

## SCHOOL STORIES

### CCAS THAT COUNT



Clement receiving an award from Principal Mr Boo Hian Kok

## CLEMENT THE COURAGEOUS

Having been involved in a uniformed group in primary school, he enjoyed the solidarity and structure that came along with it. Once in Outram Secondary, Clement became further convinced of the camaraderie and loyalty found in the National Police Cadet Corps (NPCC), now absorbed into the National Cadet Corps (NCC), Mixed Unit.

Hailing from a frugal household which valued thrift, adaptability and perseverance, Aw Clement of Secondary 5/1 (Class of 2021) had always been brought up with the values of teamwork and responsibility. He had learnt to be the other significant adult in his household, being the eldest in a latch-key family. He was quiet, insular and felt he had little of value to offer to anyone outside his family. Little did he know that simple family household responsibilities were essential training ground for him, building his self-confidence step by step, slowly but surely. Taking care of younger siblings whilst his parents toiled at work, meant Clement had to grow up fast, and smart, even if there was nobody to provide respite for or acclaim him.

As an NPCC cadet, he thoroughly enjoyed the platform which afforded him an opportunity to develop his leadership skills. Familiar with the notion of taking charge of younger ones, Clement recognized he was a solid, competent and capable mentor to his juniors. He reminisces fondly the joys and tears as a uniformed group cadet, recalling that it was not just about torturous drills, marching in the heat and hearing commands bellowed in anger. It was about that special sense of belonging.

Suffering and winning together really helped to cement that affective bond within the NPCC core.

As a graduating student, Clement has these words to impart to incoming Outramians, “No CCA is easy. Everything is hard and it takes time. But the uniformed group made me realise what it takes to lead. Learning while leading was new to me.”

The uniformed group has broadened his horizons, enriched his perspectives and reshaped his mindset. With half a decade’s worth of uniformed group expertise and experience behind him, Clement has grown in stature. “Regardless of the challenges, one needs to adapt,” he commented, reinforcing the consistency of a growth mindset he has long since embraced. As the interview neared to its closure, the customary “Thank you for your time” to the interviewee, was almost poignantly and quickly rebuffed, albeit in a rather self-effacing manner, “No, I think ... I want to thank the uniformed groups. And of course (the) school...Exposure to new things was good!”

Indeed, Clement found himself at the pinnacle of student leadership whilst being a senior NPCC staff sergeant. Serving the school further in his capacity as a Student Councillor, Clement was imbued further with the growing sense of responsibility to school and community. From representing the school unit at zonal competitions, to serving as a BiCentennial volunteer, Clement has come a long way from being a shy, awkward and unconfident skinny lad, blossoming into a resilient and resourceful young adult.

The appeal of the uniformed group remains enshrined in Clement’s mind. If he had to do it again, he would, and gladly so. It was not just about preparing for National Service; it was not just about the thrill of participating in courses and acquiring skills proficiencies like Emergency First Aid. Clement sees his time in the uniformed group as more than time well-spent, where “brotherhood is the most important thing”.

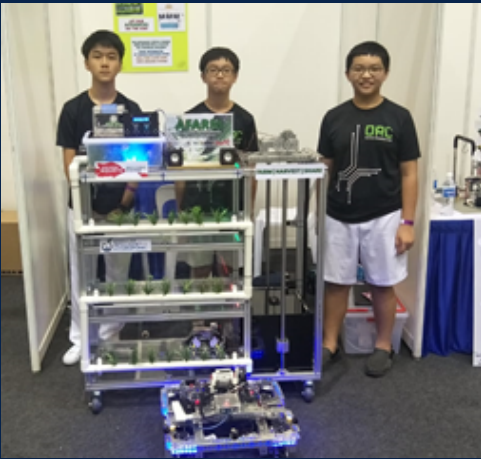


Clement with his Officer-in-charge and fellow cadets



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## JIAN SHENG'S INSPIRING JOURNEY

*"There is this quote by Albert Einstein that has inspired me to be who I am today, 'If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.'" Lee Jian Sheng*

When he was 13, just like other kids, Jian Sheng enjoyed playing games on his phone and often wondered about the magical coding behind all the games he played. When he joined Outram Secondary School, he wanted to try something new and he knew Robotics Club was the one for him. With no background knowledge of robotics, Jian Sheng was selected to represent school in the National Robotics Competition when he was in Secondary One. Little did he know that this competition became the turning point of his life. During the competition, he was fascinated and intrigued with what technology can do and he was inspired to make the world a better place for everyone to live in. Since then, he was motivated to research and learn more about robots, coding and automation.

