

Issue No. 4 (December 2009)

samudra

SOS is All For All Nationalities
– **Safeguarding Foreign Members' Welfare**



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SEACARE SAILORS' HOME OPENS IN MANILA

**They came. They saw.
They loved it –*instantly*.**

The Seacare Sailors' Home in Manila, Philippines, received an overwhelming positive response from the seafarers unions, members and the shipping companies.



"SOS has gone out of its way to do this – to show that they care for our Filipino seafarers. This is a first class home," said Mr Amado L Castro, Jr, President, Reinier Pacific International Shipping, Inc.

The Seacare Sailors' Home in Manila consists of 14 fully furnished studio, 2 and 3 bedroom units at Sunshine Garden Condominium. Strategically located at Mandaluyong, it takes only five minutes to walk from the Boni MRT station.



The Sailors' Home will provide our SOS members with temporary accommodation at an affordable cost when they are waiting to sign on ships or when they wish to stop in Manila after signing off," highlighted Mr Leow Ching Chuan, SOS General Secretary.



Captain Yeow Kok Kean, Director of Talent Management, Neptune Shipmanagement Services Pte Ltd, agreed. He pointed out that most Filipino seafarers are not living in Manila but the official documentations are all done in the capital. The Sailors' Home will act as a comfortable and affordable "holding area" for the seafarers and elevate their standard of accommodation.

Explaining further, Mr Amado L Castro pointed out that Filipino seafarers living in the provinces often find themselves travelling to and fro from their home to Manila three times for each stint – to get their documentation done; obtain their assignment; and have their medical examination before going onboard ships.

"When they are in Manila, they either stay with their relatives or check into a local dormitory with poor living conditions. But this Sailors' Home is something good. It's like a home. I will have my staff and crew stay here. I myself will stay here."



Mr German N Pascua Jr.

Vice President, Philippines Seafarers' Union

"The Sailors' Home is a worthy project of SOS and Seacare; one that really benefits Filipino seafarers. It is a place for seafarers to rest while waiting for their vessels or medical examination."

Capt Anthony Khoo

Senior Manager, Crew Department,
PACC Ship Managers Pte Ltd

"This is a very good project especially in the Philippines when seafarers, majority of whom come from other provinces, need to travel to Manila as a transit point. The standard of the Sailors' Home is very high. In fact, it is hotel standard. It will definitely be full house."

Capt Yeow Kok Kean

Director of Talent Management, NSSPL

"This Sailors' Home elevates the standards of accommodation of Filipino seafarers. With Seacare, I can see the benefits coming back to SOS and its members. I think Seacare and SOS are doing very well and by working together with the industry in a more concerted manner, we will certainly push the frontier of quality shipping further."

Mr Amado L Castro, Jr

President, Reinier Pacific International Shipping, Inc

"We all know that SOS is a Singapore union. Despite that, the Union has come up with an initiative to do something for Filipino seafarers. When the seafarers arrive and stay in this Home, they will be surprised to see how the Singapore union look after them and make their stay in Manila first class.

The SOS through Seacare manages their projects very well and they return the benefits to the crew. I am very pleased that SOS has come here to serve the members."

Mr Elde Brando C Jalop

Chief Officer, Career Philippines Shipmanagement Inc.

"There are three things that seafarers need: accommodation, medical benefits and savings for retirement. All these needs are met by SOS. I'm happy that for the first time, a Singapore union is providing accommodation right here in the Philippines."

Mrs Allen Simborio

General Manager, Nicomarine Travel Company

"The Seafarers Home is very accessible. I can't wait to tell our seafarers about it!"

Mr Nico Simborio

Crewing Manager, PB Maritime Personnel, Inc.

"What SOS has done is noble and we are humbled by their effort."

Mr Valtori Pesarillo

Fleet Manager, Magsaysay –
MOL Tankship
Management (Asia) Pte Ltd

"Accommodation in Manila is not cheap and not very comfortable. So, I'm glad that now seafarers, especially those from the provinces, have a home that is simple and nice for them to enjoy."

At the soft opening ceremony of the Sailors' Home held on 11 December 2009, Mr Leow pointed out that in initiating the Seacare Sailors' Home, SOS is "merely trying to emulate the welfare programmes of Associated Marine Officers' and Seamen's Union of the Philippines (AMOSUP) and Philippine Seafarers' Union (PSU)".

"For many years, we have been very much impressed by the comprehensive range of welfare facilities and services AMOSUP and PSU have been providing for their members. Our setting up of the Seacare Sailors' Home should be considered as an effort to supplement the welfare programmes of AMOSUP and PSU for Filipino seafarers by providing welfare benefits for our Filipino members."

The Sailors' Home, of which Seacare is the core developer, is part of the newly launched Seacare Sailors' Home Scheme (SSS); which also includes Seacare Drop-In Centre for International Seafarers and Seacare Hotel. The main aim is to provide accommodation and services for the benefit of SOS members, international seafarers and the shipping community.



