



epworth moments

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May 2025

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ABOUT US

Epworth Community Services is a Social Service Agency (SSA) that helps at-risk children and youths from needy and disadvantaged families. We want to create a better world for them so that they can develop their potential. Our work focuses on promoting the mental well-being of children and youths by building strong families and imparting skills for resilient living.

VISION

Strong Families, Resilient Living, Beautiful Minds

MISSION

To reach out in Christian love, by providing quality programmes and services to all children, youths, parents and their families, of all language, race and religion, and nurturing each family member in body, mind and spirit.

EPWORTH MOMENTS

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ED's MESSAGE:

Why Is Epworth Constantly Raising Funds For Our Work?

By **Tan Khye Suan**
Executive Director

I have been working in the social service sector for the last 23 years. When I first started work at Epworth Community Services, I did not realise that fundraising would become an integral part of my work. **But it did!** Yet, sometimes, I wonder why we need to raise funds, especially when it becomes a big part of my work.

Epworth supports children and youths who are at-risk and from disadvantaged backgrounds. On a personal level, I often reflect and ask myself: Why am I so committed to this cause? Why am I so deeply invested in helping children and youths through fundraising? What is my motivation?

I believe the early years of a person's life are critical. These years shape a person's development mentally, emotionally, socially, and, even, spiritually. The experiences at early age, often, greatly shape a person's ability to cope. Eventually, these experiences determine the direction of a person's adult life.

I have met many people who had difficult experiences when they were young. Some took the wrong path in life, leading to more struggles and painful outcomes. These effects can be long-lasting. They can affect others around them and even the next generation. Hence, it is important to give children and youths a good start in life. If a child has gone through negative events, we must do our utmost to mitigate these experiences. We must support the child to rebuild their life so that they can look forward to a better future.



A child does not choose to be born into hardship. But we can help to change the path they are on. We can support the child in making good choices in life. We can help them grow into adulthood with the hope of rising above their current disadvantaged and needy circumstances.

Like myself, many at Epworth are motivated to help these children and youths. Their work shapes the future of individuals, developing their potential so they can one day contribute to society. We may never fully know the impact of their work. We cannot measure its value in dollars. But, cumulatively, their work impacts the well-being of the whole society. With full conviction, suffice it to say: "The work that they do, in no uncertain terms, positively changes the trajectory of individual lives and society."

To continue this work, we need resources. Without them, we cannot do what needs to be done. Hence, we will keep asking those who can give, to give generously. Together, we play a part for the betterment of our society, our country and our future.

Please continue to support the work of Epworth Community Services!



Illuminate: Lighting The Way Epworth Fundraising Gala Dinner 2025

By Angeline Nah

Assistant Manager, Community Relations

On 16 May 2025, Epworth Community Services held its Fundraising Gala Dinner at One Farrer Hotel. The theme for this year's fundraising dinner is 'Illuminate: Lighting the Way'. This reflects how Epworth's programmes shine a guiding light for children, youths, and families, offering transformative support and hope.

The event was graced by Guest-of-Honour Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and attended by donors, partners, and supporters, all committed to uplifting at-risk families. The warmth and enthusiasm of our valued guests truly illuminated the evening and our hearts.

The evening's entertainment was nothing short of spectacular. It began with an energetic cajón performance by our volunteer and beneficiaries. This was followed by a mesmerising medley of Disney songs by Barker Road Methodist Church Band, beautiful song performances by former Epworth beneficiary, Charlene Teo, and talented sisters Chloe and Zoe from Barker Road Methodist Church. One of the evening's highlights was Charlene's Story — an animated illustration showcasing her journey at Epworth's Literacy Centre.

As Dr Vivian Balakrishnan shared, "The problems faced by children and youths who have learning disabilities or who have been victims of trauma compound tragically over time."

This underscores the importance of timely intervention in achieving our vision of building strong families and resilient living. Our fundraising target this year is \$600,000. Funds raised will be used to support Epworth's work with disadvantaged children and at-risk youths.

The fundraising campaign runs till 30 June 2025. We thank all who have supported and invite others to join us in lighting the way forward for our children and youths.



