



SERANGOON MORAL  
FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE



# OUR SERANGOON



# CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE



2022 is a significant year with signs of normalcy returning after more than two years of lockdown, strict safe management measures and travel restrictions. Most of us would have resumed gathering with family and friends while some of us have even attended big-scale events and travelled overseas. Although social responsibility is still necessary to protect ourselves, our loved ones and the community, we should celebrate the fact that we have risen stronger from this pandemic and appreciate the people who have stood by us and supported us – our family.

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) has dedicated 2022 as the Year of Celebrating SG Families (YCF) and four family values were highlighted as part of the campaign – love, care and concern, commitment and respect, with communication as an enabler. For many of us, our family is important as it is our sanctuary where we can be safe and turn to whenever we need

help. The four family values serve as a timely reminder that we should not take our family for granted and to take personal responsibility to build and strengthen our family ties.

To align with MSF's YCF, the theme for this sixth edition of "Our Serangoon" will feature stories of families that are generously contributed by our staff and volunteer residents. I am also excited to share the programmes and services that our Centre is providing. I would like to encourage you to reach out to us to find out more about how you can contribute to the Serangoon community. Here's wishing everyone good health and a wonderful time celebrating with your family.

**Er. Ong Ser Huan** ●  
Chairman  
Serangoon Moral Family Service Centre

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Serangoon Moral Family Service Centre Management Committee FY2022/2024



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Member

# ADELINE'S

## Q&A

### / FAMILY /

A word that means the world to most people. A chat with our Executive Director Adeline Chew reveals the many meanings the word has for her.

#### Who do you think of when 'family' is mentioned?

The word immediately recalls all the important people who played an important role in my growing up years. My parents who loved and supported me unconditionally; who despite their busy schedules set aside time to bring the whole family out to play. It also makes me think of my elder brother who was my playmate and Maths tutor. And the many loving relatives who provided childcare support and emergency help when the occasion called for it.



#### Has your idea of family shifted as you age?

My notion of family has become broader. I no longer limit my idea of family to people who are related to me by blood, marriage or adoption. To me now, my family is the community of people who care about me and who accept me. They are there for me in good times when we laugh and have fun together and during bad times when I can be vulnerable with them, knowing that they will support me through it.

#### What are some emotions that you experience when you think about your family?

The feelings are of warmth, security and love.

#### What it is about your family that keeps you going?

Knowing that at the end of a tiring day I can go back to a place where I am comfortable and safe and where I am with the people I love re-energises me. I appreciate my family's encouragement and advice as well as their respecting that there are times I need space to reflect and just be by myself.

#### What are some things you've learnt about family from working in a Family Service Centre?

I have witnessed families with immense capacity for forgiveness and for giving themselves another chance to rebuild and strengthen their families. I have also worked with families that have demonstrated resilience despite the tremendous challenges in their lives. I am grateful to these families for allowing me to journey with them and learn valuable lessons about forgiveness, resilience, hope and the importance of continuously investing time and effort to strengthen one's family.

#### What similarities do you see between your family and the community?

The most striking similarity I see between the two is generosity. I am amazed and touched by the desire of the community to help vulnerable residents even though they may have other commitments. The community's willingness to open its hearts to contribute time and money has made a difference to many lives in the community. It reminds me of how my parents have been generous in spending time with my brother and me to create beautiful memories and experiences for us. My parents have made a huge impact in my life by role modelling what love and nurture in a family looks and feels like.

# CASEWORK

Our Casework & Counselling services are provided by social workers to help individuals and families work through their personal, social and emotional challenges. Our team of professional staff works closely with the individuals and families to provide holistic services with the aim of strengthening resilience, increasing inner resources and enhancing overall well-being.

Residents can choose to call, walk in, write or email to the Centre to share their individual and family concerns or to obtain information on relevant community resources and services. After assessing your needs, the duty officer will decide whether further follow-up is needed at our Centre or if you should be linked up with more appropriate community resources and services. If further follow-up is needed at our Centre, a social worker will be assigned to work with you and/or your family. An initial session will be arranged to explore counselling or casework goals, followed by subsequent sessions to work on the identified goals.

We can assist in areas such as:

MARITAL OR COUPLE ISSUES



FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES



PARENTING ISSUES



MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES



#### Step 1: Share concern / obtain information

Call

Walk in

Write/email

#### Step 2: Assessment by Duty Officer



Follow-up?



