

7TH EDITION

SINGAPORE

PATIENT

20
21

Action Awards[®]

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The Singapore Patient Action Awards (SPAA) is jointly organised by Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH)'s Centre for Health Activation in partnership with TTSH Central Health, National Healthcare Group (NHG), National Healthcare Group Polyclinics, Institute of Mental Health and Yishun Health. It is created to acknowledge individuals and groups who have made significant and notable contributions in enhancing the healing journey of our patients – from partnering in their care journeys to give them hope and encouragement to overcoming their illnesses and getting a new lease of life.

We are grateful for the wonderful support received from 73 health and social care partners for submitting 117 nominations. In the 7th edition of SPAA, we continue to honour our invisible heroes in health and social care who have made a positive difference to the community.

They have also demonstrated exemplary qualities of care, courage, empathy, resilience, generosity of spirit, emotional and mental strength.

This year, there are 21 extraordinary individuals and groups, our highest number to date, who are acknowledged across 5 award categories:

- **Singapore Patient Caregiver Award**
- **Singapore Patient Advocate Award**
- **Singapore Patient Support Group / Volunteer Group Award**
- **Singapore Patient Engagement Initiative Award**
- **Singapore Community Engagement Initiative Award (NEW!)**

AWARD CATEGORIES



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

This award honours the caregiver who has demonstrated strength, resilience and unwavering dedication in caring for another person who requires support in physical, mental and/or social well-being, amidst health and/or social care challenges. The caregiver takes on the role as an active care partner with the health and/or social care team, to overcome these hurdles with a positive and resilient attitude.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD

This award honours an individual who is very passionate about advocating meaningful causes and has contributed significantly to improving care delivery in partnership with the health and/or social care team/institution. Being personally involved in the care journey as a patient, a volunteer and/or a caregiver, this individual uses his/her personal experience to provide valuable learning for health and/or social care professionals.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD

This award honours an outstanding patient support group or volunteer group that has led the way in helping others in need and has contributed significantly to improving health and/or social care delivery.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

This award recognises an outstanding patient engagement project or initiative that is in collaboration with the health care team, intermediate and long-term care teams (ILTC) and/or social service agency; contributing to the improvement of care for patients and/or caregivers. Only projects or initiatives involving active participation from patients, caregivers and/or volunteers, together with the health and/or social care team may apply.



SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

This award honours the work of successful neighbourhood-based initiatives that have contributed significantly to the improvement of care and overall well-being of residents and the local community/neighbourhood.

DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF JUDGES



DR BENJAMIN KOH

Chairperson, SPAA Judging Panel
Deputy Secretary (Development)
Ministry of Health

Dr Benjamin Koh is currently the Deputy Secretary (Development) in the Ministry of Health (MOH). He oversees issues relating to infrastructure and manpower development for the healthcare sector in Singapore, as well as matters relating to ageing and population health.



DR WONG LOONG MUN

Chief, Care Integration & Operations Division &
Customer Experience Department
Customer Group
Agency for Integrated Care

Dr Wong Loong Mun is the Chief, Care Integration and Operations Division & Customer Experience Department at Agency for Integrated Care. He holds a doctorate in social psychology.

Under his portfolio, he oversees the referral management team, case management team and customer experience team. He has been in aged care field for more than 20 years, having set up a national referral management programme in 2001, previously known as the Integrated Care Services.

DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF JUDGES



DR TAN KOK LEONG

Family Physician, Senior Consultant

Head

Department of Continuing and Community Care

Tan Tock Seng Hospital

Dr Tan Kok Leong's interests are in the areas of post-discharge care and working alongside community partners in the holistic management of the patients in the community. He is also involved in postgraduate trainings and teachings in Family Medicine.

As the Clinical Lead for the Transitional & Community Care work-stream for Community Health, he assists in planning and implementation works to improve the physical, mental, and social well-being of the residents in the Central Zone of Singapore.



MR LIM HOCK LENG

Chief Operating Officer

Institute of Mental Health

Mr Lim Hock Leng guides and directs the hospital operations, encompassing ambulatory services, support services, allied health and education and research services at the Institute of Mental Health (IMH). As IMH's Quality Service Manager, he also facilitates strategic hospital taskforces and improvement projects.

Mr Lim is a member of NHG Senior Management and is actively involved in projects and initiatives at the NHG level. Prior to joining IMH, Mr Lim drove the strategic intent of transformation and simplification for Business Partner Organisations in Growth Market Units around the world and the ease of doing business with IBM for Business Partners.

DISTINGUISHED PANEL OF JUDGES



MS TOK SHOU WEE

Volunteer Programme Manager
Dover Park Hospice

Ms Tok Shou Wee joined Dover Park Hospice as the Volunteer Programme Manager in 2014. Working with 400 active volunteers and engaging them in a variety of activities to meet the needs of the Hospice and patients, she is often invited by community care and social service agencies to share her experience, as well as being a guest lecturer at Nanyang Polytechnic.

In 2017, Shou Wee played a role in Dover Park Hospice's win in the President's Volunteerism and Philanthropy Awards (Non-Profit Category) organised by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre. Prior to joining Dover Park Hospice, Shou Wee was a teacher with the Ministry of Education and taught Humanities at a secondary school. Shou Wee graduated with Bachelor of Arts from NUS in 1997 and obtained her Postgraduate Diploma in Education, NIE (NTU) in 2006.

CONGRATULATIONS

TO ALL SINGAPORE PATIENT ACTION AWARDS RECIPIENTS



The Singapore Patient Action Awards recognises exceptional individuals and groups across all health and social care institutions in Singapore.

