

For All We Care

50 Years of Social Service in Singapore
1958 – 2008

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National Council of Social Service
170 Ghim Moh Road #01-02 Singapore 279621
Tel: 6210 2500 • Fax: 6467 1705 • Web: www.ncss.org.sg

NCSS





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of Social Service

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Helping the Needy and Passing It On

Foreword by
President S R Nathan

In the early years of the Singapore Council of Social Service (NCSS's predecessor), there was very little money and few voluntary organisations engaged in social service. Those that existed were founded on the passion of individuals personally concerned about those whose plight they sought to relieve. Then, the only philanthropic organisation at that time was the Lee Foundation.

It came into prominence with the giving of a matching donation to victims of major fires that left people homeless. They matched the government grant with their own.

The period of 1960 to 1970 was still very formative years of the voluntary effort. In some ways, it was still very much a Victorian concept of charity. People of leisure came together to set up voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) and devoted their time in helping out. So, it was more through the enthusiasm of volunteers that some of these problems were identified and attended to.

At that time, there were not many voluntary organisations. The Association for the Blind, The Deaf Association of Singapore, the Singapore Children's Society and a few others were prominent in catering for the needs of orphans and people with physical disability. As each new area of social welfare came to public notice, new initiatives were mounted by individuals or groups of individuals prepared to address them despite the lack of money, facilities or governmental help.

The late Dr Ee Peng Liang and late Mr Woon Wah Siang (then Director of Social Welfare) were in the forefront of getting such groups organised and supported through public donations particularly mobilised through flag days.

“It is important for every Singaporean to be always mindful that there is someone somewhere who needs our help. If we can help to reduce their pain, distress and burden, we would have made a difference, and lived our lives in a meaningful way. The NCSS is in the forefront of that call.”

Mr Woon took the initiative to get the council organised with Mr Sim Miah Kian – a banker – as its Secretary and Dato Lee Kong Chian as its President. After the formation of the council, I was asked to help Mr Sim and later take over from him as Honorary Secretary of the council. In those early years, the council had many prominent stalwarts like Mrs Boswell, the late Mr Harry Wee, Mr Cecil Wong, Brother Albert of Boys’ Town, Mr Ng Aik Huan among other prominent people.

In the beginning, the council saw itself as primarily providing support for those who were rendered homeless by fires. But once the council became active, the council saw the need to get the existing VWOs to come together.

Among the activities that the council started was the development of a calendar to co-ordinate members’ fundraising through flag days. In their enthusiasm for conducting flag days, the more prominent organisations often booked several days in a year, sometimes affecting the smaller VWOs. With the council managing the calendar, bookings were recorded and evenly spread throughout the year.

The other was the Annual Charity Bazaar at Victoria Memorial Hall, where Puan Noor Aishah, then the First Lady, would grace with her presence. This bazaar enabled VWOs to display the handicrafts made by their clients and sale of food and other items to raise money and showcase their respective efforts. This annual bazaar continued for almost 10 years.

I was in the council until the early 1970s. But before I left, I saw to the completion and occupation of the council building in Penang Lane. That building was put up entirely with money provided by Dato Lee with land provided by the government on lease.

One of the facilities provided was one floor of space for shops where VWOs

could bring their products for sale. By bringing them together, they could see what the market wanted and also cease making things that were really not marketable.

Dr Ee Peng Liang was the chairman of the council throughout the 1960s until he retired in 1992. Through the Catholic’s Welfare Services, which distributed bread and food, Dr Ee had a personal grasp of the extent of voluntary effort addressing the problems of the less fortunate among us.

He was a fundraiser and he would intervene to solicit funds for any VWO that needed money. He used to scrounge a lot to get money, calling himself “the Nation’s Beggar”. He was indefatigable in his efforts to help and support voluntary and government efforts to alleviating the hardships prevailing in our midst.

Now, some 50 years have passed. In the meantime, the Singapore Council of Social Service has made way for the emergence of National Council of Social Service (NCSS). Its role has not changed and it is still engaged in efforts to alleviate people’s distress and problems. But the problems have changed. We have new problems, problems of an affluent society. But there are still some of the basic problems of the past, plus new ones like domestic abuse and cruelty. We still have families in distress.

But today, the elderly, persons with disabilities and the needy have several organisations that have come into existence to look after them. And the government too, is doing considerably more these days than they did in the 1960s.

As we overcame our earlier economic circumstances and improvement in national finances, government spending has also increased. We see many instances of the government providing capital grants for up-to-date facilities

to be built to cater to the particular needs of people with disabilities and the elderly. The government has also been encouraging voluntary effort and philanthropy to raise extra money through the tax incentives available to organisations enjoying charitable status and double taxation benefits for individual donors and organisations.

Some things have not changed. Money remains an issue but it is not as serious a problem as it used to be. Voluntary organisations embarking on addressing new areas of social problems need to raise funds from the public. They have to contend with major and more prominent charitable organisations.

Various organisations addressing social problems that attract public sympathy and attention being earlier in the field naturally get better responses from donors. We are also in a better state today with our society more socially-conscious and generous in service and donations.

Today, the NCSS remains an umbrella body of voluntary organisations, as was its predecessor. As an umbrella body, it is expected to stir the conscience of our society whenever and wherever distress appears.

While having a symbiotic relationship with the government and its agencies, the council is expected to speak up about unmet needs and services in our society which are seeking understanding from government agencies and solutions. Besides being an efficient social service administrator, NCSS also needs to remain passionate in dealing with delicate and complex welfare issues in the community.

There is still need to involve as many people in society as possible and arouse their consciousness about the people in need of help. It has to constantly appeal to the public for volunteering time and service as well as help by participating

in activities that support various social service causes.

Today, we have Community Chest and the President’s Challenge. They are aimed at arousing consciousness in society as widely as possible, about the needs of those who are in need of support, and in need of help. The President’s Challenge itself has grown.

Every person who is engaged in one way or another, with Community Chest and President’s Challenge is constantly urged to make contribution, however small, towards fellow needy Singaporeans.

As a society that is developing rapidly, we cannot ignore the plight of the less fortunate segment of our population.

It is important for every Singaporean to be always mindful that there is someone somewhere who needs our help. If we can help to reduce their pain, distress and burden, we would have made a difference, and lived our lives in a meaningful way. The NCSS is in the forefront of that call.

President S R Nathan



“The professionals and organisations of the social service sector of Singapore represent the best aspects of our society. A society can only be truly successful if it reflects compassion, empathy, responsibility and service to the most vulnerable amongst us. This affirms the value, dignity and hope that each and every human being deserves. I would like to commend all who have served faithfully over the past five decades and wish you continued success in reaching out and changing lives for the better.”

Dr Vivian Balakrishnan
Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports



In the Beginning

Disaster relief was an early priority of the Singapore Council of Social Service

At the time, the Singapore Social Welfare Council, comprising representatives from religious bodies, voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) and heads of government and municipal departments concerned with welfare, was more of an advisory group. It had been formed after the War by the Social Welfare Department to mobilise community support for voluntary social services. But as the post war needs grew, so too the need for an umbrella body to co-ordinate the various services.

So on 22 December 1958, the director of Social Welfare, Woon Wah Siang called a meeting of some 40 heads of these organisations to discuss the formation of a new statutory body to take over. And so was born the Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS). Its main aim then was to co-ordinate and promote the roles and contributions

of VWOs. It would bring together all organisations and individuals with interest in community service and social welfare. This would allow the government to focus on providing essential services such as housing, health care and education for the masses, while the council would support the Social Welfare Department in providing remedial service.

The first executive committee consisted of the businessman and philanthropist Dato Lee Kong Chian, head of the Department of Social Studies at the University of Malaya Jean Robertson, and a 45-year-old accountant Ee Peng Liang, who would go on to become synonymous with charity.

The founding executive committee consisted of
President: Dato Lee Kong Chian
Vice Presidents: Miss Jean M Robertson
Mr Rowland Lyne

Honorary
General Secretary: Mr Geoffrey Abisheganathan
Honorary Treasurer: Mr Sim Miah Kian
Committee
Members: Mrs R S Boswell
Rev Canon John B H Lee
Lt Col J W Blake
Dato A M Alsagoff
Mr Harry L Wee
Mr Ee Peng Liang
Mr L Cresson

Dato Lee served until 1964 when he had to step down because of ill health. Besides providing leadership, he was also a generous donor. The Lee Foundation subsequently donated \$200,000 to the SCSS Building Fund.

Disaster relief was an early priority of SCSS. In February 1959, just two months after its inaugural meeting, a major fire broke out in Kampung Tiong Bahru that left 5,000 people homeless. The council managed to raise \$700,000 within just a month to help victims of the fire.

The council also raised funds to help victims of the 1961 Bukit Ho Swee fire that made about 15,000 people homeless.

Its founding general secretary and treasurer, Mr Abisheganathan and Mr Sim respectively, recalled: "As the fire was still raging, Dato Lee, Ee Peng Liang, Woon Wah Siang and other council members rushed to the scene. Dato Lee gave \$40,000 to the victims for immediate relief measures. That gesture started the ball rolling and other donations came in, totalling more than half a million dollars."



Chief Minister Tun Lim Yew Hock at the inaugural meeting of the newly-formed Singapore Council of Social Service, held at the Asian Seamen's Hostel.



Payment of cash relief at the Social Welfare Department in the early 1960s.



Registered as Organisation

Mar Sembawang Muslim Welfare Association

Jun Singapore Malay Youth Library Association (Taman Bacaan)

Rising from the Ashes

“Each time, the council led the national effort in serving and helping people to rebuild their lives from the ashes left by the flames.”

On 13 February 1959, at least 5,000 people lost their homes in a fire at Kampong Tiong Bahru that destroyed 1,000 attap huts.

One person was killed. Two months earlier, in the tail end of 1958, the Singapore Council of Social Service had been set up. It was the first test of the fledging organisation.

It co-ordinated the efforts of the voluntary welfare organisations, the government and the community. Within a month, some \$700,000 had been collected for the victims of the fire.

In the early years, with crowded living conditions, and homes built with flammable materials, fires continued to be the largest hazard facing many.

The council's mettle was tested repeatedly. Each time, it led the national effort in serving and helping people to rebuild their lives from the ashes left by the flames.



Residents fled with whatever they could carry as five blocks of flats and hundreds of attap huts in the densely populated Tiong Bahru District went up in flames.

X-Ray Vision

It took farsightedness to appreciate that an epidemic was looming in the horizon. That year was the first time Singapore got an idea of the enormity of the problem which tuberculosis posed to the tiny island. And so the Community Mass X-Ray campaign was promptly rolled out.

Some 240,000 residents living in different parts of Singapore were systematically screened. About 4474 were found to have TB – one in every 55 persons screened.

In his message for the publication: *Our First 25 Years Against TB*, the patron of the Singapore Anti-tuberculosis Association (SATA), Dr Benjamin Sheares, who was the President of Singapore wrote: “Since the association’s inauguration, SATA

has made a valuable contribution to the health of the people of Singapore in combating tuberculosis which was then the No. 1 killer.”

SATA was founded in 1947 by a group of doctors and businessmen. Locals included doctors such as Dr Benjamin Chew, Dr Chen Su Lan, Dr B R Sreenivasan and businessmen such as Dato Lee Kong Chian, Lien Ying Chow, R Jumabhoy and Tan Chin Tuan.

In 1962, SATA built the Uttamram Clinic on land donated by G Uttamram. It became the regional centre for patients living in the eastern part of Singapore. Apart from screening for and treatment of TB, SATA also provided rehabilitation for those who were unable to return to their jobs after recovery.

Workshops were conducted in the Shenton Way clinic, with premises for patients to be engaged in book-binding, tailoring, printing and general handicraft.

The continuous fight against the dreaded disease had resulted in lowering the incidence of TB from more than 150 per 100,000 in the 1960s to 34 per 100,000 in the population today.



Top: Members of the 1st Nee Soon Girl Guides group getting ready for the annual Singapore Anti-TB Association Flag Day. Above: The Community Mass X-Ray campaign encouraged the public to get screened for TB.



Registered as Organisation

Jan St John's Home for Elderly Persons
Jul Adventist Community Services

Dec Sian Chay Medical Institution
Dec Singapore Thong Chai Medical Institution

Dec Spastic Children's Association Of Singapore



Housing the Poor

Building one new flat every 45 minutes, the Housing and Development Board (HDB), formed on 1 February 1960, was able to complete 26,000 flats in its first three years – a vast improvement over the 23,000 units put up by its predecessor, the Singapore Improvement Trust, in its 32 years of existence.

By March 1963, the head of state, Yang di-Pertuan Negara Yusof Ishak, was able to declare that the housing shortage had been solved. By the end of 1964, it had built 51,000 flats, providing homes for about a quarter of the population.

In 1959, close to a third of the 1.6 million citizens had no proper homes; about 300,000 lived in squatters and 250,000 in slums.

The HDB was able to offer every applicant a new home within three days. These flats, for rental or sale, had kitchens, baths, electricity, gas, water and elevators. Erected in blocks rising up to 16 storeys, they were grouped into new communities complete with stores, social centres, schools, clinics, recreation facilities and delightful landscaping, becoming a model for many developing countries.

Unlike the poor and homeless in these countries, Singapore was able early on through its public housing programme to alleviate poverty and wipe out the slums.

Behind this public housing success was businessman Lim Kim San who became chairman for three years, never drawing a cent. On assuming office, he re-organised an earlier halting effort at government-assisted housing, applying quietly and carefully a businessman's energetic pragmatism to the construction industry.

Private contractors were encouraged to participate to the maximum, while their profits were kept reasonable and costs of materials were stabilised.

Economic activity and employment generated by the building of some 60,000 flats became a major element in Singapore's growing prosperity.

In an interview, he explained why the housing issue was important to him. He visited houses in Upper Nanking Road to see for himself the reality of overcrowding. He said: "I went into a three-storey shophouse with one lavatory and two bathrooms. We counted 200 tenants living there. It was so dark and damp. It was an inhuman and degrading existence.

"Underneath the staircase was a single plank. A man was lying on the plank. He had rented it. That was his home!

"And he was lying down covered by a blanket; the thick red blanket made in China. I paused to ask him if he was sick, 'Why are you covering yourself with a thick blanket?' He replied, 'I am covering myself out of respect for you. I am wearing only undershorts. My brother is wearing my pants.'

"They were too poor to afford clothing. In those days, there were shops which pulled clothing and shoes off the dead to sell them.

"My God," I thought to myself, "I really must help these people." And help he did.

For his selfless efforts, he was awarded in 1962, Singapore's second highest honour, the Darjah Utama Temasek (The Order of Temasek).

A year later, he was named Minister for National Development and served in the Cabinet for 18 years moving to key ministries in finance, defence, education and the environment as well.

In 1965, he received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for Community Leadership for "his marshalling of talents and resources to provide one-fifth of Singapore's burgeoning population with decent, moderately-priced housing amidst attractive surroundings."

Clockwise from top: The Yang di-Pertuan Negara, Yusof Ishak, accompanied by HDB chairman, Lim Kim San, at the Queenstown building site; balloting for HDB flats at Redhill; applicants at the HDB office in Upper Pickering Street.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Singapore International Chamber of Commerce
- Feb Young Women's Christian Association of Singapore
- Feb National University of Singapore Students' Union
- Mar Singapore Regional Centre of the World Fellowship of Buddhists
- Mar Singapore After-Care Association

- Mar Rotary Club of Singapore
- Mar Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Singapore
- Apr Young Men's Christian Association of Singapore
- Apr Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped
- May Catholic's Welfare Services Singapore
- May Society of St. Vincent De Paul (National Council Singapore)

- Jun Lions Club of Singapore East
- Jun Singapore Nurses Association
- Jul Junior Chamber of Singapore
- Jul Inner Wheel Club of Singapore
- Aug Singapore Leprosy Relief Association
- Aug Singapore Chung Hwa Medical Institution

- Aug Australian & New Zealand Association (Singapore)
- Sept Buddhist Union
- Oct Girls' Brigade, Singapore
- Oct Muslim Missionary Society Singapore
- Oct Blue Cross Charitable Institution

- Nov Singapore Association of the Institute of Chartered Secretaries & Administrators



About 15,000 people were made homeless after the fire swept through the squatters.

Massive Public Donations Pour in After Biggest Ever Fire at Bukit Ho Swee

Bukit Ho Swee was in utter chaos. Bare-footed women ran with children strapped to their breasts. Young men carried their greying fathers on their backs. Families were frantically saving what they could from their homes. Within minutes, the fire had licked everything in its path, and the squatter district of Bukit Ho Swee burned to the ground. About 15,000 people were made homeless that day on 25 May 1961.

Singapore had witnessed its biggest fire, but it also saw the bigness of its people's hearts.

Goh Sin Tub received a call for help. The deputy director of the Social Welfare Department had rushed to the aid of fire victims, co-ordinating food supply and shelter, at a camp made up of schools at the Kim Seng Road area.

It housed 12,000 people, and he was responsible for the welfare of every one of them who were now huddling together in classrooms and along corridors. It broke his heart to see the things people managed to save from the fire – an old broken-down sewing machine, dented pans, and even chamber pots.

He saw a little girl hugging her dirty plastic doll while an old man sat clutching a faded photograph. He heard the heroic tale of a Chinese youth who had carried his Malay neighbour's grandfather to safety. He saw others helping to care for children, and sharing salvaged clothes, blankets, and what little food and drinks they had with their neighbours.

And then he saw a bespectacled man in a crumpled white shirt and baggy pants.

“Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made a promise to build 12,000 flats for those made homeless, and by 1962, all families affected by the fire were able to return.”

It was Dato Lee Kong Chian. “I was waiting for my turn to see you,” Dato Lee said as he passed Mr Goh a cheque for a six-figure amount. It was a generous donation, as in those days, a bungalow cost \$30,000.

In the next few days, donations in kind and cash poured in from the public, and the government

started a fund for fire victims with \$250,000.

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew made a promise to build 12,000 flats for those made homeless, and by 1962, all families affected by the fire were able to return. Singapore's biggest fire eventually put an end to slum dwelling and low-cost government flats began their rise.



Registered as Organisation

Jan Singapore Children's Society
 Feb Boys' Brigade in Singapore
 Mar Singapore Association for the Deaf
 Mar Federation Of Youth Clubs, Singapore
 May Ex-Services Association of Singapore

May Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore
 May World Red Swastika Society (Singapore Administration Centre)
 Jul Ramakrishna Mission
 Oct Jewish Welfare Board
 Dec Children's Aid Society

Body for Disability Set Up

The Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore, one of the largest agencies in Singapore, was set up in 1962 to serve the educational, vocational, social, and welfare needs of those with intellectual disability.

Its aim was to maximise the potential of persons with intellectual disability, help them attain a life of quality to participate fully in society, and support them and their families in overcoming challenges in their journey towards social integration.

It goes by the acronym, MINDS, to reflect its five core values.

- M – MOVE ON with confidence
- I – INNOVATE for improvement
- N – NURTURE with patience
- D – DETERMINE to succeed
- S – SERVE with love

In 2006, MINDS established MINDSville@Napiri, a 6-storey multi-service centre catering to persons with intellectual disability at various life stages – the first of its kind in Singapore.

MINDSville integrates a home, a hostel and group home for adults with intellectual disability, a children's wing, and a training and development centre under one roof. It also houses a sensory integration room, a multi-sensory room, a soft playroom, and an indoor hydrotherapy pool for its residents.



MINDS was set up to maximise the potential of persons with intellectual disability.

“Our experiences and exposures have been expanded with co-location of the four services and this is very rewarding and enriching.”

Before MINDSville@Napiri, MINDS ran two homes for persons with intellectual disability. The first was Tampines Home, set up in 1969 to meet the residential needs of persons with intellectual disability on the waiting list of Woodbridge Hospital's Mental Defective wards. The home subsequently moved to Thomson Road.

Residents at the home usually had multiple disabilities and were unable to care for themselves independently.

Many of them were destitute or had been abandoned by their families. In 1994, the second Tampines Home (West Coast) was established as a hostel facility, specially designed to help the

more able residents to manage their own lives in a communal living environment.

Now with four services housed together under one roof at MINDSville@Napiri, there is better utilisation and pooling of resources, resulting in economies of scale and savings in operational costs for MINDS.

This not only benefits clients and residents, but also enriches the experiences of MINDS staff.

“The clients and staff in MINDSville@Napiri have benefited from the interactions with each other. Our experiences and exposures have been expanded with co-location of the four services and this is very rewarding and enriching,” said MINDS' assistant director for residential services, Ms Koh Gee May.

An Interview with Mrs Tang See Chim, SCSS executive director from 1962 to 1983



Mrs S C Tang (right) was the first full-time professional at the council.

Genesis

“There were many challenges. But slowly, things changed. We put in place professional services and careers.”

I started work with Mr S R Nathan right from the beginning. It was just a small committee, working with a clerk and a messenger boy. We were at Asia Insurance Building and Mr Nathan was just down the road from us. Mr Nathan saw that there was a lack of co-ordination and information. So he told me to get to know all the charities. See them in their premises. Meet the heads of their groups.