SOS Welfare Schemes Seminar in Manila

BRINGING MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES AND BENEFITS TO THEIR HOMELAND

SOS has brought a host of benefits and privileges to the doorstep of our Filipino members. From medical benefits and training subsidies to retirement savings and a roof over their heads, the Union has made these welfare assistance possible.

At the SOS Welfare Schemes Seminar held in Manila on 11 December 2009, the four main welfare schemes – the Seafarers Provident Fund, Seacare Maritime Training Scheme, Seacare Medical Scheme as well as the latest, Seacare Sailors' Home Scheme were presented.

Besides the SOS Filipino members, shipping agents and shipping companies management staff were also soaking in all the helpful information our two speakers were presenting. They went home

grateful that the Union has done much to meet their welfare needs and will be doing more.

Seacare Sailor's Home Scheme Three Parts – Three Homes – Three Groups of Beneficiaries

With the overarching objective of providing accommodation and services for the benefits of SOS members, international seafarers and shipping community, the Seacare Sailors' Home Scheme encompasses the following three components, as explained by Mr David Shoo, Manager of the scheme.

1

SEACARE
SAILORS'
HOME FOR SOS
MEMBERS

SOS members will enjoy subsidised accommodation in Seacare Sailors' Home located at Sunshine Garden Condominium in Manila.



2

SEACARE DROP-IN
CENTRE FOR
INTERNATIONAL
SEAFARERS

The second part of our Seacare Sailors' Home Scheme is to provide a beneficial service to international seafarers. When international seafarers are working onboard ships that call at Singapore, they can make use of the facilities at the Seacare Drop-in Centre for International Seafarers at no cost to them.

This Drop-in Centre is located at the Pasir Panjang Terminal Centre Building in Singapore. The facilities and services available at the Centre include high-speed internet access and games, telephone booths and reading materials as well as light refreshments.

3

SEACARE HOTEL
FOR SHIPPING
COMPANIES

The third part of our Seacare Sailors' Home Scheme is to provide for qualified shipping companies transit accommodation for their seafarers at Singapore at a discounted rate when the Seacare Hotel is built and in operation.



Seafarers' Provident Fund Internet Portal

PAPERLESS, FUSS-FREE, ACCESSIBLE ROUND THE CLOCK



**It's about money.
It's about their
savings. It's about
their retirement.**

The seafarers and manning companies' representatives listened in rapt attention as Ms Sharon Li, Assistant Manager, Seacare Thrift Pte Ltd, spoke on a topic that is close to everyone's heart – the Seafarers' Provident Fund (SPF).

A popular and life impacting benefit, the SPF is a savings scheme that provides seafarers with financial assistance upon retirement and a platform to grow their savings and safeguard future needs. Seafarers who are working onboard vessels covered by Collective Bargaining Agreement with SOS and whose employers are participating in the SPF scheme can enjoy this benefit.

In her presentation at the SOS Welfare Schemes Seminar in Manila, Ms Li showed the ease in which seafarers can access their SPF account and keep track of all their transactions; and shipping companies

can make their contribution submissions through the internet portal known as Internet Seafarers' Provident Fund or iSPF.

"iSPF, which went into full implementation in September 2009, is a paperless and functional system that provides real time information in an environmentally-friendly manner," said Ms Li.

For the members, iSPF enables them to update their personal information, check their account balance and enjoy the savings on not having to make international calls to check their account balance. They can apply for withdrawal online when they meet the criteria of withdrawal, i.e. when they hit 50 years and above and have maintained their account for more than three years.

For shipping companies, they can update company information, automate data input, check payment dues and enjoy the ease of paperless transactions.



"I now have a better understanding of the iSPF after this talk. By having the system on the internet, everyone can have an easy access to their SPF account. The SPF is really a good benefit especially when seafarers find themselves with little money left upon their retirement," commented Ms Jasmine D Salvador, Crewing Manager, Belchem Philippines.





SMS REVIEW SESSION IN THE PHILIPPINES

Doctors from the Seacare Medical Scheme (SMS) Affiliated Clinics came from different parts of the Philippines to review the Medical Scheme on 11 December 2009 in Manila.

Hosted by Dr Chia Yih Woei, Chief Executive Officer, Seacare Maritime Medical Centre Pte Ltd (SMMC), the session enabled the meeting of minds with regards to the SMS and how the Scheme can be further improved to better serve the needs of Filipino seafarers and their dependants.

"We are always on the look out for ways to enhance the SMS and to have a closer partnership with our affiliated clinics. We all have one aim – and that it is to improve the wellbeing of the seafarers and their family members," commented Dr Chia.

The meeting had a three-pronged objective – to update the status of SMS



(Philippines); to hear from the participating clinics; and to brainstorm on ideas to improve the scheme.

