the challenge of eradicating poverty and supporting the vulnerable even harder than it already was before. The world has seen a rise in exploitation of the poor and the vulnerable (United Nations, 2021)¹ and an increase in sexual exploitation of children, particularly through online platforms (Freedom Collaborative, 2021).²

In Singapore, the poverty situation appears less stark – at least on the surface. Our gross domestic product (GDP) per capita has grown from \$1,567 in 1965 to \$82,503 in 2020, and median household income rose from \$2,296 to \$7,744 between 1990 and 2020 alone. Singapore's prosperity as a nation has freed the vast majority of our children from food insecurity and lack of shelter, day-to-day struggles which our earlier generations commonly faced (Raising Children in Singapore, 2009).³

This evolution and trend, however, pre-dates COVID-19 and has given rise to a different kind of challenge within the family unit. To support a higher cost of living and growing aspirations, many families now depend on dual incomes. The number of latchkey children has consequently increased. Divorce rates have risen from 3.8 to 8.0 per 1,000 married resident females. Further, there has been an increasing number of suicides, attempted suicides, and self-wounding incidents among children and youths.³



With global connectivity and heightened media consumption through social and entertainment platforms, the young of today are exposed to images and notions of alcohol, drugs, and sex with little to no guidance, and from a worryingly early age. They are also heavily influenced by the behaviours and conversations they observe around them, particularly from their parents. Professor Ho Lai Yun, in *Raising Children in Singapore*, shares: “Young people do not create these problems. Their health and development in most societies are undermined more by the attitudes and behaviour of the adults around them than by their own actions.”

Something is clearly broken, and not enough is being done to counteract it.

At LCSS, we understand and have seen first-hand, over the years, the importance of positive and constant adult role models in anchoring the developmental journey of children and youths and providing a strong catalyst for every child to grow to his or her fullest potential – the best each can be.

While there exists a well-established youth mentoring programme ecosystem in Singapore, mentoring support for children remains largely elusive. What is for certain is that societal data and trends all over the world signal an urgent need for much earlier intervention.

In 2014, MENTOR National, a mentoring organisation that seeks to impact America’s young people through quality mentoring, identified that “a child born in the United States today is twice as likely to have a parent in jail as compared to a child born just 20 years ago. Compared to 40 years ago, two and a half times as many children live without the presence of a father at home, which puts more children at-risk for having fewer caring adult examples in their lives.”⁴

To advance efforts to address this need, we have adopted mentoring as a centrepiece of our organisation’s work.

We are under no illusions that mentoring is a journey that requires focus and commitment. To

“To advance efforts to address this need, we have adopted mentoring as a centrepiece of our organisation’s work.”

enable this, we adopt a “3P” framework – *Principles, Pathways, and Programmes*. First, our principles are the values that underpin our proprietary approach to child mentoring; second, our pathways are the means by which we create and sustain a supportive mentoring ecosystem around each child; and third, our programmes speak to how activities can be designed in a manner that is evidence-based, effective, and replicable.

Ultimately, the impact of our work has ripple effects beyond the children whom we serve. Children possess the power to transform families for the better. They are a basic unit of the family, just as how family is a basic unit of society. Our role, then, is to create the right environment for children to thrive, to dream, and to themselves become the positive change that they hope to see.

PRINCIPLES

Since 1996, LCSS has supported numerous vulnerable and at-risk children and youths in their developmental journeys, through conventional channels like casework, after-school care and drop-in facilities.

In 2019, in response to the evolving societal trends, we made the decision to refocus resources and attention into creating a holistic and supportive mentoring ecosystem around each child. This model has become and will continue to be a major thrust of our work and we believe it will be so for other child-centred agencies for years to come.

Our overarching goal remains – to empower children to be healthy, resilient, and have good social relationships and character, enabling them to become competent and confident individuals

who, in turn and in time, can and will contribute back to society.

Three core principles underpin this:

Child-Centredness

Nothing beats child-centred mentoring that is intentional, positive, relational and sustainable. This entails the building of relationships that are genuine, congruent, non-judgmental, and empathetic, and programmes and activities that holistically address four growth domains – socio-emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and physical.⁵

Socio-emotional: Helping every child form a positive sense of self and the ability to make sense of and regulate his or her emotions.

Behavioural: Helping every child make the right decisions and translate them into socially desirable actions.

Cognitive: Stimulating thinking and reflection, and building confidence in communication.

Physical: Health, hygiene, nutrition, and motor ability.

Community Partnerships

As the widely-known proverb goes, it takes a village to raise a child.

LCSS believes in working in concert with community partners, especially those with whom children spend the most time. Schools are one such example. The average child spends roughly half his waking hours in some form of schooling environment. It is thus unsurprising that second only



The “3Ps” of Mentoring.

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“Each of us may have our limitations, but together, we become more than the sum of our parts.”

to parents, it is student welfare officers, teachers, and counsellors who interact most closely with our children. They offer a layer of understanding and insight that contributes deeply to our engagement with them.

In addition to schools, we collaborate and coordinate with agencies such as student care centres, rehabilitative institutions, various departments within the Ministry of Social & Family Development (MSF) and our community of trained volunteers. Each of us may have our limitations, but together, we become more than the sum of our parts, contributing differently yet complementarily to create the conditions for our children to experience the world around them and grow in a safe and healthy environment.

Caregiver Support

Caregivers are often the forgotten piece in the equation. Nevertheless, they play a critical role as they are often the primary adult figures that children take reference from.

While LCSS primarily focuses on serving children, we make it a point to include caregivers in the process; to foster ownership, help them understand their roles, responsibilities and contributions in their children's lives; as well as guide and motivate them to recognise and respond to their challenges and areas they need to work on (e.g. financial woes and stressors).

PATHWAYS

Drawing from the principles of child-centredness, community partnership and caregiver support, we then construct several key pathways to enable effective mentoring to take shape.

They include caseworker upskilling and reskilling, a robust and diverse community of volunteer mentors, and increasingly, corporate and industry collaborations.

“Casework 2.0”

Casework is commonly associated with unending piles of administrative duties. Maintenance of case notes by pen and paper and manual scheduling of check-in and evaluation sessions used to be the norm. With advancements in technology and digital tools, however, caseworkers have evolved to undertake higher-order roles.

At LCSS, more than being experienced in the conventional requirements of casework, our caseworkers are champions, advocates, and sounding boards for the children. They are initiators and connectors with the community, and with community partners. For example, caseworkers at LCSS take it upon themselves to guide each child to understand and recognise positive influences in their lives, such as friends in school and around their neighbourhoods, or the online content that they are so constantly exposed to.

Our caseworkers also establish working goals for each child, and rally various stakeholders to be intimately involved in helping the child achieve identified goals. These stakeholders could range from caregivers, teachers, school counsellors, social workers, volunteers, to other social service professionals.

A Robust and Diverse Volunteer Mentor Community

Every successful mentoring relationship begins with a suitable mentor-mentee match.

We recognise that our children and youths come from all walks of life and have a variety of needs and aspirations. As such, to ensure that we are able to establish the best possible mentor-mentee matches, a robust and diverse community of volunteer mentors is an imperative. Strength in diversity also contributes to a dynamic and inspiring mentoring ecosystem for our children and youths, as they are able to seek different avenues of support in response to the changing seasons of their lives.

LCSS volunteer mentors engage our children in one-to-one and group mentoring sessions focussing on socio-emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and physical needs and aspirations. They provide stability and guidance as trusted friends and role models, motivators and encouragers, and reinforcers of positive learning. They do so by adopting three core principles of mentoring: 1) accepting, not judging; 2) guiding, not directing; and 3) being aware and empathetic.

Corporate and Industry Collaborations

As we build a sustainable child development and mentoring ecosystem, so too must we think ahead to what lies beyond. After all, not only will our children eventually enter adulthood, no man is an island, and a big part of growing up well involves connecting with the world.

Exposure to the industry from an early age provides a platform for children to consider whom they wish to serve and where they want to invest their time, talents, and energies in when they grow up. As they dream and aspire to what is possible, so too do they begin to think about how their actions and decisions today have implications for what is to come.

PROGRAMMES

Our programmes are the physical expression of our mentoring principles and pathways. They are the touchpoints via which our children experience,

learn, reflect and grow. While the execution and delivery of one programme may differ from that of another, their essence is one and the same – to create a village in which our children can thrive and fulfil their fullest potential.

