



Foreword

Welcome to Aidha's first newsletter for 2014!

The Year of the Horse started auspiciously for Aidha. The efforts made by the team resulted in successes on several fronts. Our outreach efforts coupled with innovative marketing ideas has seen student recruitment increase by 40% compared to the same period last year. Another outcome of these initiatives is that we are increasingly seeing a good mix of students at Aidha. 50% of students are from the Philippines, followed by a huge 40% from Indonesia. The remaining 10% is a mixture of ladies from Myanmar, India and Sri Lanka. In line with our values of respect, diversity and learning, Aidha is pleased to welcome the different nationalities of domestic workers to our community, all united in the goal of learning so that they can create more sustainable futures for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Our Fundraising team has been incredibly busy as well. We are proud that our strong partnership with Mastercard continues, this time with a new grant of \$18,000 that will go towards the tuition fee of Module 2 students. The team also supported a very successful bike-a-thon which raised over \$50,000 for Aidha. Meanwhile, donations from the Gene and Ruth Posner Foundation, and Singtel, for cash and laptops respectively, were also welcomed by the team.

The excitement didn't stop there. Our growing student population has been necessitating for some time now that we look for a campus with more classrooms. After a long and challenging search, Aidha is very pleased to have found a partner in UWC SEA who has generously offered us their premises in Dover. Read more about our exciting first Sunday in the Main Feature section.

Finally, in celebration of International Women's Day this month, we have dedicated a special section featuring members of the Aidha community who share a little bit about the women who inspire them. We thought it was a fitting way to round off this month's newsletter as it also reminded us of the women that we admire the most: the ones who courageously walk through Aidha's doors every Sunday, clutching their school binders in their hands, holding dreams of a better financial future in their hearts, and working hard to make them come true.

We hope you enjoy this edition and we wish you all a Happy International Women's Day!

The Aidha Editorial Team



Previous Events

Jan 22nd - **A-listers' drinks night**

Feb 9th - **Sunday Funday**

Feb 16th - **Tour de Singapore**

Feb 26th - **Move to UWC SEA**

Main Feature

A New Home for Aidha

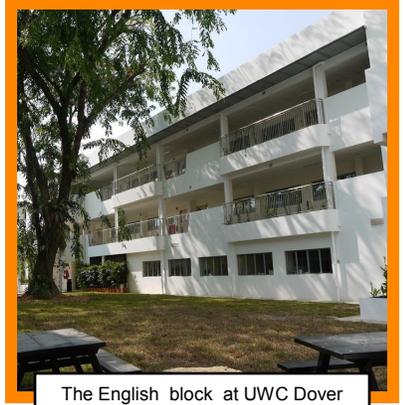
By Ting Claravall

16 spacious classrooms, outdoor lounge among facilities at UWC SEA

Staff, volunteers and mentors eagerly trooped in bright and early to UWC in Dover last Sunday, 2nd March, for our first-ever weekend at our new campus.

An entire three-storey building, known as the English block, has been designated for Aidha's exclusive use on Sundays. The building houses 16 spacious classrooms with modern facilities that also serve as computer labs and offices.

In addition to putting up directional signs, Aidha stationed volunteers to meet students at the MRT stations in Buona Vista, One North, and nearby bus stops, to direct them to UWC. Inside the campus, volunteers patiently escorted students and mentors from the gate to their classrooms.



The English block at UWC Dover



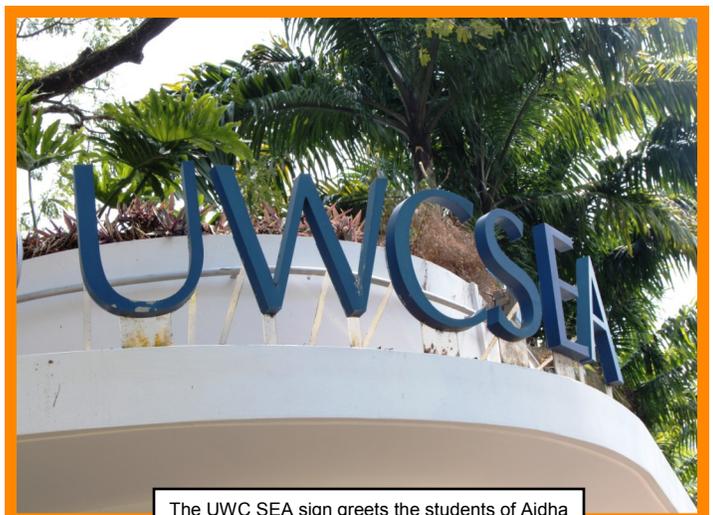
CEO Karen Fernandez welcoming the students to the new Aidha campus