One good thing that came out of that was the first directory of social services. It was called *The Helping Hand*. It covered about 50 organisations at the time. In the early 1960s, we were mainly providing custodial care, and were in charge of giving out the public assistance stipends.

Woon Wah Siang, who was the director of Social Welfare then, saw such councils in the USA and thought we could do with one here. When Mr Woon came back, he got together

a few people, including Dato Lee Kong Chian, Dr Ee Peng Liang and Jean Robertson, to discuss the formation of Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS). And we never looked back.

There were many challenges facing NGOs and SCSS became the spokesperson for its members to negotiate and to promote better communication between NGOs and the government, such as increasing funding for its members, more teachers for special schools, co-ordinating fundraising activities such as flag days and permits from government.

Various committees were also set up for children and families, persons with disabilities and the elderly.

But slowly, things changed. We put in place professional services and careers. We set up committees. Slowly, the money came in. Today, things are very different.”

First Joint Fundraiser

It was a time in Singapore where there was no national agency to co-ordinate social services. Welfare organisations generally raised their own funds. So in 1962, voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) took part in a massive exhibition cum fundraiser. At the exhibition, the different organisations set up stalls to tell the public what they did and what services were provided.

The exhibition was also a fundraising opportunity because it allowed these organisations to sell things to raise funds for themselves.

The highlight of the exhibition was the Tourist Souvenir competition organised by the Ministry of Culture. The Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association won the first prize of \$200.

In 1963, an even bigger exhibition was held. This time, it was a two-day affair with 33 VWOs taking part. Boy's Town won the Tourist Souvenir competition and took home the top prize of \$125. The exhibition cum fundraiser was an annual event until 1970.

New Wing for Old Home

In 1962, one of Singapore's oldest philanthropic organisations, the Children's Aid Society, became a member of SCSS.

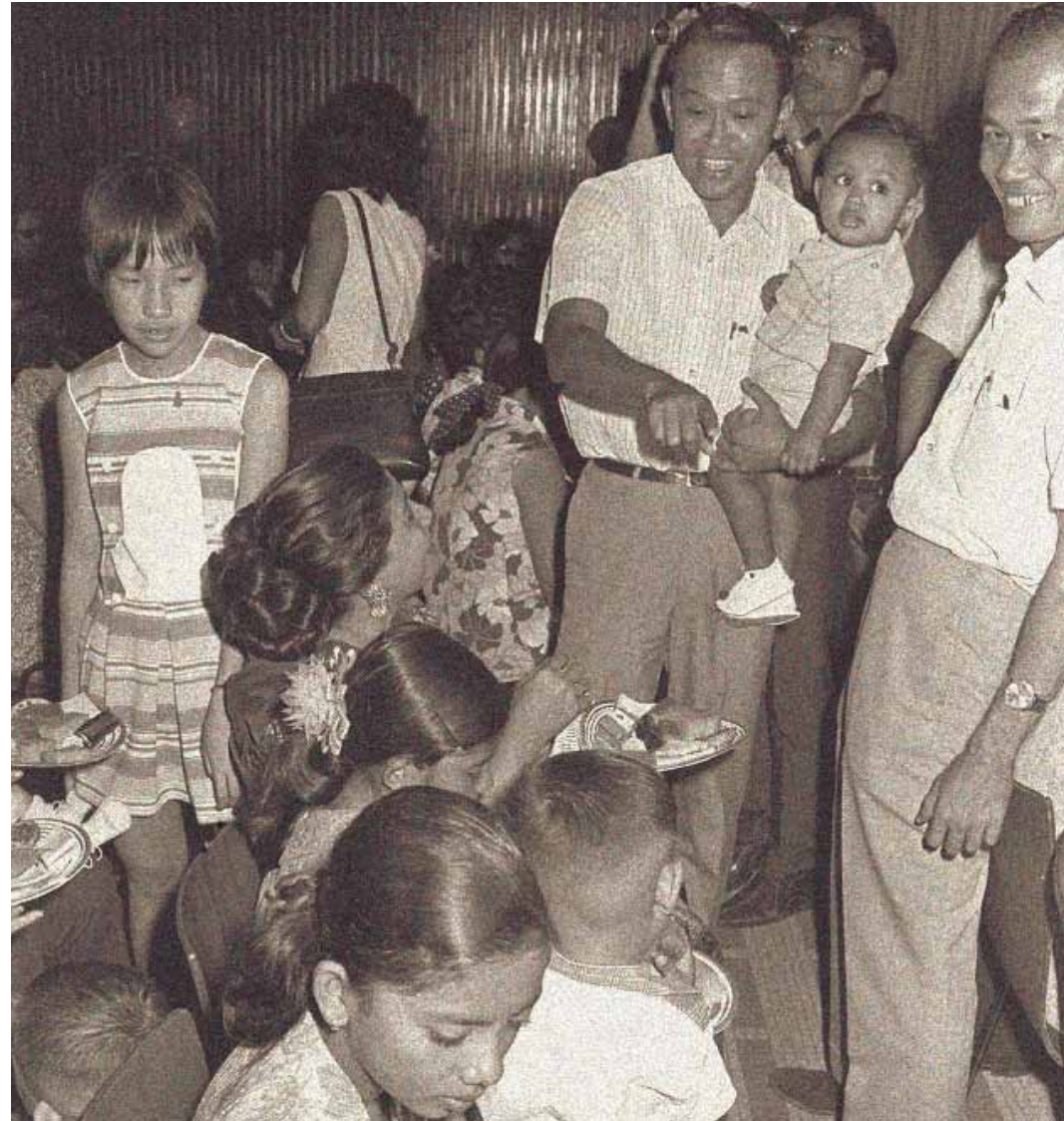
Formed in the late 1800s as the St Nicholas Home, it took on its present name in 1902. Today, it runs Melrose Home in Clementi Road which takes in children between four and 12 years old who need care or protection.

Government agencies, Members of Parliament, family service centres, hospitals, schools, the public, or family members themselves refer these children. The child's progress is reviewed at least once every three months by staff and the Home Management Committee. Their goal is to work with the child, parents, and the community, to help him or her be ready for discharge as soon as possible to return to the family. In January 2008, a wing for teenagers was added.



Registered as Organisation

- Feb Metropolitan Young Men's Christian Association of Singapore
- Mar American Woman's Association of Singapore
- Apr Lions Club of Singapore Central
- Aug Singapore Planned Parenthood Association



Social Affairs Minister Othman Wok attending the annual Social Welfare Department party for foster children.

First Minister, Second Chances

When Singapore was given self-rule in 1963, Othman Wok became the first Minister for Social Affairs.

Recalling the early years in an interview, he said: "I had taken over the Social Affairs Ministry in 1963. The ministry was also in charge of the Social Welfare Department, which was a big department dealing with children's homes, girl's homes, beggars and adoption of children. We also had to liaise with vol-

untary welfare organisations like the Red Cross and Muslim welfare organisations.

"I had a close relationship with the Ministry of Labour in those days; the permanent secretary of the ministry would always ask me to send him a list of unemployed people, and he would do his best to find jobs for them.

"To encourage those who were on the dole to go to work, we gave them two choices. We offered them jobs the first time, and if they didn't want them, we gave them a second chance. But if they did not accept those jobs, we would cut off the dole. We believed those who were able-bodied and healthy should work, so we could give the money to people who needed it more."

Did You Hear That? Full Integration is Possible

The merger of the Singapore Chinese Sign School for the Deaf and the Oral School for the Deaf to become the Singapore School for the Deaf in 1963 marked a turning point in the education of the deaf. Studying in a school on Mountbatten Road, the pupils were able for the first time to follow the same curriculum as that of their hearing peers.

Prior to the merger, the Singapore Chinese Sign School for the Deaf provided Chinese education and the Oral School for the Deaf provided English. And sign language had been used for communicating and teaching.

A new method called Total Communication, using speech with sign language and finger spelling, was adopted for the school in 1977. Total Communication was not new. The other pioneer in special education for the deaf, the Canossian School for the Deaf had in fact adopted it earlier in 1970.

"Experience has taught us that the deaf can be what they will, but they must have the opportunity. Our responsibility is to make these educational dreams of the deaf come true."

— Leonard M. Elstad

When Sister Anne Tan became the principal in 1983, she changed the name of the 27-year-old school to the Canossian School for the Hearing Impaired (CSHI) to reflect her belief that a high percentage of deaf children had sufficient residual hearing to develop auditory skills and spoken language as the main mode of communication. This led to the use of natural auditory-oral approach as the method of instruction in teaching hearing impaired children to maximise the use of residual hearing. It worked as language, speech and cognitive skills are developed principally through listening.

Hence, early detection of hearing loss and appropriate fitting of hearing aids were crucial in



Students learning sign language.

helping the hearing impaired learn to listen and speak. The school replaced the existing hearing aids with better and more powerful ones. From 1989, the school was able to integrate all the pre-school hearing impaired children into the regular kindergarten. Back-up support services were offered to teachers in the mainstream kindergarten to help cope with the presence of these children. Likewise, four hearing impaired pupils from the school were integrated into Bukit Batok Primary School after having successfully sat for their primary three streaming examination. The first batch of successful candidates did well in the PSLE in 1992, paving the way for further integration projects.

In January 2003, there was full integration for all pre-schoolers in Magdalene's Kindergarten and three

boys were integrated into secondary one in Monfort Secondary School. The school then changed its name again to simply, the Canossian School.

Like the Canossian School, its counterpart, the Singapore School for the Deaf, also expanded its education for its students from pre- to primary school, using Total Communication.

In the late 1960s as Singapore was industrialising, the Singapore School for the Deaf quickly captured the opportunity to introduce vocational training for deaf youths to fill the blue-collar positions that were becoming available.

Thus, in 1973, with the assistance of the Industrial Training Board, it drafted plans to train deaf youths to be skilled workers.

With more fundraising, the Vocational School

for the Handicapped was formed and classes started in 1975. The emphasis was to provide certificate courses so that the trainees could vie for jobs with their hearing peers on the strength of the certificates they held.

Over the years, the school has grown from Pre-Vocational to Artisan to National Trade Certificate Grade 3 courses in dressmaking, furniture production and general welding.

Men's tailoring was introduced in 1989 to supplement the dressmaking course.

The entire course structure was revamped in 1997 to reflect the trend towards a more sophisticated labour force: knowledgeable in information technology and able to provide quality customer services.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Eurasian Association Singapore
- Apr Young Women Muslim Association
- May Singapore Physiotherapy Association
- May United Indian Muslim Association

- May Singapore Buddhist Federation
- Sept Apex Club of Singapore (City)
- Nov Society for the Physically Disabled

Volunteers Help Restore Goodwill

In 1964, when race riots broke out between the Chinese and Malays in Singapore, which was part of the newly formed Malaysia, 23 people were killed and 454 injured.

They clashed during a religious celebration on 21 July. A procession of some 25,000 celebrants was making its way from Geylang Serai into town. In the late afternoon, while passing the Kallang Gasworks, the procession got rowdy and by nightfall, fights had broken out between some Malays in the procession

“The following days saw lawlessness as people from both races attacked one another with knives, glass bottles, metal rods and bars. Calm was only restored with the help of political leaders and hundreds of volunteers on the ground.”

and the Chinese who were in the vicinity. The police stopped the strife, dispersed the crowd and ordered a curfew. But it wasn't the end of it.

The following days saw lawlessness as people from both races attacked one another with knives,

glass bottles, metal rods and bars. Calm was only restored with the help of political leaders and hundreds of volunteers on the ground.

In the aftermath of this tragedy, one of the government's first initiatives was to set up Goodwill

Committees made up of community leaders, village headmen, and local leaders representing the different races in Singapore. Because they were recognised and respected by their communities, it was felt they could lead the way in helping to mend communal relations. These Goodwill Committees can be considered the forerunners of today's Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCC).

In 2001, after Al Qaeda attacked the Twin Towers in the United States and Jemaah Islamiyah suspects were arrested in Singapore, there were some concerns that our social cohesion could be threatened. The Inter-Racial Confidence Circles (renamed Inter-Racial and Religious Confidence Circle) was then formed in 2002 as a sub-committee under the charge of CCC to bridge any gap that might have grown between the different races.



In 1998, SAP became known as the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD), providing a wider range of services to help people with disabilities.

A Cause is Born

In 1956, Paulette Leaning, a New Zealander with physical disability, made a moving speech to members of the Singapore Rotary Club. Leslie Rayner and a few Rotarians were moved but it still took them eight years before the Society for Aid to the Paralysed (SAP) was born on 27 November 1964.

A few years later in 1967, they founded the Leslie Rayner Sheltered Workshop to provide employment opportunities for those who had difficulties seeking jobs in the open market. From a carpentry workshop, it grew into the first purpose-built service centre in 1994 to meet the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities.

Another benefactor included past president Lee Boon Huat who left in his will a bequest to set up the SAP Scholarship Awards in 1985. In its first year, a total of \$9,100 was presented to 25 successful candidates. The scholarship grew from strength to strength and by 2004, had awarded over \$1 million to almost 1,500 students with physical disability and students with parents with physical disability.

By then, the society's name had been changed to the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD).

Scholarship programmes received a boost in 2004 when the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation sponsored studies at a local university. A beneficiary, Liew Chong Choon, who has Spinal

Muscular Dystrophy, was a second year student in Business Management at the Singapore Management University.

“I have been a wheelchair-user since birth. I study because I wanted to give myself a better future. I also wanted to be in a position to be able to help others. I could be a role model for less privileged children and impart to them the importance of perseverance and determination, to inspire in others the belief that nothing is impossible. That is why I signed up as a mentor to help fellow students,” said Mr Liew.

The SPD is recognised for best practices in managing its volunteers, donors and resources.

Its Assistive Technology Centre helps people with disabilities to leverage on technology. For instance, James Poh, who has cerebral palsy and spent 30 years communicating through sign language, now types his messages which are read out by a communication device.

Its Therapy@Home Service provides occupational therapy and physiotherapy for those who cannot leave their homes for therapy. With the growth in demand for services, SPD@Tampines was set up in 2007. The new centre helps relieve the demand for services at Tiong Bahru, and also shortens the travelling time for clients who live in the east.



Reinforcements were sent to quell racial clashes at Kallang Road.





Registered as Organisation
 Jan Children's Charities Association of Singapore
 Jan Singapore Cancer Society
 Nov Chinese Women's Association

Open Hearts, Healthy Bodies and Heady Days

Independence in 1965 may have brought joy to the nation but pressing issues like welfare relief, rehabilitation and medical care meant there was no time for the council to celebrate. Voluntary welfare organisations had to be mobilised to attend to these urgent problems.

One of its major accomplishments in 1965 was its successful fight to get residents in institutional care exempt from having to pay the outpatient fees imposed by the Health Ministry. The 50 cents per person per visit charge may sound small by today's standard but not to the 1,700 residents of Boys' Town, Canossian Mission, Ramakrishna Mission, Salvation Army and Singapore Children's Society, who were the first beneficiaries. Over the years, several thousands of residents of institutional care agencies have benefited from this scheme.

“Independence in 1965 may have brought joy to the nation but pressing issues like welfare relief, rehabilitation and medical care meant there was no time for the council to celebrate.”

The council also had to maximise its limited resources. Although it had only \$237,000 worth of assets then, it still managed to give out some \$90,000 to help fire victims.

Avoiding duplication of efforts was another key thrust of the council's early work. Toward this end, it introduced the first “Calendar of Charitable Events in Singapore,” a yearly master calendar to help different organisations plan their fundraising activities a year ahead. It included a listing of all activities including film premieres, concerts and fun fairs.

The council's early advocacy with government

bodies led to Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) representations in various ministry initiatives aimed at helping people in need. One such effort led the Western Australian government to offer to undertake 10 open heart surgeries from Singapore each year because there was no cardiac unit in Singapore hospitals at that time. The council was invited to sit on the “Open Heart Surgery Scheme Committee” to raise funds and select patients for treatment in Australia. Dr Ee Peng Liang was the council's representative and managed to raise \$15,000 to help 10 patients.

Another early concern during the heady days of independence was the prevention of prostitution and rehabilitation of prostitutes. SCSS set up the first Women's Welfare Committee to explore how prosti- tutes could be encouraged to make use of the pro-

grammes and help offered by various organisations.

It did this by uniting social workers who were involved in similar work, co-ordinating their respective programmes and constantly evaluating their effectiveness. This allowed the committee ways and means of bringing about improvement in a significant way. One result was the successful operation of the anti-VD programme supported by the Health Ministry. By pooling their resources and having the necessary information readily available, the committee was able to reach out to women who were in need of help.



Health Minister, Yong Nyuk Lin, visiting the General Hospital following complaints of congestion and delay.

Inspired by Prophet Muhammad

Since its establishment in 1965, the Prophet Muhammad's Birthday Memorial Scholarship Fund Board (PMBM) has been the educational torchbearer for Malay Muslim students in Singapore.

Better known by its Malay name of Lembaga Biasiswa Kenangan Maulud (LBKM), the fund helps needy students further their education through bursaries and other financial assistance. The idea to form a board of this nature was first mooted a couple of years earlier by a prominent Malay businessman and philanthropist, Mr Syed Ali Redha Alsagoff, during a meeting among Malay Muslim organisations to discuss preparations to celebrate the Prophet Muhammad's birthday.

Over the years, it has worked tirelessly to raise funds to help underprivileged students even as their numbers and needs have increased.

“When LBKM was established in 1965, the Malays' socio-economic standard was poor. Our challenge then was to ensure students could afford to have basic education. Today, we face different challenges, the increasing cost of education being one of them. I hope LBKM can continue to raise funds so that we can continue to provide deserving students with the assistance they need to excel,” said Haji Wan Hussin Haji Zohri, president of its executive council.

To date, it has disbursed over \$9 million in bursaries and study grants to more than 13,000 students from primary to postgraduate levels here and overseas.



Doing their part during Flag Day.



Registered as Organisation

- Feb Prophet Muhammad's Birthday Memorial Scholarship Fund Board
- Jun National Safety Council of Singapore
- Jul Kamala Club, Singapore

The Blood Run

To encourage people to give blood, it makes sense to make it convenient for them to do so. That happened in June 1966, when the Rotary Club of Singapore donated a mobile blood bank to the Singapore Blood Transfusion Service (SBTS). The mobile blood bank was a converted bus which went around Singapore collecting blood donations from the public. The bus was officially presented to the health minister, Yong Nyuk Lin, in 1967.

The mobile blood bank makes it easier to collect blood en masse from large organisations such as schools and companies.

“To encourage people to give blood, it makes sense to make it convenient for them to do so. That happened in June 1966, when the Rotary Club of Singapore donated a mobile blood bank to the Singapore Blood Transfusion Service (SBTS).”

The mobile blood bank is an integral part of SBTS, which was formed in 1946 just after the War. In its first year, there were only 287 donations. It has made tremendous progress since then and now has more than 60,000 donations each year. It collects about 200 pints of blood each day.

Apart from providing government hospitals with their monthly blood needs, the SBTS also collects blood during national emergencies like during the Spyro ship disaster and the Hotel New World collapse.



Top: The mobile blood bank was converted from a bus.
Above: More donors came forward as it became more convenient to donate blood.

Turning Dreams into Reality

The Rotary movement is worldwide and was founded in 1905 by Paul Harris. Its motto: Service Above Self. The Rotary flame was ignited in Singapore, on 6 June 1930 when 75 leading members of the community representing 20 different nationalities met at Raffles Hotel to inaugurate the first Rotary Club in Singapore.

The flame was fanned by the visions of men like James W. Davidson, Lim Bock Kee and the founding president, Dato (Sir) Roland Braddell. This led to the growth of 23 Rotary

Clubs in Singapore with about 1,000 members.

Besides each club adopting various causes, the Rotary Clubs also set up the Rotary Foundation to partner the Singapore government in identifying needs to enhance the welfare of society, and in providing appropriate community services.

For instance, The Rotary Family Service Centre was established in 1997; in 1999, the Rotary-Ayer Rajah Students' Care Centre and in 2001, Rotary Counselling Centre. Currently, its motto is Make Dreams Real.



Each Rotary Club adopts its own cause.



Registered as Organisation
 Apr Rotary Club of Singapore East
 Jun Girl Guides Singapore
 Aug Singapore Life Saving Society

Educating Pioneers

The University of Singapore began teaching social work in 1952 when it offered a two-year Diploma in Social Studies, the first professional social work qualification in Singapore. Fifteen years later, in 1967, the first batch of students for a degree in social work walked through the portals of the university.

Behind those major milestones in social work education were two women pioneers. The first pioneer was Jean Robertson who was born in 1908 in Scotland. She arrived in Singapore in 1952 to set up the Department of Social Studies at the University of Malaya, where she worked for the next 15 years.

At the time, social service as a field of study was dismissed as “merely vocational” and did not have any academic standing. Miss Robertson worked against the tide and soon established a department of international repute.

