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'Captain of Lives' at work

By LIM YANN LING

THE Singapore Prison Service (SPS) does not immediately come to mind when one thinks of excellent service awards.

Yes, by making Singapore a safe place for the people through the custody and rehabilitation of offenders, it makes a solid contribution to society.

Staff sergeant Kris Yong (right), 31, has been with the SPS for eight years.

Her love affair with prison service started in her final year as an interior architecture student at Temasek Polytechnic.

"As I researched the rehabilitation process for my thesis project, I realised what a meaningful job it was to help others get back on their feet and find self-worth again," she says.

As a new recruit, she underwent three months of physical and tactical training to qualify for the job.

In 1999, she was assigned to supervise and counsel inmates at the Chang Women's Prison. The job required her to work shifts and deal with inmates on a one-to-one basis.

What sustains her through harsh situations is a positive mindset.

"It is very easy to be influenced by the offenders if you do not have a strong positive mindset. I deal them with on a daily basis, and I realise that with a right, positive mindset, I can influence people around me for the better," she says.

She believes that excellent service stems from politeness.

"If you treat others with good manners, they will naturally reciprocate. Of course, there will still be rude and difficult people around, but I remind myself that even the nastiest scenarios can be resolved in a peaceful manner," she says.

In 2003, she was transferred to the prison headquarters as a recruitment officer. There, she had to maintain confidentiality on certain information while servicing public enquiries.

Despite the constraints, she made an effort to elaborate and explain to people who made inquiries, and received compliments for her professionalism and resourcefulness.

"If anything, prison service has taught me the art of restraint. It is an invaluable skill that allows me to react peacefully in all situations.

If others are hot-tempered, I try to empathise with them. Everyone has difficult days, per-

haps due to personal issues, heavy workload or tight deadlines," she says.

Staff Sgt Yong is currently an administrative officer with the Singapore Prisons Emergency Action Response (Spear) force, a contingency squad that is mobilised during riots. As a member of a tightly knit team, she feels as motivated as she was when she first started with the organisation.

"My job now is quite different because I serve my fellow prison officers instead of inmates directly. It is an indirect impact but I still feel I'm living out the mission of the organisation," she says.

The SPS inculcates in its officers the mis-

sion of being Captains of Lives — steering offenders to become law-abiding and socially responsible citizens.

Staff Sgt Yong's effort as a member of the organising committee for the Asia Pacific Conference of Correctional Administrators and the Prisons Workplan Seminar 2006 garnered praises from the international delegates.

For her continuous efforts towards excellent service, she received the Exsa gold and star awards in 2006 and 2007 respectively.

She says: "I am honoured to receive these awards. At the same time, I am very surprised because for me, I am just carrying out a daily routine."

Many public officers remain steadfast in delivering excellent service and continue to exceed the expectations of the customers even under the most difficult of circumstances. These officers deserve commendation for their outstanding service.

MR CALVIN PHIA,
 DIRECTOR, P521 OFFICE, PUBLIC SERVICE DIVISION, PRIME MINISTERS OFFICE



PHOTO: JAMIE FOM

PUBLIC SERVICE	
2007 EXSA WINNERS	TOTAL AWARDS
Accounting and Corporate Regulatory Authority	2
Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority	4
Anglo-Chinese School (Primary)	1
Balestier Hill Secondary School	1
Building & Construction Authority	7
Central Provident Fund Board	26
CHIJ St Theresa's Convent	2
Chong Boon Secondary School	4
Civil Service College	1
Coral Secondary School	1
Corporation Primary School	1
East View Primary School	1
Fuchun Secondary School	1
Health Promotion Board	19
Housing & Development Board	91
Immigration & Checkpoints Authority	58
Insolvency and Public Trustee's Office	1
Institute of Technical Education	2
International Enterprise Singapore	1
Jurong Town Corporation	2
Jurong West Secondary School	1
Jurongville Secondary School	4
Land Transport Authority	10
Media Development Authority	8
Mindef — Tuas Maintenance Base	1
Ministry of Defence	1
Ministry of Manpower	6
Monetary Authority of Singapore	3
National Arts Council	2
New Town Secondary School	1
National Library Board	4
Northland Primary School	3
Pasir Ris Secondary School	4
People's Association	13
Pioneer Secondary School	5
Public Utilities Board	73
Siglap Secondary School	1
Singapore Civil Defence Force	6
Singapore Land Authority	4
Singapore Police Force	160
Singapore Prison Service	229
Singapore Tourism Board	8
South View Primary School	1
Spring Singapore	3
St Gabriel's Secondary School	1
Supreme Court, Judiciary	1
Temasek Primary School	2
Townsville Primary School	1
Urban Redevelopment Authority	42
West Spring Secondary School	3
Ministry of Education	33
National Environment Agency	7
Yishun Primary School	1

*Refers to the total number of Gold and Silver awards.