

## Results of the green challenge

We recorded the New family's waste output\* in the week of the eco-friendly living challenge and compared it with their waste output before the challenge to see how they fared.

### TRASH (black trash bags)

**5 bags**

2 recyclable and 3 non-recyclable

• Average 0.29 bag recyclable and 0.43 bag non-recyclable a day

• **Total reduction:** 4 bags, 2 recyclable and 2 non-recyclable, average 0.28 bag recyclable and 0.28 bag non-recyclable a day



### FOOD (bowl of cereal with spoon)

**1.9kg** food waste

• Average 271.4g a day

• **Total reduction:** 1.2kg food waste, average 171.4g a day

### SHOWER TIME

**196.75min**

of showers

• Average 5.32min per shower

• **Total increase:** 6min of showers, 0.17min per shower



Norman New, 40, lecturer

Shania, 9

Nathan, 11

Shavon, 9

Lim Li, 40, adjunct lecturer

NOTE: \*Due to complications in data collection, the family's energy output was not included in our comparison

ST PHOTOS: KEVIN LIM  
STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

### DID THE CHALLENGE PAY OFF?

**I do feel the challenge paid off. We applied ourselves and were happy to see that it didn't really take that much effort to make these positive changes. Being more conscious and mindful, I hope we can turn these mindsets into habits.**



MS LIM LI

### WHAT HABITS WILL YOU INCORPORATE INTO YOUR LIVES?

**I will continue doing what I did during the challenge: turning off the tap when soaping/shampooing, using bar soap, a bamboo toothbrush, bamboo toilet paper and handkerchief, and also reusable cutlery and a straw.**



NATHAN

**We will continue using bamboo toothbrushes, bamboo toilet paper and handkerchiefs, as well as reusable cutlery and straws.**



SHANIA AND SHAVON

# Youth join fight against climate change

In his National Day Rally speech, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong called for more youth to be problem solvers, innovators, scientists, engineers and entrepreneurs in the battle against climate change. **Timothy Goh** and **Jeanell Kiew** speak to four young people making a difference here.

Ms Angela Ferguson, a facilitator and host for local non-profit organisation Climate Conversations, has facilitated eight discussion sessions on climate change. PHOTO: ANGELA FERGUSON



## Tackling the issue, one conversation at a time

One humid Saturday afternoon, five young people gathered around a coffee table in a Housing Board flat to talk about the weather.

More specifically, they talked about how hot it was getting lately – and if there was anything they could do about it.

The gathering was led by Ms Angela Ferguson, a 22-year-old research analyst who is also a facilitator and host for local non-profit organisation Climate Conversations.

Founded in late 2017, the group believes the first step to combating climate change is to ensure people are open to discussing, engaging and reflecting on the issue.

It does this through a network of hosts who invite others to gatherings, where volunteer facilitators guide conversations on how climate change affects the things they care about and what practical steps they can take to fight back.

In order to facilitate deeper discussions, session sizes are capped at 12 people, but the hope is that some of the participants will be inspired to become facilitators and hosts themselves.

Over 800 people have attended these sessions and 32 of them have volunteered to be facilitators. They include Ms Ferguson, who has facilitated eight sessions so far.

Her young age and full-time job have not stopped her from training others. "A lot of people care about climate change, but may feel overwhelmed by the topic and, as a re-

sult, do not talk about it. But it's tough to take action about something if we don't discuss it," she said.

During the two-hour session at her home, participants reflected on their attitudes towards climate change and watched videos on the topic. They also discussed the things that mattered to them, how climate change affects these things, and what they could do about it.

Not everyone at the session was optimistic, with some questioning whether they could do anything to turn the tide. But others felt motivated by the discussion. Student Alysha Park, 22, said: "Before, I felt very resistant to fighting climate change because I felt there was social pressure to do so... but now I understand the situation better and feel the need to take action."

According to Ms Ferguson, the mixed response is fine, so long as a "critical mass" of individuals band together to take action.

She hopes to focus on reaching out to people who are curious about the situation, do not know how they can tackle climate change, or want to know more about the issue. "We don't need everyone to be on board because we know that if society moves on, the rest have to follow eventually," she said.