The day was as busy as it was hot. Despite the rising temperature though, everyone present last Sunday tuned in as Aidha CEO Karen Fernandez gave a welcome speech during the morning and afternoon assemblies in the outdoor lounge area. Afterwards, a massive group photo was taken to commemorate the momentous day. Karen also spoke at the orientation classes of first-time students throughout the day to welcome them, outlining the Aidha ethos of learning as well as the campus policies at UWC.

"We are very fortunate to have formed this partnership with UWC as they have not allowed the use of their premises to outsiders on an extended basis," Karen explained. "They have been very kind and supportive about accommodating our various needs and requests. So, like guests who have been invited to a friend's home, we want to treat their classrooms and facilities with all due care and respect and observe the rules they have set."

Karen also explained UWC's security policy that requires all members of the Aidha community to identify themselves by wearing bright orange lanyards.

"UWC hosts a huge number of international students, some of whom board on campus," Karen said. "The rules are for the safety and security of everyone."



The UWC SEA sign greets the students of Aidha

Main Feature

A New Home for Aidha—cont'd



Still, there was no sense of restriction as students relaxed on the outdoor benches and tables, or chatted with their mentors along the corridors in between classes.

“For some time now, Aidha has been looking for a campus that has the space and flexibility to meet our growing number of students. We are so lucky to have found an institution like UWC who have their own ethos of service and who are wholeheartedly supportive of our mission to empower migrant women,” Karen expressed.

The train ride to Dover didn't seem much of an issue for Sheila Mae, a new student from the M1Mar14C Batch, who was the first to arrive last Sunday. Sheila was at the front gate of UWC at 8:41 AM even though her first class wasn't until 10. “I'm excited!” she replied, when asked why she came so early. “It's my first time at Aidha and I couldn't wait!” For her enthusiasm, she was rewarded with a simple token.

But perhaps there's no better proof of the move's success than the number of new registrants that made their way to Dover. “We were afraid that people might not find us or mistakenly go to the old campus instead,” shared Karen. “But instead we had a lot of new sign ups today. And best of all, our volunteers stationed at the old campus for such an eventuality reported that nobody showed up there. So we are very happy that our communication plan for the move worked. My thanks go to the Aidha team and the many volunteers and trainees who painstakingly planned the logistics, visited the site, made signs, called students and patiently answered queries over the last few weeks as we tried to make sure that everyone heard about the move and knew where they were supposed to be going.”



Students holding their first class in the new campus

The new aidha campus is located at United World College South East Asia (UWC SEA) 1207 Dover Road, Singapore 139654. For more information, visit www.aidha.org or call +65 9789 4041.



Early bird awardee, Sheila Mae



One of the hallways in the UWC SEA building



A computer workshop with donated laptops

Student Feature

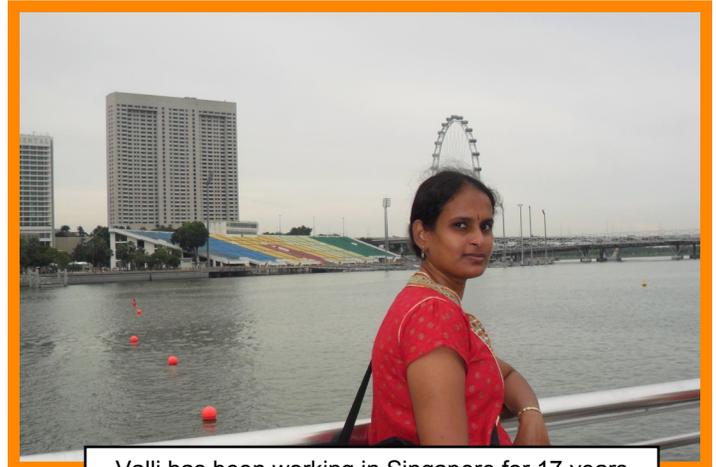
Valli Subramaniam Finds Her Voice

By Ting Claravall

When you first meet Annavalli Subramaniam, she strikes you as someone who has always been capable, independent and confident. After all, even before joining Aidha, Valli, as she likes to called, says she had already been saving and budgeting. “However, I wasn’t very good. I wasn’t as strict as I am today,” she shares. Furthermore, she didn’t speak much. She felt very shy because her English wasn’t very good. “I didn’t want to speak to other people, only with my own people,” says the native of Tamilnadu, India, where she grew up with five younger sisters. “Even my reading and writing were very bad.”