#### Step 3: Appropriate Help Rendered

Social worker assigned

Community resources and services provided

# WHAT IS A FAMILY?

As social workers, we see families in many different forms in the community. A family can mean different things to different people. Based on our work, we loosely define a family as:

**A group of individuals who share ties of blood, marriage or adoption; a group residing together and consisting of parents, children and other relatives by blood or marriage; a group of individuals residing together who have consented to an arrangement similar to ties of blood or marriage.\***

Abraham Maslow in his Hierarchy of Needs presented the needs that are most vital to humans. Maslow suggests that families meet the needs that he believes are the most basic: food and shelter; safety and security; love, affection and feelings of belonging; and self-esteem. Based on his work, we could infer that a loving and caring family often is the most important contributing factor for its members doing well in their everyday lives.

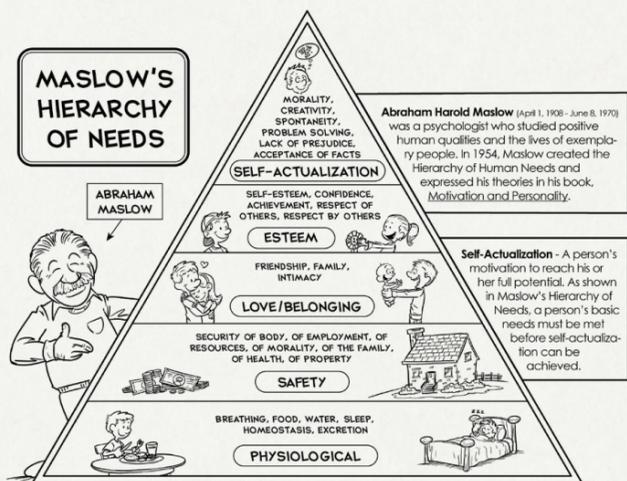


Image Credit: Freepik

\* Please note this is a definition based on a sociological perspective of what a family could possibly be. It does not reflect the definition of a family for nationwide policies and schemes.

Families also evolve over time. Family members go through different emotional and physiological stages as they move from childhood to old age. This is known as the family life cycle. In each stage we face many challenges that – if negotiated well – help us to acquire new skills. These skills allow us to deal with life changes that nearly every family will experience.

However not every member goes through these stages effortlessly. Life situations such as sudden or chronic illnesses, death of a loved one, addictions, extramarital affairs and financial problems can affect how well we negotiate each stage. If we don't acquire or build necessary skills, we can still transit to the next phase, but we are more likely to struggle with relationships and future transitions.

Broadly speaking, the stages of the family life cycle are:

- Independence
- Coupling or marriage
- Parenting: babies through adolescents
- Launching adult children
- Retirement or senior years



Image Credit: Freepik

For families struggling to manage these transitions, there are ways to acquire missing skills and enrich family life at any stage. Parenting seminars, self-reflection and seeking counselling support at professional agencies like our centre are some ways you can improve your family life.

# Young Adults Supporting Each Other In



## EMBRACING ADULTHOOD

**Emerging Adulthood is a group that supports young adults who are transitioning to adulthood. Group members support each other by discussing struggles and successes. All members work together to improve one another's emotional well-being and sense of self-worth.**

**Let's face it: adulting is hard.**

Adulthood is a stage of life when one starts detaching from the family to explore work, love and life. This natural coming-of-age development will see young adults trying to establish their individual identity while grappling with many new challenges.

This stage involves fast adaptation to new and mounting responsibilities where one has to quickly pick up independent living skills. Often young adults are also expected to contribute to the family socially and/or economically.

Adjusting to these new demands is often stressful. What makes things worse are daunting societal expectations and the endless comparisons with one's peers. Those who are successful in dealing with the transitions of this period are rewarded with an improved sense of well-being, while those who struggle to do so risk being trapped in a perpetual pit of depression and anxiety.

B	I	N	G	O
Buy own house	Career	Emotion management	Self care	Financial planning
Eat healthy	Finding a partner	Self confidence	Support parents	Job interviews
Hobby	Credit cards	Free!	Household chores	Deal with death and illness
insurance	Work life balance	Exercise	Pay bills	Friendships
Further studies	Break ups	Learning to cook	Family	Mental well-being

**Our participants had fun playing this very relevant adulting version of BINGO!**

Adulting is harder if a young adult is unprepared, is still healing from ordeals sustained earlier in life or has complicated family relationships to begin with.

