

The Alumni Magazine

# Contact

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"What do we live for, if not  
to make the world less  
difficult for each other?"

- George Eliot

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# About Contact

**Contact** is the medium for OUM graduates to stay connected to their alma mater. Published as a quarterly e-magazine, **Contact** tells the inspiring stories of those who have realised their dreams at OUM.



# IN THIS ISSUE

Film icon and humanitarian Audrey Hepburn once said, "As you grow older, you will discover that you have two hands: one for helping yourself, the other for helping others."

Such words have never been truer in these modern times, when much of the world continues to battle a pandemic that is still going strong nine months into the year. Unemployment is rising, debts are growing and scores of people are suffering from hardships and poverty, homelessness and lack of medical care.

There are those in need all around us, so the question at this juncture is: what can we do to help?

The seventh issue of **Contact** broaches this topic while also highlighting the stories of three alumni who have found their own ways to ease the burden of the vulnerable and disadvantaged. Lastly, we will share some simple tips on getting happy.

Enjoy reading!

LIVE & LEARN:

## Going Beyond the Call of Duty

By Izyan Diyana Merzuki  
(izyan\_diyana@oum.edu.my)



**Z**arinna Abu Zarin, 51, worked as a registered nurse at the Department of Otorhinolaryngology in Kuala Lumpur Hospital for nine years. Today, she is an entrepreneur who is also active in charity work.

"I have always been interested in helping poor people in my community. As a nurse, I was trained to always exhibit the three characteristics of tenderness, love and care, when treating patients. The career instilled good values in me," she says.

Zarinna graduated with the Bachelor of Islamic Studies degree in 2017 and is about to finish her master's degree in the same field.

With an undying spirit to help, Zarinna was involved in establishing PIOUS OUMNS in February this year. PIOUS OUMNS is a platform for learners and alumni to help the local community in Negeri Sembilan. As its president, Zarinna shoulders a big responsibility to ensure the club carries its objectives effectively.

"The club was established in the hope of spreading the knowledge we have learned at OUM to the community while simultaneously engaging in charity work," says Zarinna.





Zarina (second from left) distributing bubur lambuk and dates to healthcare workers at Klinik Kesihatan Senawang last Ramadan.

Though the club is still new, Zarinna and other club members have managed to lend a helping hand across the community particularly during the Movement Control Order (MCO).

The mother of five shares, "As we all know, many were affected by the pandemic, particularly those with small children. With the full support of club members, together with the Director and staff of Seremban Learning Centre, we collected thousands of Ringgit to disburse to more than 70 families struggling to afford basic needs during the period.

"In addition, we gave out copies of the Quran with translations. They were very grateful for the gifts and said they have been reading the holy Quran to their kids."

Since 2018, Zarinna has also opened free classes to those who wanted to learn reciting the Quran. But that is still not the end of her efforts. She says, "I have also volunteered as a mentor at one of the youth shelters in Kuala Lumpur that houses teen mothers."

This loving entrepreneur also likes reading and gardening. "I have more than 3,000 books at home and a very spacious and beautiful garden with a variety of flowers, fruits and vegetables. My family enjoys the produce from my garden, and I even sell them too."

Zarina hopes to keep the club active and continue helping struggling families. "I am very grateful to be given the opportunity to help the community. Not everyone is given the chance to do so. It is such a huge blessing from Allah."

PERSONALITY:

# MAKING HER MARK IN SABAH

By Izyan Diyana Merzuki ([izyan\\_diyana@oum.edu.my](mailto:izyan_diyana@oum.edu.my))