So when her employer of 17 years suggested that she attend Aidha, Valli was willing to give it a try. “I shared my dream of opening a bakeshop in my hometown. So my Madam told me it would be good for me to go to school and learn about business, computer and communicating better.”

That’s why in March of 2013, Valli found herself sitting in a classroom at the old Aidha campus at NTUC for her very first Leadership Class. Like her classmates, Valli felt very shy and nervous about speaking in front of a group. But by the last few months of Module 1, Valli said she had started volunteering to give speeches in class.



Valli has been working in Singapore for 17 years



Valli with her Leadership Club

So excited was she by her progress that she immediately signed up for Module 2 even though she was still midway through her Module 1 programme. “I couldn’t wait to learn about business already so I signed up for the Venture Club, especially because I was planning to go home for good in 2014.” Valli says studying Module 2 helped her think about things she never thought of before about putting up a business. “We talked about dealing with suppliers, evaluating contracts, pricing... all the details of starting a business. There’s so much involved and it’s a lot of work, but I really love learning so much.”

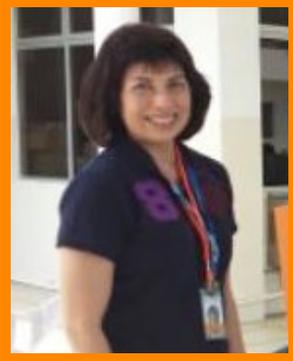
Valli is set to go back home to India this coming May. She plans to start selling baked goods from home first while she builds her reputation as a quality baker. She can’t wait to be reunited with her husband and 9-year old son, as well as her mother, who was the reason she left home to work as a domestic helper in the first place. “My mother is a widow who’s still supporting my younger sisters. So I wanted to help her out.” Armed with her savings and a headful of new knowledge and information, Valli is a picture of beaming confidence. “Before, my self-confidence was only 50%. Now, it’s 100%!” She laughs, “Ok, ok, 99.9%!”

Special Section

The Women We Admire

By Ting Claravall with contributions from Karen Fernandez and Kate Vickery

March 8 is International Women's Day and to commemorate this, we went around campus to ask members of the Aidha community who was the woman they admired the most. Here's what they had to share:



"When I was 14, all what I wanted to do when I grew up was to be a teacher like Mrs Candice Pempeon. I can still remember being enthralled in her Literature class as she read to us *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* and transported us to worlds quite foreign to us, but we didn't want to leave while she was reading with such passion and animation. Until she arrived, literature was a tedious subject, seemingly only about memorising quotes, analysing chunks of text and being corrected for 'poor expression'. I don't know if Mrs Pempeon ever knew she had inspired such a profound change among the girls in my class, and given us a lifelong love of reading. 'Inspiring change' is the theme of this year's International Women's Day and makes me think of heroines, both writ large and ordinary. Michelle Obama. Madonna. Christine Lagarde. Beyonce. Serena Williams. Janet Yellen. All powerful women, with powerful voices who lead change on the world stage. We are all the better for their passion and their energy, and the fact that they truly demonstrate what women can achieve and succeed at, if they put their minds to it. For every Mrs Obama, there are countless mothers, mentors, daughters, bosses, sisters, teachers, friends, and domestic workers, who inspire change in their own

small, unseen, but inestimable way. This year, I humbly ask you to consider the change that you can inspire and then do something to bring it about. In the words of Gandhi, a man who did much to inspire change both for men and women alike: 'You may never know what results come of your actions, but if you do nothing, there will be no results.' " – **Karen Fernandez, Aidha CEO**



"The woman I admire the most is my mother. She never fails to cheer me up when I feel down and has a way of making me see things in a positive way. Whenever I go through a difficult time, she asks me to try to look at it as just an 'exam' from God, so it is up to me if I want to pass or fail. She never gets tired of praying for all of her children and is very generous with her time." – **Nur Aini, Aidha Graduate 2012 and Student Trainee**



