

SUPPORTING THE ASPIRATIONS OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS

MORE THAN 400 EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS RECEIVED SUPPORT FOR THEIR STUDIES IN 2016.



ECDA's CEO Mr Eugene Leong with this year's awardees

Tiffany was one of 408 EC professionals and students who received ECDA Scholarships and Teaching Awards, Training Awards and Sponsorships in 2016 (see sidebar for more on what each award offers). Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin presented the awards at the annual ECDA Scholarships and Awards Presentation Ceremony 2016, held on 2 November at the NTUC Auditorium.

Nurturing Future Professionals

At the ceremony, more than 300 polytechnic and Institute of Technical Education (ITE) students received ECDA Training Awards.

Mr Muhammad Ilyasa, 20, received the ECDA Training Award in 2016. He plans to use the Professional Development Grant, given as part of the Training Award, to learn more about supporting children with special needs. "My internship has exposed me to the challenges that these children face and I would like to contribute to their development," says Mr Ilyasa, who is pursuing a Higher NITEC in Early Childhood Education at ITE College Central.

Outstanding recipients of the ECDA Training Awards will also be eligible for the new commendation award from 2017. The awardees will be specially selected for being excellent role models for their peers, performing consistently well in their studies and displaying

outstanding conduct, attitude and leadership qualities.

ECDA will also introduce another award in 2017 – the ECDA Training Award (University). Undergraduate students who are Singapore Citizens or Permanent Residents and are accepted to study the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education at SIM University from July 2017 will be eligible for the award. Similar to other ECDA Training Awards, this award will provide full course sponsorship, learning resource and professional development grants, as well as a monthly allowance. ♥

WHAT'S AVAILABLE

EC professionals and students pursuing Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) courses can apply for the following award schemes:

 **ECDA Scholarship**
For EC professionals pursuing a Bachelor or Master degree in ECCE.

 **ECDA Training Award**
For ITE students in the Higher NITEC Early Childhood Education Programme, Polytechnic students undergoing full-time ECCE diploma courses at Ngee Ann Polytechnic or Temasek Polytechnic and undergraduate students pursuing the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education at SIM University.

For more information on eligibility, value of awards and application procedures, visit www.ecda.gov.sg.



Photos by Kelvin Chia

A GOOD START

ECDA'S NEW INITIATIVE, KIDSTART, PROVIDES ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO VULNERABLE YOUNG CHILDREN SO THEY CAN HAVE A GOOD START IN LIFE.



 **KidSTART**
is expected to benefit about **1,000** CHILDREN aged SIX and below in THREE years.

A programme that aims to provide vulnerable young children with early access to health, learning and developmental support has been piloted in Kreta Ayer, Bukit Merah, Taman Jurong, Boon Lay and Geylang Serai.

It is part of an Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) initiative called KidSTART, which was announced in March 2016. The pilot programme — which started in July 2016 — comprises home visits, support for children in pre-school, and parent-child activities such as KidSTART Group which aims to build parental skills in child development and parent-child bonding.

At the KidSTART Group sessions, trained facilitators help parents understand and practice evidence-based strategies such as identifying "teachable moments" and establishing "quality everyday interactions" with their children. "What we do during the sessions can have a great influence on the parents' confidence and what they can do at home. As a facilitator, I can strengthen a parent's learning by demonstrating the strategies and encouraging them to try them out,"

KidSTART Group sessions can help parents increase their parenting confidence and realise that parenting skills can be learnt.

Ms Puspa Sivan

says Ms Puspa Sivan, 57, an Early Childhood Development and Education Consultant and Training Specialist.

Empowering Parents

The KidSTART programme recognises parents as the primary caregiver of their children, and supporting the parent-child relationship and interactions is its core objective. Parents care deeply about their children's well-being, but may not be aware of simple day-to-day activities they can undertake to support their development.

This is where KidSTART comes in, by partnering parents and empowering them — through practical guidance and encouragement — to fulfill their roles. "KidSTART Group sessions can help parents increase their parenting confidence and realise that parenting

skills can be learnt," says Ms Sivan. "My goal is to help them believe in themselves and be the kind of parent they want to be."

"There is strong evidence that parent-child interaction plays a vital role in a child's development," said Minister for Social and Family Development Tan Chuan-Jin at the KidSTART Group Trial Appreciation Event on 5 November 2016. "The response from parents has been very encouraging. Through KidSTART, we hope to work with community partners to better support families. It's true when we say it takes a village to raise a child, because together we can build an ecosystem of support for our children." ♥



Minister Tan Chuan-Jin at the KidSTART Group Trial Appreciation Event



KidSTART supports the parent-child relationship and interactions

THREE PILLARS OF SUPPORT

1 KidSTART Home Visitation
Parents receive support in practical knowledge and skills in areas such as child growth and development, health and nutrition.



2 KidSTART Group
Parents pick up skills in child development and bond with their children through structured, purposeful play. These group-based sessions are delivered in the community by trained facilitators.

3 KidSTART Enhanced Support to Preschools

Selected centres are provided with additional resources to support and strengthen their engagement with parents, and improve the child's school-readiness. Barriers to pre-school attendance and referrals to other support programmes to ensure developmental needs are also addressed.

PAVING THE WAY FORWARD

ECDA FELLOWS INSPIRE THE NEXT GENERATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD (EC) PROFESSIONALS.

More than 100 first-year students pursuing a Higher NITEC in Early Childhood Education at Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College Central had an "unusual" lecture last November. Instead of hearing from their lecturer, the students met Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua, an EC professional with nearly 20 years of experience in the sector.