Evidence-based Design

It is important that our programmes adopt evidence-informed psychosocial and cognitive development theories, in designing child-centred mentoring curriculum and activities around the four domains. These theories include:

- *Carl Rogers' Client-Centered Therapy*,⁶ which suggests that people have a desire to fulfil their potential and become the best that they can be, and can therefore benefit from a therapeutic environment that is genuine and congruent, non-judgmental and empathetic;
- *Erik Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory*,⁷ which describes the growth and change throughout one's life, and points to the importance of focussing on social interaction and conflicts that arise during different stages of development; and
- *Jean Piaget's Cognitive Development Theory*,⁸ which outlines the key stages that children undergo as they learn, and looks into how thought processes influence how they understand and interact with the world.

The activities under each programme are then categorised to ensure age-appropriateness and relevance to the respective developmental stages, and as far as possible should fulfil at least one of the following requirements: 1) Empowering each child with the ability to make his or her own decisions; 2) Helping the child discover his or her goals and aspirations; 3) Creating different opportunities for each child to excel; and 4) Preempting and addressing potential risks.

Impact Assessment Is Key

It is critical that we conduct rigorous and regular impact assessment to ensure that our programmes and activities are fit for purpose and functioning as intended in their unique contexts. The evaluation and review process also ensures that we are responsive to the evolving needs of our children and stakeholders.

To measure the impact of our programmes on the growth of our children and youths, we adopt a comprehensive 360-feedback mechanism that involves multiple stakeholders. We evaluate four parts: 1) Growth in the four child-centred growth domains over time – *socio-emotional, behavioural, cognitive, and physical*; 2) Mentor-mentee relationship; 3) Volunteering experience; and 4) Improvement of programme.

Volunteer and Partner-Empowered Mentoring-Embedded Programmes

Among our most interesting work is the design and execution of mentoring-embedded programmes, where volunteer mentors are equipped and empowered to deliver activities centred around the four growth domains.

All volunteers are required to understand and appreciate the overall LCSS mentoring strategy and undergo customised and structured training to learn how to apply our mentoring approach, principles and techniques in their respective contexts. We also facilitate this by involving our in-house professional social workers, caseworkers and teachers in providing complementary support. Here are some of our volunteer and partner-led mentoring-embedded programmes.

- *Life! Mentors*: Volunteers are matched to children and youths to provide holistic one-to-one or group mentoring. Resources and suggested curriculum are provided and customised to each child's unique needs.
- *Life! Readers*: Volunteers are matched to children to provide one-to-one mentoring through reading.
- *Life! Sports & Wellness*: Mentoring through sports, organised in concert with SportCares.
- *Life! Tutors*: Mentoring through academic tutoring and coaching.

Objective	Possible Methods	Outcome Indicator Examples
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measure improvement/growth of child across the four domains over time • Measure the quality of the mentor-child relationship 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys with child and mentor • Continual observations and regular review sessions with mentors (such as through case notes, etc.) • Ongoing assessment by staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Growth of child: e.g. "I am confident that I can make the right choices." • Mentor-child relationship: e.g. "I trust my mentor", or "My mentor has given me good advice on a problem I'm facing."
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluate the volunteering experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys and review sessions with mentors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Volunteer retention rate • "How would you rate the volunteering experience?" • "How likely will you recommend volunteering with us?"
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gather feedback to improve the programme 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback forms with stakeholders involved in the child's life (such as caregivers, partners, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "In your view, has the child shown improvement in his/her behaviour?" • "How satisfied are you with our services?"

“The “3Ps” define all that we are and all that we do in our mentoring work at LCSS. We believe these efforts, characterised by a strong ‘village’ mentality of tight-knit cooperation and collaboration, can and will unlock what is possible in every child.”

- *Life! Tech*: Mentoring through digital literacy and tech skills such as coding.
- *Life! Skills*: Mentoring through music, arts and crafts, baking and other skills.

Centralised Case Management & After-School Care Services

- *Friends of Children and Youth (FOCY)* supports children and youths (6 to 16 years old), living island-wide, whose parent/s are presently or were formerly incarcerated. Professional social workers and caseworkers visit and mentor the beneficiaries at least once a month.
- *MightyKids, Families, and Community (MKFC)* supports disengaged and latchkey children and youths (5 to 16 years old) in the Telok Blangah community via a drop-in centre. The social workers serve and mentor these beneficiaries by creating a caring and safe environment in the centre, as well as working closely with partner agencies and grassroots organisations to implement various programmes.
- *Life Student Care (LSC)* provides quality after-school care services for primary school children by focussing on the total development of the child in a safe and caring environment. This includes teacher mentors conducting character development lessons, homework supervision and enrichment activities, as well as working closely with the caregivers, schools and grassroots, especially for students who come from vulnerable backgrounds.

- *EduGrow for Brighter Tomorrows (EduGrow)* supports children (5 to 12 years old) from low-income families living in Marine Parade, to be on a path of social mobility, through a series of activities, workshops, and group academic coaching. This is a joint project between LCSS and The Hut Limited.

In sum, the “3Ps” define all that we are and all that we do in our mentoring work at LCSS. We believe these efforts, characterised by a strong “village” mentality of tight-knit cooperation and collaboration, can and will unlock what is possible in every child.

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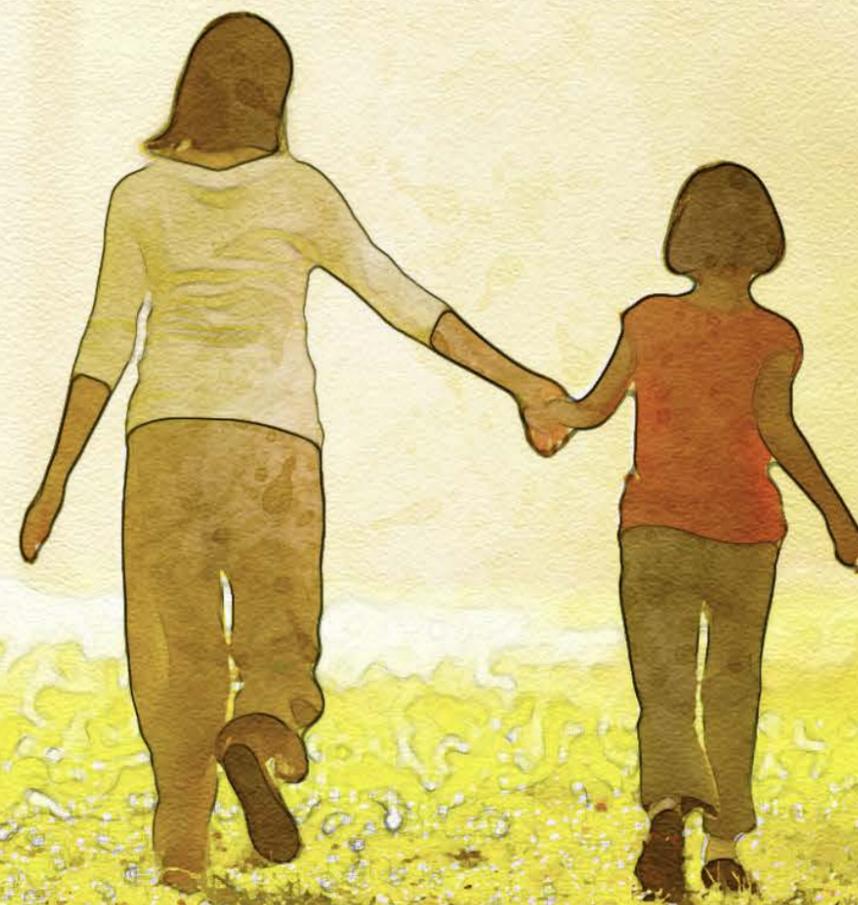
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One Life. One Family. One Community

The old adage, “It takes a village to raise a child”, is often bandied about in speeches, quotes, and news articles. It has become so commonly referred to that one can almost not be faulted for no longer giving it weight.

For LCSS, however, the idea of a village – in all its disparate parts – working together, is indeed a living reality. We have seen first-hand the transformative power of community and the long-term impact it brings to those who once had little hope.

