

# Discovering what makes youths tick

PH scholar Eisen Teo loves everything about his job in journalism

andi Aggarwal

THINKING up new story ideas about youth, finding out what youths love or hate and bringing stories of interesting people to readers give Singapore Press Holdings' journalist Eisen Teo an adrenaline rush.

The 26-year-old pursued a Bachelor in Arts and Social Sciences at the National University of Singapore on a Singapore Press Holdings (SPH) scholarship, graduating in 2009 with first class honours.

The scholarship covered all his tuition fees and also gave him an annual allowance of about \$6,000 when he was in university. The figure was raised to about \$7,000

midway through his studies.

He says he is lucky to have picked the right scholarship, which led to his interesting job.

It is also challenging, and what keeps him going, he says, is "seeing my byline in print, and knowing that I have communicated the lives and stories of others to tens of thousands of readers".

Mr Teo is two years into his four-year bond with SPH, and works for the Straits Times Schools (ST Schools) programme.

"My boss and immediate supervisor is Ms Serene Goh. Under her, there are currently five full-time staff (including me) and an intern, so it's a small team.

"We produce two newspapers for students, which go together with The Straits Times on Mondays and Tuesdays to subscribing schools. The secondary school newspaper is called IN and the primary school newspaper, Little Red Dot.



“Ours is a small team, so communication is not a problem, and there’s no office politics whatsoever. There’s always time for work and time for play.”

— Mr Eisen Teo

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"We also manage YouthInk, a page in the Saturday edition of The Straits Times, which features youth trends and issues and publishes freelance contributions from young people."

His official working hours are from 9.30am to 6.30pm, but he finishes work between 6.30pm and 11pm, depending on the workload.

"I am not deskbound. I spend many hours outside pounding the streets looking for stories and pursuing stories for IN, Little Red Dot and YouthInk. I speak to young people, get to know them better and build up valuable contacts.

"I may even go undercover and observe young people in action. Be it schools or skate parks or malls, where there are lots of young people doing the things they love (and hate), I'll be there," he says.

The working environment, colleagues and culture in SPH are

great, says Mr Teo.

"Ours is a small team, so communication is not a problem, and there's no office politics whatsoever. There's always time for work and time for play."

The company management encourages personal growth and career development.

"I personally do not have any problem working for SPH but they frequently assure us that we can go to them whenever we run into problems. When ranking and banding comes every year, we are also told we can request a change of desk if we wish, and they will try their best to accede to our requests.

"Their doors are always open and they are always ready to hear us out."

The key qualities necessary to excel in his work, Mr Teo says, is having "a keen listening ear, being *kaypoh* and curious by nature".