

IN THE KNOW

SPECIAL EDITION 2023

AWWA

COVER STORY WALKING THE TALK

Profile
THE INSPIRING CAREGIVER

Volunteer
KELLY - THE SPECIAL ANGEL WITH A HEART

Feature
INCLUSION STARTS WITH "I"

8 Questions with...
CHRISTOPHER FROM FACILITIES

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IN THE KNOW

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www.awwa.org.sg

[f](#) [t](#) [i](#) [in](#) @awwasg

EDITORIAL TEAM

Shikin Hussein
Sarah Abdul Karim
Chong Jern Yen
Syam Roslan

Designed and produced by
Redbean De Pte Ltd



MESSAGE

HELLO, THERE!

Dear friends of AWWA,

As the world emerges from the throes of the COVID-19 pandemic, I am certain that brighter skies and clearer days are on the horizon. I say this with confidence, because AWWA was started in 1970 by volunteers who built our first Family Service Centre at Norris Road. Today, thousands of like-minded partners continue to journey with us in our cause of maximising the participation of the people we serve across different life stages – from children with developmental needs, to families with complex social needs, and frail seniors. For over half a century, we have continued to grow from strength to strength, with the immeasurable support of people like you, who contribute to efforts to plug evolving social gaps where they may arise.

Read on to learn more about how your generosity and contributions have impacted our mission of upholding holistic and quality service – from the use of 3D printers to design adaptive tools to shining a spotlight on strengthening inclusion.

Our friends, volunteers and partners remain the bloodline of the organisation, and we hope that our stories, as told through the myriad of voices we serve, will continue to inspire you to build a better community for tomorrow, with us.

If you believe in what we do, come on board and connect with us through our website, Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn!

With utmost appreciation,

Karthik

Chief Executive Officer, AWWA





Building a safe space for personal growth is a delicate art. A chemical reaction that can only occur with the right balance of two ingredients: trust and mutual support. For Jasmina Begum, Assistant Manager of Admin and Operations in AWWA Family Services, her experience as a social worker has given her the catalyst she needs to perfect that concoction.



Jasmina and her colleagues sharing laughter during a staff bonding session.

  Chong Jern Yen

WALKING THE TALK



An unexpected career

Social work; a path less traversed. One would think that being a social worker is a calling or that it requires a specific skill set. In Jasmina's words, **"It was by chance that I got into the sector, but I had always wanted to work in a people-oriented sector."**

Jasmina joined AWWA as a Community Outreach Worker nine years ago before furthering her studies to become a social worker. One thing led to another, and today, she oversees a team of 10 in the Admin and Operations section, ensuring that the Family Service Centre and Transitional Shelters run like clockwork.

"My initial years as a young social worker were challenging. Why would clients open up and share their struggles with me, a complete stranger? They are, after all, sharing the most vulnerable side of their lives," Jasmina relieved her experience.

"These challenges, however, taught me one vital lesson. The basis behind human relations boils down to one word - trust. Once established, the shackles that once held them back loosen, and you can see changes in their lives."

A ground-up approach

When the opportunity to assume a managerial position knocked on her door, she took it up with trepidation.

"It is one thing handling clients. It is another thing to assume a leadership role which involves people management and ensuring smooth operations of the centres. I had to transit from casework management to corporate-related work, and it all happened in the thick of the COVID-19 pandemic," Jasmina recollected.

A cloud of uncertainty shrouded her vision as she treaded into unfamiliar territory. Keeping her company and illuminating her path was none other than her

team. Jasmina humbly shared that there is no secret formula to building trust. **"People know and can sense if one is sincere with their actions. All I had to do was to be myself, be genuine in wanting to care and look out for them. I am also thankful to be surrounded by big-hearted people who constantly support one another."**

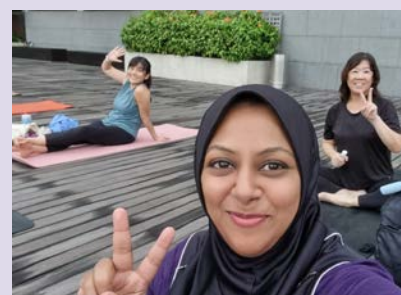
Finding the balance between work and play

Jasmina firmly believes that there should be a balance between work & personal life. To her, spending time with her family, going for evening walks, and indulging in self-care are insufficient. Making sure that her extended family's - her

colleagues' - welfare is in check: now, that completes her.

