Here Comes the ¡Man!

Lea your footprint!
All in the family
Corporate act
Parental guidance
Don't drop the ball
Hello, this isn't a scam

footprint
SEE this man? The one who wears his heart on his head? You have just seen NTU’s very own superhero!

The iMan is the embodiment of all NTU family members who pay it forward by giving back to NTU through the university-wide iGave programmes – which include Alumni Giving, Graduation Giving, Faculty & Staff Giving, Parents Giving, and the Corporate Partners Programme.

When these NTU family members give, they leave their footprints in the NTU story. Their giving makes a huge difference in the lives of students, and enables NTU schools to create a wide margin of excellence in education and research. All iGave programmes benefit three main areas of support: NTU Bursaries for financially disadvantaged students; student activities that help NTU students develop their sense of community and hone their leadership skills, and School Advancement Funds which empower NTU Schools to seize emerging opportunities in education and research, and to achieve their highest priorities with the greatest flexibility.

"Strong participation in iGave is very important because it sends a strong message to the external community that the NTU family stands firmly behind their University," says Mrs Marina Tan Harper, Director of NTU Development Office. "It inspires foundations, corporations, and the larger community to join them in achieving the aspirations of NTU."

An area impacted by the generosity of iGave donors is student activities, and the effect of this impact is multiplied. Eugene Lee is the President of the Welfare Services Club (WSC) that organises about 150 events annually. The club’s work includes befriending the elderly at homes for the aged, teaching English to needy children on overseas volunteer expeditions to countries such as Laos, and reaching out to the hearing-impaired through activities such as dragon-boating.

"At NTU, such community activities make for a very robust and meaningful education," says Eugene, a third-year student in Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering. "They help inculcate the spirit of volunteerism. More funding could lead to more of such projects, which allow more students to take part and benefit others. That’s what ‘paying it forward’ is all about," he adds.

Vishnu K V received an NTU Bursary of $3,000 last November. For him, it was a godsend because it allowed him to make
the most out of his university education. Says the second-year student in Mechanical Engineering: “My parents struggle to put me through university. Without the bursary, I would have had to find a part-time job to help with my education expenses, and that would have taken precious time away from my studies.”

“With the bursary, I don’t have to worry so much about money because it helps to cover my expenses such as textbooks and my daily allowance. Now I can concentrate on working towards my dream of becoming an engineer,” he adds.

For Lim Wee Tong, receiving the NTU EEE Excellence Award was one of the best graduation gifts he could receive. The award, which recognises students with outstanding achievements in extra-curricular activities and excellence in academic performance, is supported by EEE’s School Advancement Fund which iGave donors benefit.

Wee Tong, who graduated with First Class Honours in Electrical & Electronic Engineering in 2008, also lent his time and talent to various on- and off-campus activities. These included tutoring fellow students and even grassroots work in his constituency. Now a Senior Research Analyst with the Ministry of Defence, he has been volunteering as a paracounsellor with Mindef since last January.

“I have always believed in living life to the fullest and giving my best in everything I set out to do. That’s why I decided to pursue further studies at NTU. I have enjoyed every minute of my time here and, in the process, collated a number of unforgettable memories.”
All in the family
Faculty and staff pull out all stops to fire up spirit of giving at NTU

At the School of Electrical & Electronic Engineering (EEE), Assistant Manager Karen Lek has been merrily e-mailing her colleagues for gifts to support the annual Faculty & Staff Giving campaign.

Like family members looking out for one another, NTU faculty and staff rally toward the causes close to their hearts: nurturing NTU students, and getting the means to enable NTU to grow into a great university.

Ms Lek, one of EEE’s two Faculty & Staff Giving Ambassadors, says their next move is to visit colleagues at the School’s departments. University-wide, there are 51 Faculty & Staff Giving Ambassadors across NTU schools and offices. So committed are these volunteers that some even advocate this cause at meetings when there’s a chance to do so.

In the past, NTU faculty and staff had been making gifts to the University sporadically, but it was only in 2009 that a comprehensive annual giving campaign to advocate and inspire giving among faculty and staff was launched. It was an encouraging start. Nine offices achieved 100% participation. EEE, the biggest school at NTU, remarkably saw 60% of its 703 employees give to the campaign.

Faculty & Staff Giving 2009 had an overall participation rate of 29%.