“Now in her early 80s, Associate Professorial Fellow Wee has clocked more than five decades of social service work in Singapore.”

A year after the start of the degree course in 1967, Mrs Ann Wee came to head the Department of Social Work and Psychology.

Now in her early 80s, Associate Professorial Fellow Wee has clocked more than five decades of social service work in Singapore. This English-woman arrived in Singapore with her lawyer husband in 1950 as a 23-year-old and first taught at Methodist Girls’ School. In 1955, she joined the colonial Social Welfare Department as a training



Mrs Ann Wee became involved in social service in the early 1950s.

officer. It was a decision that was to be the turning point of her life.

When she left a couple of years later, she joined the University of Malaya to teach and eventually rose to head the department from 1968 to 1986. Among her many students was a certain S R Nathan.

Over time, the study of social work has evolved and the National University of Singapore now offers postgraduate studies in the subject. Similarly, the issues that social workers deal with have changed as well.

In the early years, social workers dealt largely with issues resulting from poverty. By the 1970s, the economy had taken off and it was problems within the family that took centre stage. Later, there were yet newer problems, such as internet addiction.



Dato Lee Kong Chian laying the foundation stone for the National Library at Stamford Road.

The Life Savers

“The Singapore Life Saving Society have been awarded the International Life Saving Federation Citation of Merit...the highest international accolade given to the society for its work in lifesaving, drowning prevention and water safety.”

Since its inception in 1967, the Singapore Life Saving Society has trained several lifesavers and lifeguards who have gone on to save numerous lives.

Proof of this is the number of lifesaving awards the society has issued – over 100,000 and counting. In 2007, the society was awarded the International Life Saving Federation Citation of Merit in recognition of its devotion to the cause of the saving of

life in the aquatic environment over the past 40 years. It is the highest international accolade given to the society for its work in lifesaving, drowning prevention and water safety.

Other programmes like the free public lifesaving clinics and aquatic programmes for people with disabilities have also garnered the society much credit and praise for its undying work in saving lives.



Members of Singapore Life Saving Society giving a rescue demonstration.

A Foundation of Good Work

When he died in 1967, Dato Lee Kong Chian left half of his shares in the profitable Lee Rubber Company to the Lee Foundation. Today the income from these shares continues to finance the foundation.

Dato Lee, a successful businessman and philanthropist, had set up the foundation in 1952 with a capital sum of \$3.5 million. The money was used to help the poor and victims of fire, flood and famine.

One of the most enduring legacies of the foundation is the creation of a free public library system for the enjoyment of Singaporeans. In 1953, Dato Lee donated \$375,000 for the construction of a new building for the National Library, on condition that the library waived its annual fees.

Today, the free public library services are due in part to Dato Lee’s generosity. Some 50 years after the first donation, the National Library once again benefited from the Lee Foundation through a \$60 million donation.

To honour the contribution, the National Library named its new reference library at Victoria Street the Lee Kong Chian Reference Library.

More than half a century later, the Lee Foundation remains Singapore’s largest foundation. Over the years, it has contributed to education, welfare, research and the arts in Singapore. His son, Dr Lee Seng Gee, became the Foundation’s chairman in 1967.



Registered as Organisation
 Feb Society for the Aged Sick
 Mar Chen Su Lan Methodist Children's Home
 Dec Singapore Association for Mental Health

New Status, Same Aims

SCSS becomes a statutory body

After a decade of operations, the Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) became a statutory body through an Act of Parliament that was passed in December 1968.

As outlined by the Act, the main aims of the council were to co-ordinate volunteer welfare activities, maintain or improve standards of social services and programmes, assist member organisations, initiate, assist and organise relief, raise and distribute funds, and disseminate information about social welfare to the public.

The council remained a self-governing body with a board of management elected from its member organisations at the annual general meeting.

In 1968, these representatives were elected to the executive committee.

President: Dr Ee Peng Liang
 Vice President: Mr Goh Sin Tub
 Mr Harry L Wee
 Hon Gen Secretary: Mr S R Nathan
 Hon Treasurer: Mr Cecil V R Wong
 Members: Mrs E M Boswell
 Mr Ron Chandran-Dudley
 Mrs Gracia Chee
 Major J G Dunstone
 Inche Mansor Hj Fadzal
 Mr Raymon T H Huang
 Mr Kwa Soon Chuan
 Mr Ng Aik Huan
 Miss Pitt Chin Hui
 Dr N C Sen-Gupta
 Capt John Storey
 Mrs Ann Wee
 Mr Woon Wah Siang
 Capt Donald Watt
 Hon Auditor: Mr Ho Chak

“The main aims of the council were to co-ordinate volunteer welfare activities, maintain and improve standards of social services and programmes, assist member organisations, initiate, assist and organise relief, raise and distribute funds, and disseminate information about social welfare to the public.”

Over the years, the council's roles and functions have expanded tremendously. It has grown so successful that on 1 May 1992, the NCSS Act was passed in Parliament to form the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

Its charter is to improve the lives of the disadvantaged in Singapore, by taking over the functions of the former Singapore Council of Social Service and Community Chest of Singapore. Though NCSS works closely with many government ministries, it is not part of the government.

NCSS is managed by a Board of Council whose members are volunteers and are either appointed or elected from amongst affiliates of the council at its annual general meeting every two years.

Benevolent to All

In 1968, a 100-year-old institution came under the umbrella of the Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) and became part of the large collective of organisations and individuals who selflessly participate in community service and social welfare.

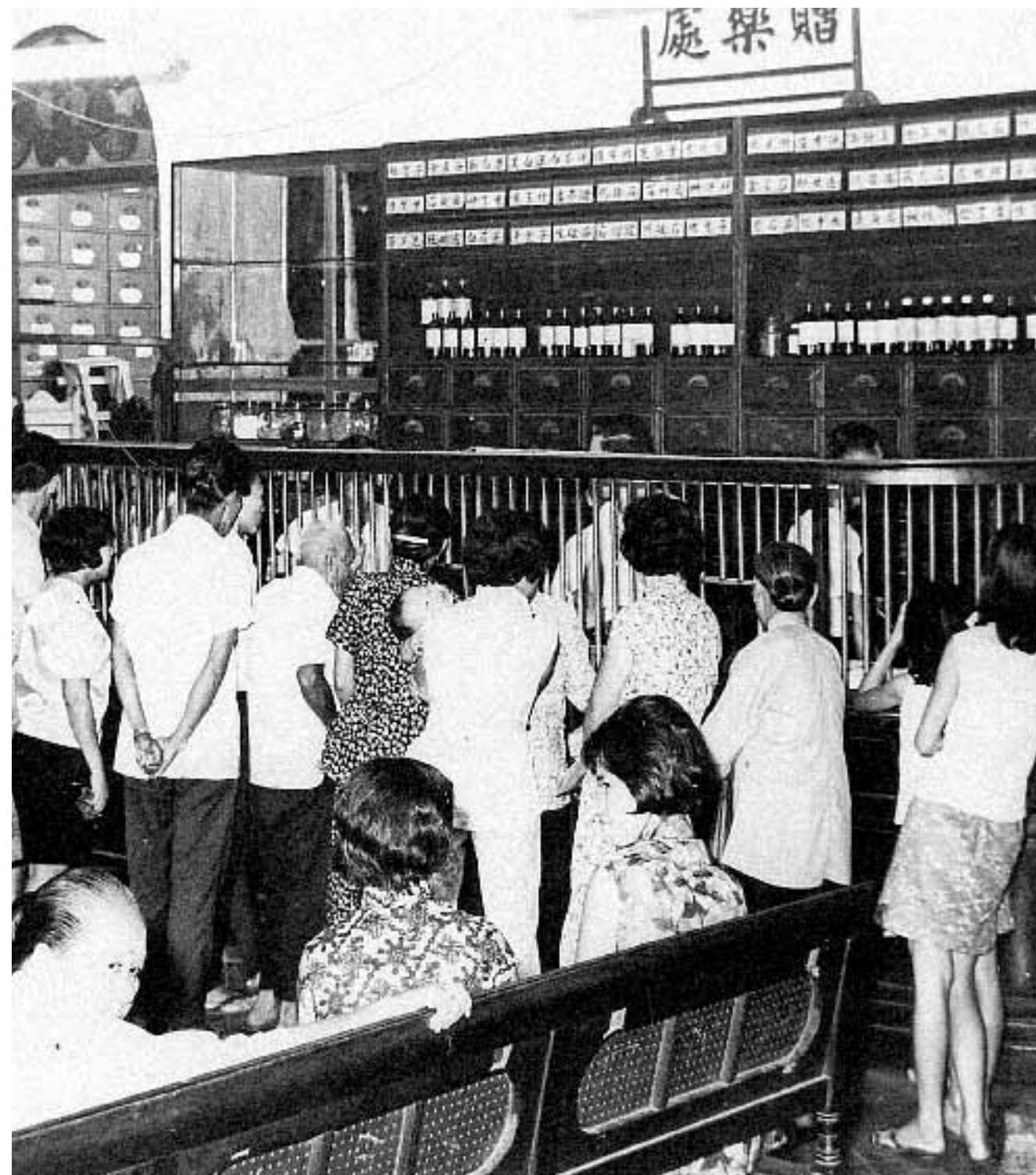
Thong Chai Medical Institution is the oldest charity in Singapore.

It was founded by seven Chinese philanthropists, including the noteworthy benefactor Gan Eng Seng, in 1867 and opened its first clinic a year later in North Canal Road.

It was the first Chinese organisation to offer free traditional Chinese medicine and consultation to poor and sick Chinese immigrants. Today, its free services are open to all regardless of race, religion or nationality, living up to its name, which means “benevolent to all.”

Right up to the 1970s, it ran its services from its unique building in Eu Tong Sen Street.

The building was gazetted as a national monument in 1973. Thong Chai continues its free services today in another premises in nearby Chin Swee Road.



Thong Chai has been providing free medical treatment for the last 140 years.





Registered as Organisation

Feb Marymount Centre
Apr Central Council of Malay Cultural Organisations
(Majlis Pusat Pertubuhan-pertubuhan Budaya Melayu Singapura)

May Singapore Buddhist Free Clinic
Jul Samaritans of Singapore
Dec Handicaps Welfare Association



Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew visits Bukit Ho Swee four years after the infamous fire. In 2001, Bukit Ho Swee Social Service was renamed Beyond Social Services and became a one-stop centre offering a wide range of services for children, youths, families and the aged.



Beyond Bukit Ho Swee

Beyond Social Services began life as Bukit Ho Swee Social Service, a charity set up in August 1969, in response to the poor living conditions aggravated by two fires that ravaged the Bukit Ho Swee community in the 1960s.

The 25 May 1961 inferno, famously known as the Bukit Ho Swee Fire, devastated 60 acres of squatter settlement and left about 15,000 people homeless. The government quickly provided emergency housing units but the squatter settlement soon re-emerged. On 24 November 1968, near the same spot where the 1961 fire began, the homes of 3,000 people went up in flames.

It was in such a climate that some religious groups and concerned individuals got together to form the Bukit Ho Swee Community Service Project with the aim of helping residents solve problems associated with poverty and crowded living conditions.

Buddhist monks, Catholic missionaries, Anglican, Presbyterian and Lutheran pastors and service

clubs pooled their resources to provide free medical treatment and food rations.

Since it began, the centre has primarily focused on improving the lives of families and individuals from disadvantaged low-income backgrounds. The centre inevitably gained much expertise in dealing with delinquency-related issues.

So with more than 30 years of experience behind it, the centre was ready to offer its services beyond Bukit Ho Swee. It was renamed Beyond Social Services in 2001 and became a one-stop centre, offering a wide range of services for children, youths, families, and the aged. Some of its programmes include a children's playgroup, outreach and learning programmes for children and youths, as well as family counselling, support for parents, and family life education.

Its vision is that by 2025, every child and youth in Singapore, despite a disadvantaged background can still have the chance and means to refuse a lifestyle of delinquency and welfare dependency.



Self-taught artist Johnny Ang's works have been presented as gifts to VIPs.

Disabled Helping the Disabled

The Handicaps Welfare Association (HWA), founded in 1969 by a group of 23 persons to promote self-help and provide mutual support among people with disabilities in Singapore, is a voluntary welfare organisation with a difference – it is run by disabled for the disabled.

Its members include Judy Wee, the former president who was born with deformed limbs. "Being on the executive committee opened my eyes and heart up to people whose lives were not as fortunate as mine," she said. She sits on various committees to improve access for people with disabilities, including the Review Committee for the Code on Barrier-Free Accessibility in Buildings. But she is quick to add that, "enhancing accessibility features for people with disabilities never ends."

HWA has come a long way from its modest beginning. In the early years, its activities were confined to mere social gatherings. It had no

office premises or staff. Meetings were held in a church library and its leaders had to contribute towards the purchase of refreshments. Today, it has over 1,700 members.

In 1986, it was judged the most outstanding civic organisation by the United Nations Association of Singapore for its contribution in helping remove physical, social and economic barriers facing people with disabilities in Singapore.

Its members inspire as well. One example is Johnny Ang. At 19, his life took a tragic turn when a diving accident left him paralysed from the neck down. Despite being a quadriplegic, he did not sink into depression.

At 50, he taught himself to paint and some of his works have been presented as gifts to politicians and dignitaries. In 1993, he flew to Washington to receive the International Victory Award for being a role model for people with disabilities.

He continued his learning journey under a Colombo Plan Scholarship and has three diplomas – in journalism, short story writing and writing for radio – from the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology through long-distance learning.

Today he is financially independent – the Association of Foot and Mouth Painting Artists pays him to use his paintings on greeting cards.



Professor Khoo Oon Teik (right), chairman of the National Kidney Foundation receiving the donor cards from Mr Lim Hong Nian, chairman of the kidney donation campaign committee of University of Singapore's hostelites in 1973.

Founded on a Brother's Loss

A young doctor who saw his brother suffer for years from kidney failure and eventually lost him to the disease started the National Kidney Foundation (NKF) in 1969 in the attic of the Singapore General Hospital.

Dr Khoo Oon Teik knew he could not save the world but that he could do something as a nephrologist, a kidney disease specialist, for others who were also having kidney failure.

In the 1960s and 1970s, thousands succumbed to the disease every year because they could not afford the expensive dialysis treatment. And without the dialysis, it was difficult to survive kidney failure. In fact, it came to be known as the "rich man's illness" because only those who were affluent enough could afford the \$4,000 monthly cost of dialysis.

Without dialysis, death was inevitable, as a kidney transplant was a remote possibility. So in 1969, Dr Khoo, together with a group of friends, set up Singapore's first dialysis unit to provide subsidised care and rehabilitation for kidney patients.

NKF was a modest start-up but Dr Khoo's spirit to help was big.

He strongly advocated a publicly funded di-

alysis treatment programme for his patients. One reason was to raise awareness about kidney disease in the community. The other was to inculcate the spirit of self-help and caring for one another to the public.

"...it came to be known as the "rich man's illness" because only those who were affluent enough could afford the \$4,000 monthly cost of dialysis."

His passion and commitment for his work and his memory of his brother's suffering kept him going. Despite a heavy workload, Dr Khoo was tireless in fundraising. Many knew him as a selfless volunteer and he was an inspiration to many.

He retired in 1995 but had managed, for the 26 years of his chairmanship of NKF, to help thousands cope with kidney failure.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Singapore Heart Foundation
- Jun Asian Women's Welfare Association
- Jul Singapore Professional Centre
- Jul National St John Council for the Republic of Singapore
- Sept United World College of South East Asia

New and Renew

Nineteen seventy saw the birth of a Muslim association and the rejuvenation of another to help those in need or in trouble.

Pertapis

The Islamic Theological Association of Singapore, was founded as a Muslim welfare and educational body to help needy Muslims. Its mission: "To do everything we can to make life more meaningful for the poor and the unfortunate," as a demonstration of Islam in action.

Since its founding, it has helped more than 800 poor and needy families, 800 children, 6,000 troubled teenagers and girls in moral danger, 200 senior citizens and 2,100 recovering drug addicts through its children's home, senior citizens home, centre for women and girls and a halfway house in Geylang Road.

"My teacher saw many blue-black marks and wounds on my body. I was then sent to the hospital and I was placed in this home. I am very sad because I do not want to leave my home but that lady from the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports took me here. I am scared. I am only eight years old. My parents will be angry with me and they will beat me again."

The Pertapis Children's Home in Yio Chu Kang is a safe haven for children like the unnamed boy above. It takes in children between four and 16 years old. Some are in the home to protect them from abusive parents while others are there because they are beyond "parental control."

To help former drug offenders and poorly educated single mothers in finding employment, Pertapis started two social enterprises to give them employment and to raise funds at the same time. In 2004, it started the Iklas Catering Services, whose profits go into the welfare trust fund. It also has a printing workshop called DigiArt that prints stickers, banners, posters, backdrops and signboards.

Today, there is a two-fold increase in the number of people seeking Pertapis assistance such as retrenched parents with children in schools. There is also a growing need to tackle youth delinquency and elderly care.

Jamiyah Singapore

Jamiyah Singapore was founded in 1932 by the famous Islamic preacher Maulana Abdul Aleem Siddique from Meerut, India together with other religious leaders in Singapore and Malaya at that time.

It was then known as the All-Malaya Muslim Missionary Society with branches in the various states of Malaysia. When Singapore left Malaysia, it changed its name to the Muslim Missionary Society Singapore.

The year 1970 also saw the election of Abu Bakar Maidin and his colleagues to the offices of the Muslim Missionary Society Singapore or Jamiyah Singapore.

At the time, it had exactly \$5.60 in its kitty and a membership of 190 people.

Under his leadership, Jamiyah's membership grew to 35,000 members and it became financially healthy. It now runs a children's home, a home for senior citizens, a nursing home as well as a halfway house. It also has childcare centres, kindergartens and a Jamiyah Business School that offers certificates and diplomas.

To help the needy, Jamiyah provides household essentials to the poor, and runs a legal and medical clinic. The medical clinic offers free medicine and consultation. Under the Jeewa umbrella, Jamiyah runs various businesses such as a deli, a restaurant and a catering service.

It is also known for forging links with organisations outside the Muslim community. It has worked with the Singapore Buddhist Lodge, Catholic Archdiocese, Hindu Endowments Board, Central Sikh Gurudwara, Taoist Mission and the Taoist Federation of Singapore. Lee Foundation has been a generous supporter.

In 2004, Abu Bakar Maidin received the Berita Harian Achiever of the Year award at the age of 77.

"Nineteen seventy saw the birth of a Muslim association and the rejuvenation of another to help those in need or in trouble."



Mrs T Kulasekaram (second from right), a founding member of AWWA.

From Women Welfare to Family Centre

The Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) was started in 1970 to help impoverished and unskilled women but expanded over the years to include children with physical disability and the elderly as well. Mrs T Kulasekaram, founding member of AWWA and the wife of a Supreme Court judge, chaired the AWWA Elderly Services to better address the needs of the elderly.

In 1991, the association provided outreach support services for people with disabilities through one of its arms called Therapy and Educational Assistance for Children in Mainstream Education (TEACH ME).

This programme provides therapy and educational assistance to physically challenged children in mainstream schools and won the Family & Resource Training Centre (FRTC) Innovative Programme Award in 1994.

The AWWA Family Service Centre empowers the disadvantaged to maximise their potential to lead dignified and independent lives.

In 2006, President S R Nathan officially opened ACCESS (AWWA Centre for Care Education and

Social Services). ACCESS provides purpose-built facilities and activity centres for children with multiple disabilities, the elderly and their caregivers.

Training its sights on the island's ageing population, the AWWA Elderly Services brings relief to Singaporeans over 60 years old by providing sheltered housing, rehabilitation, daycare services, as well as caregiver support services.

"The Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) was started in 1970 to help impoverished and unskilled women but expanded over the years to include children with physical disability and the elderly as well."

No Handouts, We're Enterprising

When the Singapore Council of Social Service opened its new headquarters in 1970, it had a small social enterprise on the ground floor – a Goodwill Shop that sold handi-crafts and other products made by residents of welfare homes and institutions in Singapore.

The people responsible for stocking up the modest store came from 25 groups – including voluntary and government welfare homes, the prisons and occupational therapy units of government hospitals.

The idea behind the shop was to find a way for the underprivileged or people with disabilities living at home, as well as people on public assistance to have a livelihood, rather than depend on handouts. By producing goods for sale, they could be made to feel more positive about their situation and try to achieve some

degree of economic independence. The shop was managed by full-time staff and patronised by high profile women like the wives of leading business, community and political leaders.

It also offered short courses, conducted by volunteers, to people from the welfare institutions and people with disabilities. Today, it has evolved and provides a sustainable source of income for poor families and some voluntary welfare organisations.

An example is the Salvation Army's Red Shield Industries (RSI) Family Thrift Stores that are a social enterprise as well as a serving ministry.

The Salvation Army receives donations-in-kind from the public and companies. In turn, RSI resells them through its network of Family Thrift Stores. The income generated supports Salvation Army social and community programmes.