She knows from her experience as a social worker, that social work as a profession, is akin to a mountaineer. There are arduous moments. There are times when you feel down in the dumps due to the intensity of the cases and that is why she surrounds her team with support pillars.

From after-work yoga sessions to impromptu evening walks with her staff, she makes it a point to engage them regularly to ensure their needs are met. **"I treat them no differently from how I treat my loved ones. If I take care of my staff, they are better able to care for themselves and their clients,"** Jasmina narrated. **"I am a task-oriented person. I still have to fulfil my duty as a manager, ensuring that our clients' issues are resolved. By practising what I believe in - extending the familial care to my staff - I am assured that our clients are in good hands."**



Jasmina practising yoga with her colleagues after work. (Photo: Jasmina Begum)

Teamwork makes the dream work

An environment that breeds positivity and prospect is a coveted treasure. Jasmina will reach her 10th anniversary with AWWA this year. **"Over the years, I have had the opportunity to take up multiple roles within the organisation that has honed my strengths and improved on my weaknesses."** Jasmina concluded by acknowledging that her team has given her the support she needed to make it this far. **"Without them, I wouldn't be where I am today. Their words of encouragement and support have fuelled me in persevering to summit the mountain we were, and still are, climbing together."**



Jasmine engaging her colleague during an Art Therapy session.



 Sarah Abdul Karim

 Chong Jern Yen

THE INSPIRING CAREGIVER



Mr Teo helping Zi Yee during one of her classroom activities in AWWA School @ Napiri.

Mr Teo Wee Kiat is a familiar face at AWWA School @ Napiri, where he knows the grounds like the back of his hands. Often seen exchanging greetings with other parents, he has been a regular fixture at the school for the past 15 years as the caregiver to his daughter, Zi Yee. Here is his inspiring story.

Zi Yee has Prader-Willi Syndrome, which impacts her growth and development. Mr Teo and Zi Yee have been attending school together since she was just one, when she attended Early Intervention. They share a close bond, with Zi Yee often gesturing for hugs and making verbal noises to express her happiness.

Despite the challenges posed by Zi Yee's conditions, Mr Teo and his wife have remained optimistic, with everyone in the family chipping in to help wherever they can. Over the years, Mr Teo has seen Zi Yee grow and develop with the assistance of the school, though he admits that it has not always been easy. He takes joy in seeing her smile and laugh at school, and is happy to assist her in class and during swimming sessions. Thanks to his constant presence in school, Mr Teo has earned the nickname "Senior Teacher Assistant's Assistant" and has

become intimately familiar with the quirks of the other children in Zi Yee's class. His hope for Zi Yee is simple: for her to be able to attend a Day Activity Centre in the long term and to be independent. While progress may be slow, Mr Teo remains motivated and sets milestones for his daughter, even though he has come to realise that each child with the same diagnosis is different.

Zi Yee's teacher, Ms Siti Aisyah Ismail, has taught her since 2011 and has this to say, **"Zi Yee is a happy child. She is ready to offer a smile and reaches out her hand when she greets someone. While Zi Yee is not able to speak, she has a pleasant disposition and is friendly to everyone. Her father, Mr Teo, is participative during class activities and helps as much as he can. He is also always ready to offer a hand to other students who may need assistance in class."**

Hopes for the future

Mr Teo admits that being Zi Yee's father is challenging, but it is also the most fulfilling, and exciting role he has undertaken in his life. He has learnt to take things day by day, focusing on her happiness and progress, rather than comparing her to others or worrying about negative outcomes. However, like any other parents of children with additional needs, he hopes that the community will be receptive when seeing families with their additional needs children out. Mr Teo emphasises the importance of not staring should they see a child behaving differently in public, but rather speaking up and offering help if needed.

As for Mr Teo, he has no qualms in bringing Zi Yee out, since he is aware of her quirks. Family meal-times outside are now possible, as they are able to manage Zi Yee, feeding her food in small portions throughout the meal.