They have stared adversity in its face and overcame it, time and time again. They are an inspiration to the community for demonstrating exceptional qualities of resilience, compassion, love and kindness.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MS RIMA RASIF
53 YEARS OLD

The Purest Love Found in a Friendship

“There is no such thing as the best caregiver, we do it out of our hearts.”

Caregiving for her childhood best friend, Ms Amina, was never seen as an obligation to Ms Rima Rasif. Having lived together with Rima’s family since 2011, Amina has grown to be like a sister to her. Similar to caring for her family members, caregiving came naturally to Rima when Amina was diagnosed with young onset dementia in 2015.



Once a fiercely independent visual merchandiser, Amina’s life changed drastically after her diagnosis as she became fully dependent on Rima. Due to her condition, Amina would get easily irritated and agitated in crowded areas and would wake up multiple times each night. Striving to normalise Amina’s life as much as possible, Rima tried and tested various creative ways to support Amina and help her cope with her behaviours. Being a musician, Rima’s first choice was to engage Amina through music that she loved. Where another caregiver might have avoided bringing Amina to crowded areas like hawker centres altogether, Rima still brought Amina out so that she could have new experiences and outings. On those outings, Rima would let Amina listen to music through her earpiece to calm her down when she became irritated and overstimulated by the surroundings.

Caring for Amina has not been an easy journey as Rima sacrificed much of her personal time and sleep to provide the best care for her friend. Rima regularly consults staff from Apex Harmony Lodge to improve her caregiving skills and knowledge on dementia to better understand and care for Amina.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MS RIMA RASIF 53 YEARS OLD

With a strong desire to help other patients with dementia, Rima volunteers at Apex Harmony Lodge's Club MemorABLE, a dementia-friendly club where members co-create and enjoy therapeutic activities. She actively lobbied for music sing-alongs to be included into the club's programme when she realised how important and useful music was for Amina. Since the pandemic, Rima has been co-facilitating these sessions through Zoom to provide club members with a sense of comfort through these trying times.

The challenges faced in Rima's caregiving journey were never viewed as obstacles when caring for her friend. Rima wanted to be a constant source of strength to her best friend and support her in ways that a family would. With her unconditional love for Amina, it made her journey much easier.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MDM LIM HEO
71 YEARS OLD

A Mother's Unyielding Love for Her Son

'I have always tried my best to give him what he wanted, I did not think about myself.'

Mdm Lim Heo's late son, Mr Danny Tan, was diagnosed with Down's syndrome when he was born in 1988. In the earlier years, Mdm Lim and her late husband were able to engage a nanny to help look after Danny. Things changed in 1994 when Danny was diagnosed with leukemia, a cancer of his



blood and bone marrow. Both parents became the main caregivers for Danny and were his pillars of comfort and strength as they journeyed with him through his ordeals.

Life's challenges seemed never-ending for Mdm Lim. She became the sole caregiver for her son after her husband passed in 2015 due to a heart attack. The past six years were extremely difficult for Mdm Lim as she continued the caregiving journey alone while grieving. With her husband's passing, Danny lost his sense of security due to a lack of a father figure in his life. He became more temperamental and would hit his mother and throw items across the room during his outbursts. Through it all, Mdm Lim learnt to be more patient and recognised when it was time to walk away from an argument so as not to agitate her son further. She sought help from various social service agencies to learn how to better manage his temper.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MDM LIM HEO **71 YEARS OLD**

As Danny's mother, Mdm Lim wanted nothing but the best for him and to allow him to live his life to the fullest. When Mdm Lim realised that Danny was a kinesthetic learner who learnt best through physical activities and interactions, she eagerly enrolled Danny in drama and drumming lessons to pursue his interests. These moments of happiness were short-lived when Danny was diagnosed with end-stage chronic kidney disease in 2020, at the height of the pandemic.

As his mother, Mdm Lim never once thought about herself and only wanted the best for her beloved son. She persevered and continued to care for Danny wholeheartedly even till his very last breath on 22 May 2021. The selfless act of love is a strong testament of Mdm Lim's unending love for her son.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MDM ZAINAB BTE BAKAR

70 YEARS OLD

A Stranger with a Heart of Gold

“Patience above everything. With patience, even the most difficult foster child will be easy.”

Mdm Zainab Bte Bakar’s journey as a foster mother began with her daughter, who worked as a nurse and met Khai*, before he became a patient of Star PALS (Paediatric Advanced Life Support) under HCA Hospice Care. She was awestruck by him and asked her mother if they could foster him. Mdm Zainab readily agreed and immediately applied to the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) to foster the infant.



Over the span of 10 years, Mdm Zainab has provided a loving home for 10 foster children. Her story is one of extraordinary love, compassion and care, beyond blood relations. Life threw a curveball when Mdm Zainab discovered severe tightening of the muscles on Khai’s hands and feet when he was about a year old. He was afflicted with quadriplegic cerebral palsy and was unable to walk or talk. Although taking care of his condition was no easy feat, Mdm Zainab remained undeterred and stepped up to learn the necessary skills to care for his needs.

Unfortunately, his ability to swallow deteriorated and Mdm Zainab had to re-learn how to feed him through a Percutaneous Endoscopic Gastrostomy (PEG) tube, where a feeding tube is inserted directly into the stomach, instead of a nasogastric tube, which is inserted through the nose. A lot of time and effort was spent to tend to his basic needs and physically transferring Khai posed a real challenge for Mdm Zainab. With the strong support of her family, Mdm Zainab persevered on to provide the best care for Khai.

*Not his real name



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MDM ZAINAB BTE BAKAR 70 YEARS OLD

Despite only receiving a basic allowance for fostering, Mdm Zainab goes the extra mile to pay out of her own pocket to cover his huge medical expenses and costs of living. From feeding and cleaning Khai to accompanying him for his medical appointments and enrolling him in school, Mdm Zainab bore all these responsibilities willingly.

