

Students participate in Singapore's first #SgGirlsTakeover

- Girls from Springfield Secondary School stepped into the shoes of an ambassador, a theatre company founder, TV news anchor, and a chief commercial officer, among others, for a day.
- Seven women who hold prominent positions of leadership in Singapore mentored the students as they experienced the nuances, challenges and opportunities of their selected careers.

Singapore, 6th February 2020

14 upper secondary school girls from Springfield Secondary School participated in the first #SgGirlsTakeover programme today – a unique opportunity for young girls to get a first-hand experience of leadership from women breaking boundaries in various sectors in Singapore.

Jointly organised by the British High Commission and the High Commission of Canada in Singapore, the programme saw the upper secondary students spend a day with an assigned mentor – each a woman at the top of her profession in sectors including government, business, the media, civil society and the arts.

The mentors for this year's programme are: Her Excellency Kara Owen (British High Commissioner to Singapore), Her Excellency Lynn McDonald (High Commissioner of Canada), Georgette Tan (President of United Women Singapore), Dr Sun Sun Lim (NMP and Faculty Head at SUTD), Christina Gao (Chief Commercial Officer at Connected Freight Shell, and Women of the Future Southeast Asia award winner), Sharanjit Leyl (News Presenter and Producer at BBC) and Tracie Pang (Artistic Director at Pangdemonium Productions).

The programme, inspired by Plan International's #GirlsTakeover movement held on International Day of the Girl each year, is aimed at building self-confidence in young girls and empowering them to aspire to taking on leadership roles themselves.

A recent study found that only 29% of senior management roles globally were held by women. In 2018, only 16.8% of CEOs in the Asia Pacific region were women and one of the main reasons for this was found to be the lack of female representation in still male-dominated career paths and sectors.

The #SgGirlsTakeover is designed to help girls aspire to leadership roles in their future careers by exposing them to strong and positive female role models. Each of the mentors invited to participate in the programme were selected not only for being at the top of their profession but also for being strong advocates of breaking gender-based stereotypes to achieve success.

Her Excellency Lynn McDonald, High Commissioner of Canada, said:

We are thrilled to work with Springfield Secondary School and the British High Commission on this landmark initiative.

Canada is deeply committed to the empowerment of women and girls globally and we hope that through #SgGirlsTakeover, these 14 young women will be inspired by a sense of possibility and feel empowered to become leaders as they choose their career paths.

Mrs Mabel Leong, Principal of the Springfield Secondary School, said:

SgGirlsTakeover programme is a great opportunity to expose our Springfielders to, especially in places of work where as a teenager, they will not have the opportunity to see nor experience.

The programme matched 7 pairs of girls with 7 mentors allowing them to get a glimpse of their hosts' profession. The girls had the chance to not only learn about the technical aspects of their hosts' work but also took the time to understand the personal leadership journey of their mentor, the challenges they had to overcome to reach where they are today, and the importance of authentic leadership.

Over the course of the day, the students stepped into the shoes of their mentors and got a first-hand experience of what it takes to play that role on a daily basis – from making executive decisions as High Commissioners for the Day to understanding the ticketing processes for theatre productions.

Some were tasked at making posters for display at the United Women Singapore display at the Singapore Science Centre while others tried their hand at designing tools for eldercare at SUTD and understanding the logistics operations over at Shell.

British High Commissioner, Her Excellency Kara Owen, shared her own leadership journey with the girls accompanying her for the day. Ms Owen said:

It was a privilege to have such smart, funny and brave girls with us today – we put them in the position of being High Commissioner and asked them to make decisions and give their opinions. No small ask for two 15 year olds!

It was great to see our world through their eyes and learn what's important to them. I hope that by showing the range of work we do in government – whether for the UK or Singapore, we gave them food for thought on the multiplicity of opportunities that lie ahead for them.

Participants of the #SGGirlsTakover programme held on Feb 6, 2020

The day wrapped up with a tour of Singapore's Parliament House where the teenagers learnt about the history and traditions of the Parliament, its functions as well as about the women and men who helped shaped the nation.

The students came away from the programme inspired to follow their dreams. Said one of the participating teenagers:

I'm not the kind of person who is comfortable stepping into the limelight because it scares me but after meeting the mentors, who showed me how it can be done, I want to be like them. Someday, I also want to be a role model to others and tell them that no one can stop you from what you are doing or what you want to do someday. You just have to go for it!

Mrs Mabel Leong said:

I am sincerely grateful to all the volunteers of this programme whom despite their busy schedules have taken time to take our girls under their wings for a day to let them observe how women can lead a team or helm a project and confidently enjoying it.

This will definitely open up a broader view of how women can lead shoulder to shoulder with their team making the society a better place for all. All can and will contribute when we put our mind and will to it. Thank you for inviting Springfield to come on board #SgGirlsTakeover!