When asked if she felt it was too late to make a difference, she said: "I don't want to go down without a fight. Maybe society won't get it act together in time, but I hope it won't be for lack of trying."

Project bECOME founder Coco Oan (at left in picture) and member Ang Li Shan became vegetarians in 2017 in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint. ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO



## Spreading zero-waste habits from ground up

Ms Coco Oan, 21, is the founder of Project bECOME, a youth-run environmental organisation that works to promote environmental sustainability around Singapore.

In March, the group collected about 3,000 plastic containers from the public, redistributing them to bakeries for reuse.

And last month, it got 25 bakeries to commit to schemes that encourage customers to purchase bread without bags for the month. Three of the bakeries have implemented the scheme permanently.

"Many people are intimidated by the idea of going zero-waste, but every small habit counts and we want to show people that," said Ms Oan, a second-year student at Yale-NUS College.

Started in 2016 as Ms Oan's solo project while in junior college, Project bECOME now has 13 mem-

bers, aged 17 to 31.

Most of the members are students, but the lack of industry connections has not stopped them from getting bakeries like Auntie Anne's on board.

The group spent eight weekends visiting bakeries around Singapore, asking them to join the campaign, said Ms Ang Li Shan, 19, who joined Project bECOME in April this year.

"I wanted to go beyond individual action and involve others in making a change," said Ms Ang, a first-year business student at the National University of Singapore.

The members walk the talk: Both Ms Oan and Ms Ang became vegetarians in 2017, in a bid to reduce their carbon footprint. Many resources used to feed livestock could be channelled directly to humans, explained Ms Oan.

Besides using reusable bags and containers, Ms Oan has swapped tissue paper with handkerchiefs. She does not buy new clothes either, but opts for second-hand pieces instead.

"We need to lead our lives in a way that cares for the environment, because climate change will definitely affect future generations," she said.

She plans to continue running the group throughout her studies. "The dream would be that Singapore achieves zero waste, and then there would be no need for Project bECOME anymore," she said.

### COLLECTIVE ACTION

**I wanted to go beyond individual action and involve others in making a change.**



MS ANG LI SHAN is a first-year business student at the National University of Singapore.

Mr Jonathan How is founder of Singapore Freebies by Sharetings, a Telegram channel that aims to reduce waste by helping users find new homes for their unwanted items. ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN



## Tapping social media to 'rehome' unwanted items

During his national service, Mr Jonathan How noticed many of his platoon mates who were about to complete their basic military training throwing away new, usable hangers they had bought for their time there.

After his time in NS, he saw people in university and those living in his Housing Board block throwing away perfectly usable books, board games and sporting equipment.

Mr How, now a 23-year-old business student at Nanyang Technological University, decided to try to reduce waste here.

In September last year, he created a channel on messaging app Telegram to help people find new homes for unwanted items.

Called Singapore Freebies by Sharetings, the group now has more than 3,000 subscribers.

Users who join the group are greeted by a pinned message explaining the rules – including the instruction that all items are to be given away for free, not sold.

Those who wish to donate their items can easily do so through a bot, while potential recipients can contact donors via the platform.

Mr How said he initially struggled with publicising the group as he lacked experience, but an internship with the Singapore National Co-operative Federation, where he is a scholarship holder, equipped him with the tools he needed to do so.

To date, more than 8,200 items

– including clothes, furniture, accessories, toys, textbooks and vouchers – have been listed in the group. Around 70 per cent have been taken by users.

"I believe that in Singapore, everyone has something they don't want. People always have things they can't sell or throw away," Mr How said, adding that by reducing waste, he aims to help people in need and the environment at the same time.

As the group's moderator, he trawls through around 50 to 60 posts daily and handles reports and complaints from users.

As if juggling both the group and his studies were not enough, he is now developing an app to replace the current Telegram group.

Due to be completed next year, the app will function as a peer-to-peer marketplace for giving things away.

People will be able to chat with one another and list items. When they put things up for donation, they can receive reward points and get reviews.

Mr How aims to get corporate partners on board to sponsor vouchers, which the reward points can be traded for.

He hopes that the app will help incentivise giving in Singapore.

"I think everyone can do their part to save the environment. Once you have a culture of giving and sharing, people will follow suit," he said.