One of the more memorable experiences he had was during the National Robotics Competition he participated in year 2018. The theme of the competition was food matters in Singapore. The team wanted to design and program a robot focusing on sustainable agriculture and food security. He recalled that it was one of the toughest competitions as the team had limited knowledge of sustainable agriculture, food security and the acquired skills for the programming and automation. He recalled that long hours were spent on researching on possible solutions, watching YouTube videos to learn how to code and decipher them. As the group leader of the team, Jian Sheng had to constantly motivate his team members to persevere on. He had to understand his team members' strengths so that he can delegate tasks such as 3D modelling, graphic designs for his members to work on. These were above and beyond juggling with his immense school work demands. After 5 months of hard work and teamwork, the team finally designed and programmed an A-Farm prototype, an aquaponics system designed for HDB buildings to promote urban and sustainable farming. The design of A-Farm was emphasized on three key areas, automation, accuracy and efficiency. A-Farm won praises from the judges of the competition and won the runner-up position and runner-up position for product presentation that year.

Over the years, some of Jian Sheng's other notable achievements include

- Robo Gladiators 2017 (4th position)
- National Robotics Competition 2017 (Overall Champion)
- World Robo Tournament 2018 - Robo Soccer (Most Valuable Player)
- National Robotics Programming Competition 2019 (Runner-up for Presentation)
- Physics Olympiad, Honorable mention
- Principal's Award 2020

When asked who inspired him greatly, his reply was "my robotics instructor, Mr G." He recounted when he was a clueless and unmotivated student in Secondary One, Mr G shared life stories and share his vast knowledge and skills about robotics with him. It was through all the various discussions they had weekly which sparked his interest in robotics and coding. This had further translated into developing him into an independent learner when he goes online to find out more about robotics and coding. "Mr G also taught me to be resilient because in the world of computing, you will meet with many failures before you succeed" said Jian Sheng.

Jian Sheng aspires to be an engineer when he grows up, he is currently pursuing a diploma in Computer Engineering in Singapore Polytechnic, and he hopes that one day he can be an inventor, an inventor who will invent robots that can make Singapore a better place to live in.



Jian Sheng with his coach and CCA members



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Jenny the French Horn player

## JENNY'S ROAD TO GLORY

As with many parents who try to provide a holistic educational foundation for their young children, Nguyen Ngoc Khanh Chi (Secondary 5/1, Class of 2021, also known as Jenny to friends), was blessed to have the chance to experiment with various musical instruments such as the piano or guitar. These proved to be half-hearted and at best, attempts to cultivate Jenny's inner aesthetic spirit at a young age. In fact, as Jenny advanced from primary to secondary school education, her instincts and inclinations naturally moved on elsewhere.

By the time she set foot onto York Hill, she had high expectations of participating in high octane team sports. Unexpectedly, she found herself in the Concert Band, which she originally felt was unsuited to her temperament. Five years on, her glowing assessment of her years in the CCA showed that it was very much the opposite instead. Despite her past dabbling with music as a young child, Jenny had no prior experience of playing musical instruments as part of an organized group, within a systematic structure and a designated target audience. Membership in the Concert Band transformed her earlier impressions of music-related CCAs. After trying out the trumpet, Jenny quickly switched to the French Horn, an instrument that she has grown very accustomed to, in the past five years.

In contrast to other Concert Bands from other schools, Outram's members were largely neophytes to a CCA that demanded strict self-discipline, positive growth mindset and strong reservoirs of self-motivation. Jenny confessed that she might be one of the somewhat slightly "luckier" ones in the Band, currently boasting a membership of 27, from the non-graduating classes. She at least had some notion of musical instruments. Reading a score, playing to a synchronized beat and working in tandem with other different instruments, constituted a vastly different ball game for Jenny and her CCA mates.

Over time, Jenny embraced this tough schedule of training, embraced the challenges of forging a common CCA identity among very different members and embraced the collective aspiration to perform the utmost for school and band. In her interview, Jenny wanted newcomers to the band to always remember, "... (It's) not easy", but joining the Concert Band, was akin to "learning a new instrument, learning a new person, learning a new language." So much had to be done and so many things were to be accomplished. Yet, Jenny conceded, that not everything was smooth-sailing in this journey of five years, as band-mates can sometimes be involved in a "love-and-hate relationship."

Also, a firm and well-planted hierarchy existed in the CCA, in which students like Jenny played a pivotal role. Over the years, what the band members did was to pass down the collective knowledge, experience and shared aspirations, from a senior batch to a junior one. This time honoured practice, required one senior member taking a junior group under his or her wings. This team would then be guided and moulded by the senior member.

In Jenny's case, she recalled the most significant event of her CCA life. She recalled how she went through an internal band interview, in which she commented she would just want to be a section leader in Secondary 3. The band seniors and instructor challenged her to scale even greater heights, and also consider being the Vice-president (music) of the CCA.

Working together to achieve the common objective, was something embedded deeply in Jenny's mind. It did not matter that her CCA was comprised of members who were like "fishes out of water" during the biennial Singapore Youth Festival (SYF). They compensated for the lack of foundational skill with sheer hard work and tenacity. There was a strong collective work ethic that ran throughout the band.

The SYF accolades have included Commendation Award, Distinction Award and Accomplishment Award. These are testament to the great sense of teamwork, responsibility and industriousness manifested in the Concert Band.



Glorious moments with the Student Council and the Band