


Heartland Heroes
SECDC

When the Going Gets Tough, the Tough Gets Going

With the current economic downturn, many residents are finding it difficult to cope with their living needs. However, there are still many resilient individuals such as Mr Vincent Khoo, who is set to ride out the storm by shouldering two jobs to provide a better life for his family.



Mr Khoo has been working as a property assistant since November 2008, and is applying the new skills that he learnt.
relevant skills before embarking on his new job.

"This job helps ease my financial burdens. With a higher salary now, I am better able to support my family. Although I still teach yoga part time, I do not have to rely solely on one source of income."

- Mr Khoo, 51

A leg up for those who need it

The Government recently unveiled a battery of measures to ease the financial pain for recession-scarred Singaporeans. Radha Basu and Gwendolyn Ng sum up the key schemes and the groups being helped.

FOR THE RETRENCHED

Better prospects with 90% subsidised training

IN MARCH last year, when the economy was still humming, Madam Alice Lye, 55, lost her job when the factory she had worked in for more than a decade relocated overseas.

Unemployed and with only an O-level certificate, she drifted from interview to interview for eight months, with no success.

Then after an interview at a job fair, she was selected to take part in a course on the basics of building and property management to train staff for vacancies in the property sector.

She was offered that elusive job even before the 3½-week course was over and now works in property maintenance at Changi Airport, where she supervises the cleanliness of toilets.

Her course cost \$3,185 but 90 per cent was subsidised by the Skills Programme for Upgrading and Resilience (Spur), a \$600 million scheme to train workers. Her employer paid the rest.

"My husband is a retiree and my earlier job paid only \$980 per month," said the mother of three grown-up children. "There is no way I could have afforded the course without government help."

Today, she earns a four-figure salary. "I don't want to depend on my children, so the training was very useful. It helped me get the job."

WHAT'S NEW IN THE BUDGET

- Spur helps not only jobless workers, but also those employed at companies which wish to make use of the downturn to upgrade their skills.
- The scheme will pay for: up to 90 per cent of the course fees and up to 90 per cent of a worker's salary but this is capped at \$6.80 an hour.
- The low-skilled will be paid \$4 for every hour they are trained, and the higher-skilled, up to \$1,000 a month.
- Workers also have more than 800 courses to opt for - significantly up from 150 last year.



Madam Lye got a better job at Changi with the help of training sponsored by Spur.
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