



THE SINGAPORE YOUTH AWARD  
— EXCELLENCE WITH A HEART  
**NOMINATE NOW!**

Know someone who is deserving of the Singapore Youth Award?

He or she must excel in any of these fields:

- 1) Arts & Culture
- 2) Community & Youth Services
- 3) Entrepreneurship
- 4) Science & Technology
- 5) Sports & Adventure

He or she must also be actively involved in community service. The achievements and community involvement must total at least three years and can be in different fields.

Call the National Youth Council for a nomination form, or download a copy at [www.nyc.gov.sg/sya](http://www.nyc.gov.sg/sya)

**NOMINATIONS FOR SYA 2005  
CLOSE ON JAN 31, 2005.**

## SINGAPORE YOUTH AWARD

### Science & Technology Roll of Honour

#### Individual

- 2004 Dr Chew Fook Tim
- 2004 Dr Ong Soh Khim
- 2003 Assoc Prof Chan Heng Huat
- 2003 Dr Mansoor Bin Abdul Jalil
- 2002 Dr Patrick Tan Boon Ooi
- 2002 Dr Allen Yeoh Eng Juh
- 2001 Assoc Prof Ling San
- 2001 Dr Marion Margaret Aw
- 2000 Dr Lam Kong Peng
- 2000 Assoc Prof Loke Kah Yin
- 1999 Assoc Prof Kong Hwai Loong
- 1999 Assoc Prof Wong Lim Soon
- 1998 Dr Coral Lai Poh San
- 1997 Prof Xu Guo Qin
- 1996 Professor Tan Chorh Chuan, PPA(E)
- 1996 Mr Jek Kian Jin
- 1994 Assoc Prof Tan Tin Wee
- 1993 Assoc Prof Peter Ng Kee Lin

#### Team

- 1985 Marine Parade Community Club Computer Hobby Club

# SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

In this fourth of a five-part series on the Singapore Youth Award (SYA), Reeta Raman speaks to scientist Dr Chew Fook Tim and Dr Ong Soh Khim — two recipients of the SYA last year. The SYA is the highest national accolade given to youths who have achieved excellence in their field and contributed to society.

Strive to the very limits of your possibilities.

— Dr Mansoor bin Abdul Jalil, assistant professor, NUS

There's a lot of beautiful scenery on the road less travelled.

— Dr Patrick Tan Boon Ooi, principal investigator, National Cancer Centre

## science of the times

**DR CHEW FOOK TIM** is spurred on when others laugh at his "crazy" ideas.

"There have been many times during the course of my career when established professionals commented that my ideas were crazy," he laughed. "When they tell me that now, I get excited because I know that the idea will work."

The scientist attained global stature for his research in translating DNA sequences of proteins found in allergy-causing dust mites.

He currently runs a world-class laboratory that houses over 10,000 such tagged genes from allergy-causing dust mites that are believed to be behind allergic diseases like asthma.

Besides working with dust mites, Dr Chew conducts one of the largest cross-faculty modules in the National University of Singapore (NUS), with over 1,000 students per semester.

He was voted as a NUS Excellent Teacher for two consecutive academic years, and went on to receive the NUS Faculty Teaching

Excellence Award in 2003.

Fusing the best of being a teacher and a scientist comes easily to Dr Chew.

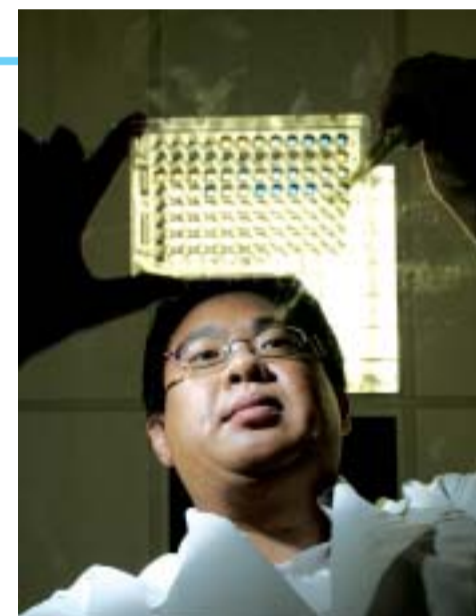
"In my opinion, every scientist needs to be a good teacher first," he said, matter-of-factly. "There's a close synergy between the two. As teachers, we transmit knowledge, and as scientists, we are on a quest for knowledge."

"Personally, I have benefited tremendously from the interaction with my students."

His sustained passion for his work, Dr Chew said, is a result of surrounding himself with good mentors, great colleagues and a supportive working environment.

"Everyone in the faculty is so enthusiastic about science, it just rubs off on you," he said. "You could say that we are a bunch of crazy people. Then again, you have to be a little crazy because of the nature of the job. Sometimes, experiments go wrong and the working hours are long."

As Dr Chew recounted the awards and accolades he received, including the latest Singapore Youth Award last year, he said that



TREVOR TAN

he was overcome by a sense of wanting to achieve more with his life.

"I feel overwhelmed," he said. "Winning awards just goes to show that I have a lot to give back to society. I hope I can inspire and I hope to play that role well."

## breaking the mould

FIFTEEN years ago, **Dr Ong Soh Khim** was one of nine girls in her engineering class.

Now, she is one of three female faculty staff in the mechanical engineering department at the engineering faculty in the National University of Singapore (NUS).

The 35-year-old, who was recently selected to be part of the new line-up of Nominated MPs, is no stranger to being the odd girl out in a male-dominated environment.

But far from feeling discriminated, Dr Ong said that she was never made to feel any less competent than her male counterparts.

She said: "The determination to succeed did not stem from the fact that I was a girl, but rather because I came from a poor family and I was determined to give my parents a better life."

The Singapore Youth Award 2004 recipient stands out internationally for her contributions in manufacturing engineering.

Some of Dr Ong's achievements include a number of firsts.

In 2002, she co-authored a paper that was

selected to receive the Norman A Dudley Award from over 200 published papers by authors worldwide.

Her team became the first in the Asia-Pacific to receive the award.

In the same year, she became the only Singaporean to be invited as a Formal Core Member of the Asia Youth Forum on Advanced Manufacturing.

Last year, she became the first woman from ASEAN to receive the prestigious M Eugene Merchant Outstanding Young Manufacturing Engineer award from the US-based Society of Manufacturing Engineers.

She is also an equally passionate educator. "When I teach, colleagues have told me that my eyes light up," said Dr Ong. "I feel different when I stand in front of a class."

Testimony to that, she received the Teaching Commendation Award from NUS in 2001.

She continues to act as a mentor to her students and contributes as a regular speaker at talks organised by the engineering faculty for junior college and polytechnic students.



TREVOR TAN

"I work extremely hard," said Dr Ong. "I have a 'die-die must try' attitude. I doubt I can survive without work. I love what I do too much to even consider taking a break."



The National Youth Council (NYC) is the national coordinating agency for youth and youth sector development in Singapore.  
Tel: 6734 4233. Website: [www.nyc.gov.sg](http://www.nyc.gov.sg)