One of the highlights of the meeting was the evaluation of the administrative and billing procedures of the clinics. The good news is – acting on the doctors' feedback,

immediate improvements have been made.

"Some of the clinics encountered technical problems with the SMS clinic web-based programme. We have since rectified the technical problems, for example, by removing the pop-up windows from the



Dr Ching

Micah Medical Clinic and Diagnostic Laboratory, Manila

SMS clinic web-based programme. Now, the clinics can carry out the transactions online smoothly without interruption from their computer settings."

Since SMS was first introduced in the Philippines in 2005, not only have the free benefits been improved and revised extensively, the number of SMMC affiliated clinics have also been increased to cover more provinces. The latest benefits to be introduced included pap smear test, dental consultation and tooth filling and reimbursement of up to Php 500 per person for medication purchase from SMS appointed clinics and any pharmacy.

"More benefits that go beyond the basic health examinations will continue to be added. We are now in the fact finding stage to gather information on the type of medical treatments to offer, the panel of specialists needed, the cost involved and the necessary procedures and conditions and more. Areas we are looking into include the provision of reimbursement for treatment in hospitals," said Ms Mariana Angel, SMS Manager.

On the meeting, Ms Mariana described it as fruitful because the objectives were met. "The SMS appointed clinics are more comfortable with our working relationship after having met the officials from SOS/ Seacare and other clinic representatives as well as the members during the year end reception. The most important result that came out from the meeting was that the difficulties faced by both parties with regards to the administration of the SMS have been discussed and resolved."

"SMS has done a lot of good for SOS Filipino members. I can see that the Union does a good job in taking care of the seafarers and their families and is always trying to do more for them."



Dr Benedict Go

Gillamacs Diagnostics & Medical Laboratories Inc., Cebu

"Most Filipinos have the mentality of waiting for the illness to go away. With SMS, they are encouraged to do something about their health by seeking medical help. I hope more can be done to publicise and promote this good and beneficial benefit so that more members will get to know about it."



Ms Jasmine D Salvador

Crewing Manager, Belchem Philippines

"Seafarers are covered by insurance but not their dependants who are the ones who really need help. So the SMS is a wonderful idea that benefits the dependants. The cost of medication is very expensive in the Philippines. I hope they can enjoy more subsidies in this area."



Mr Aldrin Condelosand

SOS member

"Thanks for looking after my family. My 81 year old mother has gone for the free medical check-up offered by SMS."

Mr Domingo Salut

SOS member

"My wife had a ECG done and my 16 year old child had a tooth extraction – all covered by SMS."



SEACARE MARITIME TRAINING SCHEME Cooks Up a Storm in Cebu

More and more cooks will be able to serve nutritious, safe and a wide range of delectable food on board; and become familiarised with the requirements for food and catering as stipulated by the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006.





SOS, under the Seacare Maritime Training Scheme (SMTS), initiated a cooking course to equip cooks on the finer points of cooking for the multi-national crew onboard. Besides enabling the ratings to whip out dishes that are varied and appetising, the course on Basic Catering in Theory and Practical also equipped them with the knowledge on how to prepare, store and cook in a safe and healthy way.

From 8 to 10 December 2009, 15 Filipino experienced cooks, currently working with Neptune Shipmanagement Services Pte Ltd (NSSPL), gathered in a unique classroom that comes equipped with a replica of a galley in the University of Cebu thus making both theoretical and practical lessons possible.

The trainer dished out the important information on Nutrition, Balanced Diet, Cultural Preferences, Proper Storage, Food Segregation, Galley Layout & Equipment, Food & Personal Hygiene, Food Borne Diseases, Cross contamination, Cooking Principles & Procedures, Preparation of Food, Presentation & Serving Food, MARPOL – Waste Management and Pollution Control, Fire and Accident Prevention and more.

"It augurs well that SOS is keen to play a key role in training cooks working in CBA shipping companies," said Capt Yeow Kok Kean, Director of Talent Management, NSSPL. "As a Union, SOS can reap the economies of scale and offer training programmes to enhance the skills of seafarers working in different companies."



On the course, Capt Yeow commented: "We are engaging a multi-national crew onboard and we need to provide food that is adequate, nutritious and of sufficient variety. We also need to look into hygiene, storage and use of clean water and more. It is more than just cooking a good meal. Our cooks have to learn many vital lessons like how to keep at bay bio terrorism and infestation by insects."

The training trip to Cebu allowed Capt Yeow and Ms Sharon Li, Assistant Manager, Seacare Thrift, "to look into strengthening the curriculum and refining it further to meet the requirements of MLC 2006".



Some feedback from participants:

"The course is good. It provides us with more recipes and taught us the appropriate methods of cooking the dishes. The course has been helpful to us."

"Before the course, we knew how to cook mostly Filipino dishes and some Chinese dishes. Now we have more recipes, for other nationalities."



