

3 friends raise more than \$44,000 for cancer research

They organise relay run in China, with proceeds going to NCIS Cancer Fund

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A catch-up dinner planted a seed in the minds of three friends – Timothy Foo, Jansen Jing and Ryan Tay, all aged 20 – and it grew into a challenge to raise funds for cancer research.

That was when the trio, who have been friends since their time studying at the Shanghai High School International Division after their parents were posted to the Chinese city for work, decided to organise a relay run to raise funds in the place where they met and formed a close bond.

“It is very heartbreaking to see (cancer patients and their families suffering), and we want to help. Yet there was really not much that I could do, that we could do. That was when we came up with the idea to do a charity relay run,” Foo told *The Straits Times*.

Under the Relay of Hope campaign on Give.Asia, they managed to raise \$44,500, exceeding the \$20,000 target they had set.

All proceeds raised will go to the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS) Cancer Fund.

For the three youths, cancer was not just a statistic but something personal, present and deeply felt.

“We realised that cancer had touched all our families... I had a relative who lost his battle against cancer,” Foo said.

Tay’s grandfather died of lung cancer, while both his mother and aunt were diagnosed with breast cancer. Similarly, Jing said the big C is a “big part of my family dynamic”, with a family member battling the disease for over 10 years.

The youths decided to hold the run in China, kicking off the relay in Shanghai.

“We have known each other for more than 10 years and this run has become a way of coming full circle, ending at the school in Shanghai where we first met. From that conversation at dinner, the idea turned into a challenge: 630km over 10 days, running 21km each day without any breaks.

“We agreed that no shortcuts would be taken, just consistency, discipline and purpose,” said Jing.

He was the only one of the three with running experience. In 2023, he took part in an ultramarathon from Kyoto to Tokyo to raise funds, also for cancer research.

The three trained relentlessly for six months before setting off on May 24 for the relay, which took them across 10 cities until they completed their journey on June 2.

“It was raining non-stop on the first day and after every leg, we had to change shirts and replenish our water. There were days when we were running in 34 deg C under the hot sun... We had to stop every 2km to 3km just to catch our breath or cool down,” Tay said.

To ensure they were safe, Foo’s mother, Serene Siar, followed them in a safety car.

“We knew we wanted to act, to find a way to do our part, however small, to help in any way we could,” Foo said.

Tay said: “Actually, my mum had a rare form of breast cancer. We got to see the effects of cancer research in real-time advancements... (the) new treatments that helped her while she was battling cancer was extra significant to me.”

Cancer is the leading cause of death in Singapore, accounting for about a quarter of all deaths. According to the Singapore Cancer Society, about one in four Singapore residents will develop cancer in their lifetime, with an average of 50 people diagnosed and 17 people dying from the disease every day.

The three men had lost touch with each other after Jing returned to Singapore first, while the other two returned later to serve national service.

“We decided to get together one evening before life takes over again and we go our separate ways because of our studies,” Foo said.

He will study accounting and analytics at Singapore Management University, while both Jing and Tay will study biological sciences – Jing at Nanyang Technological University, and Tay at Uni-



(From left) Jansen Jing, Ryan Tay and Timothy Foo in Suzhou on the eighth day of the relay run. They kicked off their run in Shanghai on May 24, covering 630km over 10 days, and running 21km each day. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SERENE SIAR

versity of Sydney.

Executive director of NCIS Chee Cheng Ean said: “Seeing young people step forward to support the cancer community is especially meaningful. We are grateful for the boys’ remarkable effort and for helping to rally the community behind cancer patients and their families.

“Their effort demonstrates how

everyone can play a part in supporting those affected by cancer. Beyond raising funds, they are helping to raise awareness and encouraging others to come together in support of patients, their families and ongoing cancer research.

“Their willingness to take on such a demanding challenge is a reminder that meaningful contri-

butions can come from anyone who chooses to make a difference.”

The youths said each step they took represented strength, resilience and a commitment to something meaningful, and they are looking forward to take on other initiatives in future.

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