There is nonetheless an obstacle that he constantly faces. Zi Yee needs to lie down during diaper change, however, she has long outgrown the diaper changing area in public toilets. Mr Teo hopes that one day, more facilities that cater to different disabilities will be available, to reduce the physical barriers for caregivers who would like to bring their loved ones with additional needs out.

For all that he has done for Zi Yee, Mr Teo sees himself as any other father, who is trying his best to bring up his child. He has this message for other caregivers who might be in a similar situation. **"Tell yourself that you are not alone and there are many others who have gone through similar experiences who are ready to help you. Take it step by step."**

Prader-Willi syndrome is a complex genetic condition that affects many parts of the body. In infancy, this condition is characterised by weak muscle tone (hypotonia), feeding difficulties, poor growth, and delayed development. Beginning in childhood, affected individuals develop an extreme hunger, which leads to chronic overeating (hyperphagia) and obesity.



Zi Yee with her parents and two sisters. (Photo: Teo Wee Kiat)

Sarah Abdul Karim AWWA

EMPOWERING ABILITIES THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

The use of 3D printing technology has significantly impacted the way we produce objects, from industrial parts to medical products. The Assistive Technology (AT) field has also been revolutionised by this technology, providing a cost-effective and customised solution to meet the needs of people with disabilities.

At AWWA, a technology taskforce comprising mostly of Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) was established to explore the potential of 3D printing in creating assistive or adaptive tools for clients. The team has taken full advantage of 3D printing's capabilities by creating high-quality, personalised AT tools that cater to the unique needs of their clients. The team continuously addresses different needs, from creating Braille blocks for the visually impaired to customising utensils and tools for those with limited mobility.

One of the most exciting aspects of harnessing this technology is the impact it has had on the people they serve. Their efforts have increased staff cohesion in working collaboratively, as the young team often gather to discuss the latest on ATs, with the end goal of benefitting their clients.



Samples of 3D printed tools.



A 3D printed key holder designed to ease key pick up for clients with restricted fingers mobility.

Joice, Clinical Head (Physiotherapy), Allied Health Professional Group and Lead (Technological Advancement in Practice) at AWWA, shares his personal satisfaction since they embarked on 3D printing. **"I am happy to get positive feedback from teams of the different departments, who utilise the tools with the clients. With 3D printing, the teams are engaged and excited about exploring the latest developments in AT, which amplify the spirit of innovation. 3D printing technology has enabled them to look at new ways of helping their clients."**

The customisation capabilities of 3D printing have enabled AWWA's team to create unique AT tools, such as customised foot insoles that are specifically designed to meet the needs of individual clients. The AHPs have plans to expand the use of 3D printing by training teachers from AWWA schools to use the machines, facilitating more personalised tools and

materials for their clients. The team has also been assisted by a volunteer specialising in CAD designing, who has been helping to personalise the initial drawings before the actual printing.

The team's efforts have opened doors to new partnerships and collaborations, leading to greater innovation and progress in the field of AT. The taskforce has been collaborating with institutes of higher learning, participating in several innovation challenges to showcase their work and building partnerships with other organisations. These efforts have been so successful that the Singapore Occupational Therapy Association (SOTA) will be setting up a lab at AWWA to support the development of AT solutions.

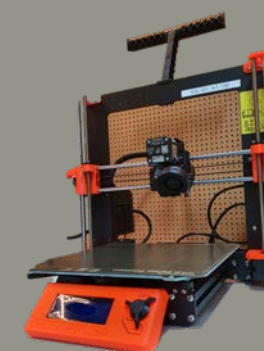
Truly, 3D printing has been an excellent example of how technology can be harnessed to improve the quality of life for people with disabilities.

About the 3D printers:



Stereolithography (SLA) Printer


The SLA printer produces high-quality prints with intricate details and colour. However, it takes longer to produce, typically 1-3 hours. The SLA printing process involves three steps: print, acid wash, and UV cure, which hardens the material. The SLA printer is used to produce items for the visually impaired, such as blocks with Braille and words engraved.




Fused Deposition Modelling (FDM) Printer

On the other hand, the FDM printer has fewer steps and is faster to produce. The FDM printer uses filament to create objects and is often used to make adaptive utensils, such as handles for cutlery and customised tools.