Ms Lek says while a few colleagues were slow to commit, many were enthusiastic in their response. “Some actually give us great advice, and that’s very encouraging. Last year, a colleague suggested we simplify the automatic payroll deduction process for gifts from faculty and staff, and this was implemented. The best is when we get pats on the back from the Chair himself throughout the campaign.”

Faculty and staff support the cause because they can see the impact of their giving. Says Assoc Prof Cheng Tee Hiang, Associate Chair (Admin) of School of EEE: “With the additional financial resources, we can enrol our students in leadership programmes that allow them to visit overseas institutions. These are part of NTU’s efforts to deliver a holistic learning experience and to groom our leaders of tomorrow.”

Gifts can also be used to cover high registration fees for entering students into international contests, he says. “Last year, we sent our students to the RoboCup competition, the world’s biggest robotics and artificial intelligence event. We did it because we felt the exposure and experience would be good for both the school and our students.”

Ultimately, Prof Cheng says what makes giving back so appealing “is the conviction among our staff that it is important not just to excel, but also to nurture a spirit of compassion”. He adds: “With everyone giving generously, we can truly describe ourselves as a university with heart.”

The collective spirit of faculty and staff giving back to NTU reflects their dedication and passion towards education, inspiring and affirming external bodies, well-wishers and individuals to join them in giving to NTU’s future.
WHY bother giving to a university? Well, if you believe that the continued success of your business and the larger economy depends on the calibre of tomorrow’s workforce, you would.

One such believer is Mr Lau Sai Leong, 37, Director of DMC Event Management Pte Ltd. An alumnus of the School of Civil and Structural Engineering, he has been giving back regularly to his alma mater NTU since his graduation in 1998, through both the Alumni Giving and Corporate Partners programmes.

“By supporting young talents at NTU, businesses make sure that the leaders of tomorrow will get all the support they need to grow to their potential,” says Mr Lau. Last year, through his company, the entrepreneur gave $50,000 towards the iGave Corporate Partners programme, which supports overseas attachments for students and activities that enhance student life.

It’s through these attachments and activities that students develop their leadership skills and learn how to work in a globalised setting – the very qualities that employers seek.

Says Mr Lau: “At NTU, I was given the opportunity to help organise club activities. The experience opened up a whole new world for me, and it eventually led me to set up an event management business of my own. I hope that by participating in the Corporate Partners programme, I will give another young person the same life-changing opportunities that I was given.”

Giving to NTU has its benefits. Singapore tax residents who make a gift in the calendar year of 2010 will enjoy a tax deduction that is 2.5 times the gift’s value. All gifts also attract a 1:1 matching grant from the Singapore Government, which doubles the impact of giving. Through the iGave Alumni Giving or Corporate Partners programme, an alumnus can choose to take that tax deductibility for personal taxes or for his company.

For Mr Lau, a third benefit is most attractive. “The only ‘payback’ I wish for, is that my experience will persuade others how an open mind and a generous heart can do to help financially disadvantaged students to succeed,” he says. “I will be rewarded enough if I can inspire other alumni and corporations to give too.”
Tan Chim Hoon beams with pride at the mention of his daughter Jiayi, a second-year student at NTU’s Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information.

While he insists that he always leaves his children to pursue their own interests, he also says: “Like other parents, I want the best for them.”

That includes seeing that his children get a quality education. “I am happy that Jiayi is in a reputable university like NTU. She enjoys art, music and dance, and is good at English, so I think Communication Studies is very suitable for her,” he says in Mandarin.

It was his love for Jiayi and a desire to provide her with the best that prompted Mr Tan, who works in the interiors and construction industry, to make a gift of $2,000 to NTU last year.

His first gift to the University was a spontaneous one.

“There wasn’t any particular fund-raising campaign,” he recalls. “Jiayi stays in a hall of residence and is home only on weekends. One day, when we were catching up about her school life, she told me about how the University had to depend on gifts to fund its programmes and activities. I was moved to hand her a cheque for $2,000 to give to the Parents Giving programme.”

Mr Tan knows of NTU’s unique heritage as the University that was built on the hopes and aspirations of an entire community. Nantah, NTU’s predecessor institution, was set up with donations from businessmen, shopkeepers, and even taxi drivers back in 1955. Referring to that tradition, Mr Tan says his gift is “only a little bit” in comparison – but if the amount can go a long way towards enhancing his children’s learning experience, he feels every cent is worth it.

