



Miss Grace Fong (foreground) training at Bukit Timah Hill for the Mental Muscle expedition to climb 10 of the highest volcanoes in Indonesia.
TNP PHOTOS: ALVIN HO

“This may seem like a crazy challenge, but it is worth it.”

– Mr Ng Chong Zheng of Mental Muscle (right)



Mount Semeru in East Java, Indonesia, is one of the volcanoes that the undergraduates plan to scale.

Staying on top of mental health issue

7 undergrads climbing volcanoes to raise funds, awareness of mental health illnesses

RY-ANNELIM

Miss Grace Fong’s friends initially did not understand why she was going to climb 10 of Indonesia’s highest volcanoes.

The 22-year-old is one of seven undergraduates who will be undertaking a 10 Peaks Challenge next month to raise funds and public awareness on mental health illnesses.

“I was inspired to do this since I saw my Mental Muscle seniors do the same two years ago,” she told *The New Paper*.

Mental Muscle is a self-initiated project by undergraduates from the National University of Singapore (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

Previous expeditions saw students race 250km through the Namib desert in South Africa and trek 200km in Nepal’s Kathmandu Rim.

This year’s expedition is in partnership with Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH).

The current Mental Muscle team will scale 10 of the highest volcanoes in Indonesia back to back – including active volcanoes such as Mount Semeru – with a total elevation of over 30,000m.

The challenge will last from May 27 to June 1.

Teammate Ng Chong Zheng, 22, said: “As medical students, we have the privilege to meet individuals who may open up about their struggles with mental health conditions.

“My experience has revealed the gaps in our community’s understanding of mental illnesses as well as the reality of those who face mental health conditions. This may seem like a crazy challenge, but it is worth it.”

TRAINING

To train for the upcoming expedition, the team meets every Saturday morning at Toa Payoh or Bukit Timah Hill to simulate what would happen during their climb.

In their free time, they exercise on their own, doing different sports, from swimming to bouldering.

The team has also planned several local outreach programmes, such as workshops with other medical professionals and students, and speaking at secondary schools and junior colleges about the expedition.

Through these activities, they hope to raise \$25,000 for SAMH’s youth mental wellness programme, Creative Say!

The programme uses sports and arts to promote general well-being and mental resilience.

Donations to the team can be made at give.asia.

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