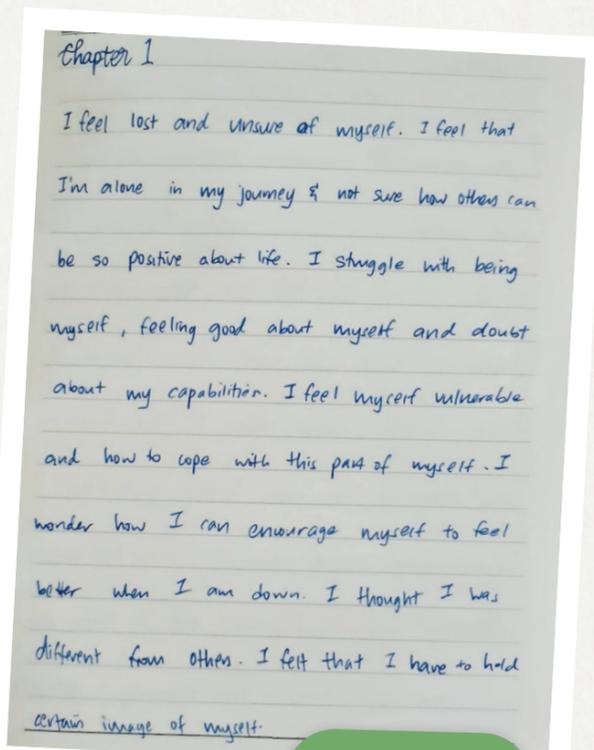
In the Emerging Adulthood support group, narrative therapy is employed by group work practitioners who facilitate a safe environment for participant to share information, experiences and coping strategies. Narrative therapy is a strengths-based approach that focusses on harnessing individuals' strengths to overcome problems. Self-reflection and self-disclosure are techniques used consistently throughout the programme.

# What We Discovered When We Journalled

In the May 2022 run of Emerging Adulthood, we asked our participants to pick up a pen and write about their challenges, strengths and hopes in their ongoing adulthood journey.

What emerged were some heartfelt emotions and their deepest reflections. If you are on the same journey as these participants, do you resonate with the fears and hopes revealed in their journals? Let us know by scanning the QR code to comment!

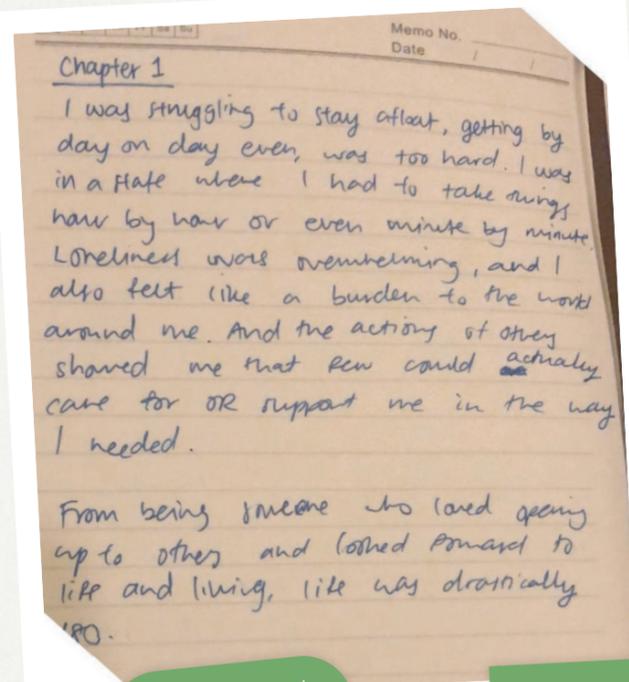
## Chapter 1 of Journal Describe Your Challenges in Adulthood



By participant Minunnie



Share your reflections on adulting with us! You may choose to include your contact details so that we can respond to your sharing.



By participant Little Lotus

# ARE SPARKS FLYING BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR PARTNER?



American professor of psychology John Gottman uses the phrase "the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse" to describe potential red flags in a couple's relationship. The Four Horsemen are:

SPARKS is an eight-session group work that allows couples to understand the four common unhealthy responses to conflicts with one's partner and how to better handle these conflicts.