GET ACTIVE, STAY INTEGRATED

 Syam Roslan

 Syam Roslan & Nur Atiqah Binte Hairodin

In line with our mission of ensuring that the disadvantaged are empowered to lead dignified lives throughout life stages, AWWA launched the provision of services for adults aged 18 to 55 years old, with mild to severe physical and multiple disabilities. Commissioned by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF), AWWA is appointed to operate the AWWA Home (AH) and Day Activity Centre (DAC) from September 2022.



Joshua participating in a virtual exercise activity.



Jazil (middle), facilitating an activity with his clients.

Situated in Pasir Ris, the AH and DAC provide holistic care for clients through activities of daily living and community integration activities. The DAC, which is located at the first floor of AH, can serve up to 50 persons, providing a safe environment which is adequately equipped to engage persons with mild to moderate disabilities.

The centre, which comprises three main areas (Activity Area, Baking Area and Exercise Corner), also integrates technology into its operations, creating a unique space for the clients. For example, DAC clients will be able to utilise online games in their activities, as well as a state-of-the-art kitchen that enables a 'live' broadcast of the activities to clients at AH. This allows them to participate in the activities from the comfort of the common living areas.

In the DAC, clients get to engage in a myriad of life-skill related activities conducted by AWWA coaches and Allied Health Professionals. This is where one gets to see the development of clients up close, through regular sessions and interactions with them. One of the coaches in



Atiqah engaging a client during a group activity.

DAC, Mohd Jazil Bin Jonet, is delighted to have played a role in their progress. **"I had a client who could not communicate with us when he first joined. After understanding his method of communication, we can now understand his needs and better support him at our centre. We can even see him laughing and waving to others now!"** Jazil quipped.

The positive vibe in DAC is not a one-sided affair. With smiles and laughter filling the atmosphere in the centre, it is heartening to see clients enjoying their time spent there. Joshua Ng, 23, is diagnosed with craniofacial-cutaneous syndrome, with quadriplegic cerebral palsy. Despite his condition, he remains optimistic about life, and attributes it to his time in DAC. **"I like being here because I enjoy hanging out with my friends and doing activities such as cooking. I also feel safe here. It feels like home,"** Joshua chirped in his affable self. His proactive demeanour does not go unnoticed in the DAC.

Nur Atiqah Binte Hairodin, Centre Supervisor for DAC,

saw it as an opportunity to empower. **"Joshua enjoys helping others. Hence, we tasked him to help out in the centre, as a timekeeper for certain activities, or to be buddies with those who are not actively participating. With the autonomy given, he is relishing the opportunity to contribute meaningfully in our activities. We are glad that he feels empowered to take charge and initiate where he can,"** Atiqah shared.

As clients remain high-spirited in the centre while learning useful life skills, it bodes well for their caregivers as well. Other than serving the clients, the DAC will also offer respite to caregivers by providing day care services for their loved ones with disabilities. Angela Tang, 52, is a full-time caregiver to her daughter, Audrey. 18-year-old Audrey has global developmental delay, and Angela is glad that her daughter has a place to go to after she has graduated from AWWA School @ Napiri. **"Now that she's enrolled in AWWA's DAC, I can rest easy, knowing that there is a place for her where she belongs."**

It provides me with a much-needed respite, to attend to my parents or run errands while she is at the centre. I am thankful to AWWA for taking her in," Angela mentioned.

Moving forward, the DAC will continue to explore suitable programmes or activities for clients to enjoy, while ensuring that the quality of care and support given to them remain optimal. For Atiqah, her wish for AWWA DAC is simple. **"I want everyone here, including clients, staff and caregivers, to enjoy themselves and leave with a smile on their faces at the end of the day, every day,"** Atiqah remarked, before ending with a much more ambitious goal. **"Hopefully, in the future, we can be regarded as one of the best DACs in Singapore!"** Atiqah chuckled optimistically.

A HOME WITHOUT WALLS

The AWWA Home (AH) and Day Activity Centre (DAC) aim to reignite the kampong spirit with neighbours by building a home without walls through partnerships with members of the community, neighbourhood retailers, educational institutions, grassroots members, corporates, donors and volunteers.