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Speech by Dr Vivian Balakrishnan



Call to Partner Epworth by Executive Director Mr Tan Khye Suan



Welcome Address by Board Chairman Dr Benjamin Tan



A night of talent, passion, and heartfelt performances





Thank you for lighting the way forward!





The Parenting Pantry:

Caring for Children in Foster and Kinship Families

Strategies and insights for caregiving in alternative family settings

By Quek Li Koon

Manager, Epworth Foster Care

What's in the Mix:

Understanding Their Inner World



At Epworth Foster Care, we walk alongside foster parents and kinship carers as they provide safe, loving homes for children who cannot live with their birth families due to reasons like abuse, neglect, illness, or loss.

Both foster and kinship care are usually temporary, with the hope of reuniting children with their parents. When that is not possible, they may stay longer with their carers who provide the care and stability they need to grow and thrive.

Kinship care, where children live with relatives such as grandparents or aunts, is often preferred because it helps children stay connected to their roots and familiar surroundings. When that is not possible, children may enter foster care or be placed in children's homes.



Add Patience First:

When Trust Is Hard to Build



Children and youths who are removed from their families often feel anxious, fearful and unsure about what lies ahead.

Past trauma and sudden changes can make it hard for them to trust others, regulate their emotions or form attachments.

Caregivers may notice behaviours like tantrums, restlessness, or withdrawal, as the children struggle to express how they feel.

Some may also have learning or developmental needs and require extra support to feel safe and understood.

Stirring in Safety:

Creating a Secure Home

To help children feel safe and begin to heal, foster and kinship carers play a key role in creating a stable and nurturing home. By observing and learning about each child's unique needs and triggers, caregivers can better support their emotional wellbeing.

When children act out, it is important for caregivers to stay calm and remember that their behaviours may be rooted in past trauma. Showing empathy and trying to understand the child's feelings builds connection. The focus is on connection before correction.

Offering children choices helps them feel a sense of control. Caregivers can support their big emotions by staying present and calm alongside them. With consistency, patience and guidance from social workers, children can begin to build trust and feel truly supported.



Resources @ Epworth

At Epworth Foster Care, we are constantly looking for potential applicants to sign up as foster parents. The resources that foster parents get include:

Support from our agency's social workers

24/7 hotline



Training courses



Monthly Allowance from Ministry of Social and Family Development



Volunteer With Us

If you are not ready to sign up as a foster parent, you can consider volunteering in areas such as befriending a child, helping with childminding, or supporting our outreach events. Your care can help transform the lives of children in need.

For more details, visit:

www.epworth.sg/programmes-services/epworth-foster-care



Let's Unpack That!

The Neuroscience of Trauma: What Happens in the Brain?

How the brain reacts to trauma, and what we can do to support healing

By Javiar Lim

Assistant Psychologist, Centre for Positive Recovery

Over the years, many researchers have studied how trauma affects people. One of the earliest and most well-known was Dr Sigmund Freud, who suggested that childhood experiences can strongly influence a person's development later in life.^[1]

While this idea is widely recognised, many people may not know how trauma affects the brain and body. In this article, we will take a closer look at how the brain responds to traumatic events and how these responses can lead to symptoms of trauma.



Wired for Survival: The Brain on Trauma

The story starts in the brain, which has been hardwired for survival. The brain governs how we think, act, and feel in the context of things we experience.

For example, we get anxious before an upcoming examination and might study harder to reduce this negative feeling and replace it with confidence.

When an individual is stressed or feel threatened, the brain reacts in one of four ways^[2]:

- **Fight:** Confronting the threatening event directly
- **Flight:** Running away from the threat, physically or emotionally
- **Freeze:** Being unable to react when faced by a threat
- **Fawn:** Reducing the threat by appeasing it through people-pleasing actions



At the same time, the body releases a substance called cortisol in response to the event. Often known as the stress hormone, cortisol helps to keep the body alert and ready to react.

Trauma is the way a person responds to an event, or a series of events, that threatens their mental, emotional, or physical well-being. Several structures within the brain are relevant when discussing how trauma symptoms may develop.