The impact stories that you are about to read showcase how various stakeholders, from caregivers, to mentors, caseworkers, schoolteachers and staff, have rallied together as a village and made a material difference to the lives of our little ones.



“It takes a village to raise a child.”

To Guide and to Reinforce



I had the privilege to meet *Zac in mid-2019. Zac was 11 years old then. He lives with his parents and three siblings. He is the oldest among his siblings in the family.

Having been a mentor with EduGrow for the previous three years, I have learnt to come into the mentoring relationship with no agenda, but with the sole desire to be a friend. So, I spent some time getting to know who Zac was, and what he liked to do. It is important to me that I started by knowing what Zac liked. Things would then flow naturally.

Football is usually a good topic to start with. Zac is a fan of Liverpool and their star forward Mohamed Salah. It proved to be a good common topic, and many of our early mentoring sessions started with a game of football, sometimes with Zac's brother too. I'm not a football coach, not particularly talented, and I'm getting on in my years. But it is always fun to get some exercise in, burn some calories, and bond over a kickabout with Zac, who is the reason we do this.

Football gives great material for mentoring. It provides the heroes that Zac looks up to, and

they've provided good inspiration and story arcs for our conversations. I often use the concept of hard work which is the first ingredient of success. We've watched YouTube videos of Cristiano Ronaldo practising his football drills, free-kicks, and ball control. It's great fun, and we always go back to the moral of the story, "*Why does Ronaldo practise so hard when he's so good? The answer: He's good because he practises*". Practice, practice, and more practice is the vehicle to success.

I'm almost like a broken record, and Zac has come to expect it from me. Heh!

Beyond football, I guided Zac in planning holiday activities such as teaching children aged 11 to 13 on making TikTok videos. In return, he taught me how he creates TikTok videos. He was proactive in the ideation process and displayed courage while videoing.

Due to the pandemic, virtual mentoring sessions continued for close to a year. Zac would always ask when we could meet face-to-face again. We finally did in March 2021, where we kick-scootered at the East Coast Park. We chatted about how

“I have learnt to come into the mentoring relationship with no agenda, but with the sole desire to be a friend.”

JAMES CHIA ■ Mentor

he was coping with the changes at school (e.g. home-based learning) and family due to COVID-19. We enjoyed this brief respite of “near-normalcy”.

While there are limitations to online Zoom mentoring sessions, such as the lack of face-to-face interaction and occasional IT issues, Zac and I enjoyed playing multiplayer online games together on gogygames.com and practising our word and spelling skills on skribbl.io. And that's how we'll continue to negotiate through COVID-19.

What I have gathered from this period is: it doesn't really matter what activity we are doing, so long as we are spending time together. Personally, I've also learnt about how a family makes do with less-than-average resources, yet is still able to navigate through the pandemic. I think this provides great lessons to all of us.

Today, Zac is 13 years old and studying in Secondary 1. Last year, to his utmost joy and relief, he passed his PSLE and managed to enrol in his desired secondary school. He had worked hard and achieved his goal (which we talked about periodically through goal-setting). He enjoys school, though he has to wake up early for his commute. Zac has also joined his desired CCA – NCC. When asked why, he readily responds, “I want to protect Singapore.”

Zac continues, “I want to be a good person in the family, and in the future, I hope to be either a policeman or a footballer.”

I would be happy to walk alongside Zac if he lets me, as he continues his growth journey and realises his potential.

“In my journey as a mentor, I've come to realise that many things are beyond my control. I can control myself, but I can't control anyone else. So, I do my part and God handles the rest. I realise I need to stop making excuses, be true to myself and watch things change in a positive way. My first mentoring case (which concluded five years ago) is now a grown-up and married recently. Even his slight disability didn't stop him from giving back to society. My second mentoring case (which concluded two years ago) was at first a troublemaker in school. He now looks forward to attending school and wants to be a police officer in future. My third mentoring case (current) is “work-in-progress”. I hope he too will turn out good.”

SIMON TAN ■ Mentor



You Are Not Alone

I am *Inas, 13 years old this year. I have two elder siblings aged 15 and 17 years old. My grandparents and aunt *Daana take care of me, as my parents have been in and out of prison since I was young.

I love listening to music and doing things together with my friends. Something and someone that makes me happy is my favourite K-pop band, SEVENTEEN.

I joined LCSS' Friends of Children & Youth (FOCY) programme when I was seven years old. My first impression of LCSS was that it was scary and boring, and that it would not be fun. At first, it was hard for me to adapt to my caseworkers as I was shy. I felt that I lacked social skills and it was frightening and awkward for me to talk to them. But all of them were very nice and good. My caseworkers and mentor were very friendly and patient with me, and brought me out for fun activities, which I fondly remember. As time passed, I felt that I could trust them with my problems.

Since my journey with LCSS six years ago, it has been a very fun time, especially during the LEAD (Leadership Exploration And Development) youth group sessions and other activities organised by LCSS. One of the most memorable activities was during the 2019 Christmas party. I had the opportunity to perform a dance with my long-time LEAD friends. For months, we practised the dance

together and finally performed the dance on stage. Yes, I enjoy dancing a lot.

I do have challenges. Last year, I had challenges managing my schoolwork. It was my PSLE year and I was quite worried. I found it hard to understand some concepts and only managed to have maths tuition around mid-year. But with the constant encouragement from my caseworkers and mentor, I passed my PSLE! I am thankful.

What I have learnt over the years is that there is always a bright side even in our darkest times. LCSS has assured me that I am not alone as there are others like me going through similar challenges in life, and there is always help. I'll remember the words of my caseworkers and mentor, "We will be with you, to help you. So seek help and guidance whenever you need."

With their constant encouragement and motivation, I can start to imagine what is possible in life, to stay resilient and not give up easily.

So to those who may be going through a hard time: don't give up; always reach out to someone for help and remember, you are not alone. There are others like you facing the same problems. We can fight together!

Finally, my dream. I dream to become a social worker/mentor. I aspire to become like the role models in my life – to help others as well.

“LCSS has assured me that I am not alone as there are others like me going through similar challenges in life, and there is always help.”

*INAS ■ Beneficiary



A Community of Support

I am *Daana, 30 years old. I work at a manufacturing company, and at the same time I am pursuing a part-time Diploma in Business Supply Chain Management. I am the caregiver of my niece Inas and nephews aged between 13 to 17. As their parents are imprisoned due to drug abuse, they have no parents' support from a very tender age.

We were introduced to LCSS when my brother-in-law sought help from the prison. At that time, we were financially tight and emotionally stressed, raising three children of our own. Due to the criteria of household per capita for various community

channels of assistance, I received only minimal financial help. We live with my aged parents and we try to stay strong and learn to face challenges each day brings.

As a mother, I know the need for children to have parents or adult caregivers around them. Regardless of what my sister and brother-in-law have done, their children still need care. Since their birth, I've been taking care of them, and I would say they are very attached to me. Reflecting, if I were not here to guide them, who would?

We've known LCSS for almost five years now. I am thankful to the many staff, such as Mr Gabriel

Lee (Programme Head of FOCY), who are always there to hear us out and never fail to lend a helping hand. I remember when my eldest nephew started to have problems, Gabriel met me personally to make sure I was alright. He did not judge my nephew as well. The children see him as an elder brother whom they can share their thoughts with. This is a great emotional relief for me. There are other caseworkers who come alongside as well. The handover journey (when needed) has been smooth, and I've never had any issues communicating with any of them.

The many activities carefully curated by LCSS have encouraged my niece and nephews to participate. This helps them to be more sociable as they make new friends. Also, besides the provision of tuition and food rations, a caseworker is attached to each of my niece and nephews, spurring them to attend youth work group sessions on Saturdays, interest-based activities such as dancing, and even events such as a Christmas Party. My niece was involved in the 2019 Christmas Party as a dancer.

LCSS and its community of caseworkers and mentors have gone out of the way to support my family. Beyond organising activities, what is most vital is the social support they provide for my niece

“I know one day we will survive this rollercoaster life. My hope is that my niece and nephews will lead a productive life.”