Mrs Jek Yeun Thong at the Goodwill Shop at the Singapore Council of Social Service in Penang Lane.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Lions Club of Singapore Jurong
- Feb Singapore Association of Social Workers
- Mar Islamic Theological Association of Singapore (Pertapis)

- Mar Lions Club of Singapore North
- Sept Diabetic Society of Singapore
- Oct Zonta Club of Singapore

Special Education Gets Special Attention

Nothing should stop a child from learning. Not even disabilities. Many voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) that believe in this have taken the lead when it comes to helping children with learning disabilities. In the 1950s and 1960s, these children were mostly treated at the Singapore General Hospital and did not attend regular schooling.

Through studies conducted by Singapore Children Society and Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) Committee for Disabled, issues on education and integration of people with disabilities into the mainstream were surfaced.

In 1971, special education for children with learning disability received special attention when a Special Education Unit was set up within the Ministry of Education.

By mid-1986, there were 12 special schools ca-

tering to some 2,000 pupils with disabilities, including those with intellectual disability, hearing impairment, visual disability, cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities. All these schools were run by VWOs with government support in terms of funds, buildings and capability building.

Another milestone in special education was reached with the setting up of the Advisory Council on the Disabled in 1988. Recommendations included setting aside land for purpose-built special education schools instead of just taking over disused buildings.

Another major improvement was in the training of special education teachers by the Institute of Education, and the increase in government subvention for special education schools. With better teachers and more funding, children with disabilities are the ultimate winners.



Children with disabilities learn through play at school.



Old friend Tan Wee Eng (left) and former boxing champion Lim Kee Chan (right) visit former boxing great, Ignacio Fernandez, at the Mandai Home for the Aged.

Just Did It

When it was discovered that three homes housing the elderly destitutes were unlicensed, SCSS set up an Ad Hoc Committee for the Aged, Destitute and Chronic Sick in 1971 to remedy the situation.

More than 300 chronic sick and elderly in the Dragon Lotus Home, Yew Tee Home and Aljunied Home were found to be in "acute and unfavourable conditions." In fact, the homes were merely makeshift shelters, without piped water, electricity and separate dormitories for men and women. There were also no arrangements for medical care.

The committee may have been ad hoc but its

work was to have a lasting impact. It improved food, care, cleanliness and the physical infrastructure for the residents. Each home was also given more staff and repairs were undertaken. In the Dragon Lotus Home, a new dormitory for women, toilets and incinerators were built. Electricity was installed at the Yew Tee Home. New beds, mattresses, linen, clothing and lockers were provided.

Later on, the council built the Villa Francis (Mandai Home) to house the needy elderly from the three privately run homes. The home was officially opened on 22 April 1978 by the Acting Minister for Social Affairs, Dr Ahmad Mattar.

Advance Social Work, Advance

Although the Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW) was established in 1971 as the national body representing professional social workers, its roots can be traced to humble beginnings some 55 years ago.

It began back in November 1954 when a group of almoners or medical social workers registered the Malaysian Association of Almoners (MAA) to help maintain standards in their profession, through a systematic and unified approach. As it was then, and today, its key objective is to advance social work as a profession and foster a high standard of social work in the country.

But as social needs and problems become more complex, social workers require not only compassion and dedication to help those in need but also intellectual and analytical skills and personal commitment.

"...as social needs and problems become more complex, social workers require not only compassion and dedication to help those in need but also intellectual and analytical skills and personal commitment."

Mrs Chow devotes much effort towards family violence prevention and elder protection in Singapore. To do this successfully, she works closely with professionals in related fields such as geriatrics, psychiatry and social work, as well as the police and the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.

Send Them to Us

With the formation in 1971 of the Community Probation Service (CPS), one of the more urgent needs of the penal and correctional system was met. The courts were then encouraged to put young offenders under the care of these probation and aftercare officers rather than send them to prison.



Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports, Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon and Mr Gerard Ee at the Toa Payoh Girl's Home.

"The courts were then encouraged to put young offenders under the care of these probation and aftercare officers rather than send them to prison."

The CPS was staffed by more than 400 trained volunteer probation officers (VPOs) and became the model for similar schemes not only in Singapore but around the re-

gion too. K V Veloo, whose 35-year career started in 1964 in probation and aftercare, became the first Chief Probation and Aftercare Officer of the CPS.



Addicted to Helping

In the Seventies, the Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association (SANA) was set up to rehabilitate drug addicts and to provide them with assistance and support.

It was registered under the Societies Act in 1972 and its charity status was approved that same year. Its first president was Dr Ee Peng Liang, Singapore's Mr Charity.

When Dr Baey Lian Peck was elected SANA's president in 1977, the authorities turned to SANA for help. In April 1977, the Central Narcotics Bu-

reau and the police begun Operation Ferret, a massive operation to flush out drug abusers. In 1977 alone, about 5,000 addicts were arrested. By February 1978, over 26,000 persons had been arrested for drug consumption.

Dr Baey recalled: "Six months later, they were released and they would go back to drugs again. Someone had to take care of them." That someone turned out to be SANA.

SANA took on the task even though it was a large challenge. Said Dr Baey: "We had our fears. How

were we going to get volunteers to take care of the 800 addicts who were coming out every month?"

Fortunately, the religious groups in Singapore stepped in to help.

Within three months, SANA had 1,000 volunteers and at its peak in 1980, it had over 2,500 volunteers. These volunteers provided counselling to ex-addicts and also aftercare support.

In 1996, Dr Baey stepped down from SANA after 19 years at the helm. He was succeeded by Dr Loo Choon Yong from the Raffles Medical Group.



Archbishop Emeritus Gregory Yong (centre) with after-care volunteers of the Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association.

Opening the Way

When President Benjamin Sheares opened the SCSS Building at 11 Penang Lane on 28 April 1972, he said: "Lack of co-ordination creates a variety of problems and would only add to the deprivation of those for whom the social services exist.

"In a small country like Singapore, co-ordination is also necessary between the government and the voluntary social agencies and between the voluntary agencies themselves to maintain the most efficient and effective services for the people... It is incumbent, therefore, that the community of Singapore, with its long established tradition for voluntary social work, should need the services



President Benjamin Sheares at the official opening of the SCSS building.

"SCSS laid the foundations of the growth of the social service sector by taking the initiative to plan, develop and pilot social services not covered by the government... It led by example."

of an organisation such as the Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) to assist and guide its social agencies, to prevent overlapping or duplication in their work, to provide a forum for them to discuss their difficulties and to act as intermediary

between the government and other bodies with like interests."

The council's vision of providing leadership and direction in social services remains today even if the style has shifted from directive to facilitative,

stressing more on capability building and strategic partnerships for social services.

Recalling the council's efforts in those days, social service veteran K V Veloo wrote: "SCSS laid the foundations of the growth of the social service sector by taking the initiative to plan, develop and pilot social services not covered by the government. I recalled SCSS' sterling efforts in setting up the Ang Mo Kio Social Service Centre, Handicaps Welfare Association and the Henderson Senior Citizens' Home.

It led by example. These projects were subsequently handed over to the interested groups to operate. That is how it should be."

A Home for Boys, Another for Girls

In 1972, Darul Ihsan, the Muslim Welfare Home, started planning for an orphanage for girls to complement the one for boys.

Darul Ihsan is a charity set up by the Muslimin Trust Fund Association (MTFA) which first started an orphanage in 1904 for 25 boys.

Years down the line, after shifting locations twice and with the number of orphans increasing, MTFA built the Darul Ihsan Orphanage for boys

situated at 5 Mattar Road. The orphanage was officially opened by President Yusof bin Ishak.

Darul Ihsan is primarily supported by donations from the public. It also receives grants from the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports based on the number of orphans under its supervision.

Darul Ihsan operates two orphanages: Darul Ihsan Lilbanin, which caters to boys and Darul

Ihsan Libanat for girls. The orphanage for girls was officially opened in 1980, nearly eight years after it was first conceived.

All their residents are students. The charity also runs an educational financial aid scheme through which they distribute monthly assistance to orphans not staying in their orphanages.

The residents are exposed to many activities that ensure the development of active minds as well as healthy bodies.

Staff and volunteers work together as one in keeping these children safe and free from the streets, and educating them on various aspects of life from communication, teamwork to social interaction skills.



Registered as Organisation

Apr Singapore Red Cross Society
May Singapore Disability Sports Council
Jun Singapore American Community Action Council

Jul Lions Club of Singapore Tanglin
Aug Bible – Presbyterian Welfare Services, Singapore

Trusted at Home and Abroad



Red Cross and other relief workers go around giving first aid to casualties of the Kampong Tiong Bahru fire.

In the recent past, the Singapore Red Cross Society has been in the spotlight for its quick and timely response to help victims of natural calamities and disasters in the region such as the Asian tsunami, Sichuan earthquake and Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar.

But as long ago as 1973 when it was founded, it has gained a reputation for its pioneering work in providing services for people with disabilities. It started the first and only residential care facility for the people with severe disabilities. The Red Cross Home for the Disabled currently provides long-term residential services and short-term respite care to 88 residents with multiple disabilities between the ages of four and 58 years.

Its Red Cross Hostel for the Physically Handicapped Workers provides subsidised accommodation for workers with physical disability and is currently home to 11 adults.

Over the years, the Singapore Red Cross has continued to play increasing important roles in Singapore. From organizing bloodmobiles, the Red

Cross Blood Centre is now the Health Sciences Authority-appointed National Blood Donor Recruiter. In this role, it is in a better position to build a ready pool of blood donors in times of emergency or disaster.

“Singapore Red Cross Society has been in the spotlight for its quick and timely response to help victims of natural calamities and disasters in the region”

Today, the SRC has grown in its humanitarian work by providing opportunities for Singaporeans to be involved in projects aimed at providing assistance or enhancing the well-being of the less fortunate in neighbouring countries.

It is a focal point for collection of cash and kinds during humanitarian crises.

An Interview with Dr S Vasoo,
Associate Professorial Fellow of the National University of Singapore

Roll Up Your Sleeves and Help Someone



Dr Vasoo serving plates of nasi beriyani to residents of the Woody Lodge Home to spread Deepavali cheer.

The year 1973 was when a lot of social problems were surfacing. There was for example, a public outcry over the problems with standards of care for the aged sick in a few nursing homes. These were privately run and the elderly were housed in make-shift shacks with zinc roofs.

So a committee for the care of the aged sick was set up. At that time, I was the deputy director at SCSS.

We had to basically go in and take over the two nursing homes: The Dragon Lotus Home and the Yew Tee Home for the aged sick.

So, we had to mobilise volunteers and one of the groups which responded in a big way were the students from the Singapore Polytechnic. Over the years, volunteers have become more involved in social welfare.

In the 1970s, the emphasis was on outreach. The British were withdrawing from its naval bases here. A lot of expatriate wives were leaving, and we needed to cultivate a pool of local volunteers. In 1976, we set up the volunteers' bureau, which had the role of training, orientating and placing volunteers.

People gave their time, money, and their efforts as well. Before the setting up of Community Chest, we started a “giving place” where people would donate goods in times of disasters. It was at the ground floor of our building in Penang Lane.

In this period, the needs were tremendous. Volunteers were hands on, on the ground. What volunteering is about is to roll up your sleeves, be on the scene and really help someone.”

A Model Home

In 1973, the Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) renamed the Ad Hoc Committee for Aged, Destitute and Chronic Sick as the Committee for the Care of the Aged, to address the problems faced by the elderly.

The first chairman of this committee was Daisy Vaithilingam, an experienced and highly regarded medical social worker and lecturer at the Social Work Department, University of Singapore. Under her leadership and with the support of her volunteers, the first community home for the elderly was launched in 1974 in Henderson housing estate.

The success of the Henderson Old People's Community Home provided the model for future homes for the aged. The government and affiliates then set up more community homes with different

“The success of the Henderson Old People's Community Home provided the model for future homes for the aged.”

variations in subsidy to provide care for the destitute and elderly who wanted to stay in the community rather than dormitory style home.

Eventually, this project was handed over to the Chinese Women's Association in 1978 and renamed the Henderson Senior Citizens' Home.

Today, it provides both residential and respite care for more than 60 senior citizens.



Residents of Henderson Senior Citizens' Home at an annual Chinese New Year lunch.



A Second Chance

The tough prison ministry received a boost in 1974 when a group of volunteers from various churches formed a company called Rehabilitation Life Ltd to bring some measure of organisation to Christian prison ministry. A year later, Henry Khoo, an associate chaplain of prisons was ordained a minister at Changi Prison Chapel and the Christian ministry in prisons grew during the 1970s and 1980s.

His father, Rev Khoo Siaw Hua, together with 19 other volunteers had first taken up the challenge thrown to the Malayan Christian Council in 1952 by the Commissioner of Prison. "These men fear neither man nor law; make them fear God," he appealed.

Although they were put through testing times and many gave up, Rev Khoo and a handful of volunteers stayed on. A year later, his ministry and work was recognised by the Prison Service when they made him Honorary Chaplain of Prisons.

As the 1980s drew to a close, the Prison Fellowship Singapore (PFS) established a Home For Discipleship Training at Pasir Panjang.

The programmes included aftercare counselling and job training for ex-offenders, which included motor vehicle repairs, printing, grass cutting and lawn maintenance and other work skills.

PFS is also involved in the widely publicised Yellow Ribbon Project, which was launched in 2004, to promote employment of ex-offenders by giving them a second chance.

Recently, it launched the "Angel Tree" project, a worldwide project of Prison Fellowship International to reach out to the wives, children and parents of offenders through a Christmas gift programme. The PFS also runs an Enrichment Centre at Bukit Merah Central, which offers Aftercare and Family Life programmes for ex-offenders and their families.



The Minister for Social Affairs, Othman Wok, visiting the Spastic Children's Association.

Celebrating Abilities

Long before the International Year of the Disabled was launched in 1981, the Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) has been actively galvanizing the support of its affiliates providing services for people with disabilities through a month-long public education programme to highlight the abilities rather than disabilities.

Social Affairs Minister Othman Wok kicked off the first such campaign on 5 September 1974 when he opened an exhibition of arts & crafts by people with disabilities.

Volunteers and voluntary welfare organisations organised a series of events targeted at the public and their clients. These included a Braille reading contest

"The objectives of all the activities were to enlighten the public on the abilities of people with disabilities, to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to interact with each other and build their confidence in managing public expectations and perceptions of them."

and a disabled teenager of the year competition. Forums on issues facing people with disabilities and the roles of professionals were held. There were also movies and camps organised.

The objectives of all the activities were to enlighten the public on the abilities of people with disabilities, to provide opportunities for people with disabilities to interact with each other and build their confidence in managing public expectations and perceptions of them. The First Lady, Mrs Benjamin H Sheares, closed the month-long campaign by officiating at a combined concert by people with disabilities.

The campaign was such a success that it became an annual event. It also became an effective platform for SCSS to mobilise its affiliates to educate the public and to involve key decision-makers here and abroad to support the rehabilitation of people with disabilities and provide equal opportunities for them.

Another immediate impact was the invitation to SCSS to host the 5th Pan Pacific Conference of the International Society for the Rehabilitation of people with disabilities from 2 to 7 November 1975.

It was titled: *Rehabilitation: The Practical Approach* and was co-sponsored by SCSS and the Ministry of Social Affairs, with participation from the Education, Labour and Health ministries. Six hundred delegates from 22 countries attended, including 200 from Singapore. People with disabilities contributed papers and participated actively in the deliberations.

These once-in-four-year events contributed greatly to SCSS advocacy for purpose-built buildings and increased government subsidies for special education, accessibility for people with disabilities, and funding of innovative projects by affiliates.

Living With Dignity

The first community home for the elderly was set up in 1974 by SCSS in Bukit Merah and was called the Henderson Old People's Community Home.

May Wong was chairman of the Chinese Women's Association, which took over the Henderson Home from SCSS in 1978.

Located in Block 117, Bukit Merah View, the home takes care of 20 residents who board with them and promises it would do everything to help them live with dignity.

It is also the focal point of activity for the elderly in the area. It has a day care centre where senior citizens can engage in meaningful recreational activities such as crafts, exercise and playing mahjong.

Social activities are often a hit with the elderly. The centre runs regular parties and even fashion shows featuring senior citizens as models.

Wong Yuet Meng was 87 when she became one

"It is also the focal point of activity for the elderly in the area. It has a day care centre where senior citizens can engage in meaningful recreational activities such as crafts, exercise and playing mahjong."

of the models in the 2007 fashion parade. The photograph of her dressed in a cheongsam, all made up, is one of Madam Wong's treasured possessions. "I was a model for the first time," recalled the former domestic helper in Cantonese.



Mrs Betty Chen (far right) daughter of the late Mrs May Wong, chairman of the Henderson Senior Citizens' Home, with residents of the Home. Social activities are often a hit with the elderly at Henderson Senior Citizens' Home.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Singapore Association of Occupational Therapists
- Jun Singapore Anglican Community Services
- Jun Kwan-In Welfare Society
- Jul Counselling and Care Centre
- Jul Presbyterian Community Services

- Oct Inner Wheel Club of Singapore West
- Nov Breadline Group
- Dec Association for Persons with Special Needs
- Dec Inner Wheel Club of Singapore East

Counsel for Families

In 1975, the Churches Counselling Centre was renamed the Counselling and Care Centre to reflect the wider non-Christian constituents it was serving.

It was also the year Anthony Yeo took over as director of the centre from his mentor, the Rev Gunnar Teilmann.

“There is no such thing as an ideal family, or a traditional family comprising mother, father and children. Rather, there is a spectrum of families, from unwed mothers to childless couples. Every family is trying to function at its best in its own way. You have to work towards making sure that there are no obstacles to a harmonious family”

The non-profit centre, offering psychological counselling and training for professionals in the mental health and social service sectors, was first set up in 1966 by the Wesley Methodist Church in collaboration with St Andrew’s Cathedral.

At the time, its aim was to offer counselling services to the community regardless of their religion. Today, the centre’s main area of service is providing counselling to those who are facing emotional, psy-

chological, relationship and marital problems.

This service is offered to all regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, educational standing and age.

Therapists see couples and families and help them with depression, anxiety, marital conflict, parenting problems, to identity struggles and more.

Through its employee assistance programme, the centre has also been involved in managing critical incidents and crisis situations arising from industrial accidents or any other traumatic incidents affecting staff.

It was involved with Singapore Airlines during the Silk Air crash in 1997 and SQ6 accident in 2000. It helps companies with psychological debriefing and counselling for staff affected when their colleagues pass away. It has also trained crisis helpers for PSA International and SMRT Corporation.

Mr Yeo who joined the centre in 1972 and pioneered formal training for counsellors here has trained close to 1,000 people.

“We focus on families and provide counselling to those who are facing emotional, psychological, relationship and marital problems,” said Mr Yeo who has been with the centre for 35 years. “There is no such thing as an ideal family, or a traditional family comprising ‘mother, father and children’. Rather, there is a spectrum of families, from unwed mothers to childless couples. Every family is trying to function at its best in its own way. You have to work towards making sure that there are no obstacles to a harmonious family.

“And we must not forget the social workers. My wish list is granting them paid sabbaticals, paying them commensurately, and giving them proper professional recognition by licensing and registering them,” he added.



Top: Anthony Yeo, first director of the Counselling and Care Centre. Above: Rev Gunnar Teilmann, founder.

Escape from Saigon

Singapore’s open-heartedness when it comes to humanitarian relief didn’t just happen in the 2004 Asian tsunami; it went way back.

In 1975, South Vietnam fell to North Vietnam’s communist forces. Pandemonium ensued and thousands fled for their lives, with babies in tow. Many escaped to Singapore. Despair was thick in the air. The Singapore government sprang into action.

First, the authorities fed the refugees and gave them urgent medical attention at St. John’s Island. Next, it tasked Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) to collect donations from the public. This amounted to nearly \$60,000 and came from the Catholic churches, Catholic’s Welfare Services, Presbyterian Church, City Tex and City Holdings. The council gave \$10,000.

All in, the General Relief Fund of almost \$70,000 went immediately to easing the refugees’ plight.

“In 1975, South Vietnam fell to North Vietnam’s communist forces. Pandemonium ensued and thousands fled for their lives, with babies in tow.”



Five-and-a-half months after streaming in from their war-torn homeland, the last batch of 81 Vietnamese refugees on St John’s Island left Singapore.

Count Every Cent

As early as 1975, SCSS had advised its affiliates on the need to keep proper records and processes in fundraising.

In its annual report, the council noted that affiliates, “...should no longer leave this matter in the hands of people unknown to them or inadequately introduced, as lack of supervision and control in fundraising will lead to abuse tantamount to breach of trust.”

At the time, there had been reported incidences of exploitation and fraudulent representation.

The government, in consultation with SCSS, instituted new rules for fundraising by the council’s

“As early as 1975, SCSS had advised its affiliates on the need to keep proper records and processes in fundraising.”

affiliates. For example, all canvassing for advertisements in the name of the charities will have to be cleared by the government, including the Commercial Crimes Division and the Ministry of Social Affairs. In addition, all proceeds above \$10,000 from fundraising activities had to be audited. Lastly, non-charitable organisations that wanted to raise funds on behalf of charities would need a letter of

agreement from the charities themselves.

