

Source: The Straits Times, Page C5
Date: 17 January 2021

JUGGLING BOOKS AND BUSINESS

With greater access to entrepreneurship programmes, as early as secondary school, it is no wonder that many Gen Zers – those born after 1995 – are keen to explore starting their own businesses. Isabel Kua reports

Making and selling jewellery for charity

When Covid-19 spread among migrant workers last year, Ms Sidney Chong organised a donation drive on Instagram to get her followers to give to Healthserve, a non-profit organisation for these workers.

Inspired by Ms Chong's efforts, Ms Gheslynn Gerard and Mr Bryan Ho, her schoolmates from Victoria Junior College, joined in.

In a day, the trio, all aged 20, raised \$550.

The encouraging response spurred them to take their efforts further, says Ms Chong, a computer science student at National University of Singapore (NUS).

The three friends started non-profit jewellery business nbwu (an abbreviation of "and be with you") during the circuit breaker.

Profits are donated to organisations such as the National Council of Social Service and Migrant Workers' Centre.

Even though they had no experience making jewellery, they decided to do it using resin as the material is simple to work with and affordable.

Ms Chong is in charge of finance and the IT aspects of the business; Mr Ho, who is doing his national service, focuses on public relations; and Ms Gerard, a medical student at NUS' Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine, designs and makes the jewellery.

"It was a week-long process of trial and error before we success-

fully made our first piece," recalls Ms Gerard.

Their first batch of jewellery in July last year – which consisted of 15 pairs of earrings – sold out on Instagram in an hour.

"The response took us by surprise. We were so touched by the support," says Ms Gerard.

The business has since gained more than 600 Instagram followers, released nine batches of jewellery – comprising four to 15 pieces each – and raised \$40 to \$190 for charity a batch.

Two other people – Ms Natalia Tan and Ms Vivian Chon, both 20 – have joined the team to help with marketing and making the jewellery.

They were recruited through the NUS Social Impact Catalyst club, a youth organisation focused on social entrepreneurship and innovation.

The team regularly posts infographics on nbwu's Instagram page (@nbwu.sg) to raise awareness of social issues such as the living conditions of migrant workers.

"We hope nbwu will not just be a business, but also a means through which people can be informed more about the causes they can support," says Ms Gerard.

Mr Ho says: "Though we started with no experience and expertise, that did not deter us from wanting to make a change. At nbwu, we believe even a small spark can cause a great fire."



Founders of nbwu – (above from left) Ms Sidney Chong, Ms Gheslynn Gerard and Mr Bryan Ho – with their handmade jewellery they sell to raise funds for charity organisations. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

We hope nbwu will not just be a business, but also a means through which people can be informed more about the causes they can support.



MS GHESLYNN GERARD on the non-profit jewellery business nbwu (an abbreviation of "and be with you") she co-founded with Ms Sidney Chong and Mr Bryan Ho