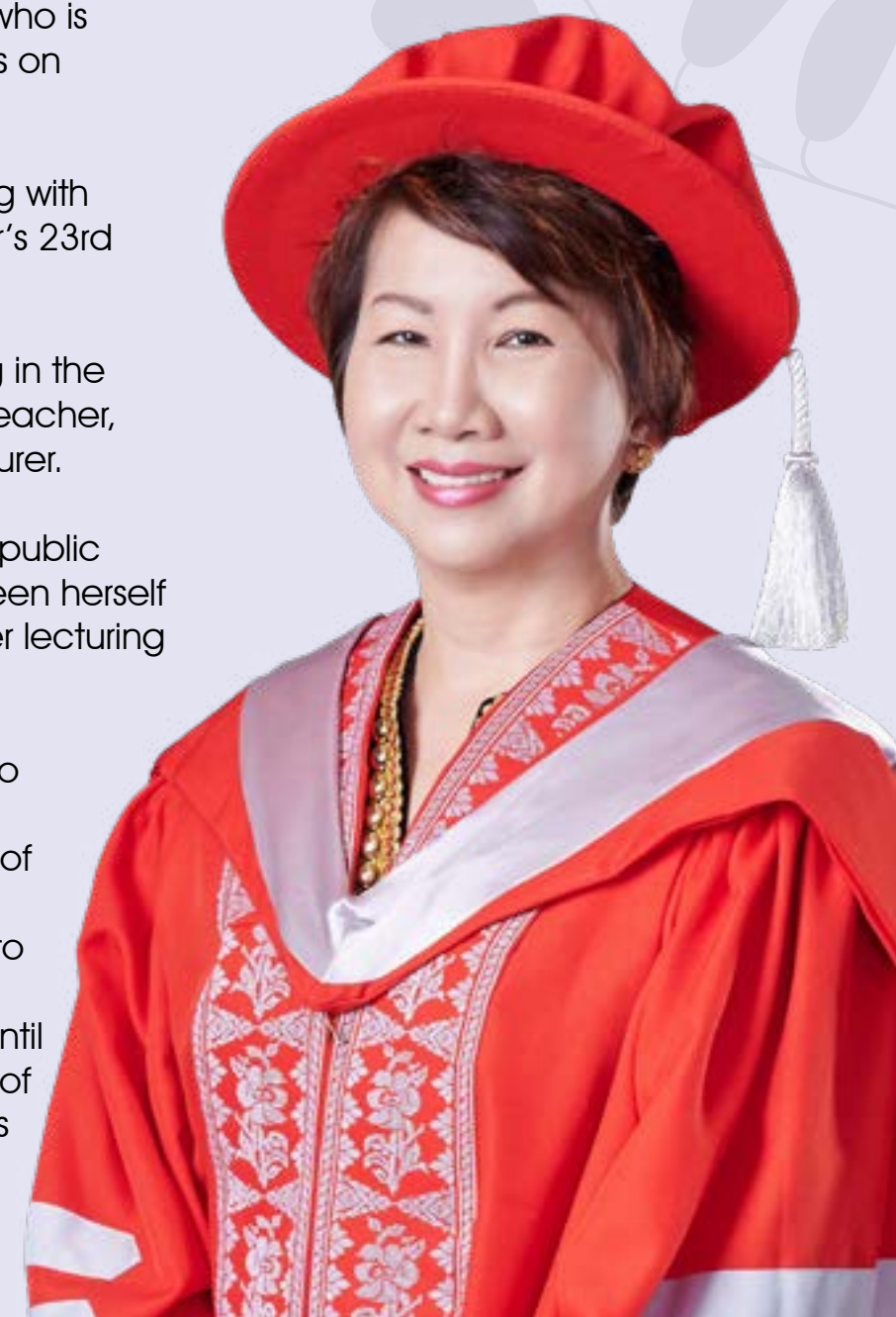
When asked to describe herself, Dr Rose Patsy Tibok says, "I am someone who is not afraid of hard work and thrives on challenges."

And she proved this by graduating with a Doctor of Education at last year's 23rd Convocation.

The 54-year-old has been working in the education sector since 1989 as teacher, teacher trainer and university lecturer.

Now teaching full-time at a local public university in Sabah, Dr Rose has seen herself adapting to the new normal in her lecturing duties.

"Our classes have fully migrated to online mode, both synchronously and asynchronously. It takes a lot of commitment and perseverance from both lecturers and students to make this work. The entire period from the beginning of the MCO until now has been a constant period of learning and relearning, as well as applying patience and empathy





when facilitating the learning process, especially for my students who are dispersed in all corners of Malaysia," she explains.

The suddenness of the pandemic made her conscious of how these difficult times have disrupted normal life, so during the MCO, Dr Rose took the opportunity to lend her local community a helping hand.

“

I am someone who is not afraid of hard work and thrives on challenges.

”

"I took part in food donation drives for communities at risk of displacement. I was only a very minor part of this chain of assistance but it brought me awareness of the sheer number of generous Malaysians who go about helping others quietly without looking for publicity or reward," she shares.

Apart from lecturing, she is also keeping herself busy by involving in research and publication, specifically in the area of local cultures and the undocumented community in Sabah.

