

MIND
your
BODY

Fit & Fab

Freelance emcee Zhang Tingjun uses adventure to raise funds for charity. **Joan Chew** reports

What do you do to keep fit?

I'm pretty lazy, so I trick myself into working out through a combination of routine, variety and fun, which also keeps me from getting bored.

I play netball, go mountain biking, run trails, swim and embark on the occasional crazy adventure.

To keep things fun, I mostly work out with friends or in the rain. I set myself little challenges when I exercise alone.

My challenge last November was to find a "treasure" on each run for my baby niece. She is now the proud owner of an assortment of random leaves and flowers.

I find routine helpful too. For the last 14 years, my netball club has been training every Friday evening, so it's pretty much programmed into my brain that come Friday evening, I'll be hitting the courts.

How do you combine exercise with social work?

While routine, variety and fun make for a good workout, they don't come close to the satisfaction of completing an adventure for a good cause.

As a co-founder of non-profit organisation The Chain Reaction Project (TCRP), I took part in an adventure race last February, which involved a climb up Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, followed by a bike ride and marathon around the 5,895m peak.

I also raced through the villages of Timor Leste, on bicycle and on foot, in the 2010 Dili City Of Peace marathon.

These are not just about reaching the summit of a mountain or completing an endurance race. At the end of the day, they are about the people – women, children and lives we hope to improve through the awareness-building and fund-raising efforts.

Our challenge to all who join us is not just to have the adventure of a lifetime, but also to be catalysts for change.

Has there ever been a time when you were not fit and fab?

Ironically, that "time" would be now. My fittest days were back when I was a national netball player training six days a week.

After dedicating 10 years to the national team, I decided it was time to pursue other interests and retired from competitive netball in 2009.

I still miss it though.

It was one of the best times of my life. It's part of the reason I look for exciting and adrenaline-pumping ways to stay fit.

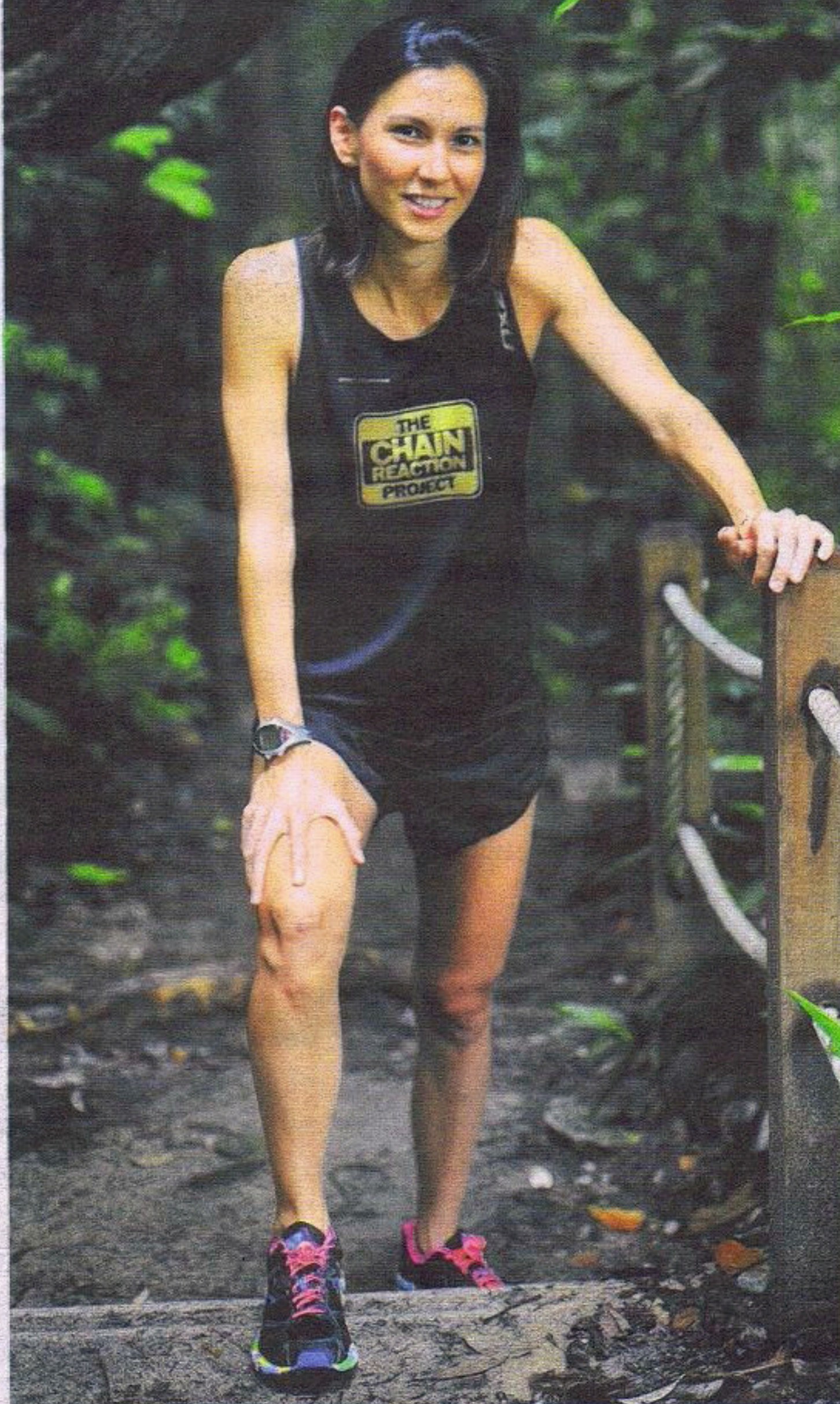
It's also why simply going for a run isn't enough for me. I always feel like there needs to be more of a reason behind it.