The Brain's Response to Trauma: A Closer Look

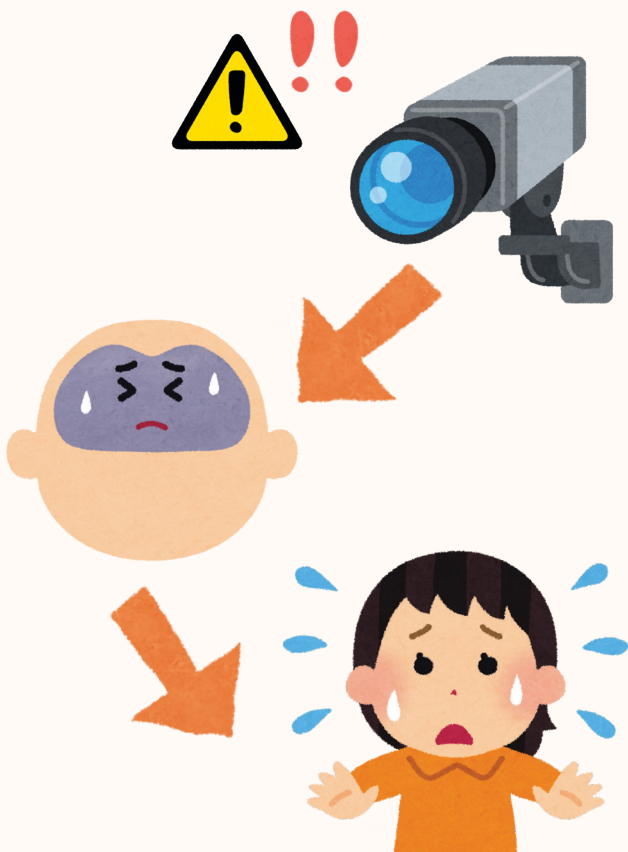
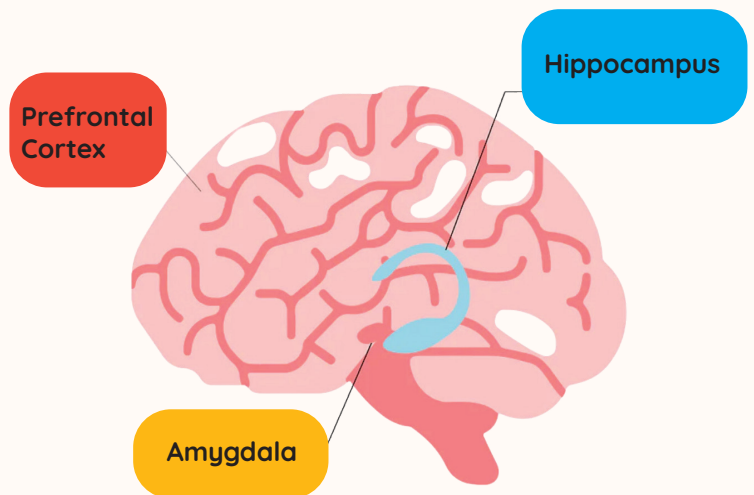
The **amygdala** (located within the limbic system) is often referred to as the “fear centre” of the brain as it processes threats and fears. It is triggered when an individual faces threats.

The **hippocampus** (located in the medial temporal lobe), whose main purpose is to form and organise memories and distinguish between the past and present.

The **prefrontal cortex** (located in the frontal lobe) is in charge of higher-level cognitive functioning such as planning, clear communication and decision-making.

Due to the undeveloped prefrontal cortex in children, many caregivers observe their children exhibit impulsivity or struggle with emotional regulation.

Children might interrupt or say hurtful things in the heat of the moment, adding to the already high tension with caregivers.



When an individual recalls a traumatic event, the amygdala becomes unusually active, almost as if the person is reliving the experience. The amygdala acts like a CCTV camera, constantly scanning for signs of danger. During a traumatic memory, it sounds the alarm, even if there is no real threat in the present moment. As the amygdala takes charge, the prefrontal cortex becomes less active.

When the brain senses danger, it shifts to survival mode. Quick reactions take over, while the prefrontal cortex slows down. Cortisol, the stress hormone, also lowers prefrontal activity.