- 01 Criticism – this is when you or your partner criticise each other instead of raising concerns
- 02 Contempt – this is when a partner makes an attack from a position of belief in his or her own moral superiority
- 03 Defensiveness – this is when you find a need to defend yourself during an argument
- 04 Stonewalling – this is when one partner shuts down and/or ignores the other

Let's get one thing straight: every couple will experience conflict in their relationship and that's not a bad thing. Indeed anytime you bring together two independent and equal adults in any type of partnership, there is going to be friction. What is bad is when couples handle conflicts badly.

Being able to identify the Four Horsemen in your conflict discussions is a necessary first step to eliminating them, but this is not enough. To eradicate destructive conflict patterns, you must replace them with healthy, productive ones.

Our centre has seen an increase in the number of enquiries on marital conflict. From 2019 to 2020, marital conflict enquiry calls to our centre leapt by 26 percent. And from 2020 to 2021, the calls increased by 13 percent.

In SPARKS, you and your partner will learn to foster respect, affection and closeness in your relationship. We will alternate between intimate one-on-one conversations between partners with couples' conversations in a group context together with short lectures and activities. The group experience will be valuable with helpful feedback derived from the experience of everybody in the room.

JOHN GOTTMAN'S 4 HORSEMEN OF RELATIONSHIP APOCALYPSE and their antidotes

<p><b>CRITICISM</b></p> <p>You're so lazy!</p> <p>✓ Complain w/out blame. Use "I" instead of "you"</p>	<p><b>DEFENSIVENESS</b></p> <p>Ugh. We'll be late. Well if someone was ready earlier...</p> <p>✓ Accept responsibility for part of the conflict</p>
<p><b>CONTEMPT</b></p> <p>What were you even thinking?!</p> <p>✓ Stay respectful. Appreciate small things often</p>	<p><b>STONEWALLING</b></p> <p>Just forget it</p> <p>✓ Take timeout to calm down and self-soothe</p>

Image Credit: Sketchplanations sketchplanations

Scan the QR Code if you are interested in attending SPARKS!



Once there is enough interest, we will inform participants of the dates of the group work. Do note that the group work would be conducted in English.

# WHEN FRIENDS GET TOGETHER TO CREATE CHANGE

Kampong Kakis is our very own volunteer matchmaking initiative. It is a platform for our Friends (both individuals and group volunteers) to share their interests, passion and skills with the Serangoon community, all to drive the kampong spirit.

Five Friends from Raffles Institution organised activities for children from Serangoon Moral Student Care Centre during the June holiday. The assets they bring to the community: Creativity and flexibility.

During her walks around Serangoon, private tutor Jean felt that more could be done for the community. To make the change she wants to see in the community, she began voluntarily tutoring two primary six children during the school holidays. The assets she brings to the community: Patience and knowledge.

Our Friends Aiman, Glenda, Ariel, Kai Yi and Amanda came together to do a mid-year review of how the Centre could evolve to better support children in the community academically and socially. The assets they bring to the community: Consistency and reassurance.

We asked the children and friends of our academic support programme one question: What is family? The answers we got were both moving and inspiring.



# Meet One of the Many Helping Hands that Run Kampong Friends' Blessings

Kampong Friends' Blessings is thriving with the warm support of a caring group of Serangoon residents. We speak to **Su Peng**, a core Kampong Friends' Blessings resident.



Officially launched in 2018 by President Mdm Halimah Jacob, Kampong Friends' Blessings seeks to encourage the kampong spirit among residents. Under the programme, Serangoon residents 'bless' residents from lower income households with food items and daily necessities.

**Tell us about yourself and how you became a member of Kampong Friends' Blessings.** Hi, I am Su Peng, a resident in Serangoon. I am a product management professional. I came across a newsletter in my mailbox featuring the Kampong Friends' Blessing initiative and seeking volunteers

**How did you find time to be involved in this?** I have volunteered as part of the core planning team for the Kampong Friends' Blessing initiative. This initiative mainly requires a couple of hours of meeting per month with other members, and we can complete our respective tasks (such as designing logo, building website, etc) during our free time.