The AH and DAC support the integration of adults of differing abilities with the belief that everyone should live out their hopes and aspirations in a conducive environment without barriers and live in the community with a sense of belonging and purpose. Your contribution will help to maximise choice and control for adults with multiple disabilities to support an increase in their overall well-being and that of their caregivers, boosting their independence and freedom to engage in self-care.



TYPE OF ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED AT THE DAC



Baking / Cooking



Adapted Sports



Hand Hygiene



Virtual Exercise



Money Skills



Purchasing Items at Supermarket



When AWWA was started in 1970, it was through the will of a visionary group of volunteers who sought to empower the disadvantaged, maximising their potential to lead dignified and independent lives. Today, we are heartened that the legacy and spirit of volunteerism live on in AWWA, with many journeying alongside to continue our mission. One such volunteer is Kelly Chen, a Finance Director for two busy businesses related to veterinary care and a mother to two teenage boys. Despite her hectic schedule, she has not let it deter her from serving the needy with AWWA.

KELLY - THE SPECIAL

Syam Roslan

Kelly Chen

ANGEL WITH A HEART

Kelly has been volunteering with AWWA since 2018. She helps out at various AWWA services including AWWA School @ Napiri, Early Intervention Centre (EIC) @ Napiri and the Integrated Home and Day Care (IHDC) centre. Serving the disadvantaged is something close to her heart, as her sister has two children with additional needs, whom she affectionately refers to as, 'special angels'. Some of her friends' children have additional needs as well, thereby spurring her in doing more to help those in need.

As fate would have it, Kelly's son was a member of the St. John's Brigade in his secondary school, during which he was required to volunteer in the community. Like Kelly, he was keen to

help children with additional needs, as his cousins had such needs themselves. After much consideration, he decided to volunteer with AWWA School then, at only 13 years old. The opportunity to be surrounded by the children and to observe their interactions with others were an eyeopener.

"He was very excited! He even told me that he wanted to take a double degree in medicine and psychology to help children with additional needs. He was inspired by the resilience of the children and their caregivers, and would like to help them as much as possible in the future," Kelly quipped.

Encouraged and intrigued by her son's experience, Kelly decided to join him in volunteering at AWWA School as well.

"I fell in love with volunteerism because of how it made me feel. There is no particular reason, but I believe in bringing joy and cheer to the people surrounding me, and that is why I still enjoy volunteering with AWWA till today," she added.



Kelly (left) and her colleagues, together with their 'furry friends' for a pet therapy session at the AWWA IHDC.

Today, Kelly volunteers at least once a week at IHDC, where she conducts activities for the clients such as art and craft, or at EIC @ Napiri, where she would take care of the children. Engaging her vocational experiences and connections, Kelly has conducted pet therapy sessions at both services, leading to her most memorable experience with AWWA.

"I remember the smiles and laughter of the elderly during one of the pet therapy sessions at IHDC, which totally melted my heart. One of the elderly uncles I met had said that the whippet therapy dog I brought gave him comfort and consolation. Even though I did not know what he was facing,

it brought me to tears. That is how meaningful volunteering can be," Kelly explained.

On top of her work, familial and volunteering responsibilities, Kelly makes time to serve in the parent-volunteer group in her son's school. When asked about how she juggles her commitments, Kelly emphasised the importance of time management and enjoying what you do.

"As we only have 24 hours in a day, I make sure that I fully utilise these 24 hours to do the things that I enjoy. I enjoy my work, spending time with my family and volunteering. When you enjoy what you do, you do not see these as an issue," she exclaimed.

Even after five years of volunteering with AWWA, Kelly indicates no intentions of slowing down. She highlights the need for volunteerism in our society and is doing her part to recommend volunteering with AWWA to her friends.

"Volunteerism is a crucial component of living in the community. It shapes your perspective and makes you feel grateful for what you have. The level of fulfilment is indescribable. I will continue to teach my children to give back to the society where they can. It does not take much to give a few hours of your time to serve others who need more than us," Kelly remarked.

With a slew of volunteering opportunities available in AWWA, Kelly is looking forward to new experiences within the organisation.

"I am grateful to AWWA for giving me the opportunity to volunteer for different types of services, from children to the elderly. I will be happy to participate in any other activities that is offered to me by AWWA," she beamed.

INSPIRED BY KELLY'S VOLUNTEERING JOURNEY WITH AWWA?