The hippocampus gets confused, so the brain may react as if the trauma is happening again, at the present moment. This explains why some people have strong reactions to reminders of the event. Trauma may also change brain connections, making it harder to build resilience.

When the Brain Stays in Survival Mode

Trauma can lead to symptoms such as:

- Flashbacks or nightmares
- Difficulty sleeping or focusing
- Constant alertness
- Emotional outbursts or irritability
- Avoiding reminders of the trauma
- Negative thoughts or feelings



These symptoms often lead to reduced concentration and memory, with many individuals describing “brain fog” and difficulty thinking clearly.

The effects are more pronounced in children, who may struggle with learning, problem-solving, and listening due to being in a constant stress state.

With limited emotional regulation and language skills, they also find it harder to calm down or express their feelings, which can cause them to fall behind academically.

Healing Is Possible: How the Brain Can Recover from Trauma

Recovery from trauma is possible with a trauma-informed approach. Synaptic plasticity^[3], the brain's ability to adapt, allows healing through learning and adaptation. Trauma is not permanent when individuals receive informed and empathetic care.

Professionals play a key role by recognising how trauma affects someone, empowering individuals to make their own choices, and creating safe, non-triggering spaces. The focus should be on healing rather than just addressing behaviours, while working holistically with others to support the individual's overall well-being.

Similarly, caregivers play a vital role in trauma recovery. Spending quality time and engaging in positive activities strengthens family bonds and helps children feel safe, which calms the amygdala.

Being trauma-informed helps caregivers better understand their child's needs and seek support when necessary. Working with trauma-informed professionals is key to creating a nurturing environment where children can blossom.

At Epworth, the Centre for Positive Recovery (CPR) provides specialised, trauma-informed support for children, youths, and their caregivers. From therapy and counselling to parenting and behavioural interventions, CPR helps families heal and build resilience together.

If you or someone you know could benefit from these services, reach out to us and take the first step toward recovery.



References

- [1] Freud, S., Strachey, J., Tyson, A., & Richards, A. (1976). The interpretation of dreams. Penguin.
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Build-Your-Own June Holiday Routine Checklist!

By Laura Jiang

Community Relations Executive

A simple tool to help you and your child structure the day and make the most of the June holidays!

During the holidays, it is common for routines to slip. Children may become restless or overwhelmed without structure, and parents might find themselves navigating tantrums, "I'm bored!", or endless screen time.

That is why we have created a flexible, child-friendly routine chart to help bring calm, predictability, and purpose into each day. Use it to co-create a routine with your child and adapt it to fit your family's needs.

's DAILY CHECKLIST

MORNING

- ☐ Eat breakfast _____
- ☐ Get dressed _____
- ☐ Brush teeth _____
- ☐ Brush hair _____
- ☐ Make your bed _____
- ☐ Take vitamins _____

AFTERNOON

- ☐ Pick up toys _____
- ☐ Read _____
- ☐ Daily chore _____
- ☐ Go outside _____
- ☐ Do school work _____
- ☐ Random act of kindness _____

EVENING

- ☐ Dinner _____
- ☐ Help clean up _____
- ☐ Bath _____
- ☐ Brush teeth _____
- ☐ Read book _____
- ☐ Lights out _____

Marching Into Fun: Holiday Highlights at Epworth



During the March holidays, students from Epworth Literacy (Jurong West) joined an exciting “Art, Craft, & Games” programme organised by volunteers from UBS. Ten volunteers and eight students joined us on this day filled with hands-on crafts and interactive games.

The session began with a lively game of Bingo that helped everyone get to know one another in a fun and engaging way. Students then created their own paper plate animals and masks, using colourful materials and lots of imagination. Volunteers guided and encouraged them, creating a joyful, creative space.

Next came the station games, with UBS volunteers acting as station masters. These activities promoted teamwork, coordination, and plenty of laughter as students moved through each game.

To end the programme on a high note, each student brought home a Happy Meal from McDonald’s as a special treat. It was a memorable day for all, and we are grateful to UBS for making it happen.

By Joleen Chan
Social Work Associate, Epworth Literacy

Epworth Literacy (Jurong West)



Epworth Literacy (Bukit Batok)

During the March holidays, Epworth Literacy partnered with YouthHarmony to host a special cajon workshop at the Bukit Batok Centre. The session introduced students to rhythm and music through hands-on activities and guided instruction.

