

# THE *Art* OF BEING Social

**SOME SOCIAL ENTERPRISES IN THE HEARTLANDS HAVE NOT ONLY MERGED BUSINESS ACUMEN WITH ALTRUISM, BUT ARE ALSO PAVING THE WAY FOR AN ALL-INCLUSIVE SOCIETY.**

Individuals harbouring dual aspirations of entrepreneurship and making a difference to society — be it helping the underprivileged or advocating environmental causes — can now take the dive with confidence, thanks to HDB's latest initiative: **HDB shop spaces at subsidised rent** will be offered to all members of raiSE (Singapore Centre for Social Enterprise). Previously offered to raiSE grantees, the expanded incentive will now benefit some 350 social enterprises.

*Life Storeys* takes a closer look at three social enterprises that represent this growing sector, which juggles financial sustainability while tackling social causes.



## The Social Space

Block 333, Kreta Ayer Road, #01-14, Singapore 080333

The newest kid on the Kreta Ayer block is a multi-concept store dedicated to eco-living with empathy for social awareness. Just a little over a year old, The Social Space is the brainchild of husband-wife team, Mr Daniel Yeow and Ms Cheryl Ou.

The in-house cafe serves up healthy goodness, while an area devoted to fair trade includes the sale of accessories designed by women from marginalised communities all over Asia. There's even a 'refillery'

corner, where you can top up your own bottles with household cleaning solutions and body washes to reduce waste. The store also offers enzyme-based cleaning products made with fruit peels collected from local vendors — a collaborative initiative with Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS).

The Social Space trains and employs its staff from marginalised backgrounds, such as ex-offenders, people with disabilities, disadvantaged women, and youth at risk. Currently, there are 18 full-timers, of which 80% are beneficiaries.



### Curious Thoughts Academy

**Block 261, Waterloo Street, #03-33, Waterloo Centre, Singapore 180261**

A learning centre specialising in English classes and phonics for children aged 30 months to 16 years, Curious Thoughts Academy is a social enterprise funded by *raiSE* since its opening in 2017, with one-third of its students in low-income families. The centre's beneficiaries consist of families supported by South Central Community Family Service Centre, and intellectually disabled adults from MINDS' Me2Club.

"We adopt a pay-it-forward model where three paying students fund one beneficiary's programme," explained Ms Lydia Lok, who together with her husband Mr Yao Shuohan, runs the centre, which also conducts SkillsFuture-approved workshops.

Curious Thoughts Academy has expanded its curriculum to include the Orton-Gillingham Dyslexia Intervention teaching approach, which is specifically designed to help slower readers. It also has certified teachers who are trained to provide dyslexia intervention and therapy via Jolly Phonics, an internationally recognised method of teaching children to read and write in English using a multi-sensory approach.

### Project Dignity

**Dignity Kitchen: Block 267, Serangoon Avenue 3, #02-02, Singapore 550267**

Awarded the President's Challenge Social Enterprise of the Year in 2015, Project Dignity has its roots at Balestier Market Food Centre with just four hawker stalls. From the start, founder Mr Koh Seng Choon has empowered the disabled and other vulnerable members of society through training and employment opportunities within Project Dignity, or with its partners in the F&B, hospitality and retail sectors.

The company manages Dignity Kitchen, a public food court where all seven stalls are staffed by beneficiaries. It also sponsors lunches for the elderly from nursing homes around Singapore.

Project Dignity has also benefited from subsidised rent under the HDB Social Enterprise Policy. "The grant helps defray costs and allows us to amplify our impact, too," said Mr Koh.