Join us as steadfast partners that empower and maximise the potential of our communities to lead dignified and independent lives.

Visit our website www.awwa.org.sg/volunteer-with-us or scan the QR code below to view our volunteer opportunities.

For enquiries, email volunteer@awwa.org.sg or call us at 6511 5200.



A handwritten note received by Kelly from an AWWA client.



Kelly spending time with an AWWA client at the AWWA Community Integration Service's Therapy Room.



INCLUSION STARTS WITH "I"

It is an increasingly connected and globalised world we live in. Yet, so many in society, especially persons with additional needs and their caregivers, still feel an overwhelming sense of isolation and exclusion. How do we actively adopt a positive attitude towards inclusion, and how do we start fostering this inclusive spirit from young?

Ebba Fernandez, Clinical Head (Speech and Language Therapy), Allied Health Professional Group, AWWA Ltd and a member of AWWA's Inclusion Taskforce, shares with us some simple ways we can let inclusion happen - starting from within our schools.



ABOUT EBBA

Ebba is the Clinical Head (Speech and Language Therapy), Allied Health Professional Group, AWWA Ltd and a member of AWWA's Inclusion Taskforce. The taskforce oversees the management of resources on its online inclusion resource centre, www.include.sg, and organises the quarterly AWWA Inclusion Experts Series webinar, which brings together professionals of diverse backgrounds to gain insights, acquire new inclusion-related information and enhance their skill sets through the sharing by local and international inclusion experts.

1 You can make inclusion happen ANYWHERE!

Inclusion can truly happen at any time, any place - and it does not take a lot to make it happen. If you are having your meal in the school canteen during recess, inclusion means making space for another, whoever that may be. When you are buying food from the canteen auntie, or a notebook from the bookshop uncle, inclusion means you are patient when speaking with them, especially if they speak differently from you.

2 You do not have to be a trained professional for inclusion to take place.

It is, of course, beneficial to have had some training or exposure to people with additional needs. However, what is first required of us is a willingness to want to be in the company of people who are different from us and the humility to accept our personal biases. This is something we can encourage and nurture from within the classrooms, no matter how young our students are. Taking the first step is daunting, but it will be worth the while.

3 It often starts with a simple smile or a simple gesture.

Sharing a smile, toy or book - these can often spark the beginning of friendships. Educators can make conducive spaces available for our students to interact and get to know one other better. A low-level book shelf, a calm reading corner - these are useful and welcoming features in the classroom!

4 Everyone stands to benefit from a more inclusive society.

By being inclusive of young and old, the haves and have-nots, we all stand to gain. The more we give, the more we get in return, when we tap on everybody's strengths and differences.



1 Can you share something interesting about yourself?

I'm a certified sake (a Japanese alcoholic beverage) sommelier. What this means is that I have knowledge of the different elements and facets of sake - taste, smell, and appearance, to name a few.

2 What made you want to pursue a career in facilities management?

I joined this industry wanting to know the ins and outs of a building. I enjoy exploring ways to resolve issues found in houses or buildings. For example, water seepage, flickering lights, wall cracks, etc.

3 What is one misconception of your role as a facilities executive?

One of the biggest misconceptions is that we have the skillset of a handyman. A handyman is like a technician - they fix the issue physically. Conversely, a facilities executive investigates, identifies, and proposes solutions for the task on hand, finishing it by ensuring regular maintenance schedules are met to prevent defects.

4 What is your quirkiest request till date?

In my previous job, while working in a condominium, I was asked by a resident to change a light bulb in her home.

8 QUESTIONS WITH CHRISTOPHER FROM FACILITIES

CHRISTOPHER ANG

Chong Jern Yen

5 How is facilities management in a social service agency different from other private companies?

It is actually on par with industry norms. At AWWA, we are driven to serve our clients wholeheartedly by providing positive client experiences and maintaining service excellence. As such, it is paramount that our facilities are regularly maintained so that our clients can receive their interventions in a safe and conducive environment.

7 If the Facilities Department is a fruit, what would it be and why?

Durian. The hard thorny shell represents our groundwork as we firefight and solve problems. How the yellow creamy flesh of the durian is savoured can be likened to the sense of accomplishment attained.