Today, the issue of corporate governance has extended beyond fundraising to responsible stewardship by volunteer leaders. This has led to the formation of the Charity Council to promote and encourage the adoption of good governance and best practices, to enhance public confidence and promote self-regulation in the charity sector.



Solace in Black and White

Almost a decade after Singapore had taken its tentative steps towards nationhood, there rose a serious need for affordable home nursing services for the large number of elderly living in the rural areas who had to grapple with elderly ailment. The Deputy Prime Minister and Health Minister, Dr Toh Chin Chye, established the Home Nursing Foundation (HNF) on 2 October 1976 to address this need.

The HNF nurse, in her white uniform and carrying an umbrella and black medical bag in each hand, became a familiar – and comforting – sight in the kampongs as she trudged to visit her elderly wards.

“Love, as they say, is the best healer.”

In its first year of operations, HNF nurses made over 32,000 home visits to 1,471 patients. The second year saw a spike in numbers to over 38,000 home visits made to 1,998 patients. HNF’s mission of providing home nursing services to the elderly sick received widespread support from medical professionals and members of the public. The HNF nurse was seen to be going beyond her call of duty in providing medical care. She was a listener, friend and companion to her patient too.

In 1984, following the recommendation of the National Advisory Council for the Aged, HNF started offering rehabilitative and day-care services together with its core service of home nursing. The Health Ministry seconded 23 nurses to HNF fulltime in 1985 and the HNF Constitution was



Health Minister Dr Toh Chin Chye (centre) at the launch of the Home Nursing Foundation.

revised to encourage greater public involvement and transparency. Ms Lee Seok Tin was appointed chairman of the board in 1986, and was succeeded by Mrs Fang Ai Lian in the 1990s.

In 2001, Mr Azleen bin Omar was admitted to HNF for recurrent urinary tract infection, pneumonia, hypo-ischemic encephalopathy and a permanent tracheotomy. He was only 34 years old when his health started to deteriorate. Struck with

multiple health problems at such a young age, his wife, Mdm Ida, took over the responsibility as the head of the household. She never once complained about the hardships and attended to her husband’s needs for the past seven years.

A nurse from HNF visited the family’s home regularly to change Mr Azleen’s feeding tube. Through the nurse, Mdm Ida learnt to conduct her husband’s feeding, the frequent suction and the need to turn him

every two to three hours to sponge him daily.

The petite lady has no qualms about taking care of her husband and her two school going children single-handedly.

With a determined mindset, she decided to take up a part-time job and employed a domestic helper. Mr Azleen’s condition has improved much under her good care all these years. Love, as they say, is the best healer.

Tackling Turbulent Teen Problems

The change from primary to secondary school, from a child to a teen, may occur in the space of a year. Yet for some, it can seem like a gulf, a sea change of experience and difficulties.

Helping them is the Students Care Service (SCS), founded in 1976 by a group of volunteers led by the principal of St Andrew’s School, Francis Thomas. Known previously as the School Social Work Service Association of Singapore, it helped students between five and 18 years old, and their families.

Social workers, educational psychologists and learning support specialists help them through family casework, counselling, group work, financial assistance, educational assistance, and special learning support.

Over the years, the charity has initiated numerous programmes, among them an SMS/email counselling service for students sitting for the ‘O’ and ‘N’ level Examinations, also known as Project

ONE. This offers a platform for students to share their problems, anonymously and conveniently.

A school in Yishun referred Kei to the Students Care Service after he had been absent from school regularly. He had expressed a desire to stop schooling so that he could work to help support his family. Kei confided in the social worker that his parents were also on the verge of divorce.

Filled with concern for his mother and her financial position, and constantly living in fear of not knowing when his father would return to threaten the family’s safety, Kei found it difficult to concentrate on his studies. The social worker promptly contacted and worked with a Family Service Centre that had been counselling Kei’s mother. With this combined support, his mother was able to care for Kei and his siblings.

With issues at the home front under control, Kei finally return to school and did well enough to be promoted to Secondary 5.



Social workers, educational psychologists and learning support specialists help students between five and 18 years old, and their families through family casework, counselling, group work, financial assistance, educational assistance, and special learning support.



Registered as Organisation
 May Singapore Action Group of Elders (SAGE)
 Aug Singapore Christian Home for the Aged

Villa for the Elderly

In June 1977, the Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) started the 200-bed Villa Francis Home for the Aged, a model of what a properly managed shelter for the destitute elderly should be, and transferred all the residents from Yew Tee and Dragon Lotus Homes to it.

A group of nuns from the Sisters of Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood ran the home at Mandai.

Mary Tan Hock Mui, an 81-year-old resident of the home, recalled: "The sisters reserved a corner

bed for me, as I had requested. They also got me a wheelchair even before I asked."

It was such attention and dedication that had endeared the nuns to the residents of the home. But after almost three decades of devotion, the

"The sisters reserved a corner bed for me, as I had requested. They also got me a wheelchair even before I asked."

Franciscan Sisters passed the responsibility to the Catholic's Welfare Services.

Faced with a shortage of volunteers and helpers to run the home, the nuns were left with little choice but to give up the home.

"We are very sad to give it up, but we have to do so," said Sister Angelo Tan, an administrator at the home. "Very few among the young want to join the religious vocation and the needs in the home are increasing." They have moved on to other services run

by the mission at Alvernia Hospital and Assisi Home for the Aged. "Our mission is to serve the poor wherever we are sent," said Sister Angelo.

During the Appreciation & Handover Ceremony on 27 March 2001, National Council of Social Service, president Dr Robert C K Loh, thanked the Franciscan Sisters for their commitment and tireless effort in caring for the needy elderly and presented them with a drawing of Villa Francis, specially done by an artist from Very Special Arts.

Mr James Chew, director of the Catholic's Welfare Services, which took over the management of Villa Francis, said that they would continue the sisters' spirit of care and compassion for the residents, and treat them with the utmost respect and dignity.



Sister Mary Barbara (centre) of Villa Francis and Miss A Vasandha (left) of the Children's Aid Society received the food and cheques for their organisations.



The HDB Flats Paying Scheme enables the elderly to remain independent.

A Roof Over Their Heads

The HDB Flats Paying Scheme, conceived by SCSS in 1976, was put into effect in 1977 at Ang Mo Kio Housing Estate, next to a similar non-paying project set up by the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) Community Home for the Aged. The paying scheme was targeted at helping those who could contribute a small sum of money towards the rental of the flats.

Eight units of one-room HDB flats were acquired for the project and 12 elderly citizens who were either on pension or had small savings but no relatives could benefit from the scheme.

The project proved to be viable and was subsequently handed over to AWWA as part of its

services to the elderly. The success of this project also paved the way for several community homes for senior citizens to adopt the scheme to complement their non-paying scheme, enabling the homes to be self-sustaining.

More importantly, it enables the elderly to stretch their savings and remain independent. This allowed the elderly to age in place through affordable housing.

In 2008, HDB launched the Lease Buyback Scheme to help low-income households in smaller flats unlock their housing equity to meet retirement needs. The scheme will help ensure these elderly Singaporeans have enough for their retirement.



Tranquil Eddie

A charity calling itself the Realm of Tranquility was launched 30 years ago to “encourage good deeds.” Its founder, Eddie Tay, is a 57-year-old entrepreneur and was one of the recipients of the 2004 Spirit of Enterprise Award.

Among its many activities, it distributes daily provisions to the needy in one-room HDB flats and provides free medical services to the elderly and persons with disabilities in institutional homes and housing estates through its weekly mobile clinic.

“In the entrepreneurial world, this is a very poor approach...but this is what serving the needy is about.”

In 2003, it set up a traditional Chinese medicine centre with a free clinic.

The charity is funded by donations from charity sales, dinners and relies solely on voluntary efforts, having no paid staff.

Volunteers like Lancy Che, 37, are a lifeline to the six children of the Goh family. The children exist on a monthly income of \$860. They are nearing their 40s, have below average IQs, and cannot fend for themselves. Their sick 74-year-old mother has been at the Lions Home for the Elders for almost two years. The charity gives the family \$200 a month, delivers provisions, and Madam Che also brings them to visit their mother a few times a month.

Observes Mr Tay with a laugh that the charity gives out more than what it receives in donations: “In the entrepreneurial world, this is a very poor approach...but this is what serving the needy is about.”



School children arriving at the Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre.

The Forerunner

“Today, the numerous family service centres all over Singapore are fashioned after the model first developed at Ang Mo Kio over 30 years ago.”

February 1978 saw the establishment of the Ang Mo Kio Social Service Centre, the first one-stop centre in Singapore providing social services for everyone in the family—from the children to the grandparents. The idea had been mooted by Singapore Council of Social Service deputy director, Dr S Vasoo.

Three agencies affiliated to the council, namely the Asian Women’s Welfare Association, Anglican Welfare Council and Young Men’s Christian Association, came together to provide these services. It was also SCSS’ first attempt in getting three agencies to collaborate. Many people have since come to appreciate its formation.

Samy is a case in point. He was in despair when he fell far behind on the rent of his two-room flat. His marriage was on the rocks and he could not cope with his three children. In desperation, he called the centre and was given financial assistance. It also helped him downgrade to a smaller flat and got him a rebate on his rent.

Two years later, after marital counselling and careful planning, Mr Samy and his wife were able to save enough to put a down payment on a three-room flat and their children were placed in the childcare run by the centre.

In March 1984, the centre was registered as an autonomous organisation under the Societies Act with its first independent volunteer management committee chaired by Mrs Jaya Anand.

The centre later set up a childcare centre and a before- and after-school care centre too. In 1995, it was renamed the Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre. Today, the numerous family service centres all over Singapore are fashioned after the model first developed at Ang Mo Kio over 30 years ago.



A volunteer, Ng Ngak Shim, visiting an elderly at the Thye Hua Kwan Moral Welfare Home.

We Never Turn Anyone Away

For over 30 years, the Thye Hua Kwan Moral Society has been helping people who need help. After its formation in 1978, some of its earliest services included emergency cash relief to the poor and Project Sunshine, which paid for the rental of HDB flats of 60 poor families.

Today it has over 50 programmes and services ranging from childcare, pregnancy counselling, medical care and meals, to funeral rites for the destitute.

In 2002, it took over the running of the Ang Mo Kio Community Hospital, which provides longer-term care for the aged sick. The hospital, which has an \$18 million annual budget, needed

far more aggressive fundraising efforts. This became the driving force behind the charity’s move to televised fundraising shows in 2006, which raised \$3.75 million.

Today, the society has about 200 members aged from the 20s to the 70s. The 700-staff runs four homes for the elderly, people with disabilities, and the destitute including the Moral Home for the Disabled and the Moral Welfare Home.

Lawyer Lee Kim Siang, who chairs the society, says: “We are still one of the organisations offering the lowest fees around...and we hope that it will remain that way... We never turn anyone away. If we do not have the services, we will do the relevant referrals.”



Registered as Organisation
 Jan Singapore Psychological Society
 May Sikh Sewaks Singapore
 Jun Apex Club of Radin Mas

Open Door Policy

After a futile search for suitable facilities for her daughter with disabilities, American missionary Alice Shae founded the Christian Outreach to the Handicapped in 1979 as an independent, inter-denominational charitable organisation.

It runs Emmanuel Activity Centre for people aged 16 and older with Down syndrome, intellectual disability, cerebral palsy, autism or multiple disabilities. Its curriculum includes the range of

activities for daily living – personal hygiene, feeding, cooking, cleaning, as well as taking public transport – and social and recreational activities. It also teaches pre-vocational skills such as sorting and packing.

While it works within Biblical principles, it is open to all especially those with lower functional levels who cannot meet the admission criteria of other day care services.

Samsui Blues

The sight of so many lonely old folks drove a 25-year-old senior medical technologist and her friends to start the Bukit Merah Old Folks Club in 1977. Koh Lai Heng's reasoning was that "someone had to do something" to bring a cheer to these lonely and destitute elderly in the neighbourhood.

Most club members were Samsui women living by themselves in one-room flats. While some received public assistance, more felt a need for someone to talk to. The club grew steadily in membership with Ms Koh the driving force in increasing the base of volunteers.

Two years later, in 1979, they handed the club over to the Bukit Timah Citizens' Consultative Committee and local volunteers. They worked on promoting the setting up of similar clubs in community centres and with other organisations.

Today, the club continues to thrive and still attracts many young volunteers like 39-year-old Lim Han Cheong.

He played a key role in forming the club's senior citizens' committee. More importantly, this pioneer club set the pace for the formation of other senior clubs in community centres and the Befrienders Service for seniors.

Ms Koh continued working with many other voluntary welfare organisations, starting numerous clubs and schemes for the elderly. One such effort – the Cheap Meal Scheme providing balanced meals at affordable prices – was awarded the Commonwealth Youth Service Award in 1988. In 2003, she received the President's Social Service Award for her service and commitment in caring and championing the needs of the elderly.



Official opening of Bukit Merah Old Folks Club.

They Deserve Better

The very first Senior Citizens' Week Campaign was held in December 1979.

It was mooted and organised by the Community Service Volunteers of the Singapore Council of Social Service, and supported by the Social Welfare Department and the People's Association.

It was aimed at raising public awareness of the need to respect our senior citizens, and to encourage senior citizens to organise and participate in social and recreational activities.

The campaign involved over 100 community centres and 40 government-registered agencies. Apart from the localised events, there was a senior citizens' bazaar at a shopping centre where the participants were given concession tickets to the Japanese Garden, Chinese Garden, zoo and Sentosa. They also received free cinema tickets.

At the end of the event, it was estimated that 9,000 senior citizens took part in the various activities.

Speaking at the opening, Communications and Acting Culture Minister Ong Teng Cheong reminded his audience that "all too often, we are busy with our work or our children and very little

attention is paid to the general welfare of our elders. We have shunted them aside... And yet, they are our senior citizens who have contributed to Singapore's prosperity through their hard work and toil, they are the ones who have shaped history and made Singapore what it is today. They deserve a little more..."

The first Senior Citizens' Week that December was a small step towards doing just that. Today, it has evolved into a festival of activities and programmes for the whole family.

“The Senior Citizens’ Week Campaign was aimed at raising public awareness of the need to respect our senior citizens, and to encourage senior citizens to organise and participate in social and recreational activities.”



Members of the Marine Parade Senior Citizens' Club, volunteered to put up a puppet show to celebrate Senior Citizens' Week.



Registered as Organisation

Mar Singapore Council of Women's Organisations

May Lions Home for the Elders

Aug Adventist Home for the Elders

Sept Tai Pei Old People's Home

Nov St Andrew's Cathedral Home for the Aged

Dec Man Fut Tong Nursing Home

To Be Disabled is Not to Be Unabled

When Ron Chandran-Dudley became president of the Singapore Association for the Blind (SAB) in 1980, it was like a journey back home.

Way back in 1953 on a hot afternoon in April, the 19-year-old Ron made his way to the association.

On reaching, he was tasked to distribute food, clothing and toys to the blind. He became a "home visitor" and the first blind volunteer to help other blind people. A kick to the head during a rugby game in school had cost him his eyesight a year earlier.

He found that many of the blind were beggars, uneducated, ill, and destitute and asked himself: "Can we only offer the blind white canes, badges, food, clothing and medical care? Why can't we give them back their dignity? What about training them to do something useful so they can give up begging and learn to be independent?"

It was a thought that would haunt him and led him to believe in the axiom that "to be disabled is not to be unable."



Ron Chandran-Dudley, President of the Singapore Association for the Blind, (extreme right) visiting a classroom.

Eventually, he left to study social anthropology at the London School of Economics and excelled. On his return, he devoted his time to starting the School for the Blind (SFB). Together with the war heroine Elizabeth Choy, the first principal of SFB, he sought out blind children in the villages to train them.

Shortly after, he became general secretary of the association. Before his time, sighted people ran the association. Many of the blind children who attended school learned few vocational skills and found it difficult to integrate into society.

As early as 1965, Ron proposed and helped kick off the integration of visually handicapped chil-

dren from primary to tertiary education. He developed a system that enabled blind children to live at home, attend primary school at the association, and then integrate fully into the regular school system at the secondary level.

"Ron transformed the place," said Patrick Sim Hak Kng, a former executive director. "He paved the way for the blind to become full participants in society as telephone operators, clerks, insurance agents, teachers and proficient computer users, unlike the older generation who remained illiterate and dependent."

He has received numerous awards from here and abroad both for his work and advocacy for the rights of people with disabilities.

In August 2004, the UN presented him with a prestigious award – the first of its kind – for dedicated service in support of the UN programme concerning people with disabilities. His message is simple: people with disabilities are handicapped only by their environment.



Mrs Cecilia Kwek (right), wife of Hong Leong Group executive chairman, Kwek Leng Beng, gathered with volunteers from the City Sunshine Club, a CDL Employee Volunteer Programme for Chinese New Year lunch with 60 residents of Henderson Senior Citizens' Home.

Apex of Clubs

The Association of Apex Clubs in Singapore has been a blessing for stroke patients and those suffering from dementia. In 1980, Singapore Council of Social Service set up the first Day Care Centre for the elderly in Block 119 Bukit Merah to provide help for stroke victims to regain their mobility through occupational therapy and physiotherapy. The centre was later handed over to the Association of Apex Clubs.

Speaking five years after his stroke, Kwok Mun Seng said: "At least I can walk now. I just exercise, and hope, and see what the future brings."

Mr Kwok suffered a stroke in 1986. It left the former nursing attendant with a muscular disabil-

ity on his right side. However, with the help of the rehabilitation programme at Bukit Merah, he is able to walk, though with a pronounced limp.

Patients pay between \$5 and \$15 a month for lunch, drinks and the exercises. Fees are waived for those on welfare assistance.

In 1999, the association helped set up the Apex Harmony Lodge in Pasir Ris, the first home for the elderly with dementia. The lodge offers day care facilities as well as residential care. It can take up to 224 patients. It came about largely through the efforts of Dr Oon Chiew Seng, a retired gynaecologist and its current chairman.

There are about 5,000 dementia patients in Singapore and the number is expected to hit 19,000 by 2030. At the lodge, women outnumber men because women live longer, and also because, Dr Oon believes, husbands tend to send their wives in. "When a husband has dementia, the wife usually takes care of him. But not the other way round."



Dr Oon Chiew Seng, (second from right) chairman of Apex Harmony Lodge, gets down to a friendly bout of mahjong with residents at the home.

Bringing Joy Year In, Year Out

In its own quiet way, Hong Leong Foundation, the charity arm of the Hong Leong Group of companies in Singapore, has been bringing joy every year since its establishment in 1980.

Every year, it gives a hongbao to every public assistance recipient during the Chinese New Year celebrations.

In 2007, that came to over \$400,000 for more than 3,000 needy people, most of whom were under the Government's Public Assistance or Silver Jubilee Fund Special Grant schemes.

At the Ling Kwang Home for Senior Citizens,

78-year-old Tham Siew Chie said she was looking forward to a rare treat. "I'm very happy. I can buy some of my favourite food, such as wanton noodles and laksa."

The foundation occasionally takes on larger projects. In 1990, it donated an ambulance costing more than \$310,000 to the St John Ambulance Brigade, and \$680,000 to various other charities.

The foundation has remained faithful to the many who count on its donations, both large and small, consistently giving away about \$650,000 every year.



Registered as Organisation

Jan Singapore Amalgamated Services
Co-operative Organisation Senior Citizens Home
Jan The Netherlands Charity Association

Apr International Y's Men's Club of Singapore (Alpha Chapter)
May Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services
Jul Realm of Tranquility

Sept Lions Club of Singapore Raffles City
Sept National Association of Apex Clubs of Singapore

Oct Methodist Welfare Services
Dec Care Corner of Singapore
Dec Pu Ti Lian She

Apples: Another Word for Noisy, Happy Children Playing

Some eyebrows were raised when an informal group of volunteers with no official identity was nominated for the 1981 National Youth Service team award. They could best be referred to as Apples, the acronym for Adventure Playland and Play Leadership Experimental Scheme, the project they adopted.

It started with seven friends searching for something meaningful to do in their weekends and found Apples, a project launched in 1979 by the Ministry of Social Affairs as part of its experimental family service centre scheme in MacPherson. One of its aims was to encourage children to come out and play.

The project had a permanent home when the volunteers took a corner of a large shady grassland off Balam Road and transformed it into a play-

ground for safe and unlimited fun. It was a playground unlike any at the time. It included discards like old tyres, crates, planks, and ropes. They even built their own tree house.

A reporter who visited the playground, wrote: "Two of them were hunched over a crate fixing wheels on it, two were drilling holes into old tyres so that these wouldn't collect water and breed mosquitoes, another sat on a rope strung between two trees, staring into space, a pair sat on the grass, pretending to eat grass. And all of them were noisy, happy children."