What was first given out of sympathy soon developed into love. For Mdm Zainab, Khai's smile is the greatest reward. Today, Khai has blossomed to a bubbly and lovely 17-year-old teenager who wears the brightest of smiles and greets everyone he meets. All these may not have been possible without Mdm Zainab's unconditional love as a foster parent.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MS SUHAILI BTE MAAT 49 YEARS OLD

Resilience and Sacrifice, the Essence of Caregiving

“I want to make her feel as comfortable as possible, so I dedicate myself into taking care of her.”

Ms Suhaili Bte Maat’s life took a turn six years ago when she had to take care of her aunt, Mdm Rapiah. Suhaili stepped up to become her main caregiver when Mdm Rapiah’s younger sister was diagnosed with cancer and was no longer able to care for her. Mdm Rapiah is single and has no children to be her caregiver. Presently, she has multiple medical conditions including cognitive impairment. With the severity of her conditions, she is entirely bedbound and reliant on Suhaili to look after her personal and complex care needs.



Presently, she has multiple medical conditions including cognitive impairment. With the severity of her conditions, she is entirely bedbound and reliant on Suhaili to look after her personal and complex care needs.

Suhaili’s story is the epitome of unconditional love and self-sacrifice. Not only does she bathe her aunt and change her diapers, she even goes the extra mile to pamper her with manicures. Recognising the importance of maintaining Mdm Rapiah’s mental well-being, Suhaili also makes time for Mdm Rapiah to watch her favourite shows.

In the later stages of her condition, Mdm Rapiah experienced swallowing difficulties and was advised to be fed through a nasogastric tube. Nevertheless, Suhaili chose to patiently spoon feed her aunt. Although it was more time-consuming, it gave her aunt minimal discomfort.

Suhaili showed remarkable resilience to care consistently for her aunt while undergoing a divorce. She ensured that her own financial and emotional struggles did not get in the way during her caregiving. Even when Suhaili had to return to work due to financial constraints, she chose to work part-time so that she could continue to accompany Mdm Rapiah to her medical appointments. Through Suhaili’s creativity and innovation, she started a home-based bakery to supplement her income and maximise her time at home. Suhaili never saw caring for her aunt as a burden and views it as a blessing that keeps her going even while facing her own personal difficulties.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MR WILLIAM LEE, 48 YEARS OLD
MDM WINNIE LOH, 46 YEARS OLD

A Parent's Love Knows No Boundaries

“If it is doing something willingly, that is not called sacrificing. We do it out of love.”

When their late son, Mr Raphael Lee, was diagnosed with cancer back in 2008 at the tender age of 8 months, Mr William Lee and Mdm Winnie Loh's world was never the same again. Since the first diagnosis, Raphael suffered from various cancers that culminated in his left arm amputation in his pre-teens. Through it all, Raphael stayed strong and bravely battled each cancer. Despite the many struggles, William and Winnie made numerous adjustments and sacrifices to provide the best care for Raphael until he passed away in November 2020. Their story is a beacon of hope and a source of inspiration to many.



In 2019, Winnie left her job to take care of Raphael full-time when his cancer worsened. The couple even took on morning and night shifts to ensure that the best care was provided for their son throughout the day. Their social life had to take a major back seat as caring for Raphael became their top priority. Another ordeal struck when William was diagnosed with Stage 2 colon cancer in August 2020. Both parents were very moved when Raphael told William that he wished he could bear the burden of this cancer for his father, as Raphael had more experience with cancer and chemotherapy. Despite the challenges, William and Winnie never faltered and continued to muster resilience and courage to care for Raphael throughout the years. As a strong family unit, they faced each diagnosis with determination and a positive attitude.

Recipients were unmasked as the photo was taken in their home.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MR WILLIAM LEE, 48 YEARS OLD
MDM WINNIE LOH, 46 YEARS OLD

Not only did the couple demonstrate remarkable courage and resilience in their care for their late son, the entire family also provided psychosocial support to families with newly diagnosed patients. Raphael's positivity served as a ray of hope for these patients, with the family encouraging fellow cancer patients in the ward and helping them look beyond the bleak diagnosis of cancer. William and Winnie have also been supportive of the healthcare team and always have words of encouragement for them. To them, KK Women's and Children's Hospital was like a second home where friendships with the medical staff were built and where they saw Raphael grow up.

Although it has been a year since Raphael had passed away, he continues to live on through the stories that his parents share. William and Winnie hope that with their story, they continue to inspire more people to live life more positively in the face of seemingly insurmountable challenges.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MR RICHARD ASHWORTH 67 YEARS OLD

Reciprocating the Unconditional Love of a Father

“Caregiving is a worthwhile journey for someone that you love.”

Mr Richard Ashworth has been the caregiver to his foster father, Mr John Ashworth for the past 23 years. John was first diagnosed with colon cancer in 1999, and subsequently skin cancer and severe dementia over the recent years.



When patients with dementia feel that their sense of normalcy is disrupted, they can erupt into violent outbursts that are often unpredictable. As a result, Richard has also been hit many times, and shared that the worst instance was when both his front teeth broke due to a punch.

“I have to tell myself that this disease does not belong to him, and neither does it belong to me. If he could control himself, my father would never have the heart to hit me.”

During the days when John was hospitalised, Richard spent more than 10 hours daily to see to John’s activities of daily living. He made it his responsibility to ensure that John receives his treatments calmly with minimal outbursts. When extra help was needed in caring for John, Richard had to reach out to the Ministry of Manpower to appeal for a male domestic worker to take care of him, as former female domestic workers also faced difficulties managing John during his violent outbursts.