"When MLC 2006 comes into force, many companies will be rushing to get their cooks trained and that will not be an easy feat. SOS is doing the right thing by getting the crew and shipping companies prepared now," Capt Yeow highlighted.

During the training, the trainer demonstrated how cooks can prepare a variation of the dishes, with the use of the same ingredients. The cooks are also taught how to prepare suitable food for the crew onboard, for example, when one is unwell. Using healthier alternatives when preparing the dishes, food and personal hygiene were also looked into. The individual trainee was provided with close to a hundred international recipes.



YEAR END CELEBRATION FOR FILIPINO MEMBERS

Cheers to Health and Friendship





✚ As 2009 drew to a close, SOS created a timely opportunity for our Filipino members and shipping companies to come together to let our hair down and celebrate on 11 December.

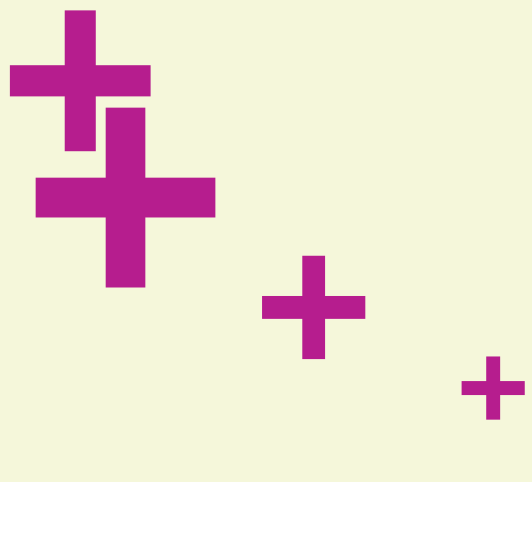
Held in the ballroom of Hyatt Hotel and Casino Manila, the year end gathering attracted SOS Filipino members living in different parts of the Philippines who travelled to Manila for the joyous time of merrymaking among friends, fellow union members and management staff.

Kicking off the evening was SOS President Mr Mohamed Idris Bin Mohamed Ibrahim who expressed, on behalf of the Union, warm greetings to the members for their steadfast support and co-operation.

The entertainment that followed got the audience roaring with laughter. The antics of the Filipino stand-up comedians, who not only could tell a good joke but also sing and dance, had everyone in the ballroom in stitches. Amusing audience participation was the order of the day. A Filipino Idol finalist and a famous Radio DJ added to the colours of the fun evening – one with her power-packed voice; the other with her charming personality. The

lucky draw was the icing on the cake as guest after guest found themselves going home with a new television set, digital cameras, branded sports jackets and more.

After a heart pumping roller-coaster ride in 2009 due to the global economic challenges, the year-end gathering put the crisis into perspective – the event enabled the family of SOS to cherish life, health and friendship.



STRONGER AND MORE STRATEGIC FOC CAMPAIGN

The South East Asia Week of Action held from 23 to 27 November 2009 **“has gotten much stronger and more strategic”**.



This was what Mr Junko Honma, ITF Tokyo Office staff who coordinated the Week of Action had to say on the recent Flag of Convenience (FOC) Campaign efforts which saw some 73 vessels inspected; media attention received in Malaysia and Indonesia; seminars and a press conference held in Thailand; solidarity actions held in the Philippines and Singapore.

The FOC Campaign, aimed at preventing the exploitation of seafarers, was organised by seafarers' and dockers' unions from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Singapore, who were working together with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

If there was one loud and clear message from ITF, it was a resounding “No Place to Hide” for FOC vessels.





In Singapore, it was full steam ahead as SOS Industrial Relations (IR) Manager and ITF Contact Person, Mr Daniel Tan and IR Officer, Mr Mohamad Bin Abu Bakar conducted vessel inspections. Mr Daniel Tan said, **"Ultimately, the whole exercise is to send a message to all ship owners that action will be taken against those who exploit seafarers. There is no place to hide for rogue ship owners. SOS in partnership with ITF will do whatever it takes to safeguard the welfare of seafarers in the region."**

During the five-day campaign, ITF affiliated unions and ITF Inspectors in South East Asia and East Asia regions put great pressure on FOC vessels trading in South East Asia – FOC vessels were inspected and asked to enter into negotiations with the appropriate national trade union. Vessels with ITF approved agreements were also inspected to ensure compliance. The strong actions taken reaped results.



GROWTH RECORDED IN TURBULENT TIMES



These were the words expressed by SOS General Secretary Mr Leow Ching Chuan at the SOS Ordinary General Meeting (OGM). Highlighting the global financial crisis and the impact it had on the nation, the SOS leader underscored the Union's efforts in assisting its members.

During the period under review from 2007 to June 2009, despite the financial crisis, SOS membership strength grew by 15% from 16,680 to 19,131. The number of ships covered by SOS collective bargaining agreement increased by 19% from 622 to 742.