This is why TCRP is so good for me. It gives me a reason to train for and friends to train with.

What is your diet like?

When I was a child, I was made to eat vegetables and drink three glasses of full cream milk a day by my mother.

Keeping fit for charity

BIO
BOX

ZHANG TINGJUN

AGE: 29**WEIGHT:** 60kg**HEIGHT:** 1.78m

ABOUT HER: The freelance emcee spent a decade as a national netball player before retiring and co-founding a non-profit organisation in July 2009 with three other women.

The organisation, called The Chain Reaction Project (TCRP), uses adventure as a platform to raise funds and increase awareness for different causes around the world.

To date, it has a network of over 1,000 people and raised more than US\$100,000 (S\$125,198) for its adopted charities.

These include a malnutrition rehabilitation centre for children in Timor Leste.

Ms Zhang is now training for TCRP's upcoming project in Davao, the Philippines, in April.

She will be embarking on the second international Mount Apo Boulder Face Challenge, a 24-hour adventure race which comprises mountain biking, bouldering (a style of rock climbing), water tubing (an outdoor sport in which people ride inner-tubes down a river) and running.

The initiative will raise funds and promote awareness for TCRP's adopted charity for this year, Visayan Forum Foundation, which fights human trafficking in the Philippines.

If you would like to take part in this challenge or a three-day hike up Mount Apo, visit www.thechainreactionproject.com.

ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG

It may be because she is American; both my father and myself are Singaporeans.

Fortunately, I am now master of my own diet.

I basically eat whatever I like, but in moderation. And, yes, my diet includes vegetables.

What are your indulgences?

I like spicy Chipster potato chips a lot. Fortunately, I come from a big family, so even when I try to finish a packet by myself, everybody steals my chips and I never get a chance to.

What do you do to relax and maintain a healthy work-life balance?

That same family who steals my chips also steals most of my free time.

I've got three sisters and a baby niece, so I spend a lot of time hanging out with them.

That aside, I also love watching movies, reading and scuba diving.

What are the three most important things in your life?

Family, religion and friends, because all three are my source of inspiration, comfort, strength, humility and humour.

What is your secret to looking fabulous?

When I tell other people they look fabulous, they almost always pay me a bigger compliment in return.

Do it enough times and people start to believe you really are fabulous. You don't even have to work out.

Would you go for plastic surgery?

I'm not opposed to it. There are a million reasons why people go for plastic surgery.

If they do and come out with not just a boost to their boobs, but also to their self-esteem, good for them.

All I'm saying is don't get addicted to or rely on plastic surgery to feel good about yourself. It's too expensive.

Do you think you're sexy?

More sexy now that the one-sided, under-cut haircut I had on a whim last year has more or less grown out. I had the insides of the left side of my hair shaved, but the top layer of my hair kept long. This was a style spotted on American pop star Rihanna in 2010. I don't know what I was thinking then.

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