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my life
my thoughts
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SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS

SET UP BUSINESS TO BEAT RECESSION BLUES



Young S'poreans' initiatives:

- Sell ad space on private cars
- Distribute eco-friendly hangers
- Create new eco tours



DESIGN: EDMUND GOH PHOTOS: NEO XIAOBIN, JAMIE KOH, ISTOCKPHOTO

JOY FANG

WHERE many see doom and gloom amid the downturn, a group of young Singaporeans are seeing opportunities to make their mark on the corporate world.

Instead of duking it out with their peers in a competitive job market, they are seizing the chance to set up their own businesses, often with an innovative edge.

They are indicative of "an increasing general awareness and acceptance of entrepreneurship among the young", Spring Singapore told *my paper*.

Ms Marion Abraham, senior manager of corporate communications at Spring Singapore, said its surveys showed that one in five entrepreneurs in Singapore is under 30 years old.

Mr Joseph Xia and his friend, Mr Jeff Peh, both 24 (above), are examples. They set up a firm to turn private cars into mobile advertising billboards.

Launched in March last year, their company, Renvertising, now has about 450 drivers who have ads plastered on their cars. These car owners are paid \$100 a month if they clock the minimum 500km.

It has three advertisers and will have three more in the coming months.

It was tough convincing sceptical advertisers that their service would work.

"(The service) is not common at all...nobody dares to be the guinea pig," Mr Xia said.

So he told them how Australia has similar services used by big names such as Nike and Samsung.

Now, they are encouraged by clients who say their idea is refreshing.

"It's quite motivating...we are still trying to be successful," said Mr Xia.

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China sees record 188 million rail passengers heading home for CNY
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TURN TO PAGE 2 FOR DETAILS NOW!

FEEL-GOOD MONDAY

STORIES TO CHASE AWAY THE MONDAY BLUES

Sporty Joe's push for greater heights

RACHEL CHAN

STEP into gymnastics and fitness centre Sporty Joe's at Turf City on a Saturday afternoon, and chances are gymnastics coach Joe Leighton asks that you be very quiet.

The Focus Group is about to start, and the pupils should not be distracted, he said.

His pupils, aged three to 11, suffer mild to moderate autism or attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Mr Leighton, 48, who is a member of Singapore Gymnastics, the national association for the sport here, came up with the programme for children with special needs following talks with their parents.

The Singapore permanent resident, who has a national coaching certification from Toronto and a degree in psychology from Upper Iowa University, has coached many national athletes, including former national champions Aileen Chai and Jackie Choy.

The challenge in coaching those from The Focus Group? Communication.

Mr Leighton said: "You have to repeat the instructions a lot more often to bring them back to the apparatus and to pay attention."

His patient coaching, apparently, has paid off.



HELPING HANDS: Mr Jonathan Chen of Sporty Joe's at a trampoline exercise with a pupil. (PHOTOS: NEO XIAOBIN)

"The aim of The Focus Group is so that the children can be more outgoing and confident. On top of overall fitness, the sport offers so much more in terms of its social and psychological aspects," he said.

He cited the example of how a six-year-old boy, who used to be fearful of drills on the bar and rings, eventually overcame his fear of heights.

"We stacked mats under-

neath the balance beam, so it wouldn't seem so high," he said.

"Then we removed one mat per week. Now, he can move forward on it without them," he said with a hint of pride.

The boy's mother, who wishes to be known only as Mrs Koh, nominated Mr Leighton for this year's POSB Everyday Champions Award, which recognises the efforts of individuals or organisations in promoting sports.

"Coach Joe teaches him with a lot of care and patience. My son's skills have improved a lot, and there's less bargaining as he's more confident," said the 40-year-old teacher.

In class, Mr Leighton makes sure that none of his participants - active and fidgety as they are - miss any of the drills.

He calls his pupils' names repeatedly and claps his hands to get their attention. The children



PAID OFF: Mr Joe Leighton's patience is passed on to his pupils.

are quickly rotated through the stations, so that they do not spend more than seven minutes on one apparatus.

The delight on their faces is apparent when they have accomplished a feat - such as landing from the balance beam with both feet on the ground and hands in the air.

"High five," he says to them with a smile on his face.

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HELPDESK 我的字典

Autism:

自闭症 zì bì zhèng

Fidgety: 坐立不宁

zuò lì bù níng

Go on an ECO trip or buy a green hanger

JOY FANG

MY PAPER spoke to two youths who took the path less travelled by giving the job hunt a miss and choosing instead to start their own companies.

Both got into businesses which revolve around their interests in environmental issues.

▶ CINDY CHNG, 19

Miss Cindy Chng is all of 19 years old and is the boss of her own travel company, ECO Travel.

The first-year undergraduate at Nanyang Technological University Business School got her start after she met Mr Wilson Ang, the president of Environmental Challenge Organisation (Singapore), in 2007.

She pitched her idea of a travel

agency focused on educating travellers on the environmental aspects of the places they visit, and her company became a subsidiary of ECO Singapore, a non-profit social enterprise which promotes environmental preservation among youths.

She gains the trust of her clients by constantly talking to them.

She said: "I reassure them and try to reduce their worries.

"I am also very open to feedback from people."



EDUCATIONAL TRIP: Miss Cindy Chng (with cap) and some Singapore students (two of whom are pictured beside a Thai child) visited Thailand's Phang Nga province last June. (PHOTO: COURTESY OF CINDY CHNG)

▶ THIAN ZHIWEN, 27

MR THIAN Zhiwen was thrown out of the laundromat when he asked the owner if he would distribute his environmentally friendly hangers.

"He gave me all the possible reasons why it would never work in Singapore, crushed the hanger and threw me out," the 27-year-old said.

He and his former classmate, Mr Wong Joon Ian, came up with the

idea of the BloomerHang - cardboard hangers which can be recycled.

Companies can also pay for ad space on the hangers.

"We wanted a business that would benefit everyone, like a boomerang that hits all on its trajectory," said Mr Thian, who added that his hangers are 50 per cent cheaper than plastic ones.

- JOY FANG



GREENIES: Mr Thian Zhiwen (left) and Mr Wong Joon Ian, both 27.

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