"The increase in the number of ships participating in the Seafarers Provident Fund Scheme, Seacare Medical Scheme and Seacare Maritime Training Scheme, underscored the success of these schemes," said Mr Leow.

As a strong proponent of skills upgrading, Mr Leow highlighted that the SOS Training and Skills Development Department maintained a close network with the various course providers to facilitate information update and relevance of courses in the training schedules so as to ensure the employability of the members.

On Seacare Co-operative, Mr Leow highlighted that "Seacare was fortunate not to be too badly affected by the sudden and massive





"If we have come through a severe economic downturn period relatively unscathed, it has been because of the loyal membership support and the skilful leadership management we enjoyed in the review period."



economic meltdown and performed better with improved revenue and profit before tax".

Mr Leow went on to announce the latest initiative, the Seacare Sailors' Home Scheme that is set up with the aim of offering more benefits and value to members, international seafarers and the shipping companies.

"You can be sure we will continue to work hard for the wellbeing of our members," the SOS leader assured.

At the OGM, the members recorded an unanimous endorsement to amend SOS constitutions with the objectives of strengthening SOS membership structure and membership administrative procedures.

The delegates also gave an overwhelming support to Seacare to construct and build an annex to Seacare Building to serve as a 3-star business class hotel.

Mr Leow thanked all the members for their strong endorsement and took the opportunity to raise the issue of SOS leadership renewal.

The SOS Ordinary General Meeting was held at Furama City Centre on 31 October 2009.



ECONOMY OF THE FUTURE

is Cheaper, Better, Faster

NTUC Ordinary Delegates' Conference 2009, 13–15 October 2009

The NTUC Ordinary Delegates' Conference (ODC) 2009, held for three days from 13–15 October 2009 blew a trumpet call to all companies and workers to be part of a Cheaper, Better, Faster (CBF) economy powered by an All CAN (Collars, Ages, Nationalities) workforce.

The call given by NTUC Secretary-General Mr Lim Swee Say to some 1,000 union leaders and employers during the Labour Movement's biennial gathering was given the thumbs-up. Union leaders embraced the strategy for Singapore's companies and workers to stay ahead in the new economic order.

Reiterating the key principles of the CBF strategy, Labour Chief Mr Lim clarified that to be "cheaper" means to improve productivity by producing better-quality products and services more cost-effectively; to be "better" means to broaden capabilities through the development and enhancement of technology, innovation of new products and services, and nurturing of new markets; to be "faster" means to be more flexible, adaptable and responsive in order to capitalise on new opportunities. He summarised, **"Cheaper, Better, Faster is about companies doing more with the same, not doing the same with less".**

For Singapore to improve its productivity, broaden its capabilities and be more flexible, adaptable and responsive, its workers need to be up-skilled, re-skilled and multi-skilled so that they can reap better jobs, better pay and better lives in the restructured economy. 'One cannot do without the other,' said the Labour Chief. Mr Lim gave the assurance that the Labour Movement will remain to be pro-business and pro-worker.

At the conference, NTUC's report card was presented to delegates to take stock of its achievements and to chart its future course. For the past two years, two key performance indicators of 'Upturn the Downturn' initiative were met – 'Avoiding Record Retrenchment' and 'Preventing a Rapid Rise in Unemployment'.



While union leaders expressed the hope that the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) would take the lead and urge companies and employers to adopt the CBF strategy quickly, union leaders also pledged to work in partnership with their management to upgrade the workforce to meet the needs of economic restructuring in the new economy.

Mr Lim complimented the union leaders in this regard – thanking them for their spirited dedication in helping members cope with the economic downturn and for their steady support of the Labour Movement. It was indeed heartwarming to see union leaders rising to the

challenge to press ahead with the CBF strategy and to drive the third key performance indicator, 'More Up When Up'.

The conference concluded with a clear mission for the next two years – to help drive Singapore's next phase of growth, focusing on transforming the economy to withstand the stiff global competition for investments and jobs.

HARI RAYA, A SEASON OF GIVING



One of the most celebrated occasions in the SOS calendar is the Hari Raya Celebration. For the Muslim members of SOS, the joyous occasion marks the culmination of Ramadhan, a holy month of fasting and symbolises personal victory, purification and renewal.

The recent SOS Hari Raya Celebration provided just the setting for meaningful gatherings to take place – the sharing of good things, the forging of family ties and the renewing of community spirit.

Held at the Marina Mandarin Singapore on Friday 2 October 2009, the event saw some 396 members and their families, as well as SOS staff turning up in full force like one big family gathering. Many chose to wear their traditional best to mark the special occasion – men in their baju melayu and women in their quintessential baju kurung, in an assortment of colours commonly associated with Islam such as green, yellow or gold.