Explaining what they were trying to do, the group's spokesman Straits Times journalist Edmund Wee said: "With a concrete slide, you can only slide down. With a rope strung between two trees, you can sit on it, walk on it, climb up, hang

down or try to shake your friends off it."

Once the project got on its feet, curious children who lived in the nearby housing estates began to flock the playground with a dozen new ones coming in every week. However in January 1980, when school reopened the kids stayed home. The project "died." Three months later, with hopes of reviving the sound of their laughter the playground reopened on a weekly basis. By this time, the family centre had ended its three-year project with the UN but witnessing its success and the commitment of the volunteers, the ministry decided to support them directly.

The following year, they were nominated for the award. But what brought more joy to this group of friends was to see the children come out regularly and join everyone in the fun and games.



With a rope strung between two trees, you can sit on it, walk on it, climb up, hang down or try to shake your friends off it.



The Bridging Programme is organised by CDAC, Eurasian Association, Mendaki and Sinda.

Three Cheers for All

The year 1981 saw the formation of the first self-help group for the Malay-Muslim community. The other major racial groups soon followed.

Mendaki

The Malay-Muslim self-help group Mendaki was formed following the publication of the 1980 Census of Population. The census reported how Malays were not doing well academically and socio-economically, and the news jolted the community into action.

In 1981, a Malay Children Steering Committee was formed that led to the establishment of Yayasan Mendaki, the Council for the Education of Muslim Children later that year. In 1982, Mendaki was registered as a foundation, with Dr Ahmad Mattar, Senior Minister of State for Education and Acting Minister for Social Affairs, as the first board President. The Mendaki Tuition Scheme was also launched that year.

SINDA

The Action Committee on Indian Education presented a report, *At the Crossroads*, to the government in July 1991. It highlighted the educational under-performance of Indian students and recommended wide-ranging remedial measures.

One led to the formation a month later of a self-help group for the Indian community called

the Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA).

It would address the pressing educational and socio-economic issues facing its members. SINDA went on to focus on raising the educational performance of Indian students, in addition to promoting family unity and helping in the social and economic development of Singapore Indians.

Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC)

The Chinese Development Assistance Council was set up with a mission to nurture and develop the potential of the Chinese community. This included help for the less successful and poorer individuals in the Chinese community, especially in the form of educational help to children from lower-income Chinese families.

To achieve its aim, the CDAC set a target of raising \$50 million for its endowment fund to develop and fund programmes benefiting the individuals over a period of 10 years.

Today, it has surpassed this target and reaches out to nearly 50,000 students and workers from low-income households, through its tuition classes, skills upgrading and job matching programmes.

Disabled, Not Disengaged

The Singapore Council of Social Service hosted the First Founding Congress of Disabled People International from 30 November to 6 December 1981 to foster international non-governmental organisations participation for the International Year of the Disabled. Subsequently, the UN resolution proclaimed 1983–1992 as the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons.

While early UN activities supported the rights of persons with disabilities to receive welfare and public services, little attention was paid initially to societal obstacles that might be created by those goals. Attitudes began shifting in the late 1960s toward a new social model for dealing with disability.

In the 1980s, numerous efforts, both substantive and promotional, were undertaken nationally and internationally to improve the situation of people with disabilities with the goal of integrating them into society and helping them with their physical and psychological adjustment. Programmes launched focused on rehabilitation and disability prevention.

Khoo, Calm and Collected

Like its founder, the reclusive banker and hotelier Khoo Teck Puat, the Khoo Foundation was set up in 1981 with a \$20 million grant to little fanfare. So were the early donations.

In 1996, it gave a relatively modest \$1 million to set up the People's Dialysis Centre in Holland Drive to provide subsidised treatment for people suffering from kidney disease.

"Father always said, never blow your own trumpet. You don't need to tell the world that you're helping people. So long as you know and the recipient knows, that's enough," said his daughter Jacqueline.

But when he died in 2004, he bequeathed 30 per cent of his estimated US\$5 billion fortune to the foundation, which has since gone on to make some of Singapore's largest private donations to education and health care.

In early 2007, it announced an \$80 million donation to the Duke-National University of Singapore (NUS) Graduate Medical School to grow the school's biomedical research initiatives. The gift was matched dollar-for-dollar by the government to bring the total sum to \$160 million.

Later in the year, it made an even bigger donation of \$125 million towards the building and funding of a new 550-bed hospital in Yishun. It will be named the Khoo Teck Puat Hospital in his honour.



Registered as Organisation
 May Bright Hill Evergreen Home
 Oct Riding for the Disabled Association of Singapore
 Dec St Andrew's Mission Hospital

Handicap is No Handicap

Debates and discussions over job matching for people with disabilities became a major issue for the council in 1982. A year later, it set up the Vocational Assessment and Placement Centre. The centre provided vocational assessment, career guidance and job placement for people with disabilities. Over the years, its services expanded and became an independent charity. In 1988 it was renamed Bizlink Centre.

Bizlink has helped thousands of people. Many find jobs as machine operators in the electronics industry and as production operators on assembly lines. Others work as clerks, typists and telephone operators or as dishwashers in restaurants.

Those with better qualifications found work as computer programmers, draughtsmen, administrative executives and accountants. One example is wheelchair-bound Rahayu Sari, who suffers from muscular dystrophy, a disease that causes the muscles in her lower limbs to waste away. Despite her disability, this Ngee Ann Polytechnic graduate was offered a job as a computer programmer with a local software firm over six other able-bodied applicants.

“Because she had the right qualifications, was willing to learn and had enthusiasm, we did not see her physical condition as a barrier,” said Michael Seah, managing director of the firm.

This job matching was possible because of the Bizlink Centre, which helps people with disabilities find work.

Another success story is Lim Puay Tiak, who suffers from polio but that did not stop him from getting an honours degree in psychology. With the assistance of Bizlink, he found a job with the Ministry of Community Development (now the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports).

“Debates and discussions over job matching for people with disabilities became a major issue for the council in 1982. A year later, it set up the Vocational Assessment and Placement Centre.”



Job matching for people with disabilities was made possible by the Bizlink Centre.

The Vintage Years

The elderly may forget but they are not forgotten as 1982 saw the launch of the UN World Assembly for Ageing to highlight the needs of the aged around the world.

In Singapore, Singapore Council of Social Service President, Dr Ee Peng Liang, represented the voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) on the Health Ministry's Committee on the Problems of the Aged in Singapore.

The committee, chaired by Health Minister Howe Yoon Chong, called for long-term strategies to support the ageing population. These recommendations led to several committees being formed, culminating in the Ministerial Committee on Ageing.

One of the major outcomes from the Ministerial Committee was the recommendation to make the physical environment more user-friendly to the elderly and people with disabilities.

As a result, HDB refurbished its blocks and upgraded the surroundings. Another major achievement was the setting up of Senior Activity Centres

(SACs) managed by VWOs and funded by Ministry of Community Development with the support of HDB for one-room HDB rental blocks with a high concentration of elderly persons.

The aim of the SACs was to provide a support network for the elderly residents.

Over the years, the centres have expanded their activities from promoting social interactions to maintaining a register of elderly persons, managing the alert alarm system, forming mutual help groups and providing information and referral services.

The SACs have been effective in reaching out to the residents and serving as a bridge between the residents and the community. As a result, there were calls from grassroots organisations and service agencies to extend the project to two- and three-room HDB flats.



Minister of Community Development Abdullah Tarmugi, Parliamentary Secretary of Finance Koo Tsai Kee and Dr S Vasoo, Member of Parliament, Tanjong Pagar GRC, visiting the elderly at one of the Redhill flats.



Registered as Organisation

- Mar Singapore Association for Counselling
- Apr Soroptimist International of Singapore
- Apr The Hiding Place (Christian Home Mission) Ltd

- Jul Centre of Activity and Recreation for the Elders
- Sept The Singapore Branch of the Missions to Seafarers
- Nov Breakthrough Missions Ltd

Family Life Cycle

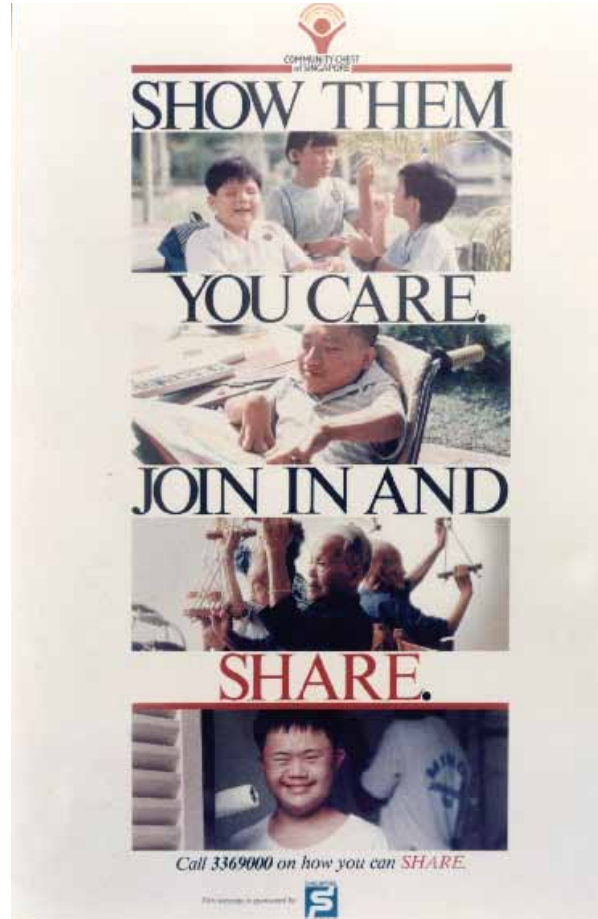
The Family Life Society was established in 1983 on the instruction of the Archbishop of Singapore.

Mabel, Mr Eric Goh's wife of 35 years, died of stomach cancer a few years ago. After she died, Mr Goh felt lost and alone. He threw himself into work and family but this simply masked the pain. It was only after he joined a Beginning Experience session that he realised just how much he still missed his wife.

Thanks to the programme, he is now coming to terms with his wife's death. He has learned that grieving is natural. "Grieving is a process which you need to work through in order to be healed," he said.

The Beginning Experience programme is aimed at helping widowed, divorced or separated individuals deal with the grieving process and help them to move on. It is just one of 14 programmes run by the society.

The society promotes pro-family and pro-life values through programmes and services, such as counselling, marriage preparation classes, marriage counselling as well as parenting skills programmes and pro-life programmes.



SHARE programme poster.



Participants dressed up at the Heartstrings Walk.



Happy Birthday Sharity Elephant!

From the Community to the Community

The success of Community Chest, launched in 1983, is a major milestone for the Singapore Council of Social Service. It allowed agencies to come together to support a common cause, employees to do their bit for charity through monthly contributions, and corporations to match employee giving.

This in turn gave impetus to the rise of national fundraising events like the Heartstrings Show, the first telethon in Singapore, Heartstrings Walk, the first mass walkathon for charity, and the Heartstrings Buy, the biggest transaction-based charity giving.

More importantly, Community Chest enabled

smaller charities to concentrate on delivering their services and pioneering new programmes and leave the fundraising to it.

With strong support from its first patron, President Devan Nair, a total of \$5.2 million was raised in the first year. Dr Tan Bee Wan, executive director of Community Chest, credited its success to the strong leadership, excellent teamwork, and passion for the cause.

"Everything was in place. We were a cohesive team of eager young professionals full of ideas and all ready to go. Our leader, Dr Ee Peng Liang, who was well loved had great support from the community. And we could count on a pool of enthu-

siastic volunteers who shared their expertise and connections freely.

"This enabled us to ensure that 95 cents of every dollar raised go to the charities."

The strong foundation laid by the founders of Community Chest led to its continual success as the most efficient fundraising body for charities and effective outreach to community participation – for the community from the community.

A year later, Community Chest launched the Social Help and Assistance Raised by Employees (SHARE) programme. It allows employees to donate a small monthly amount that can be automatically deducted from their salary.

About a quarter of the funds raised came from over 200,000 Singaporeans through SHARE in 2007. This gives it a stable and regular source of income for charities funded by Community Chest. As of 2007, employees have signed up to donate through SHARE, raising between \$12 million and \$14 million over the last five years.

More importantly, through SHARE, every working person can do his or her bit for charity, accordingly to his capacity to give. It also gets a boost from large corporations like SingTel who match the contribution of their employees, dollar-for-dollar, doubling the impact of their contribution.

On Children's Day that year, the pink Sharity

elephant was introduced to children in Singapore. The name Sharity (Share + Charity = Sharity) was mooted by a team of volunteers led by Bernard Chan. Together with the Community Chest in-house creative team led by

Joyce Hanin and Siad Hassan, the "family" of Sharity and his friends were born.

Sharity was such a great hit with the young that 1 October became known as Sharity Elephant Birthday and all primary school students donate "ang paws" to Sharity to help the needy supported by Community Chest.

More than \$100,000 is raised annually by school children. This tradition of sharing and giving to the less fortunate is still being nurtured over the years by the children of Singapore.

"More importantly, through SHARE, every working person can do his or her bit for charity, accordingly to his capacity to give."



Registered as Organisation

Mar The Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centres

Mar Singapore Dental Health Foundation

May Assisi Hospice

Jun National Arthritis Foundation

Sept Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association

Nov Lions Club of Singapore Oriental

“Hello, I’m Lonely.”

In 1984, the Singapore Children’s Society launched Tinkle Friend, Singapore’s only helpline for children, after it noticed a growing trend of dual income households, leading in part, to a rise in the number of latchkey kids.

The helpline now receives about 4,000 calls a year from troubled children, like the soft-spoken 9-year-old who called on Children’s Day in 2007 saying: “I wish I was not alone.” The girl was an only child and both her parents worked.

Loneliness is another reason children call the helpline. Sometimes it is the pressure they face from the high expectation of their parents or because their parents fight. Some pre-teens even call up about boy-girl relationships. And on rare occasions, hotline volunteers also have to counsel suicidal children.

Senior social worker Christina Appadoo noted: “A common complaint is that parents work long hours. Some time back, a little girl called me saying she was forbidden from calling mum at work unless she had something ‘urgent’ to say.”

As a result, sometimes, children call the helpline just to say ‘hello’ or to talk about their day in school.



A Tinkle Friend volunteer.

To raise awareness of the helpline, the society started a Tinkle Friend outreach programme. The programme currently reaches out to about 50,000 children in primary schools around Singapore. It also organises a Tinkle Friend Camp, which allows children to develop their character.

The hotlines are opened weekdays from 9.30–11.30am and from 2.30–5.00pm and the number is 1800-274-4788.

Controversial Howe Report Released

The Report of the Committee on the Problems of the Aged was released by the Ministry of Health in 1984 to public outcry. Commonly called the Howe Report, after the Health Minister Howe Yoon Chong who chaired the committee, the report anticipated the challenges posed by an ageing population that Singapore is still grappling with today, more than 20 years down the road.

“Singaporeans can’t depend only on their children in their old age,” Mr Howe said.

“The hopeful sign is that irrespective of whatever influences we have been getting, Eastern values like filial piety have passed from an earlier generation to the present generation, and hopefully from this generation to the next generation and thereafter.

“But we may be wrong. We’ve got higher standards of living, causing people to look more to themselves, solving their own problems, ignoring the requirements of the elders, taking on more and more Western ideas of individual freedom and no responsibility for anybody other than themselves and their children.

“So our thinking is, people should not be encouraged to retire at 55. It’s not good to say at 55, (they) can withdraw CPF.”

Today, one in 12 Singaporeans is aged 65 and above. By 2030, one in five will be aged 65 and above.

One of its far-sighted recommendations was to let elderly flat owners buy an annuity on the flat whereby they pledge their flats to the Housing Board and receive a monthly sum in return. This way, the elderly would have a lifelong income.

The report improved on the annuity recommendation by suggesting that the HDB work with private companies to peg the return rates on the flat at commercial rates, giving more money to elderly persons on the scheme.

It took 22 years, since the recommendation was made in 1984, for the annuity scheme to finally kick in for flat owners. NTUC Income introduced its version, called the reverse mortgage scheme, in March 2006. Throughout the decades, the Howe Report has inspired many initiatives to tackle the



PAP candidate Howe Yoon Chong, 55, contesting in Potong Pasir, gets a “thumbs up” sign from a grandmother during his house-to-house visits in the constituency.

“So our thinking is, people should not be encouraged to retire at 55. It’s not good to say at 55, (they) can withdraw CPF.”

– Health Minister Howe Yoon Chong

issues of ageing. Some of the notable achievements include the setting up of the Council for Third Age to champion active ageing.

The government has also taken several measures to encourage employers to hire and retain older workers, such as letting employers contrib-

ute less to the CPF accounts of older workers. But workers do not lose out because the government makes up the difference.

It will raise the minimum sum drawdown age for CPF savings from 62 years to 65 by 2018 and increased CPF interest rates to improve returns on CPF savings.

The Howe Report recommended raising the retirement age from 55 to 60 but the public furore over the proposal to also raise the CPF withdrawal age from 55 to 60 led to the government dropping the idea.

As for the suggestion to raise the retirement age, the idea was resurrected five years later, in the 1989 Report of the Advisory Council on the Aged from a committee headed by the then Minister for Home Affairs, Prof S Jayakumar. His 15-member committee asked for the retirement age to be ex-

tended beyond 60 and the seniority-based wage system to be restructured.

With people living longer, it makes sense that they continue working as long as they can so that they do not use up their CPF funds prematurely. Moving away from a seniority-based wage system means that employers would not be put off by the relatively high costs of hiring or retaining older workers.

In 1993, a Retirement Age Act was introduced, setting the retirement age at 60; in 1999, the government raised the retirement age to 62 and also made concessions on CPF contributions and wages to employers for hiring and retaining older workers.

The CPF minimum sum – the amount a worker needs to keep in his account when he starts to withdraw his CPF savings upon turning 55 – was also raised over the years. The target: \$120,000 by 2013.

Another recommendation that appeared in all the reports was providing barrier-free access for the elderly.

Although the Howe Report recommended it in 1984, the first batch of MRT stations built in 1988 did not have barrier-free access.

Currently there are about 300,000 persons aged 65 and above. It will take time for all the recommendations to be implemented and that might be too late for some of the elderly people.

Some people might take issue with the fact that measures taken to enhance the financial security of senior citizens such as raising the retirement age took so long to be enacted.

Others might rue the missed opportunity when the needs of the elderly were not taken into account in designing the first MRT stations.

But given the multi-faceted ageing issue and the wide impact of any changes in policies, it might not have been wise or even feasible to push for some of the reforms that have been implemented in recent years.

In a letter of appreciation to Mr Howe on his retirement, Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew said that he was indebted to Mr Howe for the devoted work he had put in for the people.

Pet Project Revived

The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) is Singapore’s first registered animal welfare charity and relies on the goodwill of donors, members and volunteers to continue its work. It is also affiliated to the RSPCA in UK and is an associate member of the World Society of the Protection of Animals.

Although the SPCA has existed for years earlier, it had stopped operating during the War. An English lady called Lucia Bach revived the SPCA in 1947. Her house was used as the first headquarters and the grounds accommodated stray animals including an orang-utan. Its operation became difficult because the SPCA had no paid staff, vehicle, office or adoption shelter.

Over the next few years, it received support but in small ways. When the post office on Orchard Road became vacant, the society moved in at a nominal rent of \$1 a year. But the rapid development of Orchard Road meant the SPCA had to move again.

In 1984, SPCA moved to 31 Mount Vernon Road. The site was offered by the government and because of the foresight of previous committees, sufficient funds had been set aside to meet the cost of building the premises.

Today, the SPCA takes in hundreds of unwanted animals from all corners of the island. It does not turn any animal away. And it firmly believes that its services in promoting kindness and preventing cruelty to animals are vital to the community.



Students giving an abandoned kitten some love.



Registered as Organisation

- Feb Family Life Society
- Apr Nanyang Technological University Welfare Services Club
- Jun The Haemophilia Society of Singapore

- Jun The Singapore Scout Association
- Nov Association of Women for Action and Research
- Dec Youth Challenge



President Wee Kim Wee at a Befrienders stall selling handicraft.

Number One Volunteer

Ambassador Wee Kim Wee became the country's president in 1985 and served as patron-in-chief of the Singapore Council of Social Service, a position he took seriously.

Board member Eric Teng recalled: "I always valued the opportunity of meeting him as he graced many volunteer events and activities. He was always encouraging, engaging and empathetic with volunteers and the cause of community service. Indeed, I remember Mr Wee in many ways as the No. 1 volunteer in the country."

After nearly eight years as one of the most popular and best-loved presidents, he stepped down in 1993 to resume life as an ordinary citizen. But

he continued to be involved in the social service sector. In 1997, he became the patron of the Home Nursing Foundation (HNF). Its chairwoman, Mrs Fang Ai Lian recalled: "Despite his many commitments, he readily agreed to be the HNF's patron in 1997, and furthered the cause of the elderly sick with his unwavering support."