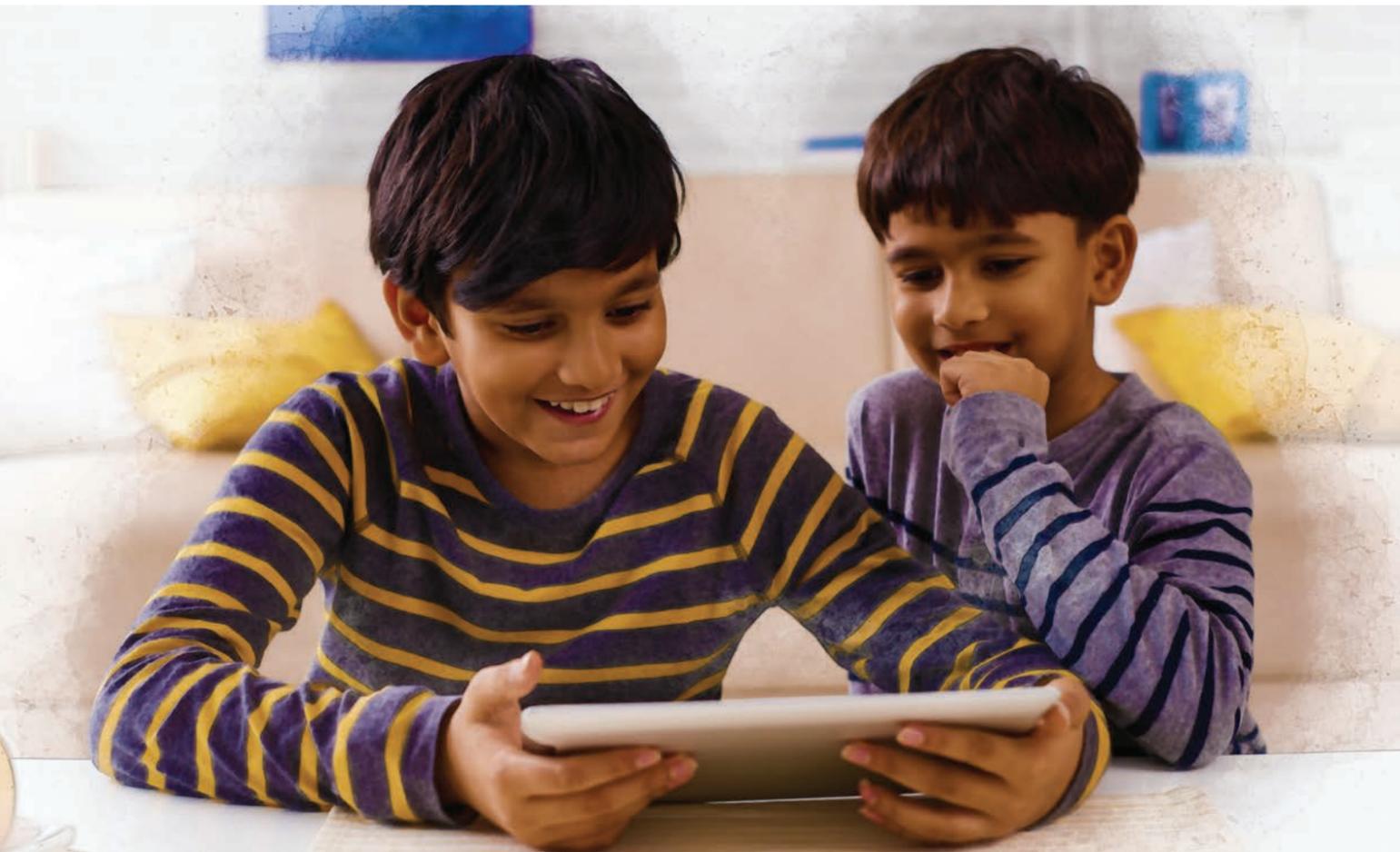
*DAANA ■ Caregiver

and nephews and caregivers like me. When my elder nephew was in hospital, Gabriel continued to keep in touch with him, and visited him too. He would go the extra mile to help whenever I needed help, such as requests for tuition.

Before joining LCSS, the three children had no one else to talk to except me. But there were times when I was not available due to work. Now, being part of the FOCY programme and having committed mentors with them, they're able to share their thoughts, feelings and worries instead of keeping them to themselves. I see them more jovial, more outspoken, and looking forward to LCSS activities. They feel appreciated, and that their talents are recognised. They know there are people out there who care for them. Also, with the guidance and tuition provided, they're driven to learn and improve on their studies too.

There is this saying, “When life gives you lemons, make lemonade!”. I know one day we will survive this rollercoaster life. My hope is that my niece and nephews will lead a productive life.

Lastly, I want to thank all at LCSS. You are always there for my family, for us to lean on. My family and I appreciate each and everyone of you!



From Hopelessness to Sunshine in My Future

My parents worked as cleaners and they worked hard to provide for me and my two siblings. Despite knowing this, I still felt embarrassed and did not want anyone to know about their occupation, especially in a society like Singapore where professional status is still highly valued. Naturally, I had low self-esteem and lacked confidence.

I also struggled academically. My parents worked long hours and did not have time to teach me. My siblings who were more than 10 years older than me would try to coach me but as they had their own schoolwork, I did not want to disturb them.

I would go to school earlier in the morning to try to ask my classmates for help. However, I was still falling behind in grades and often failed my exams. I felt like giving up and was unmotivated, since I thought I was never going to be good enough.

I came to know Life Community Society Services (LCSS) at the age of 10. I started making more friends and formed a support network with the staff members and my volunteer mentor. To engage me in my studies, my mentor made sure tuition was fun and enjoyable, taking time to teach and guide me patiently. Slowly, I picked up the basics and felt more equipped to study.

LCSS also provided me with many opportunities to try new activities and build my confidence and resilience!

One momentous moment that changed my mindset was a rock-climbing session. I was having great difficulty trying to reach the top and was about to give up. Everyone kept cheering me on and eventually I did it! I was so proud of myself. Something then clicked in me – *I am strong enough to reach my goals if I persevere*. Over the years, this experience has helped to push me on whenever something seems too hard for me. If not for the support and encouragement of people who believe in me and have reached out to lift me up, I would have given up in hopelessness and despair.

I also had the chance to try performing arts and attended a theatre production workshop during my time with LCSS. I learnt many things, including the techniques of making videos and designing publicity flyers. I even acted in one of their SG50 short films! Best of all, my parents attended the premiere for this film, which had about 200 people

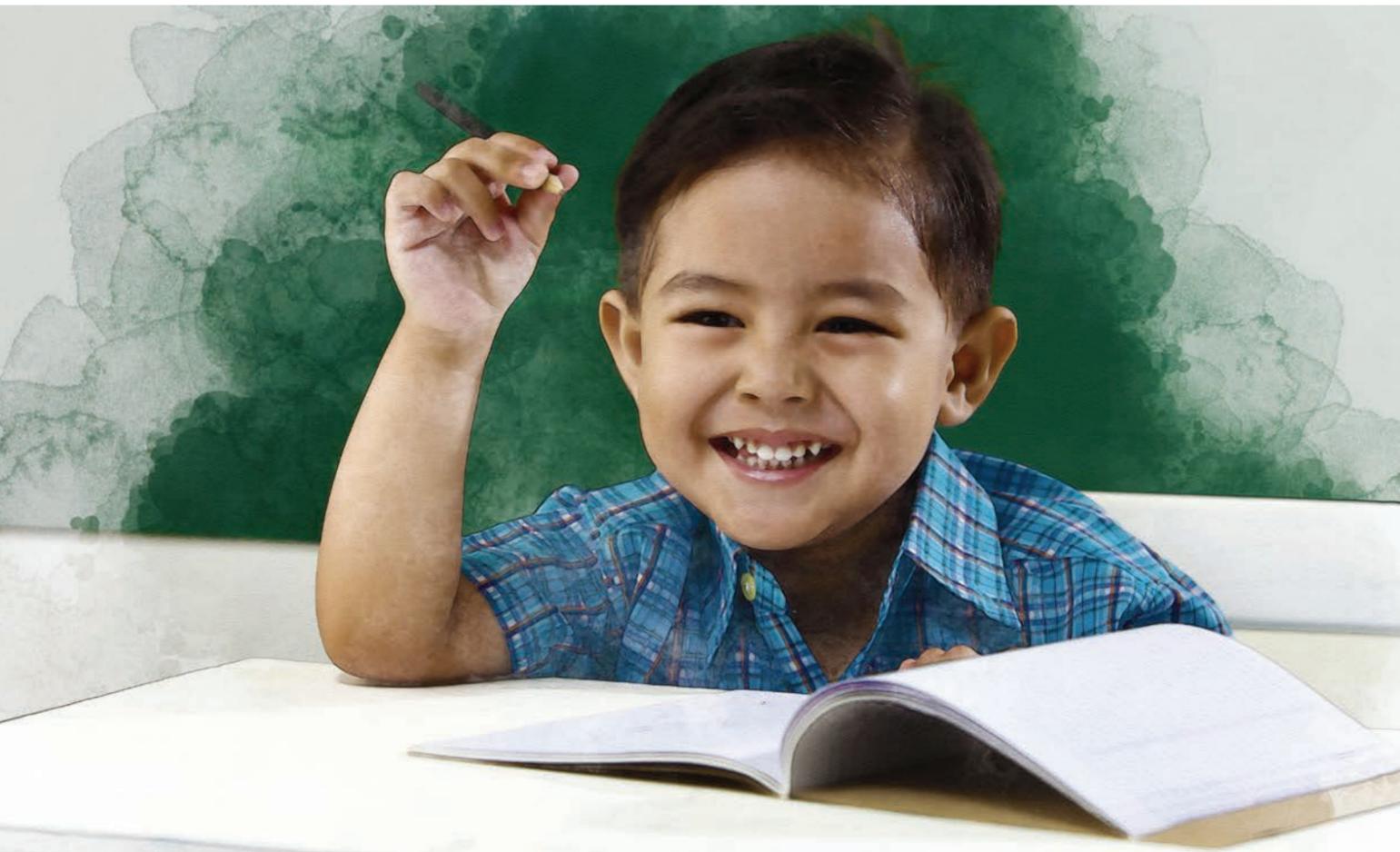
in attendance. I was elated when I saw how proud they were, seeing me being featured in the film.