Residents from the Jamiyah Children's Home, St Theresa's Home and Ramakrishna Mission Boys' Home had every reason to feel special at the dinner. The event wasn't all about eating and celebrating. Invited guests from the three homes received green packets and goodie bags, presented on behalf of the union by the Guest-of-Honour, Mr Yeo Guat Kwang, MP for Aljunied GRC.

The presentation of green packets and goodie bags have become a common feature in SOS festival events, which also include entertainment, games and lucky draw.



RAZZLE-DAZZLE DEEPAVALI CELEBRATIONS



SOS treated their members to a spicy Deepavali party at the Holiday Inn Parkview. The party on Friday 23 October 2009 saw a large turnout of more than 170 attendees who knew how to rev up the atmosphere.

A dinner buffet energised everyone for the programmes that followed. While the tempo of things picked up with some great banghra and belly dance performances accompanied by the

rhythmic tunes of the tabla, the stunt acts kept everyone at the edge of their seats.

The razzle-dazzle and glitz got everyone into the mood. Attractive lucky draw prizes of NTUC FairPrice vouchers were handed out to lucky members. The singing and laughter rang through the rest of the night as union members let their hair down.

FAITHFULLY SERVING THE COMMUNITY



The mere mention of SOS always gives a sense of gratitude to the senior residents from the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) Community Home. This is because SOS has been faithfully showing care to the elderly for AWWA, through the giving of time and gifts.

The Lunch and Leisure Session with AWWA, held at the Club@52 on 4 December 2009 was a fitting climax to a host of programmes

that SOS has organised for AWWA in 2009. Some 74 residents and two staff from the home were pleasantly surprised with a buffet lunch that was followed by a host of entertaining programmes. When it comes to belting out popular Hokkien or Cantonese tunes, the elderly can definitely out-sing the young ones. As some sang along during the karaoke session, others were seen soaking in the cheery atmosphere. Time seem to zoom rather fast when it's spent with SOS. With more than just the goodie bags in their hands, the visitors left Club@52 with yet another moment to cherish in their hearts.





Seacare Focus



ENHANCING, EXTENDING AND EXPANDING

Magnum Marine Services Pte Ltd



A year on after the merger of Seacare MarinePlus with Magnum Marine Services, Magnum Marine Services Pte Ltd (MMSPL) has anchored itself as a leading one-stop maritime support services provider with a comprehensive menu of services readily made available for all ship owners and ship managers

By providing total ship support services, MMSPL has bridged the gap and is growing strong. Mr R Chandra Segaran, Chief Executive Officer of MMSPL gave an optimistic outlook of the business: **"Our proven track record, our experienced and committed staff and our personable service are reasons why we have pulled through last year, despite the economic crunch."**

In an interview with Samudra (S), Mr Chandra Segaran (CS) shares what his plans are for MMSPL.

S: WHAT IS THE FOCUS FOR MAGNUM MARINE AND WHAT ARE ITS DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE?

CS: Our focus is to remain as a **one-stop maritime support services provider**, where we handle all aspects of our service to the sea staff, from the time they arrive at the airport to the time they board and sail with the vessel or vice versa.



This includes immigration and customs clearances; coordination of transport services; medical checkup and certification arrangements; marine certificate applications and renewals; personalised transport and booking of airline tickets.

In order to further enhance our services, MMSPL is **exploring areas of missing links or gaps** in the industry that we could fill, such as ship-shore launch services including Outer Port Limit (OPL) launches; deslopping services, laundry services; storage of crew personal effects and courier/mailling services; renewal of marine certificates on behalf of absent sea staff; supply of skilled labour; arrangement of programmes for short-stay crew and their families; manufacture of boiler suits and other personal safety gears; extending the working base beyond Singapore and ship agent services.

We intend to **collaborate with companies** which we can work with to provide some of these services and establish our base with smaller companies to provide other services. By doing that we reduce the time required to set up from ground zero.

S: WHAT ARE SOME AREAS THAT MMSPL HOPE TO IMPROVE TO MOVE FORWARD?

CS: We have identified a few areas which will strengthen our stakes. How can we better our services? The primary objective why we merged in the first place was so that we could **share our resources**, and in so doing, we expand our client base and we **save costs** by being able to offer a wider range of services under one roof at **competitive rates**. We also offer the kind of services that will help our clients save their operational costs. We are investing in the **training of our staff** to increase their expertise in their field and to boost a more service-oriented outlook.



As with all other businesses, we would like to **reward staff** who consistently deliver good quality work. When staff are given due recognition for their hard work, they will have an increased sense of ownership and satisfaction. Re-establishing and reviving our client base especially some of the businesses that we have lost a few years back is another area we hope to improve. In **understanding our clients' changing needs** we need to listen and respond accordingly.

5: WHAT IS THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE?