Elsie shared her experiences as a teacher and principal, and of how her approaches to teaching and learning have evolved over the years. She also emphasised the importance of making personal sense of different child development theories, pedagogy and practices. "Whatever early knowledge and understanding you learn will not be wasted. They will make you a better and more informed EC professional," she said.

The session on 4 November was the first of four Meet-the-Fellow sessions organised by ECDA to connect young EC students with pinnacle leaders from the sector. Held between 4 and 28 November, four sessions reached out to more than 850 first- and second-year students from ITE, as well as Ngee Ann and Temasek polytechnics.

They were conducted by three of ECDA's 14 Fellows: Elsie, Principal at Living Sanctuary Kindergarten; Ms Pushpavalli Narayanasamy, Principal at Ramakrishna Mission Sarada Kindergarten; and Dr Jacqueline Chung, Senior Principal and Academic Director at St. James' Church Kindergarten. The other 11 Fellows reached out to the students through the ECDA Fellows Talk Series videos.



Students at one of the "Meet-the-Fellows" sessions



► Over **850** STUDENTS benefitted from the four "Meet-the-Fellow" sessions held in November last year.



Mrs Elsie Tan-Chua relating her experience

Sharing To Inspire

The sessions aimed to inspire students at the beginning of their EC journeys, by sharing with them the purpose and meaning behind the profession. They give students a window into the everyday life as an EC professional. "Students may not have an understanding of the sector, which I hope I have given them," said Elsie. "This will help them as they make the transition from being a student to an EC professional in a couple of years."

Ngee Ann Polytechnic Year 1 student Rosemarie Lim left the session with more confidence in her ability to contribute to the sector. "Hearing the personal experience of the EC professionals was very helpful," said the 19-year-old. "I learnt that it is important to always have a passion for teaching, a sense of purpose and a great love not only for helping children to develop, but for one's own personal and professional development."

For ECDA Fellows, the sessions were also an opportunity to inspire and forge bonds with future EC professionals. "I wanted students to know that they have someone within the sector whom they could share their concerns and fears with," said Elsie. ♥



DEVELOPING OUR LEADERS

The ECDA Fellows are a select group of exemplary leaders in the EC sector with strong leadership and professional expertise.

They work closely with ECDA to train and mentor other early childhood professionals. They also develop sector-wide resources for professional development, curriculum leadership and sector partnerships.

For more information, please visit www.ecda.gov.sg/Pages/ECDA-Fellows.aspx.

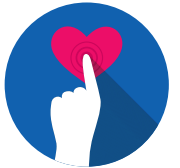
Photos by Hong Chee Yan

THE FAMILY TOUCH

PARENTS JOIN PRE-SCHOOLS TO TAKE THE LEAD IN RAISING COMPASSIONATE CHILDREN.



Minister Grace Fu with children at the launch event of "The Giving Family"



TOUCH aims to reach out to **1,500** "Giving Families" by end-2017

What is compassion, and how do you instil this in young children? "The Giving Family", a new initiative by TOUCH Community Services was launched on 1 September 2016 by Ms Grace Fu, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth.

"A great way for kids to understand what compassion means is for the family to demonstrate giving together," said Executive Director of TOUCH, Mr James Tan. "The Giving Family is a great way for kids to understand what compassion means. When more families make giving a culture and natural part of their lives, the moral fabric of our nation will be positively impacted."

Children from the Clementi and Hougang branches of TOUCH Childcare Centre participate in community work every year as part of their curriculum. The Centre makes it a point to involve parents too. "No child is too young to do a good deed and parents are important role models for them," said Centre Manager Ms Vanny Low. "We work together with parents on the importance of not only donating monetarily, but giving their time as well. Our little ones will catch on to this spirit of generosity and giving."

A key feature of "The Giving Family" initiative is a children's storybook that was written in-house.

Plant seeds of kindness in your children through daily activities. Help them to identify opportunities where they can do good, and contribute to those in need by being kind and helpful. Over time, the 'tree of giving' will blossom in them, bearing fruits of generosity.

Ms Vanny Low, Centre Manager of TOUCH Childcare Centre

Titled *A New Trolley*, it tells of how a family came together to support an elderly-in-need. The storybook has suggestions on how parents can teach the concepts of compassion and generosity to their children.

Mr Ling Hua Hing, who has a six-year-old daughter, applauds the initiative. "I believe that some values are best learnt and caught in action during our children's formative years," said Mr Ling. "Giving together helps to bond us as a family. It also strengthens our relationships with one another as we carry out acts of kindness as a family."

Mr Saito Tadayoshi, parent of four-year-old Makato, used *A New Trolley* to encourage the child to save some of his pocket money and use it to help others in need. "He made a



Reading to children at the launch event

savings bank with some help from my wife and I, and drops in coins every day," said Mr Tadayoshi. "With the right foundation in place at an early stage, children can learn to honour and respect the community around them even though they may be young."

In partnership with President's Challenge, TOUCH will distribute 50,000 copies of the storybook to 300 pre-schools through the Early Childhood Development Agency (ECDA) Start Small Dream Big initiative. Donations raised from this will benefit Voluntary Welfare Organisations (VWOs) supported by President's Challenge. ♥

GET IN TOUCH
Want a copy of *A New Trolley*? Parents and teachers can contact TOUCH at 6377 0122 or visit www.touch.org.sg/TheGivingFamily.

REFLECTING TO ASPIRE

Here's what some students had to say about the ECDA Fellows Talk Series:

- Strive to be a nurturing, understanding, dedicated and resilient teacher.
- You can be the change in every child.
- Create a three way partnership of centre-children-parent to achieve the best outcomes for children.