Lastly, I was involved in the preparation of ingredients for our daily lunch meals provided at the centre. Little did I know I would discover my hidden passion for cooking. I started learning basic cooking skills and food hygiene standards. Soon, I began to cook for LCSS' overnight camps, and also teach and pass on what I had learnt to other youths. Today, I am enrolled in ITE's Nitec in Asian Culinary Arts course and working towards my goal of becoming a chef. I am presently doing my internship at a Japanese restaurant.

I am thankful to LCSS for helping me to discover my own strengths through various opportunities and for their constant affirmation. Learning from my mentor, I don't look at the beginning; instead I look to the future – to what I can be. It's not so much of where I am now as it is where I am headed for. I believe that I can be a leader. Yes! There is sunshine in my future!

“If not for the support and encouragement of people who believe in me and have reached out to lift me up, I would have given up in hopelessness and despair.”

*JAYDEN ■ Beneficiary



Mentoring is a Journey



Just when I was about to graduate with my degree in marketing, I was reflecting if I wanted to work in the corporate world. I have always loved children and felt that I had a talent of connecting with them. Hence, I decided that working in the social service sector, in particular the children and youth sector, would give me more job satisfaction than in the corporate world. I have not looked back since.

Thankfully, Life Community Services Society (LCSS) gave me, someone without the relevant experience and qualifications, the opportunity to join the sector. I have been an employee here for close to eight years now.

When I first joined the sector, I thought just having a heart for the children was good enough. I could not have been more wrong. Hearing and witnessing the struggles and challenges the children go through helped me realise that having a passion is inadequate. Knowing how to support them in overcoming their challenges is just as important.

There are days I felt ill-equipped for the demands of the job. Thankfully, attending relevant courses has helped build up my competencies and knowledge. I also managed to pursue a Postgraduate Diploma in Social Work. As society evolves, so do the challenges the children face. Truth be told, even till today, there are times when I doubt my capability as the issues that surround them can be complex and overwhelming. It is at such times that the support of the agency and my colleagues is very important. The timely words

of wisdom and emotional support are important factors that keep me going.

I desire working with children and youths as firstly, I enjoy engaging and interacting with them and secondly, I see tremendous potential in them, which may otherwise go unfulfilled if support is not provided. Being myself a recipient of the care and love of many individuals during my childhood years, I strongly believe I would not have been where I am today if not for their support.

Today, I have the privilege of witnessing the seeds that I have sown in the children's lives bear fruit. Seeing the positive changes mentoring can bring gives me a sense of joy and satisfaction that no amount of money can buy.

One example is 18-year-old *Adam, my mentee of six years. Adam went through a lot of hardship and transition as an adolescent. He experienced harsh discipline by his parents, was placed in a Voluntary Children's Home, was separated from his family, and was eventually sentenced to spend time in the Singapore Boys' Home. Today he is reunited with his family and is taking his 'O' Levels at the end of the year. He aims to take a Diploma in Social Work as he likes helping people and has expressed his interest to volunteer with LCSS.

Through my work with children, I learn not to judge a book by its cover. Society may have written some of these children off because of their deviant behaviour or appearance. However, having had the privilege of interacting with them on a personal level has helped me see their strengths.

“Seeing the positive changes mentoring can bring gives me a sense of joy and satisfaction that no amount of money can buy.”

GABRIEL LEE ■ Social Worker

Mentoring is a journey, not a destination. I would like to encourage all mentors to stay the long haul with your mentees. That way, you get to witness the mentees' growth. Like any journey, the ride can get a little bumpy at times, so it is important to celebrate small successes. Lastly, enjoy the time and experience with your mentees, show your support through their ups and downs and affirm them constantly. The outcomes you hope to achieve with them will naturally follow.

Please let me end off with a quote by my mentee: “Thank you so much Gabriel. If not for you guys, people like us would probably be wandering the streets, getting into trouble, and following our parents' footsteps. Thank you for changing our lives and showing us there's a future for us as well!”

I gush with pride at where this mentee is today. Stories like this make the experience all the more meaningful.



Pressing On



Like many children who choose “being a teacher” as their childhood dream, I too used to dream of becoming a teacher. Little did I expect that I would one day indeed become a Student Care teacher.

My journey as a teacher began in 2018. When studying Social Work in university, I studied a module related to children, which then ignited my interest in working with them.

Understandably, with no prior experience in managing children, I encountered many difficulties, especially in my initial year as a Student Care teacher at the Centre. I faced many students with

a gamut of challenging behaviours. Then, managing children with autism, children with aggressive behaviours, learning difficulties and classroom dynamics was overwhelmingly tough.

Every physical or emotional injury that I sustained from the students seemed to be calling me to quit. I could not help but feel demoralised at times. Despite the extra time, patience, and effort that I invested in the students, many were not appreciative, and some even made undesirable remarks. However, these setbacks did not deter me. I pressed on to guide them.

“Teachers are not just people who give instructions or conduct lessons; we play an important role as their mentors too. Whatever words that we say to them now may significantly impact them either now or in their near future.”

VERANE HEW ■ Social Worker

I remember a quote that kept encouraging me to move forward – *every day is a new day*. Regardless of how bad the day was, I told myself to forgive the children and continue to inspire them. If I give up on them now, will it be too late for another person to guide them again? With this thought, I am glad that I managed to pull through every time I felt like giving up.

At last, I was able to see some breakthrough after a very long time. *Derek, who used to hurt me physically and emotionally began to gradually listen to my words. His bad behaviours had caused him to be very close to being expelled from the Centre. It was a tough decision to decide whether to let him stay or leave. In the end, we decided to give him one final chance to change for the better. Of course, it was not an overnight change. There were times when he crossed the line, but we allowed him to take baby steps to change.

I witnessed a heartwarming improvement after I stepped down from my teaching role. From the day he behaved violently towards me till the day he looked forward to seeing me during the counselling session, it brings me inexplicable joy.

Once, Derek was mad at a classmate who behaved like his old self. I reminded Derek that he once acted likewise and encouraged him to give his classmate more time to change. To my surprise, he nodded his head and even admitted his past mistake of injuring me intentionally. That was the first time he acknowledged and sincerely apologised for the incident that happened long ago.

There are many other students I interact with. They each struggle with different life issues. I am thankful that the skills that I’ve learnt in school and my teaching experience help me to bring positive changes to them. When you receive notes like “Thank you for teaching me the right things” and “You are the best” from the students from time to time, it makes all the efforts worthwhile.

