

PrimeTime Member Spotlight

July 2008

Each month *Connections* talks to a PrimeTime member to find out more about who they are, what they do, and their association with PrimeTime.



This month we spotlight

Hilary Galea
Director
at HJG Project Management

Personal talk ...

Connections: Where are you from originally, and how long have you been in Singapore?

Hilary: I'm from the UK, and have been living in Singapore for five years.

Connections: Have you lived in other foreign countries? If so where?

Hilary: Before moving to Singapore we lived in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for four years (I also lived in Penang for three years during the 1960s). Other than that, I spent a year in Oregon, USA in my early 20s, and a year backpacking – mainly to the US, Australia and Asia – in my late 20s.

Connections: What brought you to Singapore?

Hilary: The main reason for our move here was my husband's job, but we were also attracted to Singapore by the excellent international schools. For me, another important factor was that it would be considerably easier for me to work in Singapore compared to Malaysia.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about living here?

Hilary: I love the climate and the opportunities for short breaks to amazing places which, from Europe, would necessarily be extravagant major holidays. Another benefit is a much stronger sense of integration with the community here (due largely to the ease of working in Singapore), which I think is important when you live away from your own country for a long time.

Connections: What are your interests and hobbies?

Hilary: I've recently developed a greater interest in photography and love going to Sungei Buloh Nature Reserve and other coastal parks and taking photographs of Singapore's wildlife. (I'm not so good with human portraits!). I enjoy discovering the lesser-known corners of Singapore and finding new places to shop, eat and browse. I am particularly interested in Singapore's architectural heritage – especially Chinese and British colonial buildings.

Connections: Have you had any particularly interesting experiences you would like to share with us?

Hilary: Hmm. That's a difficult one. I'm finding so many things interesting at the moment. Perhaps it's my age! Last year I finally made it to Luang Prabang in Laos, which had been on my "to do" list for several years. I found the extraordinary mix of French and Asian cultures very interesting and the town itself was everything I'd hoped for: a photographer's dream and one of the most serene places I've ever been to.

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Connections: Which are your favourite restaurants/ shops/ places to go to?

Hilary: Apart from the places already mentioned, I have been delighted with the burst of restaurant activity in our neck of the woods (close to Turf City). Having Picotin within walking distance is great and we have recently discovered Mimolette and Rider's Café, which both have lovely "green" outlooks, far from the City's hustle and bustle. I love browsing in good book shops – but wish Singapore had a few more eclectic offerings. It's a huge shame that Galerie Cho Lon has closed!

Connections: What one thing would you like to accomplish in your lifetime?

Hilary: Feeling that I've made a worthwhile contribution to the world and earned my place here. And then perhaps writing a book about it!

Professional talk ...

Connections: Please tell us about your business.

Hilary: Soon after arriving in Singapore I set up as a freelance editor and have since enjoyed working on a wide variety of projects including business books, novels, corporate newsletters, internal communications, magazines and, of course, PrimeTime's e-newsletter *Connections*.

Connections: What did you do before you started your own business?

Hilary: I started my career in the advertising industry in London, first as a PA and then as an account manager. This was in the 1980s – without a doubt the most fun decade to be in advertising (i.e. before it became too serious!). I moved across to Graphic Design in my late 20s and started to become more involved in writing and editing, which has remained my real love ever since.

Connections: What were the toughest challenges you've faced as an entrepreneur with your own business?

Hilary: My toughest challenge is staying focussed and managing my time properly! Working mainly from home has its advantages, but I am all too easily distracted – by birds in the garden begging to be photographed, children begging to be fed, friends begging to go walking at the Botanical Gardens, etc. etc.

Connections: What do you enjoy most about having your own business?

Hilary: As above! The flexibility to do all those things and also to work around my children's school hours and holidays.

Connections: Have any of the PrimeTime programs helped you in starting or growing your business?

Hilary: Asha Dixit's presentation to the Small Business Group about managing your own business was incredibly useful. But perhaps the most helpful thing about belonging to PrimeTime has just been the confidence boost it's given me, through meeting other women facing the same challenges and realising I can do it.

Connections: Any advice for those thinking of starting their own businesses in Singapore?

Hilary: Just do it. Singapore makes it so easy to follow your dream; if you don't do it here you're unlikely to do it anywhere. My own business is very small and simple to run, but as a married mum who has only recently regained some real time for herself, being able to work and still be here for my family has made small business ownership the perfect solution.

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PrimeTime talk ...

Connections: When did you join PrimeTime and how did you find out about it?

Hilary: I joined PrimeTime about six months after arriving in Singapore, having heard about it first from Chris Vidal at KC Dat when she came to give me my 'new-to-Singapore chat' and then as a recommendation from a headhunter.

Connections: Which PrimeTime subgroups do you belong to?

Hilary: I am registered for all but Golf and HR I think. I fairly regularly attend Marketing and WineTime events and have also been along to Book Group, Small Business Group, and Arts Group events.

Connections: Do you volunteer at PrimeTime ? If so, in what areas have you become involved?

Hilary: My first volunteer position at PrimeTime was as the producer of the 2nd Thursday Flyer. I went on to edit the newsletter for about four years and served in two Board Positions as Assistant Secretary and Secretary. More recently I was the Communications Chair for the Village Bank fundraising initiative. As a complete change, I am currently helping Laurence Basford organise WineTime events while she takes a break to look after her new baby boy.

Connections: What do you personally feel are the benefits of being a PrimeTime member?

Hilary: I have benefited personally and professionally from meeting some inspiring and supportive women at PrimeTime. I also enjoy the opportunities PrimeTime offers through its subgroups and programmes to learn about areas that I otherwise know little about. For example, I attended a very educational Art Group event this week where Francesca Rathbone talked to us about art appreciation.

Connections: Which was the most interesting or inspiring PrimeTime event you've attended?

Hilary: At an Outreach meeting I attended back in 2005, I first learned about microcredit and The Village Bank Programme and have been inspired by the concept ever since. Being part of the Village Bank fundraising committee for the recent Casino Royale Night was a great experience.

Thank you Hilary!