



AL:PHA (Active Lenses: Photographing Humanly Aspects) Photo Book

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Introduction

Project AL:PHA (Active Lenses: Photographing Humanly Aspects) is a volunteering programme where youth volunteers aimed to provide seniors with the opportunity to use photography as a means of self-expression and reflection. At the same time, we fostered intergenerational connections.

Over a span of five weeks, youth volunteers from Youth Corps Singapore embarked on a befriending journey with seniors from FaithActs. The youth volunteers and seniors engaged in reflective storytelling through photography walks to enhance their well-being holistically and delay cognitive degeneration.

Through AL:PHA, the youth volunteers caught a glimpse into the enriched lives of the seniors. The seniors shared their nostalgic experiences living in Commonwealth, which was recently selected as an en bloc. Through the interactions and life stories exchanged, insights and a sense of social connectedness and community was fostered.

Without the collaboration of all the youths, seniors and various community partners, this project would not have been possible. This photobook hence captures our celebration of intergenerational ties and lifelong friendships.

Stretches



Photowalks



Sharings



Scrapbooking



Challenges





[Chapter 1]

Auntie Janet

(Jia Hui, Radiance, Alastair)



Taken by Auntie Janet

Auntie Janet is a jovial individual with a very vibrant personality and optimistic outlook on life.

Having moved to Singapore alone in her early teens, she did not have the easiest of childhoods. However, she managed to overcome the challenges thrown her way with sheer grit and optimism.



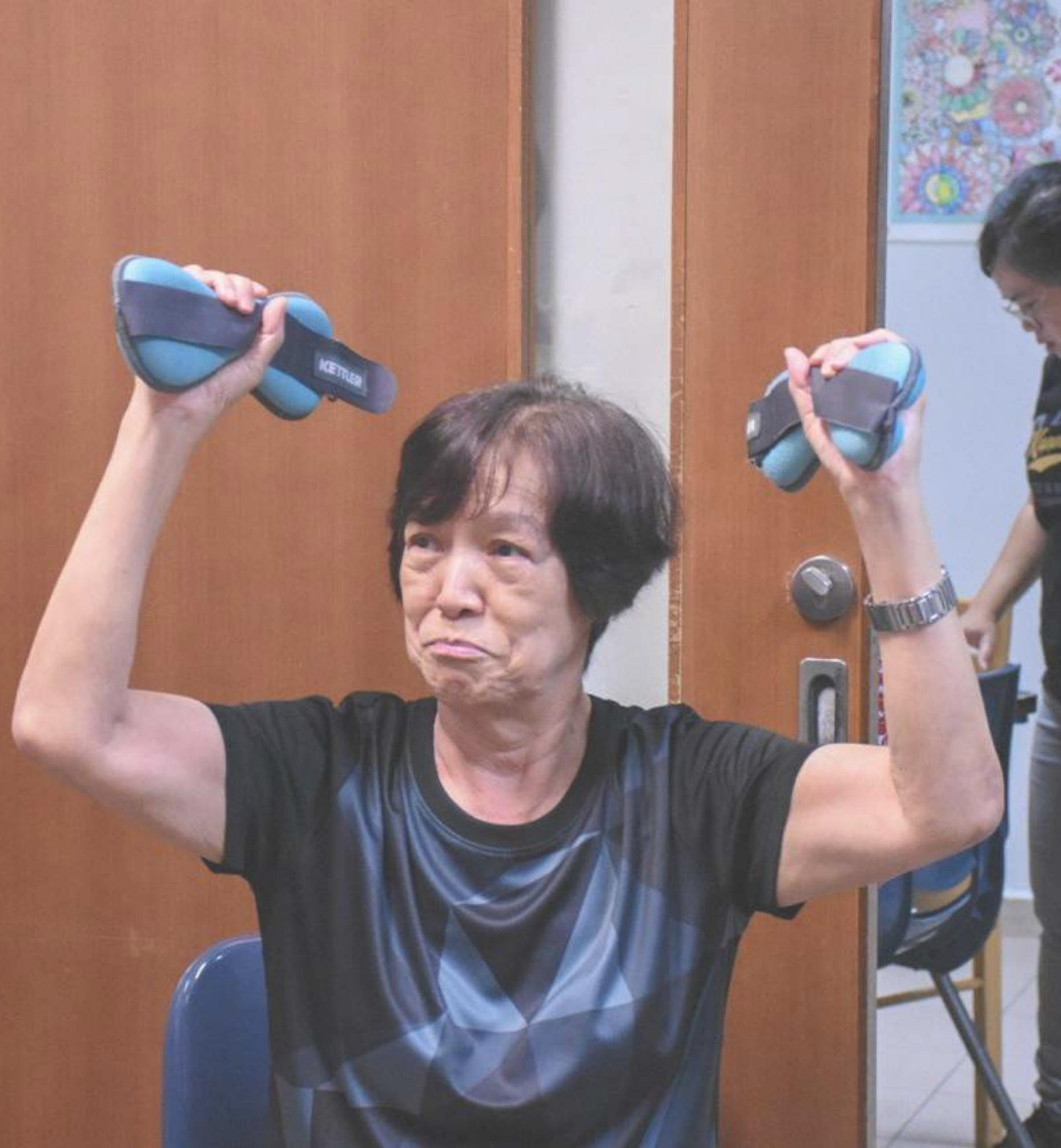
Presently, Auntie Janet is a resident living in Tanglin Halt/Commonwealth for coming 26 years.