Teachers are not just people who give instructions or conduct lessons; we play an important role as their mentors too. Whatever words that we say to them now may significantly impact them either now or in their near future. Even though some may not understand what we teach them now, they may recall and understand what you’ve said to them one day.

Indeed, the journey as a teacher/mentor has not been easy. I am glad to have had supportive colleagues coming alongside me to mould the children to become better individuals. Without each other’s constant encouragement, the experience would have been much more challenging.

Although I am no longer assuming a teaching role, that has not stopped me from guiding the children as a social worker today. I hope my words or actions have left some positive imprints on their lives.

Truly, I am just grateful to be a part of those children’s lives.



Hope Transforms

The impact stories we have just read present us with invaluable insights on how a child's life can be influenced by the bond of a mentor-mentee relationship, with integrated support from a community of caregivers, practitioners and partners.

The fact that every child and every mentoring relationship is different makes mentoring interesting and fulfilling. If we operate on the premise that every child and family has a unique story to tell, the key then is to adopt an open mind and listen without judgement, for this goes a long way in building positive and trusting relationships.

As practitioners and mentors, our role is first to provide friendship and a steady hand, but more importantly over time to deeply understand the specific challenges each of our mentees face in order to develop a meaningful and targeted intervention strategy. To view our children as little

more than cases to be opened and closed, or digits on a KPI sheet, is to completely miss the point – our children have significantly greater potential than we could imagine.

Transformation often takes time to effect. We have read numerous stories of how years can often elapse before visible changes are observed. Take joy and pride in the small wins, trusting that they are just as necessary and important as the big ones. Things are easygoing when times are good, but our persistence, presence, and intentionality even in the lowest of moments are often what provide our children much-needed motivation and drive.

Countless lessons have emerged throughout our 25 years of doing this work. As we look to our next lap, we continue to embrace the challenges and joys of mentoring, and are grateful for the many others who have come alongside us in this journey.

“Take joy and pride in the small wins, trusting that they are just as necessary and important as the big ones.”



■ THINKING ALOUD

The LCSS Journey

You have read how various stakeholders have come together as a village to make this movement possible.

In this section, some of our mentors share their thoughts on their mentoring journey. We will also see some of our mentees' emotions and thanksgiving, expressed through drawings and handwritten notes.



Lessons of Love from My Mentee



Being a mentor is a life-changing and rewarding experience. I began this wonderful journey with my mentee *Aria almost three years ago. She is a charming, shy, inquisitive girl, full of life and always beaming with joy. Meeting Aria was one of the happiest moments of my life. She taught me how to live in the present and live life to the fullest.

We share a very unique and special bond, where we learn from one another. Whenever I meet Aria, I would start our conversation by asking her, "How is your day? Any interesting and fun things you did for the day?" She would usually respond in one sentence, "It was good."

One particular day, I completely forgot to acknowledge her despite picking her up from her home for our mentoring session. I was totally engrossed in my own thoughts after a hectic day. As I walked towards the "WeCare" centre – with Aria by my side – she suddenly held my hand and asked me, "Geetika, how was your day today? What did you do?"

I was totally surprised yet very heartened by her gentle questioning, because that was the first time Aria ever asked anything about me. Previously,

I often wondered whether she was paying attention to what I was saying. That incident was an eye-opener – that she does observe how I interact with her.

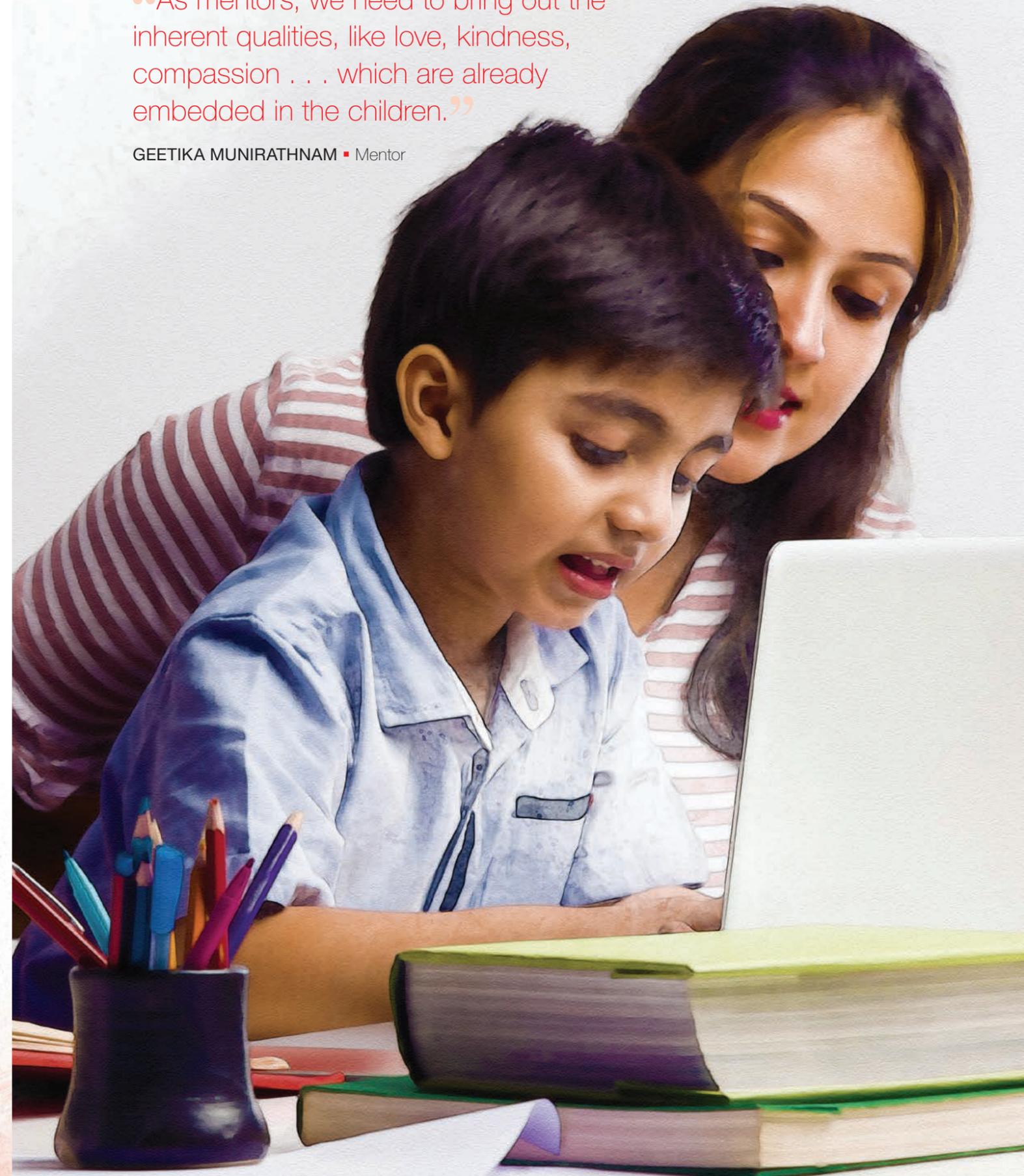
My mentoring journey has been filled with such precious moments with Aria. When I asked her to draw her family picture, Aria included me as part of her family. That was when I realised that she had accepted me as her trusted friend. This is pivotal for any mentor.

Once, Aria was not in her best of moods and she said some unpleasant things to me. Nonetheless, I spoke to her with love and calmness, to ease her mental state. After the session, I walked her home. As I was walking away, she came running towards me and hugged me and said, "I am sorry I didn't behave well today, I won't do it again." My eyes were filled with tears of joy; my heart expanded with love towards her. That day, I discovered she had so much love to share with the world.

As mentors, we need to bring out the inherent qualities, like love, kindness, compassion etc., which are already embedded in the children. Aria and I may not be blood-related but we are truly related by a unique bond of love and friendship.

“As mentors, we need to bring out the inherent qualities, like love, kindness, compassion . . . which are already embedded in the children.”

GEETIKA MUNIRATHNAM ■ Mentor



My Mentorship Journey



When I became a Singapore permanent resident in 2009 (and later a citizen in 2012), I was looking at ways to give back to the country that had welcomed me with open arms.