6 What would you say to people who are keen on joining the social service sector?

Take the leap of faith as it will be a fulfilling experience. Our knowledges can be put to better use in helping the disadvantaged.

8 What keeps you motivated in your call of duty?

To always work with the clients at heart.

OUR SERVICES

AWWA HEADQUARTERS

9 Lorong Napiri
Singapore 547531

☎ 6511 5200

✉ contactus@awwa.org.sg

🌐 www.awwa.org.sg

ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONAL GROUP

9 Lorong Napiri
Singapore 547531

☎ 6511 7034

✉ ahpoutsource@awwa.org.sg

DISABILITY AND INCLUSION

AWWA HOME AND DAY ACTIVITY CENTRE

5 Pasir Ris Street 22
Singapore 518064

☎ 6551 1646

✉ adultdisability@awwa.org.sg

AWWA SCHOOL @ BEDOK

50 Bedok Reservoir Crescent
Singapore 479225

☎ 6551 1600

✉ school@awwa.org.sg

AWWA SCHOOL @ NAPIRI

11 Lorong Napiri
Singapore 547532

☎ 6511 5280

✉ school@awwa.org.sg

COMMUNITY INTEGRATION SERVICE

9 Lorong Napiri
Singapore 547531

☎ 6511 5210

DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT AND LEARNING SUPPORT

11 Lorong Napiri
Singapore 547532

☎ 6511 5215

EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE (MAIN)

11 Lorong Napiri
Singapore 547532

☎ 6511 5300

EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE @ FERNVALE

47 Fernvale Link
Singapore 797537

☎ 6511 5621

EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE @ HOUGANG

Blk 660 Hougang Ave 8
#01-489

Singapore 530660

☎ 6511 7020

Blk 661 Hougang Ave 4
#01-375

Singapore 530661

☎ 6511 7020

Blk 665 Hougang Ave 4,
#01-345

Singapore 530665

☎ 6511 7025

EARLY INTERVENTION CENTRE @ KIM KEAT

Blk 195 Kim Keat Ave
Singapore 310195

☎ 6511 5650

SPECIAL STUDENT CARE CENTRE

9 Lorong Napiri
Singapore 547531

☎ 6511 5260

FAMILY SERVICES

FAMILY SERVICE CENTRE

Blk 107 Towner Road
#01-356

Singapore 321107

☎ 6511 9456

✉ fsc@awwa.org.sg

TRANSITIONAL SHELTER @ LENGKOK BAHRU

☎ 6511 7272

✉ ts@awwa.org.sg

TRANSITIONAL SHELTER @ JALAN TENTERAM

☎ 6511 7272

✉ ts@awwa.org.sg

HEALTH AND SENIOR CARE

ACTIVE AGEING CENTRE

Blk 123 Ang Mo Kio Ave 6
#01-4011

Singapore 560123

☎ 6511 6690

COMMUNITY, RESOURCE, ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT TEAM (CREST) @ YIO CHU KANG

123 Ang Mo Kio Ave 6
#01-4011

Singapore 560123

☎ 6511 6690

CREST @ WOODLANDS & SEMBAWANG

Blk 740 Yishun Ave 5
#01-490

Singapore 760740

☎ 9784 9247

DEMENTIA DAY CARE CENTRE @ ANG MO KIO

Blk 123 Ang Mo Kio Ave 6
#01-4035

Singapore 560123

☎ 6511 6691

DEMENTIA DAY CARE CENTRE @ YISHUN

Blk 740 Yishun Ave 5
#01-490

Singapore 760740

☎ 6511 5450

HOME PERSONAL CARE SERVICE

Blk 123 Ang Mo Kio Ave 6
Singapore 560123

☎ 6511 5252

INTEGRATED HOME AND DAY CARE

Blk 6 Boon Keng Road
#01-52

Singapore 330006

☎ 6511 5250

✉ ihdc@awwa.org.sg

REHAB AND DAY CARE CENTRE

Blk 126 Ang Mo Kio Ave 3
#01-1929

Singapore 560126

☎ 6511 6790

SENIOR COMMUNITY HOME

Blk 123 Ang Mo Kio Ave 6
#02-4035

Singapore 560123

☎ 6511 6686

f t i in @awwasg