Some things she enjoy doing include daily morning walks along the Green Corridor, picking up new skills such as ukulele playing and socialising with friends and other volunteers.



Auntie Janet is also an amazing storyteller, never failing to draw all of us into her stories with her contagious enthusiasm.

[Chapter 2]



Auntie Linda

(Amelia, Yu Qian, Leroy Lou, Avril Tng)



Auntie Linda is a resident at Commonwealth Drive who had an extensive knowledge of the neighbourhood and how it has changed over the years. She used to stay at a plot of land opposite the current HDB she lives in now- and fondly revealed that it was a kampung back in her days which she stayed in with her family.

With her substantial familiarity of the Commonwealth area, she led the group on a hiking trail along the Rail Corridor that she frequents with her friends and sister during one of our first photo walks together. We had pleasant conversations reminiscing her childhood and the rich heritage of Singapore. We passed by a number of abandoned buildings and HDBs, and each time she shared with me how old the estate was and what became of it. It was a truly enlightening walk!





In her free time, she enjoys cooking at home and strongly believes in eating healthily! She shared with us her preferred way of cooking her homemade meals and revealed that she consumes a lot of vegetables!



Taken by Auntie Linda

"Weathered with time, our photowalks to these locations are testament to how much times has changed."



[Chapter 3]

Auntie Emily

(Woon Xuen, Zee Chiang, Steffi, Aricia)

Auntie Emily is a more reserved and soft spoken individual. However, she was willing to open up gradually during the trail itself when we took the photos together and had more opportunity to interact.



Taken by Auntie Emily

Auntie Emily enjoyed the experience and said she learnt how to take photos throughout the sessions. She also mentioned that she would be interested to join similar programmes in the future.



By the last session, she was on close terms with the volunteer she was partnered with, and they even shared with each other a little about their personal lives.



It is heartening to know that meaningful relationships had been forged albeit the short period of time with each other.





Auntie Suk Tin

(Kimberly, Reyanne, Jerome)



Auntie Suk Tin is a cheerful and friendly lady who enjoys the company of her friends and regularly takes part in activities organised by the Community Centre. She has been living in the Commonwealth area for many years and keeps her mind and body active by learning how to play the ukulele and taking part in exercise classes.

Auntie Suk Tin knows the Commonwealth area very well and never fails to share interesting things about the area. She is also very interested in photography and regularly ventures out to different places around Singapore to take photos of nature.



Taken by Auntie Suk Tin





Auntie Suk Tin had a fun and enriching time throughout this project. She enjoyed reminiscing the past and present by visiting the places that she frequents and capturing the memories that have been with her for so many years. As she regularly engages in photography on her own, she also liked the photography aspect that was incorporated into this project and is happy that she managed to learn new photography skills. She was grateful to the volunteers who have accompanied her through this project and hopes that we had a fun time too.





[Chapter 5]

Auntie Kwai Yuke

(Zhu Wen Ying)



Auntie Kwai Yuke can be quite shy when it comes to sharing things in front of a group of people, but she is a really good story teller in a small group setting. She often leads the conversations when we were talking around the neighbourhood in small groups.

Auntie Kwai Yuke is also very willing to learn. When she was first exposed to Padlet, she asked if it is possible to include other functions such as having background music played for her photo collage. She often provides ideas and is very independent in learning.



Auntie Kwai Yuke is very excited to show her photos to her friends and also gets shy when her friends complimented her photography skills. She hopes that she can learn how to add in music for her photos too in the future.



Look to the end of the photobook for a picture everyone doing taichi poses !!

Teaching Tai Chi



Both pictures taken by Auntie Kwai Yuke

Auntie Kwai Yuke was happy with how the programme was conducted. She enjoyed taking photos of the scenery in the neighbourhoods, and she is very proud of the photo she took for the playground at blocks 89/90/91.



[Chapter 6]

Auntie Sian Geok

(Nicole, Michael, Crystal, Reyanne)



Auntie Sian Geok is a really nice and kind auntie that has a passion for taking pictures. That time when we went around the market to take pictures, she met her friends and took pictures with/of them and she was saying that it's nice to learn how to take pictures because when she misses them she can look back at these pictures. She also says that learning how to take photos has also enabled her to share about her life with her friends and family.



Auntie Sian Geok and her friend





Taken by Auntie Sian Geok



Auntie Sian Geok is a very cute individual. She may need some encouragement because she often feels she isn't able to take good photos although she actually can! she's a bit shy but when you ask her questions about herself like "Where were you today? What did you do today?" She will slowly warm up to you.