As caring for persons with dementia is not an easy journey, Richard actively shares his personal experiences with fellow caregivers of patients with dementia who might be new or are facing burnout. Through his sharing and support, he hopes that no one will have to walk the same journey he did, alone.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MR RICHARD ASHWORTH 67 YEARS OLD

It is extremely challenging to stay patient and loving, when the physical pains of caregiving have to be borne on top of the emotional pain of watching a loved one lose their sense of self. To Richard, his secret lies in three things – unconditional love, unconditional patience, and confidence in himself that he can overcome all obstacles as a caregiver.

Despite his caregiving challenges, Richard always speaks of his father with the gentlest love and an unimaginable amount of appreciation. John will always be the best father figure he could ever ask for, from adopting him and bringing him up to be the person he is today.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MS SALLY SOO
50 YEARS OLD

Caregiving is About Teamwork With a Heart

“My mother is my priority. I will do anything to make sure she is well first.”

Ms Sally Soo is a dedicated caregiver to her mother and intellectually disabled younger brother, who requires close supervision and is unable to work. Her mother suffered a stroke in 2018 and was admitted to Ren Ci Chronic Sick Unit, where Sally visits her daily. Her unwavering love for her mother and brother prevails despite the multiple roles she has to play — from being an employee to multiple employers, a caregiver and a member of her mother’s healthcare team in the wards.



Her mother has been bedbound and requires 24 hours of oxygen supply. Sally is always proactive in helping the care team with simple care duties such as chest tapping to clear her lungs of fluid and engaging her mother with simple games to stimulate her senses. It is through these little activities that brings Sally joy amidst the heavy responsibilities of being a solo caregiver of the family. Though exhausting at times, Sally perseveres through her journey as to her, it is the least she could do to repay her mother.

Sally has always been a proactive caregiver. Whenever she sees opportunities to improve her mother’s care, she would quickly make an appointment with the hospital’s care team to share her suggestions. For example, Sally introduced a feeding checklist to aid the nurses in remembering the feeding times for her mother, in consideration of the nurses’ busy schedules. Likewise, when the care team shares their knowledge with her, Sally always listens attentively and is happy to learn and understand.

Caregiving is a constant learning experience for Sally who approaches each day with positivity and humility. In honouring her mother who gave her life, Sally will always care for her mother with deep love and gratitude.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MDM SHARON PUNG 56 YEARS OLD

Finding Strength Amidst Life's Adversity

'It was the strength that my husband gave me that allowed me to hold on.'

Mdm Sharon Pung's life was never the same again when her late husband, Mr Tan Beng Chee, was diagnosed with kidney cancer eight years ago. As they are childless, Mdm Pung bore the sole responsibility of being a caregiver for him. Despite having to resign from her job as a factory worker and undergo neurosurgery, Mdm Pung found strength and perseverance to provide the best care for her husband who loved her just as much.



In the early stages of her caregiving journey, Mdm Pung thought that her life would return to normal when doctors removed Mr Tan's infected kidney. Unfortunately, that happiness was short-lived when the cancer relapsed more aggressively, spreading to his lungs and bones within a year. Her caregiving journey became tougher. With the cancer affecting Mr Tan's mobility, Mdm Pung had to carry and support most of his weight as she transferred him from his wheelchair to the bed or toilet. With a strong desire to make caregiving easier for her, Mr Tan would only travel out when necessary so that Mdm Pung would not be too tired from pushing him.

Mdm Pung has never once complained about how tough things were. She maintained a positive and cheerful disposition with a sense of humour. Mdm Pung was a beacon of hope for others around her as her courage and light heartedness would raise their spirit.



SINGAPORE PATIENT CAREGIVER AWARD

MDM SHARON PUNG 56 YEARS OLD

When Mr Tan was referred to Singapore Cancer Society Hospice Care Services, Mdm Pung eagerly shared her thoughts with hospice staff and advocated strongly for the use of household devices such as foldable toilet shower seats to maintain the function and dignity of the patient.

Although Mr Tan was a patient himself, he was a pillar of strength for Mdm Pung through this challenging journey and gave her hope to carry on. Since her husband's passing in June 2021, Mdm Pung's life is not without grief, fear and uncertainty. She reminds herself to live on bravely and courageously, as per the wishes of her late husband.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD

MR LAU HING TUNG, 68 YEARS OLD
MRS LAU MAK CHOI MING, 64 YEARS OLD

Improving the Lives of Seniors, One Exercise at a Time

“Once bonds and trust have been built, seniors will come every week to exercise.”

It was a chance occurrence that led Mr Lau Hing Tung and Mrs Lau Mak Choi Ming to volunteer at Toa Payoh Block 170 Senior Activity Centre. What started as a one-off volunteering session soon became a regular exercise programme. When Mr and Mrs Lau observed that seniors were able to walk better and their health condition improved through their exercise sessions, they knew that they had found their calling. Mr and Mrs Lau have since been leading their regular exercise programme for the past 11 years.



Motivated to help other seniors who experienced common leg pains, the pair completed a training under the Otago Exercise Programme offered by Care Community Services Society. This programme provided Mr and Mrs Lau the necessary knowledge and skills to initiate a fall prevention exercise programme for seniors living in Toa Payoh. Recognising that each senior’s health problems are unique, it became their priority to befriend each senior and to understand these problems in depth. Mr and Mrs Lau built on their trust and friendship with these seniors to encourage them to continue exercising with individualised exercise plans.

Going beyond their capacity as trainers, Mr and Mrs Lau would also help these seniors to take their blood pressure readings and advise them to monitor their blood pressure if it is above normal.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD

MR LAU HING TUNG, 68 YEARS OLD
MRS LAU MAK CHOI MING, 64 YEARS OLD

To the couple, the greatest happiness lies in witnessing the small improvements in the mobility of the seniors over time. They were able to see seniors switch from using a walking frame to a simple walking stick, while some were able to walk without a walking stick after these exercises.