Through a teacher I met, I got in touch with LCSS. In 2011, I was paired with a shy 10-year-old boy: *Dave. He was living with his aunt and three other siblings in a small HDB flat.

So here I was, after work on a Thursday, in my three-piece suit, sticking out like a sore thumb in a HDB foodcourt, meeting for the first time a young Tamil boy speaking limited and strongly accented

English for a couple of hours. I started by trying to interest him in what was then my home country, France, and brought picture books and some of my own photos to try and stimulate his interest. I then got stories from the Bible (Dave is a Christian) in comic book format as I remember loving it when growing up. We graduated to “proper” comics (Marvel). Dave would try and read the hero’s speech bubbles and I, the villain’s.

That was when I realised that Dave couldn’t read properly. It wasn’t that he was shy, it was that he did not know how! So, I bought some reading flash cards to get him started and we would practise

together at foodcourts. Dave had been failing at school in most subjects mostly due to his inability to read. As time passed, he started doing better at school and feeling more engaged. I remember how pleased he was, in particular with his good maths results. He eventually went on to pass his PSLE with a reasonable score, moved on to secondary school and ended up doing well at ITE.

Through the years and in our weekly catch ups, we watched videos together on my phone, and I taught him how to ride a bike. I remember his excitement the first time we went to the Universal Studios theme park on his birthday. Along the way, my wife, Natalie, befriended his sister, *Dione. As they became teenagers, we started doing more activities together.

Around 2015, Dave and Dione graduated from the LCSS programme, but we continued to see both, albeit less regularly. My wife and I continued to develop their curiosity, through cooking classes (Natalie and the children came in 4th in a local cooking competition organised by our community club), or by taking them out for meals.

In 2016 and 2017, Natalie and I relocated to Hong Kong but we returned to Singapore every six weeks on average so we could see Dave and Dione. Having guided them for over 10 years, I can only say that it has been a purposeful journey.

“Every child deserves to be supported no matter what. I believe it is how we build a more cohesive and gentle society.”

ALBAN SALORD ■ Mentor

Today, they are both successful young adults. Dave is completing his National Service (NS) and planning to return to school to further his education. Dione is in a Polytechnic, and is studying to become a nurse. They have become our friends and we still catch up once in a while.

Indeed, mentoring has been an incredible motivation in our life, and Dave and Dione have certainly enriched our lives in many ways. It has been fun, emotional, and at times challenging. The idea of paying it forward is a powerful one and once you get started, it is difficult not to want to do more. I for one certainly have started doing mentoring in several other areas of my life (including at work or my alma matter, the University of Reading). I’ve found it to be extremely rewarding as well as a great way to develop myself.

As for LCSS, 10 years on, we are still volunteers. Just before Covid-19 emerged, we were mentoring another child. We are grateful to LCSS for the opportunity and are supportive of their ethos.

Every child deserves to be supported no matter what. I believe it is how we build a more cohesive and gentle society. Everyone can chip in, even without special talents or means. All you need is to be there for the children.



A Meaningful Childhood

I used to have a difficult childhood. I wasn't able to enjoy any attractions in Singapore due to my family background. This made me sad. I felt like I was not fortunate enough.

Thankfully, through LCSS, I was introduced to Al. I remember vividly the first time we met at my house. He was wearing a three-piece suit! I was shocked as it was a sight I was not used to. We proceeded to a foodcourt nearby and introduced ourselves to one another. Our first conversation was warm and friendly.

Since then, we have begun to meet almost every Sunday to spend quality time (for example, reading books) together. As time passed, Al also imparted to me proper life skills needed for my education and growth as a person. One day, Al brought me to the Universal Studios theme park in Sentosa for my first birthday with him. My dream of visiting USS finally came true! I was super thankful as it was my first experience at USS. Also, on special occasions, he would bring me to fancy restaurants, and watch Tamil language movies though he didn't understand the language.

“Thank you LCSS, Al and Natalie for playing such an important role in my life – giving me such a meaningful childhood, one filled with good memories.”

*DAVE ■ Beneficiary

Soon, Al introduced his wife, Natalie, to me. It was then that I introduced my sister Dione to them. Dione and I joined them for cooking classes as well as educational programmes that helped us in our studies. Those cooking classes, plus visits to top attractions like the SEA Aquarium are great experiences and memories I will never forget.

I wish to take this opportunity to thank LCSS, for introducing Al and Natalie to me and my sister. They have brought to our lives so many precious and fun elements, giving us a memorable childhood. I will forever treasure these relationships and experiences.

Lastly, LCSS also gave me opportunities to bond with others at the Centre, through activities such as playing the PS4, 8-ball pool, and watching movies. Thank you LCSS, Al and Natalie for playing such an important role in my life – giving me such a meaningful childhood, one filled with good memories.



Our Journey with Al and Natalie

By *Dione, Beneficiary, 19 Years Old, Poly First Year

Our lives were very different before meeting Al and Natalie, our mentors. My brother Dave and I didn't get to explore many things or do activities that we loved. I was introduced to the couple after Dave was.

Over the years, we have done so many activities together, such as picnicking, watching movies, playing frisbee, cooking, trampoline, and many more. My favourite activity was our cooking class, where I learnt how to cook beef rendang. It was such a fun experience, bonding while cooking. I remember fondly the cooking competition we did together. Yes, cooking was something I had never done in my life and it really thrilled me.

Al and Natalie have given us so many learning experiences. They have also guided us to become better persons. They are role models to Dave and me. We too aspire to be caring and compassionate like them in the future.

I would like to thank LCSS for introducing such wonderful people like Al and Natalie to us. They make our lives so much more special. We are very grateful to them, and can't wait to spend more time with them!

Drawings and Aspirations



A Work-in-Progress & Writing
by *Rayna, 19

A *Work-in-Progress* depicts the artist, Rayna, who is broken and in need of restoration. The silhouettes represent various members of the community, whose love and care help build her up and enable her to fulfil her potential.

I appreciate my mentor Inette for spending time with me. She was there for me when I needed her, she gave me brilliant advices when I faced troubles. She also brought me to places where I have never been to. Overall, I'm really thankful to have her in my life as a mentor.

I aspire to be successful in life and contribute back to society. I dream to be able to travel around the world and find a job that I am passionate about.

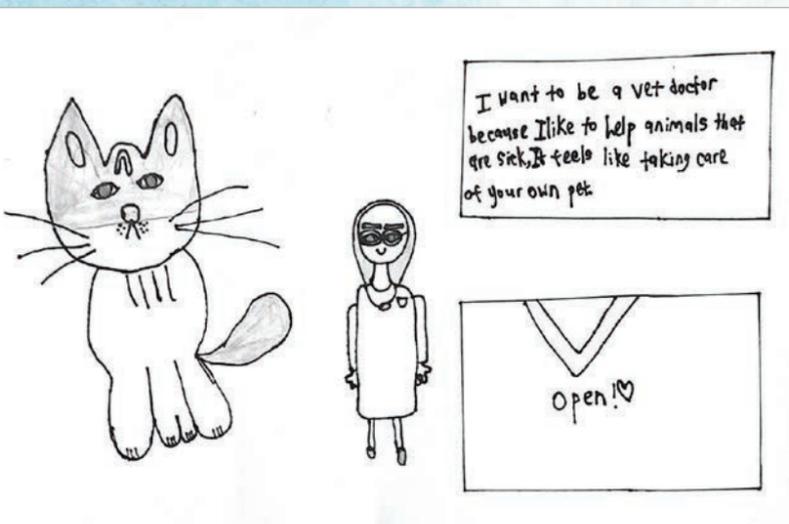
I hope all things will turn out fine for my family, where there will be no more pain for anyone, and all things they wish to achieve, will be achievable!

Dreams & Imagination by *Sylvia, 16



Drawing by *Zac, 14

"When I grow up, I aspire to be a police officer or a footballer. After earning and saving up enough money, I hope to be able to own a car because I really like cars. Their designs are so sleek and engines super fast! I hope that Singapore will continue to become a better place for everyone."