"Awareness of the impact of development and modernisation on Sabah's indigenous cultures and traditions has prompted me and my colleagues to document and research on indigenous traditions and rites, attire, consumerism and youth social behaviour."

Her doctoral research focused on the aspect of educational access for children of Sabah's undocumented community with emphasis on the context, input, processes and products of alternative learning centres (ALCs).

She adds, "For my post-doctoral study, I have expanded this to include studies on student achievement at the ALCs, teacher attributes and support, and sustainability of these learning centres. Another research that I am planning to initiate will focus on issues and challenges in food donation delivery to Sabah's undocumented community."

Looking back to the days when she was a learner, Dr Rose has a lot to be proud of. "The period when I was a doctoral candidate was hectic and challenging as I was working and studying at the same time. Since completing my studies, I suddenly find myself with time to spare, so I have gone back to my favourite pastime: reading," she concludes.

WORLD VIEW:

# Make Charity Part of Your Life

By Farah Liyana Abdul Rahman (lianaari2020@gmail.com)

**W**e live in what may feel like an endless loop of tragedies, marked by extinctions, recessions, climate emergencies, inequalities, and wars. But one thing, at least, has gotten better. *The Economist* reports that more than one billion people have escaped extreme poverty that the world might be able to declare the end of this most miserable form of deprivation within a decade.

But such a notion seems quite fragile, as one mistake could crumble years of effort. The COVID-19 pandemic stands as testimony to that.

Like many other nations, Malaysia has not escaped socio-economic hardships. The recently revised national poverty line income has shed new light on the growing gap between the rich and the poor.



Local newspapers are filled with articles discussing the impact of this revelation, such as the increasing number of urban poverty among the city folks.

According to *The Lost Food Project*, a food rescue team in Malaysia, 99.7% of children in low-cost flats live in relative poverty, whilst 7% live in absolute poverty, struggling to put even one good meal on the table.

The “Making Ends Meet” Report by World Bank’s Malaysia Economic Monitor also states that nearly three in 10 Malaysians feel that they don’t have enough money to buy food. The situation has become dire now that so many have lost their jobs during the pandemic.

As we watch the outbreak play out on a global scale, it is easy to feel helpless. But it is worth noting that one can help in many ways, even virtually. How can you start? Well, the team behind *#PulangMengundi* and other well-known figures have come up with a COVID-19 ‘one-stop shop’ called *Kita Jaga Kita*, which provides a directory of verified organisations and campaigns that you can donate to or volunteer with during this crisis. They include *The Lost Food Project*, *Tabung COVID-19: Bantu Jiran Kita*, *Rakyat Tolong Rakyat*, *Caremongering Malaysia* and *Buku Jalanan Chow Kit*.

The initiative has attracted so many Malaysians to join in to help marginalised communities, with some outfits finding themselves overwhelmed by support.

At OUM, there are those who make helping others an important part of their lives too. Among them is Dr Hamidah Mat, Senior Lecturer with the Cluster of Education and Social Sciences.

Dr Hamidah is an active member of *Pertubuhan Ikram Malaysia* and *Dapur Jalanan*. The former focuses on educating the community through programmes that advocate against domestic violence, while *Dapur Jalanan* is a well-known charity that provides free meals for the homeless. She believes that social work and volunteerism are two of the ways to help the disadvantaged.

When asked about her purpose in volunteerism, Dr Hamidah says, “It is a good platform for people to help disadvantaged and marginalised groups and the impact can be really great.”

“The pandemic has proven how Malaysians can all help one another, regardless of race, religion or locality. So although our economic situation is not good at the moment, there is still hope,” she adds. “There are a lot of good-hearted people who can contribute not just by giving money, but also by giving their support to those in need.”

#### Want to help?

Go to [kitajagakita.com](http://kitajagakita.com) to find out what you can do.

## WORK & STUDY:

# Bringing Her Passion to Life

By Tengku Amina Munira ([tg\\_munira@oum.edu.my](mailto:tg_munira@oum.edu.my))

What do you do when you have a hidden passion?

For Ch’ng Hui Lin, keeping it hidden was never an option. So although she was initially trained in the field of finance, Ch’ng said goodbye to her job as a mortgage banker and decided to try her hand at coaching.

“Deep down, I knew I had a passion for developing people. It was this passion that inspired me to enrol in the Master of Counselling (MC) programme in 2013,” she explains.