CS: Even though the market is in the midst of rebounding, ship owners are cautious about spending. It will take awhile for confidence to return. That being said, the challenge we face in a fast-paced and changing business climate, is the ability to move with the times. By this, I mean that we need to **innovate to meet current needs**. Our current base of customers should expand further from ship owners to reach ship managers and shipping agents. As mentioned earlier, we are looking into innovative ways to expand our marine-related services, fill the missing links and expand our work base geographically.

One of the ways we can keep up with the changes is to **provide updated equipment** such as working gears. We need to be **ready for change**. This would entail a mindset change of our staff and leaders; a fresh look at the way we do business so that we are ready to catch the wave when the market rebounds.



Anchored Alright

In the right position

MMSPL has anchored its position as a leading one-stop shop with a wide range of maritime support services covering:

- ship boarding services for crew matters
- crew immigration and customs clearances
- airport-ship-airport transfer for crew and families
- arrangement for medical services and aftercare for crew and their families
- attendance to crew emergency services while in-port and at OPL
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They have previously worked as seafarers which means they know and understand the needs of the ship owners and their sea staff. **Relationship with clients** have also been amicable. The personal touch in our dealings with clients has reaped repeat customers and also helped us to get more business through word-of-mouth.

SEACARE SUMMIT

Redefining the Future



"Post crisis, no more business as usual. We have to find another way to move forward. The financial crisis and the new changes will require a totally new and different approach by all. We need to think and find new ways to work, to relate, to engage and to trade with each other."

With the reiteration of these words spoken at the Apec Summit Meeting 2009, Seacare Holdings Pte Ltd Chairman Mr Kong Mun Kwong aptly set the tone for the bi-annual Seacare Summit.

Held on 26 November at Wuyishan, China, the Seacare Summit highlighted engaging discussions on the theme, Redefining the Future. Besides Mr Kong who spoke on "What's Next After the Crisis", other speakers who triggered compelling deliberations were Capt Francis Joseph, Chairman, Singapore Maritime Employers Federation (SMEF), and Mr Ake Gunnar Selander, Director, Seacare Medical Holdings Pte Ltd.

In his keynote address, Mr Kong urged the participants to explore the action plan endorsed by the 21 governments at the end of the Apec Summit 2009 and how those decisions and visions impact the future strategy of Seacare. The Apec Summit will "give a great peep into international actions in the next 1 to 2 years". Apec ministers agreed, among other decisions, to make it 25% cheaper, faster and easier to do business in the region by 2015; foster locally all inclusive growth by helping SMEs to develop in foreign markets; promote sustainable growth by reducing barriers to trade and more investment in environmental goods and services; and promote more applications of cleaner and efficient technology.

Another speaker who got the Seacare directors and managers thinking was Capt Francis Joseph who highlighted that Seacare is at the crossroad of the future. He called for bold ventures abroad such as looking at the Philippines "as a country with lots of potential and opportunities to venture





into". He suggested two key areas for business ventures – establishing a Seacare Manila Complex and an environmental-based business ventures as growth areas with focus on two key sectors i.e.: garbage disposal and management; and sewage and waste management. The next growth area and the next big wave will be in the green business.

"Re-defining the future is looking at what we have, innovating on different fronts, and taking bold actions to make things possible," said Capt Francis Joseph, who was attending the Summit with Mr Victor Lim, SMEF Vice Chairman and Mr Dennis Lim, SMEF Honorary Secretary.



Presenting a European perspective on the "Opportunities and Investing for the Upturn", Mr Ake Selander offered potential new ventures ranging from health to insurance, from pollution dispersion to property. "With the maritime industry in dire straits, it might be worthwhile looking at what ventures may be feasible and profitable ashore," he said.

The suggestions and ingenious ideas shared by the three speakers indeed offered talking points at the Summit.



"We want to create a new frontier in the way Seacare strategises and plans for the future in this challenging environment.

The keynote speakers got all of us thinking out of the box," said Mr Leow Ching Chuan, Seacare Chariman.

What followed was an absorbing and lively dialogue between the Seacare group of companies management staff and the Seacare Board of Directors. The management staff also presented their work plans at the Summit.

The SOS key officials and Industrial Relations officials who were present took the opportunity to engage the SMEF delegation. Issues that were discussed included the Seacare Maritime Training Scheme and future collaborations with shipping companies on training matters.





Photo: Courtesy of SNCF

SEAH KIAN PENG RE-ELECTED TO ICA BOARD

The International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) General Assembly couldn't have come at a more appropriate time when it convened in Geneva, Switzerland from 16 to 20 November 2009. Bringing together some 800 delegates, the theme "Global Crisis – Co-operative Opportunity", defined the future directions for the co-operative movement around the world.

Among the 20-strong Singaporean contingent to the ICA General Assembly, headed by Mr Chan Tee Seng, Chairman, Executive Council of the Singapore National Co-operative Federation (SNCF), was Seacare Co-operative Ltd Group Senior Manager, Ms Jacquelyn Lam, who is also the Chairperson for SNCF Youth Committee.

