A Tribute To Our Foreign Domestic Workers

1,600 FDWs came together on 2 December 2012 to celebrate the 3rd Foreign Domestic Workers’ (FDW) Day at the Singapore Polytechnic Convention Centre.

Organised by the Foreign Domestic Workers Association for Skills Training (FAST), in collaboration with the Association of Employment Agencies Singapore [AEA(S)], the event paid tribute to FDWs for their contributions to families in Singapore. Guest-of-Honour, Mr Hawazi Daipi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Manpower and Education, said,

Many exciting activities were lined up, including ethnic dances, songs and skits presented by talented FDWs and exhibitions by welfare and voluntary organisations. The event highlight was an impromptu Gangnam-style dance by FDWs from various countries!

Some FDWs invited their employers. Among them was 50-year old Mdm Lee, who said, “I wanted to join in the fun. I think this is a very good initiative by the organisers.”

Another highlight was the ‘Foreign Domestic Worker of the Year’ and ‘Foreign Domestic Worker Employer of the Year’ Awards. Mr Seah Seng Choon, President of FAST, noted that during the home visits conducted by judges from FAST and AEA(S), they were impressed and touched by the genuine concern shown and harmonious relationships between FDWs and their employers. See what the award winners had to say on Page 2.

To all FDWs in Singapore, thank you for your valuable contributions to the families here. We hope you will continue to build strong and enduring bonds with your employers.

“Those of you who are employers of domestic helpers will agree with me that they play an important role in the lives of our households... in many ways, they are not only helpers, but also members of our extended families.”
‘FDW of the Year’ and ‘Employer of the Year’ Awards – Building a Harmonious Employer-FDW Relationship

Mdm Johns (with her FDW Ms Kamalamma Anithakumari), Employer of the Year 2012

Ms Faustina Mey-ang Basali, Foreign Domestic Worker of the Year 2012

‘FDW of the Year’ Award winner, Ms Faustina Mey-ang Basali, was pleasantly surprised with her win. Having stayed with her employer for the past 29 years, she has witnessed how her employer’s children matured into adulthood and is touched to be treated as a member of the family. She said, “My employer and I are about the same age, so we think alike. Also, we trust each other after being together for so many years. We are like family already.”

‘Employer of the Year’ Award winner, Mdm Sheila Johns, was nominated by her FDW, Ms Kamalamma Anithakumari. Employed by Mdm Johns in 2007, Ms Anithakumari developed such a close bond with her employer that Mdm Johns accompanied Ms Anithakumari on three trips home to India to help her settle various personal matters. Ms Anithakumari said, “Mdm Johns treats me very well. My diabetic aunt needed a fridge to keep her insulin jabs but had no money, so Mdm Johns bought one for her. She also pays for my computer and English courses.”

Mandatory Weekly Rest Day – DOES IT APPLY TO YOU?

‘Only If Your Work Permit is Issued or Renewed from 1 January 2013’

• This new requirement is applicable to you only if your work permit is issued or renewed from 1 January 2013.

• You and your employer can mutually agree on which day of the week your rest day should fall on. It does not have to be on a Sunday.

• To allow you to have regular mental and emotional breaks from your domestic duties, replacement rest days must be taken within the calendar month. If you have agreed to work on your rest days, your employer must pay you at least one day’s wage for each rest day you forgo.

• You are only allowed to perform domestic chores for your employer at the residential address stated in your work permit. It is an offence to illegally work for someone other than your employer, regardless of whether the work is done on your rest day or not.

Illustrations are reproduced from FDW Weekly Rest Day: A Guide for Employers.
SCHEDULE OF SUBSIDISED COURSES

**COOKING CLASS FOR FOREIGN DOMESTIC WORKERS**

FDWs will learn a series of culinary skills in this workshop to better prepare them in their work.

Please register directly with the CC prior to the course date (limit to 20-25 participants per class on a first-come-first-served basis).

For online registration, please visit People’s Association’s website at [www.one.pa.gov.sg](http://www.one.pa.gov.sg).