Ch’ng graduated with distinction two years later. During her study, she also added other qualifications to her repertoire, including certificates in neuro-linguistic programming, as well as play, retail and solution-focused therapy.

This true-blue Kuala Lumpurian considers her MC degree the best investment she has ever made.

“The programme taught me to be a better counsellor besides enhancing my self-esteem. At first, I worried as people were hesitant to hire me due to my age and lack of experience. But once I learnt to put my own anxieties aside, everything changed. My confidence grew and I





started getting referrals. Several years on, I have done well enough to set up my own training and coaching academy," she shares.

Today, the 30 year-old calls herself an empathy coach and soft skills trainer. The former, especially, requires her to work closely with clients to identify the root causes of problems in their lives.

"The most important thing for me is 'walking the talk'. That means starting with the right intentions and using the right skills to help my clients. Whether they want to build better relationships, learn to speak better or find purpose at work, I want to help them get there.

"I'm happy when they say that my coaching sessions have transformed their lives or opened their eyes. This is how I know that the skills I've obtained are truly effective and useful," she says.

Like many Malaysians, Ch'ng is bracing for a challenging future but she remains optimistic: "I believe there is always a silver lining, even in times like these. Success really depends on one's mentality. The pandemic may be a blessing in disguise, so we should try to move forward with that in mind."

Helping others is not simply a vocation for Ch'ng, it is also a guiding principle in her life. She says, "Currently, my training academy is conducting free or heavily discounted programmes for underprivileged children. I want to open the door for people to learn, because to stop learning is to stop growing, and to stop growing is to stop living."

For current learners, she has one final advice to share: "Working and studying can be tough, so take a break when you need to and always remember that your journey is not a sprint, it is a marathon."

## POINTERS:

# GET HAPPY RIGHT NOW

By Tengku Amina Munira (tg\_munira@oum.edu.my)

If the pressures of life often get you down, you are not alone. In fact, the whole of Malaysia has not been feeling so happy lately. We were placed 80th out of 156 countries in the 2019 World Happiness Report, a sad drop of 45 places from just a year before.

But don't let this keep you feeling blue. No matter what is happening in life, the time to prioritise your happiness is always right now, so read on for easy tips on how to start becoming a happier you.



Ch'ng (centre) with her fellow coaches.

## Stop and smell the roses.



If you spend a lot of time reliving past arguments or worrying about the future, you miss a lot of what's happening right now. So why not learn to be more mindful?

Try a grounding exercise: each day, take five minutes to notice your surroundings. Name five things you see, four things you physically feel, three sounds you hear, two things you smell, and one you can taste. Then label how you feel in that moment. Experts say simple mindfulness techniques like this can ease anxiety.

## Get a good night's sleep.

Poor sleep quality is not only bad for health; it is also linked to depression. So give yourself a sensible bedtime, and do your best to stick to the schedule. You can even jot your progress in a sleep journal. Psychologists say a good sleep routine can boost memory, reduce anxiety and even get rid of toxins from your brain.

## Compliment yourself.

The voice inside your head may often sound negative or unsure. You can consciously change this by switching to a more positive language: instead of saying, "If I get that promotion", flip it to, "When I get promoted". Also, get a cheery start to the day by saying one thing you like about yourself when you look in the mirror each morning. It may sound a bit tacky, but this may help you become more optimistic.

## Learn to say "No".

Have you ever felt overwhelmed by multiple demands that leave you feeling drowned? Put a stop to this by setting the right boundaries. Before you agree to anything, ask yourself if you should do it or have the time and energy for it. Don't get guilt-tripped into doing everything that everyone asks of you. Remember that responsibilities are important, but so is having time and space for yourself.

## Give thanks.

Always be grateful, even when things don't go your way or you face yet another problem. It really is true that all of us have something to be thankful for, so make gratitude a conscious part of your daily life. Arm yourself with grateful thoughts, write them down, and you might find yourself feeling a lot more grounded and a lot less frazzled.

# CALLING ALL ALUMNI!

Take the opportunity to be featured in this e-magazine and be an inspiration to others.

Write to us at [alumnimag@oum.edu.my](mailto:alumnimag@oum.edu.my) if you're interested!

Join the OUM Alumni Official group on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1666065323497165/>

Keep in touch with friends and former classmates. Submit your contact details to:

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