To start of 2012 with a bang, we celebrated the New Years on a balmy evening at the The Terrace @ Suntec Guild House. We enjoyed a lovely al fresco dining experience of freshly prepared BBQ buffet, great salad bar and free flow of juice! It was a great time of catching up, gossiping and just plain fun! Just see the pictures and you would agree! So don’t miss out on our next event!

More photos on the next page!
1) Why did you choose LANL and how did you go about applying for the fellowship?
About one and a half years ago I got the chance (recommended by my advisor Baowen Li) to work in LANL as a visitor. I have stayed there for six months, during which I came to realize the reasons why LANL is one of the best modern science laboratories. Sagacious people with diligence, intense brainstorming with sparkle ideas, delicate facilities and cutting-edge research activities, fair and soft natural environment----this is right the ideal and dream place for scientists. LANL is renowned as the birthplace of atomic bombs. Therefore, waiting period for the final notification of my offer was so long, as there are endless security investigations by LANL before the hire. However the waiting is worth.

2) What kind of project will you be working on?
It is a fortunate that my project in LANL is theoretical so that it is not classified. I presently work on the non-equilibrium quantum transport of thermoelectricity. This project concerns about the energy conversion between electricity and thermal energy, which is promising to provide an alternative efficient way to harvest the solar energy or “wasted” heat, in order to meet the demand of sustainable energy.

3) What do you hope to achieve in the course of this fellowship?
It is too early to say any. Science is exploring unknown. It is the unknown that makes the exploration exciting. If you expect too much, then the interesting things may become boring.

4) What are your long-term plans?
It is the first stop in my pilgrimage after graduated from NUS as a PHD. Here I have meet many scientists from different fields and cultures. Interacting with them is a special life experience, which certainly opens my mind and enriches the
creativity in my focused topic. I like the status of learning and creating. So learning and creating is the definite long-term plan for me. I have spent more than 4 years in NUS and Singapore is just like my second hometown. When I am able to build some establishments, I may find a faculty position, probably back to my motherland or Singapore hopefully.

5) Any stories or feeling you want to share about your life in LANL?
Los Alamos National Laboratory is located on New Mexico State which many Hispanics reside in. Hence here is full of “hot Mexican flavor”—houses are adobe made, food is spicy, drink is strong, clothes are vivid, people are enthusiastic. My wife and I spent one cheerful night in one Mexican restaurant the second weekend after we arrived, with their warmhearted people, and especially Margarita. It is a tequila-based lime-flavored cocktail flavored with a pinch of salt, which should never be forgotten when having fun there. “Los Alamos” are Spanish words with the mean of “the cottonwoods”, which you can find anywhere in the canyons and both sides of roads. You can see gentle deer or elk now and then, as well as “lovely” coyotes. It is Gebi climate there, so the sky is always spaccioulsy blue and sunshine is intensely bright. Your mind gets broader when you immerse in this peaceful environment. You’ll like to get close to nature, biking, hiking, rafting---- and also, think about nature. I believe Los Alamos is an incredible place for scientific research and I like here.

6) Anything you want to say about NGS?
Without the strongest support of NGS, I would not be able to explore the integrative interdisciplinary sciences, have the lucky chance to visit many renowned institutes and labs, and have achievements ranging from PLoS Genetics to Physical Review Letters. It is my honor to be a NGS PhD student and I am more thankful than I can express. Wish NGS and its students more great achievements and a more promising future.
Perhaps it was the carpets that did it. Or rather, being schooled, as a child, by a carpet-collector father on the intricate knots making up the woven fabric underfoot in many homes. Or perhaps it was day-long art lessons from a young age. Or piano lessons.

Whatever it was, it has made Dr Clara Cheong, 31, who she is now.

By day, she is a senior research fellow at the Singapore Institute for Clinical Sciences, investigating how the foetal environment can affect the chances of one getting a metabolic disease such as diabetes.

By night, she plays the erhu, saxophone and the keyboard, paints cheery animal figures to fill the room of her four-month-old son, and swoons over exquisite print from old-school letter presses.

She is rapt with the living world, with the beauty and purpose of interwoven tissues in the bodies of animals and humans. So much so that she volunteered as a docent at the zoo for a year.

“I wanted to express that to visitors, to have them say something more than ‘Oh look, so cute, a tiger with stripes!’” she says.

Sound and music fascinate her, because something so technical can also drive “innate human emotion”. In Raffles Girls’ School, she joined the symphonic band. She chose the saxophone because “it was the shiniest instrument there”, but revelled more in the fact that “you are one voice, but when you are melded together, it’s beautiful to hear, more than a sum of its parts”.

It was a love affair that continued well into adulthood. She played for the Singapore Wind Symphony about seven years ago while pursuing her doctorate at the National University of Singapore under a scholarship from the Agency for Science, Technology and Research.

As an undergraduate at Cornell University, she also pursued a whole range of courses, including sociology, art history, basic German and Japanese. The different fields of study, she explains, allowed her to “understand why people choose to believe what they believe and understand what they understand”.

The clear, methodical structure of the German language, for example, was a mirror of German society, and likewise for Japanese, which is steeped in its linguistic hierarchy.

Now a first-time mother and married to a business development manager, she does not have much time to pursue her interests.

But she clings on to the belief that everybody needs to behold beauty in all its forms. It is something she wants her son to grow up doing, rather than be hardened by the pragmatic, utilitarian outlook commonly associated with Singapore.

“I want him to see a world that isn’t marked by materialism”, she says, but rather a sense of community, as well as have a deep appreciation of life around him.
1. How did you find out/apply/get this job?

One friend of mine working at google referred me to the job position. Google has a saying about recruitment: "Great people know great people". I think it is always great to have many friends, especially when it comes to finding a job.

2. How different is it from NUS and Singapore?

The bay area here is the high-tech hub of the world. There are many legends of high-tech success happening right here, Facebook, Apple, LinkedIn, Zynga, and many others. It is rewarding to see this new world.

3. Can you share what a typical day at work is like for you?

It is fun working here, especially when you think what you work on will impact billions of people. Plus, working with really smart people just makes the job more interesting. Food is an essential ingredient of Google culture, free breakfast, lunch, dinner, snacks, fruit, and drinks .... A typical day of my work usually starts with the breakfast and fresh juice at the cafe downstairs my office.
4. What do you do at Mountain view other than work?

The San Francisco Bay area has very attractive climate and scenery. If you want snow skiing, you can drive to Lake Tahoe. If you prefer sun-shower in the beach, drive half an hour and you will have the Half Moon Bay, 17 Miles. If urban life is your style, San Francisco is right in the vicinity. Owning a car here is much more affordable. I have enjoyed so much driving my new SUV.

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Announcements!

**Upcoming event!**

**NGS Alumni Dinner 2012**

13 July 2012
5.30pm
Venue: TBA

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