With senior participants ranging from ages 68 to 90 years old, Mr and Mrs Lau are mindful of the learning habits of these seniors. Most seniors would learn new things through observation and very rarely do they question the meaning behind certain exercises. Mr and Mrs Lau would make the effort to explain to these seniors the rationale behind each exercise so that they can benefit the most from each action.

With a strong belief that a healthy lifestyle begins with oneself, Mr and Mrs Lau hope to empower more seniors to become healthier, one exercise at a time.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD

MS SERLINA ENG
46 YEARS OLD

Going Beyond Her Call of Duty

“There is more to a person with mental illness and what is portrayed in movies and books.”

As a healthcare professional, Ms Serlina Eng holds her patients close to her heart and recognises that there is always more to a person than his or her medical condition. Dedicated to helping others around her, Serlina takes every opportunity that she can to create initiatives that would benefit patients with mental health conditions.



During the pandemic, Selina rallied her colleagues across IMH to drive a Make yoU a Mask (MUM) initiative for patients and their caregivers. Recognising that mask-wearing would continue in the long-run, Selina initiated this project as a way to address the shortage of masks during the height of the pandemic in 2020. As patients themselves are taught to sew these masks for other patients and their caregivers, it cultivates a spirit of togetherness amongst them and empowers them to contribute back to the society. The acronym “MUM” was specially chosen as the project was launched in May, the same month as Mother’s Day. Similar to a mother’s love and care for her children, this project signifies the essence of warmth and care of the healthcare team and patients for others around them.

As an avid advocate for personalised care for her patients, Serlina also makes an effort to write individual notes of encouragement for her patients during the weekends to paste in their appointment cards before their discharge. These notes often reassure her patients that they are not forgotten and that she will be there for them at their first outpatient appointment.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD

MS SERLINA ENG 46 YEARS OLD

Going a step further, she also encourages her patients to write letters to themselves during their inpatient stay. She would then add on a personalised note to these letters to instil hope and perseverance in these patients. A month after their discharge, she would send these letters out. Seeing that this was a great motivational approach in getting discharged patients to turn up for these appointments, many of her colleagues in the Case Management Unit also adopted the personalised care approach for their own patients.

For Serlina, her greatest reward lies in witnessing the recovery journey of her patients and learning that they are integrating well into the community. Though her journey is not without challenges, her passion and resilience drive her to continue her mental health advocacy work for many years to come.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD

MR JONATHAN KUEK 30 YEARS OLD

Advocating for Greater Change Within the Mental Health Landscape

“We want to make the most out of our limited resource, to impact a lot of people with very little.”

It may be challenging for some to find creative means to help a lot of people with very little resources, but not for Mr Jonathan Kuek. He is the founder of Matchsticks of IMH, a youth volunteer group which started out with less than 10 regular volunteers.

When they first started, their limited manpower could only allow them to focus their efforts on helping patients in one ward at IMH. Seven years down the road, they have grown to 800 youth volunteers serving over seven wards.

This could not have been achieved alone. Driven to understand how patients' needs can be better supported, Jonathan frequently brainstorms with nurses on new ideas to better engage the patients at IMH. Under his leadership, Matchsticks expanded to engage patients in a wide variety of activities such as board games, mahjong and even dancing. Prior to the pandemic, Jonathan also worked closely with other healthcare professionals to plan large group outings for patients to enjoy the sights and sounds of Singapore, beyond the Hospital grounds.

Through his constant interactions with the patients, Jonathan became keenly aware of the loneliness felt by those recovering from mental health conditions, especially during the height of Covid-19. To address this, he quickly formed a team to secure funding for the creation of 750 journaling starter packages for IMH's patients. Each starter kit included customised notebooks, stationeries and even handwritten cards by Jonathan and the volunteers, addressed to each patient. These kits provided a safe space for patients to share their thoughts and understand their feelings better. As not everyone is familiar with the concept of journaling, the team also created a guide on the different methods of journaling to help patients along.





SINGAPORE PATIENT ADVOCATE AWARD

MR JONATHAN KUEK 30 YEARS OLD

Jonathan recognised that a stronger support network needs to be created for individuals with mental health conditions. He initiated the Mental Health Awareness Conversation (M.A.C) workshop for 316 secondary school students across 11 schools in hopes of bridging this gap. In this workshop, students are empowered to customise the programme modules to be taught. To ensure the sustainability of this initiative, he helps to conduct Train-the-Trainer sessions to enable the current generation of youth volunteers to train and guide the future generations.

Meeting like-minded volunteers has sustained Jonathan's passion to push for greater acceptance of mental health conditions in the community.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD

GOLDIES JUKEBOX 金曲音乐盒

Music to Connect Through Time and Space

“Whenever we can sing to persons with dementia, we will do it.”

Since his youth, Mr Lee Yong Tick loves singing and always enjoys seeing how music brings people together. Bringing his passion to life, he and his team formed the Goldies Jukebox back in 2017. Singing for a cause, Goldies Jukebox performs and sings for persons with dementia and their caregivers at Memories Café.



Memories Café is a two-hour social programme held weekly at different café locations all around Singapore. Working closely with community artists, volunteers and staff of Dementia Singapore, the first half of their sessions include engaging activities such as sing-alongs. Recognising the importance of social support for persons with dementia, the second half of their session focuses on providing participants, their caregivers and customers at the café a chance to interact with one another over their meals.

Due to the pandemic, Memories Café ceased all physical sessions yet this did not stop the volunteers in Goldies Jukebox from singing. They adopted a livestream format for their sessions in order to continue providing joy and some form of normality for their participants. Despite the ever-changing Covid-19 guidelines, they are always delighted to perform for the participants and sing the songs that were personally requested by them.