In 2003, he published *Glimpses and Reflections*, his 204-page memoirs containing his thoughts and never-before-seen photographs. He gave the proceeds of the sale to Community Chest and seven charities. The response was overwhelming – 300 people and companies donated between \$1,000 and \$50,000 for signed copies – and the book raised \$500,000 for charity.

Helping Every Lone Parent

When a separation, divorce, or even death occurs in a family, a single parent is left behind. HELP, or Help Every Lone Parent, was set up in 1985 for that very purpose – to help single parents and their children cope with their loss.

It provides assistance and information on family counselling, legal counselling, utilities and rental aid, financial and job aid, housing, and childcare support. It also has a mutual support and self-help group called the SPE (Single Parent Encounter). The regular monthly talks and discussions allow the members to share their problems and offer solutions. Sometimes, it organises social gatherings and outings for single parents and their children to make new friends. Members also take turns to visit each other especially those who are depressed or troubled, to find out how they are coping with family and work, and provide the needed support.

Linda went to these sessions. She had been married eight years when she and her husband divorced. After the papers were signed, she felt an inevitable sense of rejection and loss.

"I felt very inadequate after my husband left me. Looking at 'whole' families made me feel like a bad parent, an inferior parent. I started doubting my self-worth... I thought of myself as a failed wife, and a failed mother," she recalled.

Although Linda was entitled to alimony from her ex-husband, she did not receive any money from him. "It just isn't worth the effort. I'll probably have to pay extra for legal fees to get him to pay up," she explained.

Returning to single status after years of being married was not without some awkwardness. "I often felt like the odd man out at company functions. Comments like, 'Why didn't you bring your husband?' didn't help."

This is one area where a group like the SPE can offer the understanding and support. As she said: "From the group, I have found some emotional support. I no longer have to give an explanation for my single status and I feel accepted for the way I am. And since we are all in similar positions as single parents, we share a common identity."



Heartstrings Show was the first televised fundraiser.

Heartstrings Pull in the Millions

Two years after Community Chest was set up, Singapore's first televised fundraiser was born in 1985. The first *Heartstrings Show*, held at the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation studios raised \$3.9 million.

Gerard Ee, who would later become the council's president, had his first taste of voluntary work at the show. He volunteered to call back donors to verify pledges. He also keyed in data to update the electron-

ic board showing the tally. And he continued to lead the volunteer team in logistics for the yearly show.

In 1988, the show moved outdoor to Marina Square, raising \$4 million. The show featured Lee Kok Hong, who has cerebral palsy, playing his song *Friends* on the electric organ, in a performance that moved many. The show took a break until the mid-1990s when it returned on air. The two-hour show in 1996 featured celebrities such as Moses Lim,

Gurmit Singh, James Lye and Chen Hanwei. The *Heartstrings Show* became the inspiration for *TrueHearts*, the first TV charity show broadcasted on Channel 8. Held at the Toa Payoh Swimming Pool in 2002, more than 900,000 viewers tuned in to watch performances by local MediaCorp artists and foreign celebrities like Fei Yu Qing, Wu Fung, Ng Kwan Lai, You Ya and Jay Chou. The show raised \$2.36 million for Community Chest.

Family Matters

Rising divorce rates. Disaffected teens. Families coming apart at the seams. The 1980s saw trends that threatened the foundations of the Singapore family.

And so in 1985, a National Family Week was launched to draw attention to the trends and reinforce family values. The Parent Education Programme was launched concurrently to teach parenting skills through workshops and seminars.

Over the years, the programmes became so popular with voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs), government, private sectors and community leaders; a National Family Council was formed in 2006.

Who Let the Kids Out?

In the early 1980s, the McDonald Kids hung outside Liat Towers. A few years later, there were the Centrepoint Kids. Into the 1990s, we had the Marina Square Kid and Far East Plaza Kids. The shopping centres may change but the phenomenon was the same.

Outlandish outfits. Multicoloured hairdo. You'd recognise them a mile away. Some were smoking, glue sniffing and sometimes getting into fights and shoplifting. Most were there just to make friends or simply hanging out at shopping centres. Unhappy shopkeepers complained the youths were blocking passageways and frightening away customers.

In 1985, Youth Challenge was launched in direct response to the Centrepoint Kids to get these unruly

teenagers off the streets and provide more fulfilling programmes and activities for them.

By 1986, this social phenomenon had slowly faded somewhat after a campaign was launched to educate students about social responsibility and talks, and pointed to the dangers of joining the Centrepoint Kids. Some school principals even issued orders forbidding students from forming or joining such groups.

This phenomenon led several VWOs, such as Marymount Vocational Centre and Singapore Children's Society, to review and expand their youth services from housing estates to outreach at shopping centres. It also led to increased collaboration between the police and VWOs.



Registered as Organisation
 Mar Gerontological Society
 Apr Disabled People's Association
 Apr Zion Home for the Aged

When the New World Collapsed

When Hotel New World collapsed on 15 March 1986 and killed 33 people, it shocked the nation but saw a surge of volunteers unlike any in the past. Besides the 500 rescue workers deployed to the scene, there were many strangers who burrowed through 6,000 tonnes of rubble to help pull 17 people out alive.

One of these volunteers was Marilyn Lim, who was driving past Serangoon Road minutes after the tragedy unfolded. Unlike others who ran in the opposite direction, she jammed hard on her brakes and charged towards the spot where six storeys of rubble lay.

As rescue workers searched through the debris for survivors over the next few days, Ms Lim volunteered by cooking for them. In an interview with *The Straits Times* in 2005, Ms Lim recalled how she was one of the first volunteers to reach the scene.

She said: "I asked how I could help. The Civil Defence officers didn't know what to do with me. But they said the rescue workers would need food and water."

Immediately, she drove home to her Henderson Road flat to prepare porridge for those at the scene. She, her husband and their two children ended up taking turns cooking round-the-clock for a week. And there were many like them.



Hundreds of volunteers helped the Singapore Civil Defence Force to rescue the victims while the rest of the nation donated blood, food, money and care. Volunteer Henry Han carried casualties, removed rubble and directed traffic at the disaster site. Scores of callers rang call-centre lines, offering to help with the rescue operations displaying an unprecedented outpouring of concern.



Massive rescue operation went on late into the night in search of survivors.

Volunteers Day

The first Volunteers Day was celebrated in Singapore more than 20 years ago in 1986 to heighten public awareness of voluntarism, encourage it, and recognise the contributions of the volunteers.

The next year, Volunteers Day became Volunteers Week and in 1988, Volunteers Week became Volunteers Month. Then in 1995, Volunteers Month became Volunteers '95 – a six-month long campaign to get the message across.

At the UN, 5 December had been designated International Volunteer Day in 1985. Joining the global spirit of giving one's time and effort, the NVPC made every December, V-Month (Volunteer Month) in Singapore.

Activities and programmes were organised throughout Singapore to focus on the remarkable impact volunteers make to the quality of life in the country.

From volunteer route marshals at sports events to teenage volunteers teaching children to read better, to support groups for widows and volunteer helpers at hospices and homes for the aged, Singapore's considerable volunteer reservoir is growing.

When asked what he thought volunteering would be like in the future, National Council of Social Service president Dr Robert C K Loh said: "The need for volunteers will always be there. Issues may be different but volunteers must continue to have the same basic qualities of selflessness, motivation and perseverance, and be passionate about improving the quality of life of the helpless. We need those who can contribute their energy in fundraising, but we also need professional volunteers who can contribute knowledge and time, like lawyers who can provide helpful legal counsel."

"Volunteers between 15 and 30 years old make up 45 per cent. It is those who are about 40 years old and have their career and family settled whom I would like to see come forward. These are the people who are in middle management and have the skills and knowledge to share. We should do our best to win these potential volunteers back. We also want to attract young children... introduce them to volunteering from an early age and start them thinking about social issues."

Keeping in Touch

From its humble attempts in 1986 to help latch-key children in Clementi and Jurong to its current network of 17 different services in 2008, TOUCH Community Services has come a long way.

Over the last two decades, it has reached out to more than 100,000 individuals from all religions and races, including children, youths, families, people with special and healthcare needs and the elderly. But even as it grows and matures, its vision of seeing families strengthened and communities transformed for the better has remained unchanged.

In 2007, it won the Outstanding Non-profit Organisation Award 2007 by the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC).

Due no doubt in no small ways to some of the early pioneer volunteers. Like Koh Bee Choo, a pioneer volunteer in 1986, who later served as its director of the Children's Club and After-School Programme between 1988 and 1994.

Recalling her early years, Ms Koh said: "As a teacher previously, I encountered children who were from single-parent or low-income families and did poorly in studies. These kids were potential delinquent youths in need of adult supervision and support outside of school. In 1986, I got together a group of people who were interested in reach-

ing out to needy children and their families. Our first Children's Club started in a small Jurong HDB flat where we organised activities and tuition to children from the lower-income families. Subsequently, we pioneered the Before- and After-School Programme in several schools."

On winning the NVPC award, she said: "I am glad to see TOUCH receive the award. I think the commitment of the staff is the main reason they won – they serve with passion, committed to excellence, and they transform lives. Other contributing factors include the wide-ranging services that cater to different needs in the community and the visionary qualities of the leadership team."

Julia Lam, its director of the Special Needs Ser-

vice Group and TOUCH Senior Activity Centre, joined TOUCH in 1991. When asked about her recollections of the organisation now and then, she replied: "When we first started, we depended heavily on volunteers. For example, TOUCH Children's Club and TOUCH Legal Care depended on the support of volunteers to deliver professional services to meet the needs of the community."

"Today, our 17 services still promote an active participation and involvement of volunteers so it not only complements the work of our staff, but also brings new perspective, richness and dimension to our service to the community. Over the years, it is encouraging to see some of our clients becoming volunteers to serve others as well."



Over the last two decades, TOUCH Community Services has reached out to more than 100,000 individuals.



Registered as Organisation

Jan Singapore Committee of the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP)
Feb The Cheshire Homes Far Eastern Regional Council

Feb Beyond Social Services
Mar Christian Outreach to the Handicapped
Apr Teen Challenge (Singapore)

Jul All Saints Home
Jul Buddhist Cultural Centre

A Special Rainbow



Professor Lee Eng Hin with a Margaret Drive Special School student.

There were schools for students with intellectual and sensory disabilities. But if you had multiple disabilities, no one wanted you,” moaned Prof Lee Eng Hin.

Prompted by this gap in service, Prof Lee put together a task force chaired by Dr Kenneth Lyen and comprising Dr Ee Peng Liang, Saras Sivagnanaratnam, Dr Pamela Sharpe and Anna Liu that eventually established the Margaret Drive Special School in 1987. As a result, it led to the birth of a centre-based early intervention programme for children with developmental delay, intellectual disability, physical disability and multiple disabilities up to four years old, and a special school for children with multiple disabilities up to 18 years old.

In 1989, the school started a programme called Structured Teaching for Exceptional Pupils for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) from two years to 12 years old. Being the first programme in Singapore to cater to the ASD children, on-going referrals were received by the school that resulted in a long wait list. This prompted the setting up of a sister school, Balestier Special School in 1995.

Margaret Drive Special School has since been renamed as Rainbow Centre – Margaret Drive School, and Balestier Special School has moved to

Yishun, and is renamed as Rainbow Centre Yishun Park School.

In 1992, Rainbow Centre was established as an umbrella body to run Margaret Drive Special School and its initiatives. Today, Rainbow Centre is a key service provider in the social service sector running two special schools and early intervention centres, a training and consultancy unit and

“There were schools for students with intellectual and sensory disabilities. But if you had multiple disabilities, no one wanted you.”

– Professor Lee Eng Hin

a family support group catering to the needs of children with special needs, training professionals locally and regionally, and providing training and emotional support to families of persons with special needs.

Cared in the Corner

The late 1980s was boom time in Singapore, with highly educated bankers, lawyers and professionals drawing record salaries. At the same time, there were many blue-collar workers who were marginalised by a fast expanding economy.

Reverend Tan Tian Ser founded Care Corner to help this group of people. He pioneered an initiative in 1987, opening up “800 Counselling Centre”, which manned the “800 Hotline” telephone service in Mandarin.

Operated by over 100 trained volunteers and a team of staff, their Mandarin hotline service, now known as “Care Corner Counselling Centre” is one of the largest counselling service in Singa-

pore today, and the only one offering Mandarin services. Over the past five years, it has reached out to about 21,000 people each year.

The centre has also launched a televised fundraising programme called the “800 Social Club programme”, and enjoyed the widespread support of MediaCorp artistes. It was probably one of the first fundraising events to use the broadcast media.

Today, Care Corner continues to provide a range of counselling services and programmes. It also provides continual education to boost its volunteers’ morale, skills and effectiveness.

The Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports and National Council on Problem Gambling commissioned it to provide specialised gambling counselling and support services for gambling addicts and their immediate families for two years.

The Hotline number: 1800-353-5800 shows how Care Corner is as important as any other hardware in providing support to the afflicted.



A support group at Care Corner Counselling Centre.

Surfing the Net Blind

In 1987, the 36-year-old Singapore Association for the Blind was renamed the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped (SAVH). But its mission remained unchanged – to meet the needs of the visually handicapped community including helping the young to lead independent, dignified lives.

Some of the services offered to enhance the life of the visually handicapped include special school, vocational training skills, low vision clinic, assistive devices, audio production, and a library with Braille and talking books.

The SAVH also runs a fully equipped classroom with the latest technology to assist in the training of its members. Devices and technologies such as the Window Eyes and JAWS, Zoom Text Magnifier/

Reader and advance video magnifiers like the Ver-tex, enable visually handicapped students to access information with unlimited restrictions and enable them to do things, which they could not do before.

With the availability of and accessibility to these devices, they could surf the Internet, read books and informative materials, fill up small print forms and be equipped with information which was unheard of or had presented difficulties in the past.

SAVH’s mission for the visually handicapped is to promote, facilitate and encourage greater collaboration with the community and work towards barriers that prevent integration and equal treatment in all aspects including architectural, attitudinal, social, cultural, and educational.



New technology helps in the continuing education of the visually handicapped.

Touched by the Hostel

Ubi Hostel was set up in 1987 by the Singapore Council of Social Service to help people with intellectual disability and to train them for independent living and employment in the community.

Such as the likes of Fong Chong Meng. As a child, Chong Meng suffered from a high fever that left him with a mild intellectual disability. He lived with his father, a rag-and-bone man, who left Chong Meng unsupervised while he worked. In 2001, he was found wandering in his neighbourhood and was referred to the TOUCH Ubi Hostel.

At the hostel, he was taught how to do household chores like washing his clothes and taking public transport on his own. Today, he holds

down a job assembling aluminium door and window frames. Most of his \$600 salary goes to paying the fees of his father’s nursing home. “Last time, my father took care of me, now I take care of him,” he said.

Another person saved by the hostel was Ng Ah Cheang. Intellectually challenged, he was abandoned by his family.

In his 30s, he was found penniless and sleeping in the void deck. The hostel helped him deal with his suicidal urges, find a job, and eventually buy an HDB flat.

The hostel was handed over to TOUCH Community Services in 1996 and is now known as TOUCH Ubi Hostel.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan TRANS Centre
- Jul Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Federation (Singapore)
- Aug Lions Club of Singapore Sentosa
- Aug The Helping Hand

- Oct Sunshine Welfare Action Mission (SWAMI)
- Nov Action for AIDS (Singapore)
- Dec Grace Lodge



The Advisory Council on the Disabled recommended setting up a nation-wide community-based child development programme.

Review and Recommend

In 1988, a number of advisory councils were set up to review social services, identify gaps in service delivery, and recommend actions needed to prevent problems from growing into national issues.

The Advisory Council on the Aged conducted a review of ageing issues: employment, residential care, community-based programmes, and attitude change. Government programmes were administered through the Ministry of Community Development (MCD), Ministry of Health (MOH), and the Singapore Council of Social Service. Laws such as the Homes for the Aged Act 1988 and Homes for the Aged Regulations 1989 empowered MCD to ensure that sheltered homes were built and managed properly, providing adequate care for the destitute elderly.

In 1988, the Advisory Council on the Disabled made several recommendations with significant impact on the improvement of child development services in Singapore. It recommended setting up

the Development Assessment Clinic in Singapore General Hospital and setting up an Inter-Ministerial Committee comprising the MOH, MCD and Education Ministry to develop a comprehensive nation-wide community-based child development programme, provide important statistics and information on further planning and development for services for children with special needs in Singapore. Other major recommendations were starting a psychological service for children and allocating land for the building of special schools.

The Advisory Council on Youth recommended the formation of the National Youth Council to co-ordinate youth affairs and activities on a na-

tional level.

In 1988, the Child Care Centres Act was implemented to provide a framework in setting minimum standard to safeguard the well being of children through the licensing, inspection and control of child care centres. This also led to the release of HDB void deck spaces to private sector childcare centre operators in 1990. This led to increased participation of voluntary welfare organisations in providing childcare facilities and before- and after-school programmes to support women from low-income families to stay in the workforce, such as Grace Child Development Centre by Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services.

“In 1988, a number of advisory councils were set up to review social services, identify gaps in service delivery, and recommend actions needed to prevent problems from growing into national issues.”

Giving Out of the Box

What started as a humble effort in 1988 to encourage donors to go beyond writing a cheque or giving cash, and making an effort to buy and even gift-wrap presents for the less privileged in our society, has become Singapore’s biggest year-end charity initiative.

The Boys’ Brigade Sharity Gift Box project started in 1988 in conjunction with the Community Chest Sharity Orchard Road Light-up with some 7,000 gifts of rice, shoes and clothes.

In 2007, there were more than 436,000 food and household items collected and delivered to 18,826 beneficiaries island-wide.

Donors can indicate the homes or institutions

that they want to present their gifts to. They simply have to write the names on a sticker attached to the gifts. These will then be delivered to designated homes and institutions under Community Chest and other welfare organisations.

Thanks to this thoughtful donation, Madam Jenny Tan, 68, a widow with two sons with disabilities, had her wish granted and received a motorised wheelchair for her younger son, whose large body frame makes it difficult for her to move around with him.

Such thoughtful attention to personal needs and empathy with the less privileged is an enduring legacy of the Gift Box.

“Donors can indicate the homes or institutions that they want to present their gifts to. They simply have to write the names on a sticker attached to the gifts.”



A volunteer from the Boys’ Brigade delivers a hamper.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Rotary Club of Changi
- Sept Renewal Self-Development Centre
- Nov Apex Day Rehabilitation Centre for Elderly

- Dec HCA Hospice Care
- Dec Ju Eng Home for Senior Citizens
- Dec Lions Club of Singapore Serangoon Gardens

From Happy Meals to Happy Kids

Did you know that, since 1989, five cents from every Happy Meal sold have gone to the Ronald McDonald Children Charities Fund (RMCC)?

It was established in October 1989, as part of McDonald's community relations programme, to help raise funds for sick children below the age of 12 from needy families who need medical treatment.

Initially funded by Community Chest of Singapore, and administered by SCSS, RMCC's first beneficiary was Jane Lee, who was diagnosed with a congenital heart disease soon after she was born. She benefited from the fund by receiving medical treatment at the Royal Melbourne Children's Hospital in Australia. She is now a healthy, happy adult carrying aspirations of being a nurse.

"...RMCC has been able to help more than 700 children with financial grants of over \$3 million from the sale of McDonald's Happy Meals..."

The fund has also extended lifelines to cases like Madam Inah, a single mum. It stepped in to purchase a ventilator costing \$20,000 for her son, who was struck by a virulent form of hand, foot and mouth disease. The ventilator was his lifeline as his heart, brain and lung functions had all been permanently damaged by the disease, and he could not breathe nor eat adequately on his own.

Since 1989, through the current administration of the fund by KK Women's and Children's Hospital, RMCC has been able to help more than 700 children with financial grants of over \$3 million from the sale of McDonald's Happy Meals, and big-hearted contributions from McDonald's family, suppliers, and the public.

Easy Come, Easy Go

Accessibility is a key enabler for people to have more opportunities, be it with regard to social, cultural or economic participation. An accessible environment allows our seniors and people with disabilities to maintain essential links to friends, family and the wider community. It facilitates seniors and people with disabilities in maintaining their independence.

Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS) and its affiliates have been lobbying for barrier-free environment in the 1980s. Finally, it was supported by the Committee on Ageing Issues which recommended that the government set up an inter-agency barrier-free accessibility co-ordination towards the development of barrier-free accessible features.

By 1989, there was a rising sense of awareness of the many barriers to wheelchairs across the island. Recognising this, the Building and Construction

Authority (BCA) introduced a code a year later that required all new buildings, as well as existing ones undergoing major refurbishments, to ensure that they were wheelchair-friendly.

Over the years, the Code on Barrier-Free Accessibility in Buildings has been modified and improved. The latest revision, which took effect in April 2008, expands on the original code by going beyond just covering buildings to also including other facilities like parks, open spaces and bus shelters.