“Money can always be earned, but education is for life,” he says. “So I want to do my part in helping to ensure that my children will learn in the best environment and under the best conditions, like those at NTU.”

Gifts from parents enable their children and others to enjoy a world-class education, to be taught by the best professors, to be exposed to cutting-edge research and thought leadership, and to access diverse learning opportunities such as international exchanges.
SALLY, a third-year student at NTU’s School of Physical and Mathematical Sciences, spends hours visiting hall residents to talk to them, and it’s all for a good cause.

As the elected President of the Graduation Giving Ambassadors, this is just part of her work to champion the iGave Graduation Giving programme. Sally and her Ambassadors volunteer to encourage fellow seniors to make a Class Gift. These gifts may be designated towards the support of NTU bursaries, student activities, or the advancement of their own Schools. The Ambassadors raise awareness of the programme among NTU students, enlist other students to serve as Ambassadors, and advocate the culture of giving at NTU.

“Financial crisis or not, there will always be many students at NTU who are financially disadvantaged and need to work part-time to pay for their own education,” Sally says. She is driven by the belief that the hard work put in by Ambassadors will make a difference in the lives of these students.

This year, in conjunction with NTU’s 55th Anniversary, Sally poses a challenge to her cohort – to set a new record of 55% participation in Graduation Giving.

"Since the start of the Graduation Giving programme, every graduating class at NTU has outdone the previous class, from just 8% in participation rate in 2005, to 46% in 2009." she says. “I hope the Class of 2010 won’t be the class to drop the ball!”

“I like to ask my peers: Have you left anything behind?” she says. “When we make a Class Gift as the Class of 2010, we leave behind our own legacy at NTU. Just as we have benefited from the gifts that our seniors have made, we should share the joy of these gifts with our juniors and give them the same opportunities.”

She says one big challenge the Ambassadors face is the misconception many NTU students have that their University has more than ample resources. “Actually, our Schools really need support from private donors to achieve the margin of excellence in education and research which will make our University great,” she says. “So I tell my fellow seniors that, by participating in Graduation Giving, they will also inspire external donors to enable NTU to achieve even more, which will ultimately enhance the value of our degrees!”

NTU students celebrate their graduation by leaving behind a Class Gift, as they take away with them the memories of their university life.
Hello, this isn’t a scam

Please don’t hang up on Cheng Yee Kiat, one of the unsung heroes of the NTU Phonathon team

CHENG

Yee Kiat chats on the phone eight hours a week, 12 days a month. He is not burning up the lines gossiping. Instead, the fourth-year Civil & Environmental Engineering undergraduate is talking up a good cause.

Yee Kiat is an assistant supervisor with the NTU Student Phonathon, which was started in 2006. During term time, between 7 and 9:30 pm from Monday to Thursday, and from 4:30 to 8.30 pm on Sunday, he and about 30 other Phonathon Ambassadors would call NTU alumni, telling them about the latest developments at their alma mater, and inviting them to take part in the iGave Alumni Giving Programme. The Phonathon Ambassadors also encourage the graduating class to support the iGave Graduation Giving campaign.

“It was hard at first. Many people we called initially thought we were a scam!” says Yee Kiat. “But we learnt to overcome our fear to assure the doubting person at the other end of the line that we are not. When we get our message across clearly, our alumni will give to support bursaries for NTU students in financial need. Many also choose to support their own Schools.”

He says he has also often encountered alumni who are happy to be called. “Some have graduated a long time ago, and are pleasantly surprised to hear from their alma mater,” he says.

The NTU Phonathon Ambassadors have a mighty voice. More than 60% of the total participation for both the iGave Alumni Giving and Graduation Giving campaigns come through the phonathon programme – because Yee Kiat and his fellow student callers provide the personal touch and communicate the needs and priorities of the University clearly to the alumni they call.

Student Phonathon

is a part of the work-study scheme at NTU put in place for students who need to work, but for Yee Kiat, “it’s not just any other job to earn an allowance”. “You must believe in the cause to be able to convince others to support it,” he says. “Knowing we can help a fellow student in need motivates us. It gives us the courage to hear the dreaded click of a phone line going dead. This is a way we can give back to our University and to society. We are proud to be the keepers of NTU’s tradition of giving.”

The NTU Phonathon centre is manned by students on the work-study scheme. They call alumni to share their passion and conviction in the value of the educational experience at NTU, reconnecting alumni back to their alma mater.

To find out more about iGave, please contact the NTU Development Office.

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