The volunteers kicked off the session with rhythm-based games that taught the students about musical timing in a fun, interactive way. These activities encouraged creativity, teamwork, and focus.



With guidance from an experienced instructor, students then learnt the basics of playing the cajon. They practised hand placement, simple drumming techniques, and rhythmic patterns, eventually accompanying a song as a group. The session boosted their coordination, musical awareness, and confidence.

As the workshop progressed, students explored different rhythms and supported one another in their learning. Their enthusiasm and teamwork stood out as they played together and encouraged each other. A few students were later selected to continue learning and performed at Epworth's Gala Dinner.

This workshop offered a refreshing change from regular lessons, allowing students to build new skills, discover music, and enjoy learning in a creative environment. Their performance was really well-received by guests at the Gala Dinner.



By Ethan Shew
Social Work Associate, Epworth Literacy

HomeSweetHome

HOYA Lens Singapore has been supporting Epworth HomeSweetHome for the past three years through its Empowering Children Through Vision Care initiative.

As part of this partnership, HOYA conducts yearly eye check-ups for our residents and provides free spectacles for those who need them. On 17 March 2025, the team returned once again to offer screenings, continuing their commitment to improving children's eye health and well-being.

By Ezekiel Jeevan
Social Worker, HomeSweetHome





Leading with Purpose: A Look into Our Board Briefing and Retreat

By Deborah Long
Senior Management Executive

The first half of the year was an enriching and purposeful time for the Board. On 22 Feb 2025 New Board Members were invited to hear more about the work at Epworth. The session was held at Epworth's Therapeutic Group Home, HomeSweetHome (HSH).

During the visit, our Executive Director, Mr Tan, provided an overview of Epworth's mission and the various services we provide. Part of the session was a tour of the Home, where Board Members had an opportunity to experience first-hand the daily operations of the Home, observe resident activities in action, and witness the nurturing environment cultivated by the team.

The session concluded with a heartfelt lunch prepared by HSH's cook, Aunty Bee, featuring her signature chicken rice!

About HomeSweetHome:

Epworth HomeSweetHome, established in 2013 in partnership with MSF, is Singapore's first Therapeutic Group Home providing stay-in treatment for children aged 7 to 12 who have experienced abuse. Using the Trauma System Therapy (TST) model, the Home supports children with complex trauma and behavioural challenges. With early intervention and coordinated care from professionals, we aim to help each child heal, build resilience, and eventually return to a safe placement in the community.

On 7 Mar 2025, Epworth held its Annual Board Retreat, bringing together Board Members and Senior Management to reflect, align, and chart the organisation's strategic direction.

This retreat serves as an important platform to ensure that Epworth's work remains at the heart of all that we do, guiding our operational priorities and long-term goals. Through open dialogue and forward-thinking discussions, the Board continues to steer Epworth towards meaningful growth — ensuring that we can expand our reach and deepen our impact in the lives of those we serve.



Towards a Future-Ready Epworth: Town Hall Highlights

By Cyan Khoo

Assistant Manager, Community Relations

On 7 April 2025, staff gathered for the Epworth 2025 Town Hall meeting to hear key updates for the organisation.

The session opened with a short icebreaker, where departments shared interesting facts and insights into their work. It offered a glimpse for the staff to get to know one another better as well as the team's varied work.