"The woman I admire the most is my employer, Sarah Druce. She generously supports my dreams and plans: enrolling me at Aidha, giving me a laptop, and also helping me out financially with my planned business. She is also very intelligent and talented, and openly shares her knowledge and ideas with me. I really appreciate how she is behind me all the way." – **Norma Casinova, Aidha Graduate 2013 and Student Trainee**



"I greatly admire Anuradha Koirala, a social activist, founder and director of Maiti Nepal – a Nepali NGO that supports girls and women affected by sex trafficking. She is remarkable for her dedication to her work, her fearlessness in the face of dangerous and life-threatening situations, and for not being deterred by hateful messages and death threats. When asked how she deals with these death threats from the traffickers, her response

was, 'Well unless they have a gun to my head, I will carry on.' Anuradha works with the police, raiding brothels, patrolling the India-Nepal border, establishing Homes for girls who were victims of trafficking. Anuradha and Maiti Nepal provide education, assertiveness life skills and income-generating skills that will help prevent these women from being trafficked again. Now that's a true change-maker!" – **Kate Vickery, Aidha Student Coordinator**



"I've always admired women who, despite having gone through tragedy and hardship, manage to come out successful and positive on the other side. Just off the top of my head, there's Fawzia Koofi, Malala Yousafzai and Oprah. Closer to home, I've had many opportunities to get to know Aidha students over the years and even lucky enough to call some of them my friends. And I'm always in awe of how hopeful, happy and just all around optimistic they are even after having gone

through challenging circumstances, like say, losing a husband or experiencing abusive employers. They remain determined to reach their dreams and I really think we can all learn a thing or two from these ladies who are living examples of courage." – **Ting Claravall, Aidha Communications volunteer**

Events and Happenings

A-listers' drinks night

By Marigold Duncan

Aidha's A-lister event series kicked off on January 22nd with over 50 mentors and volunteers coming together at Senor Taco for a night of drinks and nibbles. This was the first of a series of events Aidha will be holding throughout the year to bring its volunteers together to mix and mingle, get to know one another and share their Aidha experiences.

In true Aidha spirit, guests were welcomed by a complimentary Aidha-orange cocktail. The room was abuzz with excitement as experienced and new mentors got to know each other. The Aidha office team and board members relished the chance to hear stories from Aidha's amazing volunteers. Door prize winners for the night were: Hannah del Porto, 'First Guest to Arrive'; Sanket Gupta for 'Most Aidha orange'; and Kamika Argawal and Arun Kelshiker for 'Mentor with Most Batches Taught.'



Arun Kelshiker, Kamika Argawal and Karen Fernandez at A-listers drink's night



Mentors and volunteers mingling

The last award was offered to Leslie Swanson but who graciously declined to claim the prize. The night also provided a chance to introduce Aidha's new CEO, Karen Fernandez. Karen was clearly thrilled with the opportunity to get to know Aidha's dedicated volunteers who make all the organisation's great work possible.

A huge thank you to our supportive and fun-loving corporate partner, Senor Taco, and to everyone who attended and made the night a huge success!



Aidha's volunteers mix and mingle during A-listers' night

Campus Story

Exciting Sunday Funday

By Rohini Chopra

Aidha wrapped up another successful Sunday Funday last February 9th. It was a day of free workshops and classes on Basic Etiquette and Photography. Volunteer Anjna Nihalani taught the Basic Etiquette workshop while Marco Rubi-Cruz facilitated the session for Photography. It was another truly eventful day at Aidha. Thanks to everyone who helped make it happen!

Photography lessons taught by Marco-Rubi-Cruz



Anjna Nihalani giving pointers on etiquette

Fundraising

Karen and Aini during a presentation to Mastercard



Partnership with Mastercard

Contributed by Priya Mendon

Aidha is thrilled to announce a new initiative on our on-going relationship with MasterCard. The grant provided to Aidha in December 2013 will help cover the costs of 75 students enrolled in Aidha's Module 2 courses, specifically for the Venture (or Entrepreneurship) club. We thank MasterCard for this important partnership and very much look forward to a wonderful and collaborative year ahead.