To date, Goldies Jukebox remains as Memories Café’s most popular Mandarin singing group, with a minimum of 300 viewers at each livestream session. The team’s great chemistry ensures a smooth sailing session each time, creating a joyous atmosphere for everybody. Their captivating music encourages participants to sing and move along to the beat.

“Aside from just singing, we hope that more people will start to volunteer to help the elderly who live alone and participate in activities together,” said Yong Tick. “By helping others, we will have a sense of fulfilment that cannot be explained in words.”



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD

DOVER PARK HOSPICE RUBY GROUP

Pawing the Way into Patients' Hearts

“Pets are an instant point of connection with patients that helps them open up.”

Ruby Group has been organising Pet-Assisted Therapy (PAT) sessions for patients of Dover Park Hospice since 2001. For the patients, they feel the unconditional love that these pets have to offer whenever they come over for a visit. The smiles from the patients and their family members are strong testimony to the positive impact of Ruby Group's volunteer-led programmes. Through these warm and loving animals, they provide patients with a sense of comfort while reducing their pain and feelings of isolation and loneliness.



Aside from improving their emotional well-being, PAT helps to build on patients' motor skills as well. Ruby Group volunteers engage patients, especially those whose conditions are gradually deteriorating, in fun activities such as a game of fetch with the pets to maintain the patients' agility. However, it is not only the pets who are heavily involved in these therapy sessions. The volunteers have to attend a series of trainings conducted by Dover Park Hospice nursing team to equip themselves with the necessary skills and knowledge to support the care journeys of these patients.

Although physical PAT sessions are suspended due to the pandemic, Ruby Group volunteers have quickly adapted to the situation and converted it to tele-visit sessions. The group came up with creative ways for their furry friends to interact with the patients during these sessions. These include a showcase of special tricks by their pets and even virtual kisses and high fives to the patients.

There may be days where some of the patients may not want to attend the sessions. For Ruby Group members, they have learnt not to take this personally and to remember that these patients are facing their own challenges as well. Ultimately, for these volunteers, the best reward is seeing a smile on the patients' faces after a therapy session.

Recipients were unmasked as each individual photo was taken in the recipient's home.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD

BE KIND SG

Small Acts of Kindness with Big Hearts

“Whatever you give will always be more than what you receive.”

Ms Sherry Soon, founder of Be Kind SG, strongly believes that everyone can volunteer as long as they keep an open mind. Knowing that there are many kind-hearted individuals with limited time to spare, Sherry created Be Kind SG to provide micro-volunteering opportunities. Although the impact of these acts of kindness might appear small at the start, when amplified by many volunteers, Be Kind SG’s impact grew to touch the hearts of many communities.



Be Kind SG regularly engages the residents of several Homes, including Moral Welfare Home, with interesting performances, craft activities and festivities. They also worked with different performers to show residents unique art forms ranging from taiko drumming to lion dance.

Moreover, outings to places of attraction around Singapore like the River Safari and Universal Studios Singapore may be commonplace for many, but they might be challenging for residents who are wheelchair-bound. Volunteers from Be Kind SG put in the extra effort to ensure that the outings organised for residents are wheelchair- friendly, to create a more inclusive community and to be able to bring a smile to their faces.

When the pandemic struck, both residents and volunteers were disappointed that Covid-19 curtailed their volunteering activities in the Homes. However, this did not stop Be Kind SG from reaching out to the residents through Zoom. Held monthly, volunteers would organise activities and performances by professional magicians and ventriloquists to spread joy to the residents. The group even went the extra mile to coordinate the delivery of hundreds of colouring sheets hand drawn by the volunteers for the residents to colour.



SINGAPORE PATIENT SUPPORT GROUP / VOLUNTEER GROUP AWARD

BE KIND SG

Sherry's heart also went out to frontline workers during the height of the pandemic. Determined to give these frontline workers a source of encouragement, Sherry and her team toiled over many late nights to coordinate and pack 7,000 care packs for healthcare workers in National Centre for Infectious Diseases and Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

Be Kind SG strongly believes that it is possible to volunteer and spread acts of kindness to everyone despite the ongoing pandemic.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

CONNECTING THROUGH ZOOM PARTIES

Volunteerism in the New Normal

“Volunteers make a huge difference, not only to their communities and beneficiaries but to nurses and staff as well.”

With the Covid-19 pandemic, schools and workplaces have grown accustomed to Zoom meetings as a way of life. At IMH, volunteers take it one step further with the patients with regular Zoom parties.



in April 2020 as a way for volunteers to continue interacting with the residents at IMH who have grown to be their friends. As the patients became more accustomed to using Zoom, these Zoom sessions gradually expanded and increased in diversity, from arts and crafts sessions, sing-alongs with the volunteers, to even a virtual tour of Singapore. To bring more fun and games to these residents, the team of volunteers worked tirelessly to develop protocols as they adapted to virtual volunteering.

Youth volunteer leaders, Mr Tan Zai Xuan and Mr Jordon Lim, recalled how the team learnt and adapted processes to safeguard patient confidentiality and ensured that volunteers and invited performers do not take screenshots or recordings during these parties.

In addition to organising parties, the volunteers have created a Human Library series to learn from one another’s volunteering experiences with persons with mental health conditions. During these sessions, volunteers provide each other with tips, emotional support and motivate one another to deliver better care in their own ways. For some volunteers, they appreciate how the Human Library allows the team to know their fellow volunteers better and allow them to celebrate the contributions and successes together as a team.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

CONNECTING THROUGH ZOOM PARTIES

Many volunteering opportunities have been put to a halt due to the ongoing pandemic and technology such as Zoom provides an avenue for volunteering activities to continue despite the circumstances. Jordon fondly recalls that despite not seeing the IMH residents for a long time, one of them unexpectedly recognised him during a Zoom party. When the resident called him “Ah Boy” endearingly, Jordon was overwhelmed with warmth as he did not expect that resident to remember him.