**What are your views on family values and what are your friends' reaction to this programme?** My family members are in Singapore, Malaysia and the US. Even though we are apart, we keep in touch through social media and video conferencing platforms. Technology has enabled

us to be part of each other's life despite the physical distance. It is important to have strong social networks for overall well-being. When I told some friends that I have volunteered for this initiative, they were supportive as well as curious about this programme, and the type of activities involved.

**What are your hopes for this programme?** By creating awareness of this programme through digital media, I hope that we will be able to reach out to more people who are able to donate items needed by the beneficiaries of the initiative. At the same time, I hope that we would be able to make it more convenient for the beneficiaries to collect items that they need.

**Any words of encouragement for other residents thinking of volunteering?** If you are keen to help others, don't be afraid to take the first step and help in any small way that you can.

Interested to find out more about how you can be part of Kampong Friends' Blessings? **Scan the QR code to leave your contact details and we will contact you!**



# Kampong Harvest Draws Residents with its Fun Events

Kampong Harvest @ SMFSC is an open concept community garden that aims to connect people in the community and promote physical and social well-being. Co-created with the community, Kampong Harvest is all about **Connecting People and Promoting Well-Being!**



It was exciting to see many new residents joining the many Kampong Harvest events organised this year. Among the most popular was the aquaponics workshop by Joseph, a science lecturer with James Cook University. His wife Czarina and son Kaiser also joined us in the workshop.

## Czarina shares her experience with Kampong Harvest:

We decided to join Kampong Harvest because of our interest in plants and gardening and to expose our son, Kaiser, to nature and planting. The residents who are in Kampong Harvest are so warm and inclusive and we learn from one another through knowledge sharing. Also Kampong Harvest has a vision for rebuilding the kampong spirit and building up friendships in the neighbourhood. This is something we appreciate and want to contribute to.



## Nature Walk @ Singapore Botanic Gardens March 2022

Twenty residents took a walk at Singapore Botanic Gardens. As they checked out the herbs section, they enjoyed animated discussions on the usage of the herbs and explored the possibility of planting them in our community garden.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Celebration

2022 marks the 3<sup>rd</sup> year of Kampong Harvest in the community! Through many learning conversations with our residents, we realise many residents like to cook and incorporate the edibles that are in the garden in their recipes. Hence, the idea of the Recipe Book is born! We hope this Recipe Book will inspire you to create garden to table recipes.

Please drop by our Centre for a free copy of the recipe book.



# LORONG LEW LIAN

WHERE RESIDENTS BECOME FAMILY!



Launched in 2016, Kampong @ Lim Kopi aims to strengthen the kampong spirit in Lorong Lew Lian by creating a space for seniors to gather and foster relationships through active ageing activities.

We often associate family with blood relations. But family can often mean so much more.

In Lorong Lew Lian, while on our post-pandemic community walks, we noticed that there are some groups of residents who behave like a family! They hang out frequently to have their good old cuppa morning coffee. They gather at low-key locations around the neighbourhood for a nice jovial chat. They even visit each other's houses to help fix household appliances! It is genuinely uplifting and inspiring to know that these 'families' exist, and that they are so prominent within our small community.

In Singapore, families are often viewed as the first line of care and support for the less fortunate in the social service landscape. Perhaps if we expand our perspective on what constitutes a family, we would be able to expand our network of care and support as well. This would, in turn, increase our perceived social support, which would be beneficial to our overall well-being.



OUR WEEKLY COMMUNITY WALK IN ACTION!



# 400 HOURS with SMFSC

Overwhelming. Lively. Truly special. Two interns report in on their 400 hours with us.



Justin

As this was my first internship, I had no idea what to expect. Hence I came in with quite a bit of apprehension. In the end I could not have asked for a better place to learn and grow in 400 hours. Serangoon Moral Family Service Centre exposed me to almost every aspect of what it does, be it casework, group work or community work. It wasn't easy being exposed to such a breadth of experiences in my first internship and there were times when I felt overwhelmed. However, I appreciated the opportunity immensely as it gave me a representative picture of what work at a Family Service Centre entails..

Also this experience gave me the chance to explore my own strengths and flaws as well as discover how my own values apply in real practice, outside of the lecture theatre. Furthermore, my colleagues here are amazing and always willing to guide me along. They all possess their own unique perspectives that always impart insight. Serangoon Moral Family Service Centre has contributed much to my social work experience; it helped me grow both as a social worker and as a person. Ultimately, my time here has been invaluable in giving me on-the-ground experience, and it has been a wonderful first step in my social work journey.

