

Lifestyle

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Work Passion

Ask about Singapore's report card on animal kindness and Andrea shakes her head.

"Gandhi says the greatness of a nation can be judged by the way it treats its animals," she notes. "From here, I say we can certainly improve a bit more. I wish we can have more enforcement powers to protect animal rights."

The only child in her family, Andrea grew up with animals as companions. She had lots of hamsters – "my first experience with animal care and I realized they don't do well in cages together" – as well as chicks and dogs during her childhood.

The Buddhist's compassion for animals stayed with her through adulthood. Working in the hospitality and performing arts fields, he also found time to volunteer at the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA).

"Volunteering with SPCA led me to think about what I really want to do in life. Generally, what gets me worked up is animal abuse including laboratory testing for household products." Said Andrea, who tries not only buy from companies that don't practice animal testing.

"I had heard of ACRES and their undercover work. I identified with their aims and decided to email ACRES"

Andrea became ACRES' first full-time campaign officer in August this year, as part of its expansion plans in Asia. Her job scope includes the managing of campaigns like ZooCheck and developing relationships with key stakeholders.

"ACRES conducts regular undercover checks in Zoo Negara in Kuala Lumpur, Zoo Taiping in Perak, Zoo Melaka as well as the Singapore Zoo. We would present the reports to the zoo managements so they can make the necessary improvements.

"People usually thinks we are an aggressive, extremist group but we believe in partnerships. We realize that a lot of people don't do things intentionally and are willing to change when informed."

Besides road shows, persuading Traditional Chinese Medicine halls against the sale of endangered species' body parts is under Andrea's purview too. Since the launch of the 'ACRES & STOC Endangered Species-Friendly TCM Labeling Scheme' by ACRES and the Singapore TCM Organisations Committee, some 300 medicine halls have agreed not to sell tiger, rhino and bear products.

"There is no scientific proof to the health benefits of consuming animal parts like bear bile and tiger penis. But there are over 50 herbal alternatives to them, like bai xing pi (dittany bark) for detoxifying purposes, and long dan cao (Chinese gentian) for clearing liver fire," notes Andrea.

Working on things that Andrea loves comes with a hefty price tag. Formerly earning \$3200 a month in a museum, her current pay is less than one-third that amount.

“Passion, passion,” she says with a weak smile. “I am not a shopaholic or anything like that. So Its not a big loss.”