

Speaking up for Singapore Voice Day

Event aims to get people thinking about vocal health and forming good voice habits

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By Leslie Kay Lim

Four years ago, voice coach Jessica Seet was approached by a university lecturer in tears. The teacher had almost lost her voice and was terrified she might have to give up her profession.

Ms Seet, in her 40s, recommended a few lifestyle changes, such as drinking more water and regular breathing exercises. The lecturer regained her voice and saw marked improvement within a week.

Ms Seet said such incidents spurred her into bringing World Voice Day to Singapore this year.

Celebrated every April 16 in different parts of the world since 1999, World Voice Day brings together head and neck surgeons and other voice-health professionals.

The aim of the event is to encourage people to think about their vocal health and improve or maintain good voice habits.

Creating a website for the occasion, Ms Seet compiled voice-related factoids and advice on good voice habits to put online. She said this was to celebrate the important role the voice plays in people's lives, adding: 'I want people to recognise that every one of us opens our mouth to speak... Individuals have to speak up for this precious gift.'

People commonly affected with vocal fatigue or damage include teachers, performers, broadcasters and those who rely on their voice for work.

Besides talking too much and too loudly, doctors say dietary habits and lifestyle choices such as smoking can damage a person's vocal cords.

To spread the message about Singapore Voice Day, the former broadcaster recruited television hosts such as Anita Kapoor and radio personalities to speak about the importance of voice in videos available on the website.

Singapore Voice Day co-founder Paul Mok Kan Hwei, an otolaryngologist - ear, nose and throat specialist - at Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, said the establishment of Singapore Voice Day will help voice professionals come together to discuss relevant issues and create network support.

In addition to activities that were conducted on Monday, Singapore Voice Day will have two follow-up events.

Khoo Teck Puat Hospital will host a World Voice Day symposium, a series of public lectures by voice professionals, this Saturday.

Speech therapist Kristen Linnemeyer from Khoo Teck Puat Voice Clinic, who will speak at the symposium on the benefits of vocal exercises, said some singers may experience damage caused by their normal daily speaking voice.

Voice, hearing and balance awareness will be the theme of ENT Rehabilitation Day, a related event at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, to be held next Friday.

Free laryngeal, or voicebox, examinations will be available at the event.

Said Dr Mok: 'People take their voices for granted, and a lot of people wait far too long when it comes to voice problems. Prevention is key.'

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Speech therapist Kristen Linnemeyer with Singapore Voice Day founders Paul Mok and Jessica Seet. The event ties in with World Voice Day, celebrated every April 16 in different parts of the world since 1999. - ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN

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- 12:05 PM** Woodlands library launches Asian Children's Literature collection
- 11:16 AM** Singapore to host large summit on waste management in July
- 9:34 AM** Enhancing help to reach needy families
- 6:00 AM** Ex-China Sky director 'used wrong process'
- 6:00 AM** Top 29 pupils head for the Big Spell on April 28
- 6:00 AM** Budget carrier Scoot to have 4 seat options
- 6:00 AM** **Speaking up for Singapore Voice Day**
- 6:00 AM** Are we sacrificing safety for beauty?
- 6:00 AM** Axed swimming club president fights back
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- 6:00 AM** CCTVs to curb piracy at more cinemas
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