Along with the changing times, the team believes that society should remember the importance of volunteerism and to seek new ways to preserve them. Even though there are challenges to volunteering in-person, as long as volunteers stay true to their causes, volunteering can still happen virtually.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

NO ONE DIES ALONE @ IMH

Forging Family Ties With Volunteer Befrienders

“Be resilient when facing obstacles and have faith in the volunteering work that you are doing.”

When we think about the most important things in our lives, ‘family’ is often one of them. For the unfortunate few, familial love is not something that they experience as they live through their final days in the hospital.



IMH initiated the No One Dies Alone @ IMH programme where volunteers provide support and companionship to long-stay, terminally ill patients with mental health issues. These patients do not have a living next-of-kin or friends who could be called as family and these volunteers seek to change that narrative. As in the title of the programme, “No One Dies Alone” is also a promise to the patients by the team that they would not have to spend their last days alone or forgotten.

Besides providing companionship, volunteers treat every opportunity to socialise and participate in recreational activities with their newfound friends. The volunteers truly find it a privilege to be in a position where each patient places their trust in them to walk alongside and accompany them in the last stage of their life journey.

Besides the new kinships forged with the patients, volunteers shared that the most rewarding part about their work was when they observed positive changes with the patients. Some patients are unresponsive and bedbound, and some have grown desolate as they reach the end of their lives alone. Undeterred, volunteers would pull off the remarkable feat of bringing optimism and hope in these patients over time.

It is the small wins that matter. For each success in encouraging the patients to sit in a wheelchair or to convince them to participate in activities, the team finds great joy as the patients become aware that there are still good things in life to live for. At No One Dies Alone @ IMH, it is where the almost forgotten are remembered by those who live and where water is as thick as blood.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

NCIS DREAM MAKERS

Turning Dreams into Reality for Cancer Patients

“When the dream is completed, simple as it may be, it is very rewarding.”

Most of us live our lives chasing one achievement after another. We find that dreams are ours to pursue and what we need to do is to invest our time and heart into our endeavours. At the National University Cancer Institute, Singapore (NCIS), they have met many patients who no longer have the luxury of time and capacity to hustle for their dreams.



“If you could have one last wish before you go, what would you wish for?”

NCIS sees approximately 600 late-stage adult cancer patients every year, and this number has since been increasing. When faced with potential terminal cancers, many patients are hit with the possibility of leaving this world with their dreams unfulfilled. Currently, most wish-granting organisations are focused on fulfilling the wishes of children rather than adults.

To address this gap, a team of healthcare professionals created the NCIS Dream Makers initiative. With the help of patients’ families, NCIS Dream Makers aim to make these small wishes come true. Each member is motivated to provide hope, encouragement and emotional closure to the patients and their loved ones.

Every dream is unique and memorable — even more so when the dreams are fulfilled. In their most recent endeavour, the team worked to fulfill a simple wish from a young lady who had terminal cancer. She shared that her final dream was to have a simple meal with her boyfriend in the hospital. In spite of the Covid-19 restrictions, the Dream Makers team planned extensively to make this dream come true.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

NCIS DREAM MAKERS

With many safety measures in place, the Dream Makers finally received the green light from the hospital to arrange for a candle light dinner in the ward. To the team, kindness is an act that goes two ways. Even after fulfilling the patient's wish, she sought for a second wish which was to thank all the nurses who looked after her during her last days.

When the Dream Makers team sees the happiness in patients who had their wishes fulfilled, their hearts beam with immense joy as well. Hope lies in dreams and there is so much courage in those who dare to turn dreams into reality.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

STIMULATING ACTIVITIES FOR FRAIL ELDERLY (SAFE) PROGRAMME

Bringing Rays of Sunshine into the Wards

“It is our dream for our patients to stay physically active and socially connected when they are hospitalised.”

Ms Giang Thuy Anh, a Senior Occupational Therapist with Khoo Teck Puat Hospital, believes that health is a state of mental, emotional and physical well-being. Together with her colleagues, Anh founded the Stimulating Activities for Frail Elderly (SAFE) Programme to help to meet the patients’ needs for comfort, for the community and for doing something that is meaningful and purposeful.



To better support the patients, Anh and her team enlisted the help of the Sunshine Buddies, who became regular volunteers for the SAFE Programme. They are a unique group of volunteers with a big heart of gold beyond imagination, working as “magicians” to bring laughter to the otherwise somber atmosphere of the wards. For the team behind the SAFE Programme, their volunteers were interviewed and carefully selected based on their interests to support frail patients.

SAFE volunteers create a healing environment where the psychological needs of patients are met through social and physical activities. By engaging patients in games, the volunteers help patients to improve their motor skills and dexterity. They also facilitate patients’ recovery by engaging them in gardening therapy. Patients develop a newfound sense of purpose as they get up from their beds in joy and participate in activities that greatly reduces their functional decline.



SINGAPORE PATIENT ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

STIMULATING ACTIVITIES FOR FRAIL ELDERLY (SAFE) PROGRAMME

A happy life cannot be without a measure of sadness, an emotion all too familiar with patients who are often bedbound and lonely. Sometimes, patients can be feeling down or in a bad mood and these outwardly positive SAFE volunteers come in for each session mentally prepared for anything.

The volunteers and the healthcare team approach these patients with a loving heart, knowing that they are overcoming their own difficulties as well. They reach out to these patients, offering sincere friendships and comfort. Over time, SAFE Programme accomplished the amazing feat of improving levels of happiness in patients and decreased levels of anxiety, fear and sadness. There is no happiness like that of being loved by your fellow community and feeling that your presence is an addition to their comfort. For the great work that the SAFE volunteers do alongside the healthcare team, it is no wonder that these patients regain hope and joy in their lives.



SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

COMMUNITY CARE HUB @ 414

Building an Inclusive Community

“A close-knitted neighbourhood is not formed overnight. You have to nurture it from the beginning.”

Fostering a sense of belonging amongst members of the community is an important task that is not an easy feat, especially when including disadvantaged communities like isolated seniors, people with disabilities and even those with mental health conditions. Exclusion from the community can often lead to repercussions at times where people feel less valued.



Located in Ang Mo Kio, the Community Care Hub @ 414 was formed to serve as a platform to build connections and relationships among community members in 2020. Its goal is to create and facilitate an organic community of care with mutual reciprocity — one where residents are consistently looking out for each other without seeking for anything in return. It goes the extra mile to foster a sense of belonging between community members regardless of age, socio-economic background and health by giving them opportunities to contribute back to the community.

This initiative serves as an important platform for community members to offer their assets, skills, and talents to contribute to improving the well-being of the community. A large emphasis is placed on showcasing these members' strengths and contributions rather than just treating them as passive recipients with needs to be fulfilled.

One laudable project is the “Genesis of Goodwill Lunch”, which is held thrice a week at the void deck for residents to participate in communal meals, cooked by fellow residents. When Singapore went through the Phase 2 reopening in June 2020, many seniors in the neighbourhood remained socially isolated due to fear of Covid-19 contagion.



SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

COMMUNITY CARE HUB @ 414

To ease their worries while still providing an avenue for them to socialise, the team swiftly implemented safety management measures for this project. Residents were eager to step up to ensure safe distancing is adhered to along with temperature taking and the various hygiene practices.

All in all, this generates a clean and safe space for residents to interact and deepen connections with one another, enjoying home-cooked food together and reliving the familial Kampung memories.



SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

PROJECT PENCIL SINGAPORE @ YISHUN 71

Rekindling the Kampung Spirit With a Pencil

“We are like one big family looking out for each other.”

Mdm Sarimah Amat envisioned a resilient neighbourhood where residents support one another and establish an informal support structure for one another. Project Pencil Singapore @ Yishun 71 was born when a friend approached Mdm Sarimah to request for colour pencils to donate to an orphanage in Southern Thailand. Today, Project Pencil Singapore @ Yishun 71 brings the Kampung spirit to life through the creation of socially engaging activities such as block cleaning, exercise sessions and Ramadan food distributions.



With the main goal of creating one big family in the community to look out for each other, this initiative enhances the neighbourliness and fosters a strong kampung spirit in Yishun 71. Apart from bringing different generations of residents together under one roof to contribute back to the community, the team sponsored children from needy families with free tuition and field trips. Each member also works to support these children in their social and emotional development.

Not only does this initiative bring great joy to children, it also brings smiles to the seniors. The team helps to run the Healthy Ageing Promotion Programme for You (HAPPY) programme. This exercise programme is customised to improve the overall health of seniors through various physical and mental activities. When the seniors engage in these “dual-task” exercises, it keeps their minds active, preventing the possible onset of dementia. Many of the seniors have bonded closely over the months and serve as each other’s motivation to stay healthy and motivated.



SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

PROJECT PENCIL SINGAPORE @ YISHUN 71

Although this initiative has grown beyond providing pencils to help needy children with their learning needs, Mdm Sarimah stays true to its roots. She hopes to create dispensing machines of pencils for children in the future. To the team, with each pencil that is handed out, that very child could be the next pilot, or the next engineer, or even the next leader of the country. They strongly believe that they can change the community with one pencil at a time and serve as an inspiration to others in Singapore.



SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

NEIGHBOURHOOD CARE NETWORKS AT TOUCHPOINT@AMK 433

Creating Community Enablers to Support Each Other

“It is about recognising what the residents’ strengths are, so that they can come in at different points in time to help one another.”

Neighbourhood Care Networks at TOUCHpoint@AMK 433 is part of TOUCH Community Services’ sustainable care approach to build an enabled community. They believe that anyone can be empowered to impact lives regardless of age, ability or physical status. Their key objective is to journey with residents — get them engaged through befriending efforts, teach them how to take charge of their health and equip them as community enablers to be resources in the community.



An important aspect of this initiative is to get the community to be self-sustaining, where residents find creative ways to see how they can contribute to the wider community by caring for one another. This was especially evident during the Circuit Breaker period, which saw residents reaching out to support their neighbours during the height of the pandemic. This initiative serves as a platform for residents to come together, form bonds and find ways to extend a helping hand through their own unique interests and skillsets. Through this, residents become part of an informal support network, creating a strong kampung spirit within the community which supports each other as they age.

Volunteers regularly arrange informal get-together sessions with their befriendeds in community facilities or at TOUCHpoint@AMK 433. The volunteers also actively accompany homebound seniors to these facilities to learn new skills and participate in engaging activities. The volunteers also run errands for vulnerable seniors and mobilise other residents to provide support to those who are in need. Together, they are eyes of the community to look out for vulnerable seniors and flag them out for TOUCH to assist.



SINGAPORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVE AWARD

NEIGHBOURHOOD CARE NETWORKS AT TOUCHPOINT@AMK 433

Over time, other residents have also stepped up as volunteers as part of this care ecosystem to help meet the needs of other residents. Out of 40 befrienders, at least half have gone beyond their befriending roles to extend help to other needy residents in the community. Residents have developed to be advocates, taking care of vulnerable seniors and forming their own informal support group to support one another. In all, this initiative has touched many lives and gave residents a chance to bring about a sustainable change to their community.

8TH EDITION

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