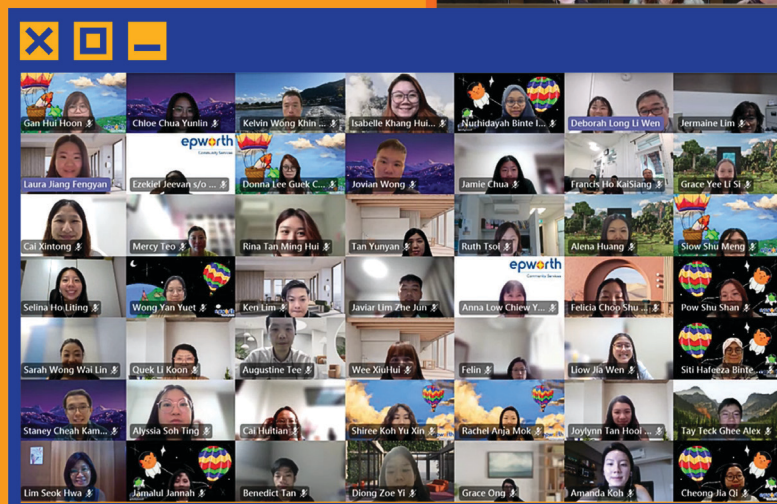
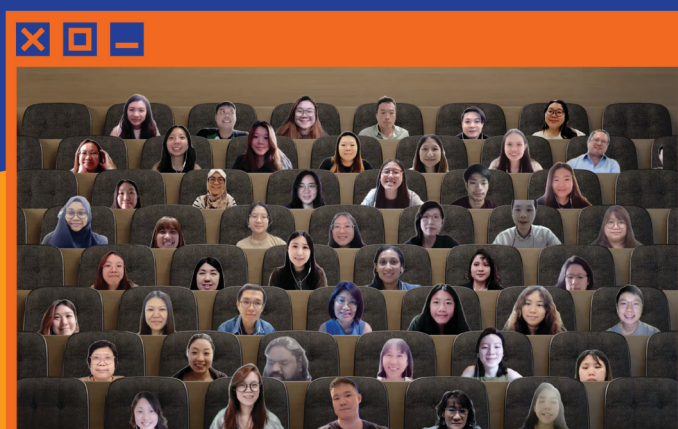
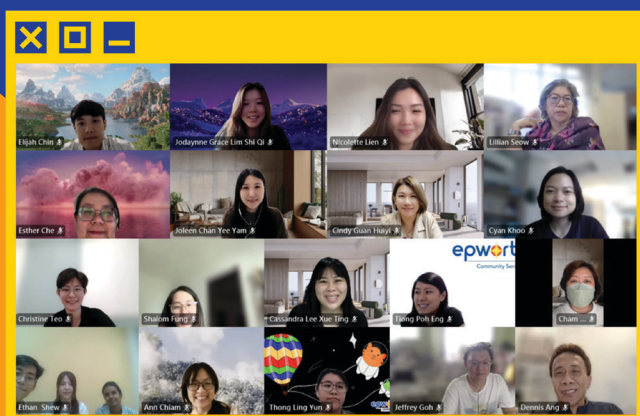
One of the main updates was the launch of a new HR staff portal. This portal will serve as a central hub for HR matters. It includes access to staff handbooks, updates on new team members, and other useful resources. Staff were encouraged to explore the portal and use its features.

The meeting also covered Epworth's efforts in Workplace Safety and Health.

Staff were briefed on the practices in place to promote a safe and healthy work environment. These include identifying and removing potential hazards, and introducing good practices to support staff safety. These efforts reflect the organisation's ongoing commitment to staff wellbeing.

Staff were also informed of a possible shift in Epworth's strategic direction. While details are still being explored, staff were encouraged to stay adaptable and open to growth. Executive Director Mr Tan urged everyone to grow alongside the organisation.

The Town Hall was an opportunity for all staff to align with Epworth's goals and stay informed on future directions. It reflected Epworth's commitment to becoming more agile and future-ready.



“Together, we can uplift
lives and create a
community where every
child has the
opportunity to thrive.”



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Pledge monthly and
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Sharing just \$20 a month
will help build a better
future for many!

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We would like to invite you to join us to help at-risk
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By pledging, we can build an unhindered stream of
resources to support our beneficiaries regardless of
the economic uncertainties.

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How can I make a difference?

SUPPORT US

The important work of Epworth Community Services is funded primarily by generous well-wishers who strongly believe in our cause. We invite you to join us in making a difference in the lives of children and youths under Epworth Community Services.

*All donations are eligible for 2.5x of tax exemptions.
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VOLUNTEER WITH US

Volunteers play an important role in our programmes and services. Volunteers can choose to be engaged in ad-hoc, short- or long-term programmes and are matched to programmes according to their time and interests.

*For volunteering enquiries, visit www.epworth.sg
or contact us at community.relations@epworth.sg.*