She enjoyed the event and felt that it was a good opportunity to do something productive on her weekdays.



[Chapter 7]

Auntie Sharon (Lele)

(Kylie)



Taken by Auntie Lele

Although Auntie Lele is not well-versed in technology, photography is an activity that she does not shy away from. She loves taking pictures and even enjoys being in photos. Seeing how well she turns out in pictures puts a smile on her face.

Being close to 80 years old, Auntie Lele does not look or feel like her age. She has such a jovial and bubbly character that attracts people to her as she shares her life experiences with them. Auntie Lele needed to take on the responsibility of taking care of her husband when he fell ill and was not able to move about freely as herself. Despite that, Lele has kept a positive mental state and finds any free time that she has in participating in activities that are conducted at FaithActs.

Despite experiencing pain in her legs, Auntie Lele loved the walks to the different parts of the neighbourhood as she got to see many different things that she did not notice before. She has taken a liking towards the nature and enjoys being a part of it.





During the visits, Auntie Lele often reminisces about her childhood. She shares a lot about her favorite snacks and also the different stores at the hawker that she likes to visit when she used to live near FaithActs. When we coincidentally passed by a store near the hawker centre that sold various traditional snacks, she could not hide her excitement from them and ran over to take pictures with the snacks. She was so bubbly that it almost made her look like a young child.

Auntie Lele is naturally a very appreciative person as she always remembers the good in the people, especially those who have showed her kindness in the past, no matter how small the gesture. During the trip to the hawker centre, she remembers how her favorite roast meat stall owner is so kind to her years ago when she visits. Their interaction is extremely heartwarming as the stall owner remembers her and is also excited to see her when she visits the stall, proving how her bubbly personality is like a magnet to others. Auntie Lele's sense of gratitude is something that we can all aspire to achieve.





[Chapter 8]

Auntie Ha Moi

(Xian Bin)



Auntie Ha Moi has stayed in this neighbourhood for less than 10 years after relocating from Bukit Panjang. What she recalls about this place will be the kampong spirit that it used to hold when the other blocks had not en-bloc yet.

Auntie Ha Moi took time off from the daily activities that she has at home and outside to take part in this project. With her limited mobility and her husband's health situation, she is unable to travel far away from her home and thus unable to explore the other parts of Tanglin Halt.

She is well-versed in her thoughts and feelings about different pictures and scenarios with different meanings to what she want to indicate through each unique picture.



Taken by Auntie Ha Moi



Auntie Ha Moi also mentioned that they have learnt a lot from us regarding the recent technology and is thankful that they are able to know us and have us help them and also listen to their 童年往事



[Chapter 9]

Auntie Cindy

(Gabriel, Jia Hui)

Auntie Cindy can be described with two words: "cheerful" and "adventurous". Always smiling and radiant, age has certainly not caught up to her as she is full of energy and ready for an adventure at a moments notice.



Auntie Cindy loves hiking with her friends along the rail corridor, before proceeding to the nearby Redhill Hawker Centre for a hearty breakfast. During Project AL:PHA, she even fulfilled a childhood dream to sit on a motorcycle, even if it was only a parked bike belonging to a stranger!



Having been displaced from her previous flat due to en-bloc, Auntie Cindy is grateful for her new home in Commonwealth, which is more convenient and less noisy, as her previous flat was located near the the train tracks. Since moving about two years ago, she has adapted well to life in her new neighbourhood, even getting to know the block cleaners whom she often greets whenever she encounters them along the way.



Taken by Auntie Cindy



Jia Hui



My interactions with the seniors taught me the importance of looking at things from a different perspectives.

Change, however daunting, is an unavoidable part of life. By focusing on the positives and the little mundane things in life e.g. the daily routine of feeding chickens in Mdm Chin's case, these can have a huge motivational impact on one's mindset.

In a way, this aligns with Project AL:PHA's aim of using photography as a medium for seniors to express themselves and more importantly, reflect.

While I may have some way to go before I can confidently 'embrace change', I strive to be as lion-hearted as the seniors and to look at situations through a different lens, with and without a camera.



Project AL:PHA is a very unique experience for me. I had a really fun and enjoyable 4 weeks with the seniors, especially with Mdm Kwai Yuke.

I was anxious at the start because I am a very reserved person and thus was afraid that I can't communicate with the seniors well. But Mdm Kwai Yuke was very willing to share her stories with me. It is always very happy to see her in the morning because she's always ready and eager to learn new things!

Project AL:PHA has also exposed to me to the dynamic personalities that some seniors have, and changed my perceptions of seniors entirely. For example, the seniors will get shy if we praise them for taking well-angled photos; they are often willing to share things they have learnt before, like ukulele and taichi.



Wen Ying



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Volunteer Mentor:

Dr Michelle Yeo

Seniors:

Auntie Janet Chin, Auntie Linda Loh, Auntie Emily Low, Auntie Ee Suk Tin, Auntie Ng Kwai Yuke, Auntie Lee Sian Geok, Auntie Sharon (Lele), Auntie Yap Ha Moi, Auntie Cindy

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