**Justin, intern from the National University of Singapore, on his 400 hours**

Interning at Serangoon Moral Family Service Centre was truly special and an experience I will never forget. As with most new experiences, I had my worries, hesitation and lots of self-doubt. However through this internship I saw myself growing tremendously both professionally and personally. I am thankful to my supervisor for her intriguing, eye-opening questions that made me think deeply about my experiences and, in the process, learn more about myself. There were many times when I felt like giving up, but her immense support helped me push through.

At Serangoon Moral Family Service Centre I was exposed to a diverse range of case management, group work and community engagement that pushed me to my limits. I learned to take it step by step and find my areas of competency. Improvement and growth is a continuous process, and I'm glad Serangoon Moral Family Service Centre helped me take those hard first few baby steps. The staff were extremely welcoming and supportive and provided a conducive learning environment for me. They often brought me around with them, which increased my exposure to aspects of work at a Family Service Centre. Additionally, the vibrant, lively culture I experienced here made this internship even more enjoyable.

**Natasha, intern from Nanyang Polytechnic, on her 400 hours**



Natasha

## FACES OF SERANGOON

Get to know our friend **Janet**, a long-time Serangoon resident.



**What does the word 'family' remind you of?**

"Family" to me means a micro-community, one where I can learn and grow in my acceptance of others. Building strong families develops over time as families learn to manage differences. An important value enabling such growth is the choice to love. So to me "family" means choosing to love.

**How has your idea of 'family' shifted as you age?**

Previously, I envisioned 'family' to mean a perfect one. However, after starting my own, the concept has undergone changes. It takes consistent effort to relate, support and love one another. For example, the younger generation might embrace a lifestyle different to mine. Choosing to love then means learning to understand and accept people regardless of differences. I recall how my own parents also chose to love and forgive whenever conflicts arose from our differences.

**What are some emotions that you experience when you think about your family?**

I experience mixed emotions as I reflect on the high and lows of family life. I dwell on positive emotions like having gratitude to God for the blessings of a family. Simultaneously, I acknowledge the hurts and disappointments experienced. I move forward by exercising forgiveness and by learning new skills to better manage expectations. In this way I balance experiences both joyous and regretful.

**What are some things you've learnt about family from being involved in the community programmes at SMFSC?**

The Centre provides a platform to work with residents from all walks of life. When we first started working on the community garden (Kampong Harvest), we were elated to start something new and fresh in our neighbourhood. Though the Kampong spirit brought us together, we quickly recognised the need to understand where people came from and adapt our working styles accordingly. Regular group discussions were held to overcome challenges in working together and in building the garden. Slowly but surely, with better understanding and cooperation, our labour of love began to bear fruit.

Recently, at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary Celebration of Kampong Harvest, I was reminded that a family is similar to the community. Just as a community learns to work together through better communication and cooperation, a family has to do likewise. I often share with my children that involvement in community programmes provides the chance to help the disadvantaged much like helping family members in need.

# GET TO KNOW

Our two young residents, Yu Jie and Jia Hwee!

## Say Hi to 20-Year-Old Jia Hwee

I have lived in Serangoon for all my life! As I'm currently interning, my daily routine involves heading out to NEX or a nearby coffee shop to buy dinner after a hard day's work. My favourite stops are KOI, Five Guys and &JOY Japanese Food Street at NEX. With the aging population, I hope that more senior activity centres or day care centres can be built to cater to the needs of the Serangoon community.



## Read on to find out what Yu Jie loves about the Serangoon community

I joined the Serangoon Moral Student Care in 2019 and am a student from Zhong Hua Primary School. I really like the people in Serangoon because of how kind and friendly they are. They often offer seats to us when my father and I go to the coffee shop near our house. Among my favourite memories in Serangoon are the times I spend in student care especially during Children's Day or at the Christmas party where I would play Nerf guns and Nintendo Switch with my friends. I really enjoy playing games such as Roblox and spending time with my family. I hope that there are more events in Serangoon that I can enjoy with my family such as *pasar malam*.

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VERONICA, JING RU AND STACY

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OUR  
SERANGOON

COMING  
TOGETHER