

**Singapore Youth Award 2017**

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## Making a positive impact

SYA 2017 Finalist Ng Lin Zhi Shayna



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Eight finalists are in the running for the Singapore Youth Award that honours young people who exemplify the values of resilience, courage, leadership, and willingness to serve.

Belinda Wan

Bowling was not Shayna Ng's first love. Singapore's world champion bowler picked up the sport only when she was in Secondary 2 at CHIJ Toa Payoh. In primary school, she was a netball player.

Her introduction to bowling came at Orchid Country Club in 2004, where, bored of being a spectator at her parents' bowling sessions, she became a participant. Despite being a novice, her impressive skills caught the attention of her schoolmates, who were there as well.

An invitation to participate in the national inter-school bowling C-division competition followed, and she came second despite having no formal training. After that, she joined the school's bowling team, then the youth squad, and eventually the national team.

Over the next 13 years, Ms Ng, 27, improved her game and chalked up impressive accomplishments.



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In 2011, she broke the 6 Game series world record at the World Women's Championship, racking up a total of 1,601 points over six games, which works out to an average of 266 points per game. Nobody has so far managed to better her performance.

Ms Ng went on to clinch the World Women's Championship title in 2012, and her first world title in 2013. She picked up a gold medal at the All Events Title at the World Championship in 2015, and also won the Women's Open at the China One event in Shanghai last October.

And this year, she has again been nominated for the Singapore Youth Award — for the third time.

#### OVERCOMING SETBACKS



PHOTO: CHEAH CHENG POH/SPORT SINGAPORE

Despite her many accomplishments, Ms Ng's sporting journey was not without setbacks.

She recalls taking her quick success for granted, in particular, progressing from the national youth team in 2003 to the national team in 2006.

It was a steep climb, as she did not do as well in the international championships as her coaches had expected, and was demoted to the youth squad.

It was a setback that many people didn't believe she could overcome, even doubting whether she could regain her place in the national team. Determined to prove the naysayers wrong, she worked hard, focusing solely on improving her game for two tough years.

Her efforts paid off when she finally earned her place back on the national team in 2009.

After an exhilarating run, the high point of which was the world title, she spiralled downward from her winner's high to a low point with zero motivation.

She says: "The pressure of the public's expectations also got to me. Having won once, everyone expected me to win again, which isn't how it works.

"Eventually, this affected my performance. Every time I wanted to do well, I found myself wondering what the public would think of me if I couldn't strike."

It took three years for her to learn how to deal with the pressure. "I realised I only needed to answer to myself. This made me feel less stressed," she says.

Once she had sorted this out, she recovered her form, winning her second world title in 2015.

#### GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Her success in the bowling arena aside, Ms Ng has always felt compelled to go the extra mile outside her sport too, and do something meaningful.

She began with shaving her head for the [Children's Cancer Foundation](#) during its Hair For Hope campaign, raising about \$20,000 for the foundation after she won her first world title.

Some fellow athletes joined her new cause, and they started Invisible Hands to scout for sponsorships to buy, pack and deliver daily necessities to underprivileged families.

"We call ourselves Invisible Hands because if no one is in, we just hang the bag of supplies at the door. The response was overwhelming the last time we did it, and we hope to do it again soon," she says.

Ms Ng also set up the one-stop portal SportSanity with a fellow bowler. The site aims to make sports more accessible so more people can be encouraged to play a sport.

In addition, she gives talks at primary and secondary schools, in the hope that sharing her



banishes insecurity



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journey will inspire youth.

Her advice is simple. She tells them: "Never be afraid of making mistakes and have the courage to take risks. If I play it safe all the time, I will remain in my comfort zone and not be able to make any breakthroughs."

Ms Ng feels youth today are rather protected as their parents often make decisions for them.

"Without making enough wrong decisions, they may not know how to make the right decisions," she says.

#### LOOKING AHEAD



PHOTO: SPORT SINGAPORE

When she feels her motivation slipping, Ms Ng reminds herself why she loves bowling.

She says: "I discovered bowling by chance, but over time, my passion for it grew.

"I love the sound the bowling ball makes when it hits the bowling pins. It gives me an adrenaline rush and makes me want to strike the pins again and again. The passion I have for bowling keeps me going."

Her path to personal success may be uneven, but she is proud that she has learnt the true value of resilience in the process.

She says: "My setbacks have made me a stronger and more motivated person. Without them, I would not have experienced or learnt the importance of resilience, nor would I have been able to deal with the obstacles the way I do now.

For Ms Ng, obstacles are challenges and determination is the tool she uses to overcome them.

#### TO GREATER HEIGHTS: MS JANE LEE

The Singapore Youth Award (SYA) is the nation's highest accolade for youth. It is conferred annually on youths who have excelled in their fields of pursuit and brought distinction to the nation. Like Shayna, past SYA recipient Ms Jane Lee is another athlete who has literally scaled unprecedented heights.

Holding a Master's degree from Yale, and having worked as an associate in a leading business consultancy, Jane's journey of success takes her beyond traditional excellence in work and academics. She was the first Southeast-Asian female to successfully climb "The Seven Summits" – the tallest peaks on each of the seven continents – and was one of the first Singaporean females to ski across Greenland. Having conquered Mount Everest in 2009, Jane is currently training to climb the world's second tallest mountain, K2.

Despite her busy schedule, Jane makes it a point to regularly attend various forums in order to interact with youth, and share her experiences with them. She also visits schools and corporations to spread her message of "Climbing Your Own Everest", analogising her real-life experience of scaling mountains to surmounting everyday obstacles through courage and determination.

Jane is a strong proponent of women breaking out of societal norms and gender stereotypes in order to achieve their fullest potential. She is also a strong advocate of holistic education for youth and is passionate about the need to introduce alternative ways of learning beyond the classroom.

Jane's commitment and dedication has inspired many youth, including her own teammates, to stretch themselves to the maximum in the quest for success. In collaboration with her Everest Team, she intends to set up a fund from the sale of their book and public talks to help aspiring young mountaineers achieve their dreams.

For her achievements in mountaineering and her contributions to society, Ms Lee Zhenzhen Jane was conferred the Singapore Youth Award in 2014.

Correction note: The article introduction has been edited for clarity.

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