

SPEECH BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM, CHAIRMAN, SINGAPORE PRESS HOLDINGS AT THE CHEQUE PRESENTATION CEREMONY TO 20 CHARITABLE ORGANISATIONS FOR THE ELDERLY HELD ON TUESDAY, 5 AUGUST 2008 AT 3.00 PM AT THE SPH NEWS CENTRE AUDITORIUM

Ms Jennie Chua
Chairman
Community Chest

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very good afternoon to all.

Today we mark the 5th year of SPH's annual group giving to 20 charitable organisations. I am very happy to welcome all the beneficiaries who have joined us on this special occasion.

According to a report by the Ministerial Committee on Ageing last year, one in five Singaporeans will be 65 years old and above by the year 2030. And by 2050, Singapore is projected to be the fourth oldest country in the world.

As our population ages, it brings about challenges such as providing affordable healthcare and eldercare services to promote active ageing. Like everyone else, the elderly should continue to live in the comfort of their own homes as part of the family and the community, where they can enjoy the company of their loved ones.

Some of the charity programmes that we are supporting today, such as the SWAMI Home Nursing Service, Home Nursing Foundation, HCA Hospice Home Care Centre and the Homecare Assist Programme by the Changi General Hospital, provide nursing services for the needy in their own homes. The services they provide include wound care, changing of feeding tubes, administration of injections and simple physiotherapy.

Take for example 67-year-old Mr Ng Yeo Soo, who has been receiving help from the SWAMI Home Nursing Service since 2001. Mr Ng, who lives alone, is not married and has no contact with his siblings. He suffers from hypertension, diabetes, vertigo, a non-healing ulcer on his right foot, among other ailments. All these medical conditions have made it difficult for him to work. The SWAMI Home Nursing team visits him at home three times a week to care for his wound, monitor his pressure and blood glucose, and supervises his medication. SWAMI also arranges for a doctor to visit Mr Ng once every two months to check on his medical condition, and supply him with the necessary medication.

Because of Mr Ng's financial circumstances, he is not required to pay for the medical care and attention which have helped to stabilise his condition.

Apart from healthcare needs, it is important for senior citizens to maintain an active lifestyle and develop meaningful relationships to stay alert mentally.

The Lions Befrienders programme recruits and trains volunteers to befriend the elderly. Mr Heng Boon Choon was suffering from dementia when he was first introduced to the programme in 2002. The 68 year old was unable to recognise people around him and would often lose his way. The Lions Befrienders arranged for a volunteer to visit him regularly at home. They also arranged for him to participate in outdoor activities and outings where he could meet and socialise with other people. With the social and psycho-emotional support, Mr Heng's condition has since improved.

As we celebrate our 43rd National Day this week, let us not forget the sacrifices and hard work that our senior citizens have put in to make Singapore what it is today. Our appreciation also goes to the staff and volunteers of these 20 charitable organisations who have helped care for them.

As a responsible corporate citizen, SPH is driven by our compelling passion and strong social duty to build a better nation. Besides the financial assistance that we are giving to these charities, our colleagues from different departments will also be putting up performances to entertain our special guests today. Despite

their hectic schedules, they have set aside time to rehearse specially for this occasion. We hope that our guests will leave this place with fond memories that will help keep them going.

I trust that you will enjoy the entertainment that we have put together for you this afternoon.

Thank you.
