

NMP Olsen stands her ground

She says her Seoul commitment was made 2 months ago, before swearing-in date was known

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FOR close to two weeks, a debate about her raged on – in the news and letters pages of the newspapers and on forums on the Internet.

Accusations of being irresponsible, of putting money above cause, and of insincerity in serving were thrown at her – all because she missed her parliamentary swearing-in ceremony on Jan 17.

But while some would have crumbled under the pressure, Nominated MP Eunice Olsen found strength from it.

Speaking to TODAY after a youth dialogue session on volunteerism on Friday, the 27-year-old singer and active volunteer said: "I stand by what I did. It was about honouring a commitment that I made. A commitment is a commitment. Whether I have made my commitment to other people or to people in my country, both have to be honoured."

The political science and philosophy graduate and former beauty queen was amiable and forthright when pressed for her comments on the brouhaha.

In response to critics who questioned her priorities, she said: "Before they make a judgement, they should try to find out what the facts were. The fact is that I only knew about the date of my swearing-in on

the night of the President's Address.

"I had made that commitment two months ago. I wasn't going up there because of money. I wasn't even paid to do the gig, it was more like a favour.

"Had things been different, of course, I would have wanted to attend my swearing-in. Even when I was in Korea, I was preparing for my maiden speech."

While the criticisms stung initially, Ms Olsen – who said the words of encouragement she also received "more than made up for it" – took them in her stride, and has since "moved on".

She said: "You cannot please everybody. Everyone will have people who like and dislike them, not only me. It is just that my criticisms came out in the papers. It comes with the territory. If I cannot accept criticism, then I think I should not be in this (NMP) role."

But she could not help but feel puzzled by the attention.

"Frankly, I was thinking to myself,

You cannot control what people are thinking. If they want to criticise, there is nothing I can do about it. I am here because I feel strongly about volunteerism and affecting people's lives.

– NMP Eunice Olsen (right), when asked if she wished others would just give her a break



She even went as far as to thank her detractors, saying: "It is because of them that I am a stronger person. Whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

Things like this fuelled her conviction in what she was doing, she added.

For the Youth Volunteerism Ambassador for the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre, who has devoted much of her time to volunteering for the past four years, her pet cause is developing youth volunteerism in Singapore.

This was the topic she spoke on to over 60 students from various secondary schools at Friday's session, co-organised by a local non-

government organisation, Heartware Network, McDonald's and Southwest CDC.

Friday's session was the third in the ongoing McDonald's Youth Inspiration Series, which aims to facilitate interaction between Singaporean youth and community leaders on youth-related issues like volunteerism and school pressures.

Singapore News »



Time is GMT + 8 hours

Posted: 04 December 2005 1611 hrs

100,000 visitors expected at North East CDC's largest volunteer fair

By Hasnita A Majid, Channel NewsAsia

Some 100,000 visitors are expected at North East CDC's largest volunteer fair that will run till the end of the month.

Mayor for North East CDC Zainul Abidin Rasheed officially launched the event on Saturday evening with the light up of the tallest man-made Christmas tree in the district.

The fair hopes to bring festive cheer and remind Singaporeans of the need to give back to the community.

It will have a one-stop family hub where families can learn more about the different volunteer opportunities and services provided.

The fair, which will also have family activities, is organised by the CDC, National Volunteer Centre and Philanthropy Centre, Heartware Network and ITE Central. - CNA/ch



Time is GMT + 8 hours
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ITE, polytechnic students drive home volunteerism message on IT bus

By Asha Popatlal, Channel NewsAsia

SINGAPORE : It's a mobile IT classroom on wheels created by students for students.

The Ep-Bus, an open double decker bus classroom, will make its rounds visiting about 100 Singapore schools within a year.

But instead of seats, the bus is equipped with the latest in digital photography gadgets.

And instead of ferrying passengers, it will drive the message of volunteerism to 100,000 students.

The brainchild of ITE and polytechnic volunteers, the bus is used to teach students about IT. The students will, in turn, use those newly acquired skills to produce good photographs that will be sold. The proceeds will go to charity.

The plan is to visit about two schools weekly over a one-year period.

And Ep-Bus is already a hit with the first few schools it has visited.

Delphne Tan, a student of Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary said: "Normal classroom session is not boring but neither is it very interesting because you can't move around. You have to sit at your place and learn from the textbooks. But with this mobile classroom, you are moving around when you are learning."

"It's the communication with volunteers. When they ask you a question, you can answer in a more casual way. But if it's the teachers, we'll get scolded if we give the wrong answers," said fellow student Pratip Kumar from Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Secondary.

Although the students are obviously having a lot of fun on the mobile classroom, it took time to put it together.

The volunteers spent a year preparing it and in the process, ran across some unexpected road blocks.

Said student volunteer Shuan Neo: "Because the bus is an open roof-top concept and the LTA (Land Transport Authority) says there is the weight problem - sometimes when you turn the bus, it might overturn."

"And the number of people you can seat inside. These are some of the regulations we had to tackle and resolve. For example, if the bus moves, what happens to the printer inside."

The bus will also be travelling to Malaysia with student volunteers to take part in Malaysia's National Day celebrations.

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志愿服务展由东北社理会、全国志愿服务与慈善中心、志愿团体“心伴工程”(Heartware Network)与中部工艺教育学院(ITE Central)联办，举行到本月31日，除为社区增添节庆气氛，也希望能鼓励居民更积极参与社区活动，从不同层面帮助弱势群体。

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