Drawing by Arumi, 11

25 Years of Empowering Children and Families

1996
Registered as a Society
(non-profit)



2021

- LCSS 25th Anniversary
- National Mentoring Summit (organising committee member)
- Soft Launch of LCSS New Vision: **Every Child, the Best that They Can Be**

2020

- International Learning Trip – Two delegates participated in the National Mentoring Summit in Washington D.C.
- Partner Agency for MOE Uplift Programme Office Tele-befriending Services (Dazhong Primary School)
- Learning Hub @ Sengkang LSC (Sponsored by HP)
- Presented a Workshop at the European Mentoring Summit in Barcelona

2019

- 2nd KidSTART Family Day in Partnership with ECDA for 700 Children and Families (Hosted by Mr Desmond Lee)
- Learning Is Fun and Engaging (LIFE) Programme (in Partnership with Temasek Foundation Nurtures)

2018

- Inaugural KidSTART Family Day in Partnership with ECDA (Hosted by Assoc Prof Dr Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim)
- CARE Network Children Support Programme
- Christmas Extravaganza 2: Kids Give Back – Outreach at Ling Kwang Home
- Opening of 5th Life Student Care in Park View Primary School



2014

- Opening of Activity Centre in Leisure Park Kallang
- Received Friends of Nan Chiau High School Award
- Received Against Family Violence Appreciation Award
- Organised 2nd Run for Life with 3800 participants

2016

- LCSS 20th Anniversary Commemorative Book Launched by Mrs Mary Tan
- Launch of EduGrow for Brighter Tomorrows Programme – A Collaborative Effort Between LCSS & The Hut Limited



2017

- Christmas Extravaganza
- Appointed KidSTART partner agency by ECDA

2013

- Inaugural Run for Life with 2000 participants – Featured in The Sunday Times & Berita Harian

2009

- Opening of MightyKids, Families & Community Centre in Telok Blangah



2007

- Launch of Friends of Youth Programme



2005

- Awarded Best Grandparenting and Intergenerational Bonding Programme
- Opening of 3rd Life Student Care in Yishun



2012

- Opening of 4th Life Student Care in Meridian Primary School (ceased w.e.f. 31 Dec 2020)



2008

- Featured in The Straits Times “Group helps kids whose parents are in prison”
- Received Letter of Commendation from Prison Link Centre (Changi)

2006

- Featured in The Straits Times “Charity at Home”
- Received Letter of Commendation from Singapore Prison Service

2004

- Launch of Friends of Children Programme



1999

- Opening of 1st Life Student Care in Hougang



2001

- Member of National Council of Social Service (NCSS)
- Opening of 2nd Life Student Care in Sengkang



2002

- Registered as a Charity

2003

- Conferred Institute of Public Character (IPC) Status
- Awarded Certificate of Recognition for the Family Life Ambassador Programme

Keeping the Heartbeat Going

“Every child, regardless of his or her background, deserves the right to be heard, the right to receive care, the right to pursue dreams, and to one day achieve his or her fullest potential for a bright future.”

LAM MOI KWAI ■ CEO

Board Members



Mr Nicholas Goh
Board Chairman



Mr Shaun Tan
Board Vice-Chairman



Mr Seow Kiat Wang
Board Honorary Treasurer



Dr Gilbert Tan
Board Honorary Secretary



Ms Ng Mi Li
Board Honorary Assistant Treasurer



Ms Ashley Low
Board Member



Ms Dawn Tan
Board Member

“We believe every child can be a catalyst of hope, evincing and perpetuating the spirit of mentoring for generations to come.”

NICHOLAS GOH ■ Board Chairman

LCSS Leadership Team



Lam Moi Kwai
CEO



Shirley Mun
Finance, HR & Admin



Delia Pak
Corporate Development



Elaine Soh
Volunteer Management & Partnerships



Evelyn Loke
Donor Management & Fundraising



Sharon Loh
LSC Development

Corporate



Jasmine Loh



Gabriel Lee



Geraldine Chew

Friends of Children & Youth, MightyKids, Families & Community



Josephine Ruth Sim
EduGrow for Brighter Tomorrows



Lim Beng Yong



Lily Low



Chu Li Hui

Life Student Care



Sabrina Sin

Programmes

Thank You

“Dear LCSS Village, thank you for being part of our collective network to love and serve the children, youths and families under our care. It has been a great privilege and joy to see how various members of our community have worked together in synergy, supporting each function in LCSS. We appreciate you! 😊”

JASMINE LOH
Assistant Director of Programmes

“We are very grateful to all of you for your invaluable contributions to support our beneficiaries! Thank you for being part of our LCSS village, a community that works together to encourage, empower, inspire, and positively influence the lives of our children and youths. You are all change-makers, and the impact that you leave will transform their lives for the better. Thank you!”

ELAINE SOH
Volunteer Manager

“We are exuberant to have your generous support. Your donations, talents and time are much appreciated. Your contributions have in many ways impacted the children’s lives and inculcated a strong spirit of appreciation and giving back. It is your involvement that helps us accomplish our vision: Every child, the best that they can be!”

SABRINA SIN
Centre Supervisor | Yishun Life Student Care

“I wish to thank all who have contributed to the lives of our children and youths at LCSS! Your efforts, be they encouraging words or little acts of kindness, may appear small as a mustard seed, but they can result in lives transformed.”

LIM BENG YONG
Manager | Life Student Care

About Life Community Services Society

Life Community Services Society (LCSS) believes that the value of the individual and the importance of the family lay the foundation for the growth and progress of the community. In its mission, LCSS seeks to affirm, nurture and develop the intrinsic value of the individual to the fullest potential, and inculcate love and develop respect within the family. Started in 1996, LCSS focuses on social and community work like mentoring children, youths and families, and the provision of before and after school care. We also partner with like-minded social service agencies to provide effective care for the less advantaged children and their families.

Stay in Touch

LCSS Corporate Office

5 Stadium Walk, Kallang Leisure Park, #04-04/07, Singapore 397693
Tel: 65-6387 3700 ■ Email: lcss@life-community.org

Activity Centres

Friends of Children and Youth Activity Centre

5 Stadium Walk, Kallang Leisure Park, #04-04/07, Singapore 397693
Tel: 65-6387 3700 ■ Email: lcss@life-community.org

MightyKids, Families & Community Activity Centre

32 Telok Blangah Rise, #01-267, Singapore 090032
Tel: 65-6270 7198 ■ Email: mkfc@life-community.org

Life Student Care Centres

Hougang

665 Hougang Ave 4 #01-365 Singapore 530665
Tel: 65-6489 8720 ■ Email: hglsc@life-community.org

Sengkang

306C Anchorvale Link #01-77 Singapore 543306
Tel: 65-6489 8718 ■ Email: sklsc@life-community.org

Yishun

611 Yishun St 61 #01-199 Singapore 760611
Tel: 65-6755 0678 ■ Email: yslsc@life-community.org

Park View (within Park View Primary School)

60 Pasir Ris Dr 1 Singapore 519524
Tel: 65-6282 2969 ■ Email: pvlsc@life-community.org

Life Community Services Society is a registered member of the National Council of Social Service
Charity Registration Number: 01545 ■ Unique Entity Number: S96SS0100H

“For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.”

Matthew 25:35-36 (ESV)

Together, Let's Realise “Every Child's Best”

Every contribution counts. Be part of the LCSS village and journey by supporting our vision of empowering every child to be the best that they can be!



\$50 will provide one child with food rations and ongoing mentoring for a month.



\$250 will provide a child with ongoing mentoring, meals, tuition, case management, activities and workshops for a month.



\$3,000 will provide a child with ongoing mentoring, meals, tuition, case management, activities and workshops for a year.



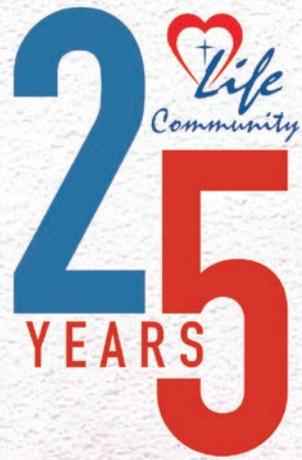
UEN: S96SS0100H

All donations are eligible for 2.5 times* tax deduction.
For tax deduction receipts, kindly provide your NRIC number and contact phone number.

Contact us at Life Community Services Society:
+65-6387 3700 ■ lcss@life-community.org ■ life-community.org

*Information accurate at time of print, subject to prevailing tax policies in Singapore.





life-community.org