Ms Lam's exposure and experience in co-operative work with Seacare allowed her the opportunity to network with fellow conference delegates from around the world and to learn from them.

One of the key highlights of the ICA General Assembly was the re-election of Mr Seah Kian Peng to the global Board of the International Co-operative Alliance (ICA) for a new four-year term from 2009 to 2013.

Mr Seah, the Managing Director (Group Business) of NTUC Fairprice Co-operative Limited and a Member of Parliament became the first Singaporean in ICA's 112 year history to be elected to the ICA Board when he was bestowed with the honour in 2005. ICA, an independent non-government association serves 233 member organisations from 89 countries and represents more than 800 million individuals worldwide. Mr Seah's re-election into a second

term is a strong endorsement of his leadership and passion for the co-operative movement on the national and international level.

In congratulating Mr Seah, Mr Leow Ching Chuan, SOS General Secretary and Seacare Co-operative Ltd Chairman said, **"SOS and Seacare salute Mr Seah for the good work that he has achieved in the co-operative movement, both locally and internationally. Mr Seah's position on the ICA Board ensures that the Asia Pacific region's voice and views continues to be heard. Although a small country, Singapore is able to take a leading and pro-active role in engaging the global co-operative movement."**

Another event that made history at the ICA General Assembly was the election of Dame Pauline Green of the United Kingdom as the ICA President, making her ICA's first woman President.

Other highlights of the General Assembly included:

- Election of a new Board of 18 members
- Keynote address by Mr Jeremy Rifkin
- Three panel sessions addressing the theme "Global Crisis – Co-operative Opportunity" – Towards a Sustainable Energy Economy, Co-operative Resilience to the Global Crisis and Climate Change and the Co-operative Response
- Five resolutions on the economic global crisis, climate change, sustainable energy and peace adopted
- ICA Rules and Bye-Laws amended
- Mr Ivano Barberini, former ICA President posthumously conferred the Rochdale Pioneer Award

The next ICA General Assembly will be held in Mexico in 2011.

DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES NO MORE

There is a big pool of women waiting to fill positions in companies, organisations or institutions. They no longer need to wait too long, with the help of Seacare Manpower Services.



Mr Lee Van Chong, Managing Director of Seacare Manpower Services said that housewives willing to make a comeback to the workforce are the right fit for positions in educational institutions such as administrative assistants, laboratory assistants, teacher assistants and librarians. **"Many schools require part-time staff. During school holidays, or lull periods, the employees get some time to spend with the school-going children. Many women who approach us like this arrangement."**



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The Scandinavian
And Singaporean
Experiences
On Enhancing
Productivity
With Work-Life
Innovations

Seacare Manpower Services has been tapping on this pool of women since it was approached by the NTUC Women's Development Secretariat (WDS) to access the Flexi-Works! Fund. For their swift and proactive efforts in responding to the Government and labour movement's call to recruit new workers on part-time and flexible work arrangement and create jobs for the mature workers, Seacare Manpower became one of the companies to receive grants under the Flexi-Works! Programme as well as the Advantage Scheme.

Seacare Manpower scored so well in its efforts that for the first time, they were among eleven companies that were showcased in a special publication called "Work! Live! Play!", featuring companies that already have work life innovations put to practice.

The book which was launched by NTUC Deputy Secretary-General and WDS Director Mdm Halimah Jacob, was presented to Seacare Manpower Services' Manager Ms Sulena Supaat on 28 October 2009 during a special presentation ceremony.

The publication which hopes to encourage women to return to the workforce and companies to hire them on their merit, also looked at how the Scandinavian countries are able to achieve a high birth rate and a high female employment rate. Work-life harmony, which largely advocates flexibility in the workplace, has been high on the Scandinavian countries' agenda. This is a major reason why these countries' fertility rates are also significantly higher than Singapore's. Therefore, creating an environment for female employees to enjoy a better balance between work and life is an important step that employers in Singapore must take in order to attract and retain more female talent in the workforce. Flexi-Works! which allows a woman to divide her hours to earn an income and look after her family and home is the answer to the future.

Is it possible then for housewives or matured women to find work that could meet both the career and family expectations equally? We say yes... with the help of advocates such as Seacare Manpower Services.



"Creating jobs is the mission of Seacare Manpower. We are honoured for being recognised as a champion for creating job opportunities for women."

Mr Lee Van Chong, Managing Director, Seacare Manpower Services Pte Ltd

The Flexi-Works!, an initiative by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency and the National Trades Union Congress offers a grant of up to \$100,000 to support a company's efforts in the recruitment of workers on part-time or flexible work arrangements. The programme was first launched in 1 January 2008. It has since been enhanced and extended to run for another year from 1 March 2009 to 31 March 2010.



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