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<tr>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>COURSE DURATION</th>
<th>COURSE FEE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bukit Timah CC</td>
<td>1 session (1st Sunday of the month)</td>
<td>$5</td>
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<tr>
<td>20 Toh Yi Drive S(596569)</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td>10:00am — 1:00 pm</td>
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<td>Tel: 64662912</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geylang Serai CC</td>
<td>1 session (2nd Sunday of the month)</td>
<td>$5 / $7</td>
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<tr>
<td>99 Haig Road, S(438748)</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
<td>9:30am — 12:30 pm</td>
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<td>Tel: 67472919</td>
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<td>(for PAssion /Non PAssion card member)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kampung Ubi CC</td>
<td>1 session (3rd Sunday of the month)</td>
<td>$5</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 Jalan Ubi, S(409075)</td>
<td>3 hrs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tel: 67423564</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geylang Serai CC</td>
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<td>$5 / $7</td>
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<td>99 Haig Road, S(438748)</td>
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**ENGLISH LANGUAGE COURSE**

FDWs who wish to brush up on their day-to-day conversation with their English-speaking employers can register for this course.

Please call to register directly with the training provider.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SSA Consulting Group Pte Ltd</td>
<td>Module 1 — 4</td>
<td>$7.75 per module</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Jalan Masjid #01-04</td>
<td>4 sessions per module on Sundays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kembangan Court S(418924)</td>
<td>4 hrs per session (Total: 16 hrs per module)</td>
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<td>Tel: 68422282</td>
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**WORKING PART-TIME ON REST DAYS IS AGAINST THE LAW**

Many of you may be tempted to moonlight on your rest day, i.e. take up another job to earn extra money. However, please remember that working part-time on your rest day is a violation of the Work Permit conditions and you can be fined and even jailed.

This was the case for Filipino FDW Mary Grace Sobrejuanite Daclangin. Mary was given a day off every Sunday by her official employer. However, instead of resting on her rest days, Mary decided to earn more money by cleaning the flat of a Chinese man for a fee. Mary was eventually fined S$3,000 for performing work for persons who were not her employer between November 2009 and April 2012. She was sent home after that.

As a FDW in Singapore, you can only work for your employer and at the address stated in your work permit card. Working for other employers is wrong, even if it is on your rest day. If you engage in such activities, you will be caught, and will not be allowed to work in Singapore.

As a FDW, you are bound by the work permit conditions below:

- You can only work for the employer and address stated in your work permit card.
- You must not work at your employer’s business or other houses, or work in another job (full-time or part-time), for example, waitress, sales assistant, etc.
- You must not set up your own business, for example, sew clothes to sell, sell handicrafts, etc.
- If your employer asks you to do something illegal or illegally deploy you, you must firmly say “No”. If in doubt, call your employment agency or MOM at 1800 339 5505.
Indonesian FDW Ika Sugiyanti wrote to INFORM last December to express her gratitude towards her employer, Mdm Lim Lan Eng. The INFORM team decided to pay Ika a visit to have a chat with her. Ika was all smiles when we met her at her employer’s residence. We found out what makes a happy FDW like Ika.

Q. What made you write to INFORM?
A. I feel very happy working for Mdm Lim and her family. Although I have been here only for 8 months, I don’t feel homesick at all! Ma’am and her family do not see me as a domestic helper. I share my problems with Ma’am. I eat at the same table as them. We are like one big happy family!

Q. What do you like most about working for Mdm Lim?
A. Ma’am is very understanding. Whenever I’m busy doing a chore, she will work alongside me so that I can manage better. Ma’am knows I miss my daughter so she printed my daughter’s photographs so I can see her every day. Sir often asks me if I want to call home to chat with my family too. I joke with Ma’am’s family a lot, so there is never a dull moment.

Q. How did you adjust to working in Singapore?
A. This is my second time in Singapore so I don’t find it difficult to adjust to living and working here. I am used to working in homes in high-rise buildings too. Though I talk to Ma’am and her family in basic English, Madam also teaches me some simple Chinese phrases.

Q. What advice would you give to other FDWs who are finding it hard to adjust to work in another country?
A. Be happy! This is very important. Even if your workload is heavy, if you keep a happy mind, you will feel light at heart. This is what keeps me going.

A GRATEFUL NOTE

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A huge Thank You to all who sent us your inspiring letters! The INFORM team is always happy to hear from you. Let’s take a look at what some of our readers have to say...

We welcome you to continue writing in to us to share your experience or what you wish to see featured in future issues of INFORM. Send your letters to: Media, Promotions & Education Branch, Foreign Manpower Management Division, Ministry of Manpower, Services Centre, 1500 Bendemeer Road #02-01, Singapore 339946.

The INFORM team will select the 10 best contributors to win an exclusive gift pack!