

# Working for free for priceless experience

She was not paid for her internship, but the non-monetary benefits she got from it were priceless.

Not only did Ms Tan Qian Ying, a fourth-year psychology student at the National University of Singapore, make many new friends, she also learnt how to set up a business.

In July last year, the 22-year-old did a one-month internship at Envisage Education, a social enterprise which encourages and supports youth to run their own social enterprise projects.

She chose to work there as she was curious about the prospects in the education sector.

For five days a week, she worked from 9.30am to 5pm at Envisage's office at \*Scape. Her job involved writing a 50-page guidebook on social entrepreneurship that is currently being used in the organisation's programmes and planning and facilitating the free annual series of workshops, Gen.SE (short for "Generation Social Enterprise"), which encourages young people to learn about social entrepreneurship.

One of the most memorable experiences for Ms Tan was sitting in during the workshops and listening to the speakers.

She says: "One of the speakers who inspired me was Ms Leona Leong, who founded Aii Singapore, a corporate gift-giving company that employs people with disabilities and the under-privileged.

"These people can find it hard to find regular work, so I'm inspired by how her business helps them to be employed. She motivated me to want to start my own social enterprise in the future."

The highlight of her internship was when Envisage's managing director Stanley Chia, 28, invited about 20 interns – both past and present – to his home in Serangoon for a party near the end of her stint.

"He cooked meatball pasta, mush-



Ms Tan Qian Ying, a fourth-year psychology student at NUS, did an unpaid internship with Envisage Education, a social enterprise, in July last year.

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room aglio olio and clam chowder for the group and they played card games such as Saboteur. Until this day, we're still friends with the boss and one another."

The only downside for her was not getting an allowance for transport or meals.

"My daily expenses accumulated after a while, but I kept them low by taking the MRT and eating at food courts."

She lives in a five-room flat in Woodlands with her sales director father, her student care teacher mother and 28-year-old brother, who is a regular in the army.

She says: "Initially, my parents were unhappy that I took an unpaid internship. They preferred me to continue giving tuition instead, which would allow me to earn about \$500 a month.

"But they let me make my own decisions and I think they are happy I learnt so much about social enterprises in such a short time."

Her former boss, Mr Chia, says: "The internship may be unpaid, but it is still a good opportunity to learn and meet like-minded people. I'm glad Qian Ying explored an issue close to her heart, gained skills which can help her in the future and had fun at the same time."