Donation from Gene and Ruth Posner

Contributed by Priya Mendon

Aidha recently received a generous donation from The Gene and Ruth Posner Foundation. Shown here are CEO Karen Fernandez with the Aidha team receiving the check from the foundation's representative, Tod Gimbel. The amount will be used to fund the printing of student handbooks. On behalf of the Aidha community, thank you for your kind support!



Karen Fernandez with the Aidha team receiving the check from Tod Gimbel

Fundraising

Aidha Tour de Singapore 2014

By Priya Mendon

To kick off 2014 with a bang, Aidha had its biggest fundraising yet! On Sunday, February 16th, bikers from Deutsche Bank, Barclays, Goldman Sachs, BNP Paribas and other volunteers rode incredible distances to raise money for Aidha. It was a huge success as 130 cyclists toured 50, 100 and 120 km distances all over Singapore. The riders assembled at 5AM and finished at 12 noon at East Coast Park. Aidha staff and alumni were on hand to cheer on the bikers as they neared the finish line. A total of SG\$50,000 was raised from the event!



Biking enthusiasts and Aidha volunteers during the fundraising event



Aidha Research Project

Contributed by Citlalic Gonzalez



The Aidha Research Team

The Aidha research team just kicked off a new project whose objective is to collect data that identifies and measures the benefits Aidha is creating on the local community, on Singapore and on the families our students work with. The data collection project was rolled out last 12 January. For the first time, data on four different impact domains, i.e., financial capability, business ownership, ICT literacy and confidence will be obtained on a regular basis. Participants will be given the survey after the end of their courses at Aidha. The Aidha Research team members are: Gladys Dizon, Norma Casinova, Dwi Lestari, Sue Helen Nieto, Citlalic Gonzalez, Susilowati, Tia Sutresna.

Join Us Volunteer Make a difference

Volunteer

Aidha is in need of volunteers to fill up the following positions:

IT Manager

A part-time position reporting to the CEO, the IT Manager must understand Aidha's business requirements and goals, and utilise IT to optimise and advance our business functions, operational and cost efficiencies. This will include:

- Assign and manage IT projects with IT volunteers
- Maintain, support, and continuously improve the reliability and efficiency of the IT infrastructure in the Aidha office and on campus
- Oversee Aidha cloud services (SaaS) and data management
- Provide IT-related training, as needed to staff, volunteers, interns and student volunteers
- Define, implement and enforce IT security policies (i.e. access to email, data, systems, network, etc.)
- Provide support to students on Sundays (i.e. set up Internet cafe so students can practice their skills, etc.)

We are looking for someone with IT experience who is organised and result-oriented. It would be great if this person could commit 2-3 days per week, including 1-2 Sundays per month at the Aidha Campus.

Grant Writer

A part-time position working with the Fundraising Manager who will be responsible for driving Aidha's grant application process. This will include:

- Compile a database of grant makers and competitions in Singapore and elsewhere which Aidha is eligible for (foundations, trusts, other entities)
- Write and submit grant applications
- Write and submit applications for competitions for either grants or prizes
- Compile a list of FAQs for grant papers (to be used for grants which have a specific format)

We are looking for someone with excellent English writing and language skills and the ability to effectively communicate information and ideas in written and illustrated format. This person should be organised and result-oriented with attention to detail.

It would be great if this person could commit 2-3 days per week to this role. They are welcome to work at the Aidha office or from the comfort of their home.

Like us on Facebook:

Office Hours: 9am-5pm, Mon – Fri

Campus: 10am-5pm, Sunday

Tel: +65 6884 9938

www.aidha.org



Social Media volunteer

Working alongside the Marketing Manager, this person will be responsible for implementing the web and social media strategies planned for Aidha. This will include:

- Managing, updating and maintaining the website and social media platform, such as Facebook, Twitter etc.
- Planning and implementing activities as per the Facebook / editorial calendar alongside the Marketing Manager
- Planning activities to drive traffic to the website and Facebook page
- Replying to queries on Facebook or relaying them to the proper channels
- Generating and managing content, posts and marketing campaigns to increase brand awareness and 'likes'

We are looking for a technocrat with experience in digital and social media marketing. A desire to work with non-profits and to contribute to the society is always a plus.

Thank you for reading!

Warm Regards,

The Aidha Editorial Team:

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Priya Mendon Citlatic Martinez Rohini Chopra