Because the code only covers buildings built after 1990, this left older buildings largely untouched. To improve accessibility for people with disabilities in these older buildings, the BCA began a five-year Barrier-Free Accessibility (BFA) Upgrading Programme in 2007. Under this programme, a \$40 million Accessibility Fund was set up to encourage building owners to retrofit their old buildings to make them BFA compliant.



The new code on barrier-free access extends to parks, open spaces and bus stops as well.

When the End Nears

In life, there comes a time when the end is within sight. For the terminally ill and their families, good hospice care enables them to live a fuller life before they pass on.

Established in 1989, the Hospice Care Association (HCA) is a charity that offers support to patients and their families with a homecare service

and a hospice daycare centre. The homecare service tends to 2,700 patients in their homes each year. In addition, more than 250 patients pass through the doors of the daycare centre.

To date, it has cared for more than 25,000 patients since 1989.

In 2003, HCA launched "The Hospice into the



The Hospice Care Association offers support to patients and their families with a homecare service and a hospice daycare centre.

Community" programme. Its aim was to make its presence felt in the heartlands, so that its services would be readily available to caregivers. With a base in the heartlands, travel time for the staff was shortened, allowing them to spend more time with the patients.

With funding from the Lien Foundation, Shaw Foundation and Khoo Foundation, the programme flourished. Within four years, four satellite centres in Jurong, Hougang, Bedok and Woodlands were set up. These centres have their own teams of clinical staff to provide palliative care and to train caregivers on providing better care for their family members.

"With a base in the heartlands, travel time for the staff was shortened, allowing them to spend more time with the patients."

HCA's hospice care efforts provided relief to Elly Sukmawarni, who had to take care of her husband, Mohammad Abdooh in the later stages of his lung cancer.

Kahvidah Nathan, a nurse from HCA's Hospice Care, visited them once a week to ensure that Mohammad was taking his pain medication correctly. This specialised care gave him the motivation to make video clips about cancer and smoking before passing away in 2006.

How to Get Kids In

In 1989, SCSS launched two initiatives to tackle the challenge of the shortage of manpower in the non-profit sector. It established the Community Chest of Singapore Scholarship, which offered academic scholarships in various fields of studies ranging from physiotherapy to speech pathology for successful candidates, to train and prepare them for a career in social services.

It also launched the Youth Volunteer Involvement Programme (YVIP), targeting youths between the ages of 15 and 19, who would attend a three-day camp. After the camp, there was an attachment programme which gives the youths two weeks at various voluntary welfare organisations. The purpose of the programme is to encourage volunteerism as a way of life for Singaporeans, and to give them a deeper understanding of the lives of those they are helping.

An Interview with Yeo Siew Mui, Immediate Past President, Student Volunteer Corps & Deputy General Manager, National Community Leadership Institute

I took part in the YVIP in 1996 which was organised by Student Volunteer Corps, then a student volunteer group with the National Council of Social Service. It triggered a chain of events which shaped my teenage years, and who I am today.

Then, I was 18, had just finished my 'A' level exams, and was looking to find meaning in my life.

The camp provided that. We were sold on volunteerism.

Those were the days before the compulsory Community Involvement Programme was introduced and all the activities we did, did not amount to accolades or any CCA points. It was pure passion and friendship that drove us to pour our heart and soul into making a differ-

ence in the lives of the less fortunate.

Today, most of my volunteering friends and I are working in the non-profit sector instead of chasing dollars and cents. I still visit my elderly friends whom I made when I started volunteering eleven years ago at Ren Ci Hospital. We have aged but the memories of those activities that my friends and I had organised remain etched vividly in their minds.

Echoing the camp refrain: "This volunteering light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine", the flame still burns brightly within me. And I will continue to let it shine for the younger ones who come our way.

YVIP will celebrate its 20th anniversary in December 2008."



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Care Corner Counselling Centre
- Apr Association for Early Childhood Educators (Singapore)
- May Lions Club of Singapore Phoenix
- Jul Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA)



The Rent and Utilities Assistance Scheme helps low-income families, like Mr Tan Beng Yeong's, pay off their rental and utility debt and will cover their rent and utilities until they can find a job.

Splitting the Bill

Low-income families that run into difficulty paying their rent and utilities bills to the Housing and Development Board (HDB) and Public Utilities Board (PUB) respectively have a friend to turn to – the Rent and Utilities Assistance Scheme that began in October 1990.

One of the earliest families to be helped was on the verge of being evicted from their one-room HDB flat because they owed \$800 in unpaid rent. The power and water had already been cut. The father could not work and the mother worked irregularly as a cleaner. After a year on the scheme, they were able to repay both the HDB and PUB. A social worker

from Paya Lebar Methodist Church also helped them get support for their children's schooling.

The Singapore Council of Social Service administered the scheme until it was taken over by the Community Development Councils. The scheme was designed to provide short-term financial assistance to these families. The money was given for a

fixed period, between three months and two years.

Speaking in Parliament in 1991, Dr Seet Ai Mee, Acting Minister of State (Community Development and Education), said the scheme was meant to help these people "temporarily until such time as they can get back on their feet."

Under the scheme, a needy family can get up to \$110 a month in rental assistance, \$60 a month on utilities for a one- and two-room flat and up to \$35 on service and conservancy charges. Tenants in three-room HDB rental flats are considered on a case-by-case basis.

"The scheme was designed to provide short-term financial assistance to these families to help them get back on their feet."

Places in the Sun

Judy Pan, a part-time insurance agent, has twin sons. Instead of doubling her joy, it has been double the challenge. Both sons are 22 years old and have intellectual disability.

Half her problems were eased in 1990, when the SUN-DAC Centre for the Disabled in Chai Chee became the first day activity centre for adults with intellectual disability to be set up in an HDB void deck. Since enrolling one of her sons at the centre, she was able to cope better. She could focus on one son while SUN-DAC helped her other son.

"The teachers have taught my son things which I never thought he could do, like painting and making handicrafts," said Madam Pan. "They have

lightened my burden. I can look after one son and the other has somewhere safe to go."

The centre was so successful in training its charges that some of the trainees became volunteers at the Zion Home for the Aged in Bedok in the mid-1990s. As volunteers, they cleaned floors, windows, and toilets, washed cloths and interacted with the residents.

One of the residents, Tan Lian Neo, said: "At first we were a little scared of them. They would tap us on our shoulders or pull our sleeves. Now we are used to them. I also find that they clean the place very well."

"The centre has been so successful in training its charges that some of its trainees became volunteers at the Zion Home for the Aged in Bedok in the mid-1990s."

A second centre was opened in Chua Chu Kang in 1999 to cater to those living in the west. Together, they can take up to 85 students. Both centres offer day programmes to persons with intellectual disability from 16 to 60 years to train them to be independent. They teach them social skills, personal grooming, hygiene, domestic skills and functional mobility. Other activities include arts & craft, simple kitchen duties, swimming, occupational therapy, excursions, gardening, and telematches.

Meanwhile, by providing a safe place for them in the day, their caregivers have a chance to work or take a break.

A New Horizon

It is estimated that by 2020 there will be 50,000 people suffering from dementia, an illness that affects mainly the elderly. It causes brain cells to die at a faster rate than normal and often leads to failing memory, deterioration of intellectual function and personality changes. Alzheimer's disease is the main form of dementia where the onset of symptoms and progression of the illness is gradual. The other form of dementia is the result of a series of strokes in the brain.

providing daycare services for the elderly with dementia while a third in Tampines concentrates on rehabilitation for those recovering from strokes, fractures, Parkinson's and related disorders after their discharge from hospitals.

New Horizon centres also have a caregiver sup-

port service that runs a gamut of activities and services ranging from a telephone helpline, to counselling and support group sessions conducted in English, Mandarin and Malay.

Such support groups were a huge source of encouragement to Chan Beng Hua and his wife, who felt the challenge and pressure of taking care of his mother who has dementia, and balancing his roles and time as a father, son, friend, and employee.

All the centres are managed and supported by the Alzheimer's Disease Association.

"Help and support arrived in 1991 with the setting up of the New Horizon Centre, a daycare centre in Toa Payoh for senile dementia patients."

Imagine the 24-hour toll on caregivers whose parents gradually forget their identities, soil themselves, or cannot recognise their own spouses and children. Some dementia patients even forget who they are.

Help and support arrived in 1991 with the setting up of the New Horizon Centre, a daycare centre in Toa Payoh for senile dementia patients.

Today, there is another centre in Bukit Batok



The New Horizon Centre provides day care services for dementia patients, keeping them occupied and taking the burden off the caregivers.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Special Olympics Singapore
- Jan Breastfeeding Mothers' Support Group (Singapore)
- Jan Lions Club of Singapore (Tanah Merah)

- Jan Alzheimer's Disease Association
- Apr Muhammadiyah Welfare Home
- Apr Society Against Family Violence

- Apr Rochore Kongs Home for the Aged
- Aug Singapore International Foundation
- Sept Agape Counselling and Training Centre

- Oct The Turning Point
- Oct Association of Muslim Professionals
- Oct Dyslexia Association of Singapore

- Nov Society for Continence (Singapore)
- Dec Hearty Care Centre

Teach Me How

Much had been said about the benefits of allowing the children with disabilities to study in mainstream schools. Talk became action in 1991 when the Asian Women's Welfare Association (AWWA) set up an integration programme for these children.

The programme was called Therapy and Educational Assistance for Children in Mainstream Education, or TEACH ME. And in 1993, AWWA merged the ASSIST programme, or Assisted Integration Support with TEACH ME, and started offering a single programme under the name.

“The proactive approach taken by TEACH ME has opened a window of opportunity for many of these children.”

TEACH ME provides educational, rehabilitative and social support to children with disabilities studying in regular schools.

The support includes assisting the children in enrolment, providing regular physiotherapy and occupational therapy at home or at school, conducting rehabilitative sessions for children who require intensive physical and educational input to remain in school, and working closely with principals and teachers on ways to meet the needs of special children.

The proactive approach taken by TEACH ME opened a window of opportunity for many of these children. Integration has reinforced the fact that disabled does not mean unable.

With higher quality programmes and curricula, TEACH ME helps lay a solid foundation for children with disabilities, thus preparing them for independent living, open employment and integration into mainstream society.

Service Blueprint for The Next Lap

This was the first gathering of policymakers, professionals and academics to develop a blueprint towards a holistic service delivery for people in need.

From 21 to 22 June 1991, the Singapore Council of Social Service and the Institute of Policy Studies jointly organised a conference on *Social Services: The Next Lap*.

The conference sought to increase public awareness and understanding of the needs of the community, to map out the future directions for social services in Singapore and to assist voluntary welfare organisations develop long-term plans to meet the community's needs.

About 330 civil servants, academics, professionals, experts in social services and volunteers

“...and the rigorous findings formed the spine for development of a holistic approach towards integrated service delivery.”

discussed the future needs and directions in five service areas: people with disabilities, disadvantaged families and children, youths, elderly, and mental health.

The conference proceedings were published in a book and the rigorous findings formed the spine for development of a holistic approach towards integrated service delivery.

The Big Test

The global HIV/AIDS epidemic started in 1986. In just a short time after that – five years – Action For AIDS set up Singapore's first Anonymous HIV Testing and Counseling Clinic in November 1991.

Since then, the number of people who have sought its services has grown from 33 to 7,000 in 2007. Most who got tested were heterosexual men who were concerned about contracting HIV from casual sex partners or sex workers. Most of the women who get tested were single. Surveys showed that married women would only come for testing if their husbands were sick or had tested positive, and only if they themselves had a strong suspicion that they might be HIV positive.

To be anonymously tested, a person comes into the clinic, requests for a test and pays a \$20 fee at the reception. The person then completes a ques-

“The services provided by the clinic give people the chance to test for HIV without fear of social discrimination. They can also get counselling support and seek treatment.”



Action for AIDS volunteers take the sting out of HIV testing.

tionnaire. All information is kept anonymous and confidential. The person never has to reveal his or her identity.

The person is then led into a private room for pre-test counselling. The test is taken after this session. After 15 to 20 minutes, the results for the test are available. A counsellor will then take the person into a private room for the results and post-test counselling.

The services provided by the clinic give people the chance to test for HIV without fear of social discrimination. They can also get counselling support and seek treatment.

In 2007, as a signal of the clinic's experience and expertise in this area, the Ministry of Health sought its assistance for the nation-wide GP HIV Rapid Test Project.

Blowing in the Wind

In 1991, Singapore hosted the 1st Asia Wataboshi Music Festival – which is focused on realising and harnessing the creative potential of people with disabilities, primarily through musical expression and performance.

The Wataboshi movement first started when a group of amateur musicians and singers added melodies to a collection of poems written by students from the Special School for Disabled Children in Nara, Japan and performed them in the 1st Wataboshi Concert in Nara in April 1975.



Boon Lay Secondary School student Gina Tan, 18, who is hearing impaired, practises her dance moves.

The concert was a great success, and a record made sold all over Japan. Many persons with disabilities from other prefectures started submitting poems to the organiser, the Tanpopo-No-Ye Foundation. It became an annual event in Nara. Other cities and prefectures all over Japan started organising their own Wataboshi concert. So far, there are about 40 to 50 concerts held yearly with the co-ordination of Tanpopo.

When it decided to expand the festival to Asia, Singapore was chosen to host it. Subsequently, it was held in Seoul (1993), Shanghai, (1995), Bangkok (1997), Nara (1999). At the start of the new century, it became the Asia Pacific Wataboshi Music Festival and the host cities have been Kaohsiung (2001), Brisbane (2003), Shanghai (2005) and Johor Baru (2007).

Wataboshi, which is Japanese for the seeds of the dandelion flower, was chosen as the name of the music festival to spread the message of love and understanding throughout the world towards special persons.



Registered as Organisation

- Feb Help Family Service Centre
- Apr Kheng Chiu Loke Tin Kee Home
- May Rainbow Centre

- Jun Sunlove Abode for Intellectually-Infirmed
- Aug Infant Jesus Homes and Children's Centres
- Aug Autism Association (Singapore)

- Sept St Luke's Hospital
- Nov Children's Cancer Foundation
- Nov Dover Park Hospice

Community Chest Gets New Chair

Council Gets New President

In May 1992, Dr Robert C K Loh at 67 became the first president of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), the new name for the Singapore Council of Social Service (SCSS). He was a committee member of SCSS from 1979 to 1983, and vice president of SCSS from 1984 to 1991.

"Better service, more volunteers and more staff. That's what you can expect from the new social service council," he said.

An eye surgeon in private practice, Dr Loh was recommended for the job by Dr Ee Peng Liang, who was president of SCSS and chairman of Com-

munity Chest. Dr Ee described his successor as a "steady man, not rash, and quite conservative".

No stranger to welfare work, Dr Loh was president of the YMCA, chairman of the Singapore Polyclinic and district governor of the Rotary Club of Singapore.

Mr Zulkifli Mohammed, vice-president of SCSS and MP for Jalan Besar GRC, said: "Dr Ee is a strong character. He is able to make other members accept his views.

"But Dr Loh is milder. He will want to hear all views and will call another meeting if necessary. He will then put forward a compromise, and take the middle ground well."

Dr Loh insisted that his public service career had been, at least initially, a hesitant one: "I very seldom volunteered for anything. One thing led to another, which is the usual story for a lot of people in volunteer work. Some people just can't say no."

Nevertheless, his involvement in community service seemed to have emerged from an enduring personal philosophy of caring for others.

His wife, Mary, was at first disheartened to learn that her husband had been selected for the council's top position.

"At his age, he should enjoy life, enjoy his grandchildren.

"But he said we must not compare ourselves with other families, that we must be happy in our own way," she said, adding that she was anxious about his health although he was quite fit.

"I very seldom volunteered for anything. One thing led to another, which is the usual story for a lot of people in volunteer work. Some people just can't say no."



In 1992, Dr Robert C K Loh (third from right) became the first president of NCSS and Dr Richard Eu (fourth from left) took over as chairman of Community Chest.

The couple met in the Singapore General Hospital, where Mrs Loh was then a registered nurse.

"My relatives and friends used to ask me, 'How can you live with a man with a golden halo?'" she said, laughing.

Dr Loh mentioned that he felt a sense of achievement from public service.

In 2008, Dr Loh donated \$100,000 to organise the "Robert Loh-SSTI Eldercare Lecture Series", which would be organised in the Social Service Training Institute annually over five years. The lectures will serve to support the capability building of social service professionals in the eldercare sector and to update social service professionals on the best practices and innovations on eldercare issues.

The Year of Giving Plenty

The year 1992 was a time of plenty for many Singaporeans. The country saw the building up of a large middle-class, with more money to give to charity. It also saw more volunteers initiating new programmes and organisations.

METTA

Many may not be aware of the meaning behind this word "Metta". The word in Pali means "compassionate light". The Metta Welfare Association (Metta) was founded in 1992 before registering itself as a charity in 1994.

Metta provides accessible and affordable medical care to the less fortunate, ranging from home hospice care for the terminally ill, day rehabilitative services for the elderly and stroke patients, to providing community care services, special education and training for the wide spectrum of the community – including the elderly, students and children.

Dr Richard Eu, the chairman of Eu Yan Sang Holdings and the Singapore Institute of Management's governing council added to his portfolio when he took over as chairman of Community Chest in 1992.

While Dr Eu had big shoes to fill, he was no stranger to community work himself. He had been a founding member of the Singapore Cancer Society and had served as its chairman for the first five years. He had also previously headed the Singapore Anti-Tuberculosis Association for five years.

In an interview, Dr Eu said he accepted the position of chairman of Community Chest because he saw it as performing national service. He said his ultimate goal was to establish Community Chest as the umbrella body for all charities in Singapore.

"Dr Eu accepted the position of chairman of Community Chest because he saw it as performing national service."

He also aimed to get more support from private sector employers and employees and to gear up public education programmes to increase public awareness of the organisation.

He served as chairman until 2000 when he stepped down and was succeeded by hotelier Jennie Chua.

Buddhist Welfare Services

Singapore Buddhist Welfare Services was first established in 1981 to champion and care for the welfare of the poor and needy in Singapore. They have in place, a Daily Meal Programme where their volunteers deliver two meals per day, six days a week, as a form of support to the poor.

For the first time in Singapore, a Buddhist halfway house "Green Haven" was set up in 1992 to help ex-drug addicts. Green Haven provides accommodation, drug rehabilitation programmes, counselling and vocational training for ex-drug addicts.



Registered as Organisation

- Feb Sun-Dac Centre for the Disabled
- Feb Foundation of Rotary Clubs (Singapore)
- Mar Red Swastika Charity Foundation

- Apr Tsao Foundation
- Sept Buddhist Compassion Relief
- Tzu-Chi Foundation (Singapore Branch)

Nov Care Corner Family Service Centre (Toa Payoh)

Very Special Artists

For people with disabilities, art is a way of communicating that unites all people.

Art is a vehicle for self-realisation and discovery, a voice that enables self-expression, a tool for learning, a channel for achieving excellence, and a pathway to careers and opportunities.

However, the arts often remained beyond the reach of people with disabilities.

To change this, Very Special Arts (VSA) was formed in September 1993 to provide people with disabilities with opportunities to access the arts for the purposes of rehabilitation and social integration.



Professor Tommy Koh with VSA artist Johnny Ang.

VSA promotes the educational, social, rehabilitative and therapeutic benefits of visual and performing arts for people with disabilities; integrates them into mainstream society through the arts and whenever possible, helps them obtain financial assistance and independence through arts and arts-creation.

“Very Special Arts was founded on one belief: that the arts belong to everyone and everyone deserves equal access. Artists with disabilities are VSA’s key advocates and exemplars of the significance of the arts in people’s lives,” said VSA executive director Chris Yeow.



President Ong Teng Cheong, the Guest of Honour at NCSS’s 40th Anniversary Dinner.

Worthy of a President

In the 1990s, one man’s ‘star power’ shone brightly for a worthy cause. Actually it was one man and a constellation of stars. In 1993, President Ong Teng Cheong launched the President’s Star Charity, an event that has raised millions of dollars for local charities annually.

Through the years, celebrities, multinational corporations and the man in the street have always

rallied to support this showpiece event.

Ong Teng Cheong, Singapore’s first elected president, is fondly remembered as a gentleman, one with a passion for the arts, and an even greater passion for the people’s welfare.

Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew once said Mr Ong “had shown a special knack, the ability to get on with ordinary people, and empathise with them.”

Little wonder, Mr Ong left his mark on the Singapore charity scene in a big way.

President S R Nathan wrote in a letter addressed to Ong Tze Guan, elder son of the late Mr Ong,

“His genuine concern for the ordinary man, his common touch with the rank and file, the selfless sense of duty with which he devoted himself to the workers who placed their trust in him – these

Ageing in Place

With the inception of the Tsao Foundation in Singapore in 1993, the first mobile-care programme for the frail elderly in Asia was formed.

“I have now gone from working for those beginning life to the other end – from paediatrics to geriatrics,” said Dr Mary Ann Tsao, the president of the Tsao Foundation, with a chuckle.

Dr Tsao grew up in Hong Kong and studied medicine in the US, specialising in paediatrics. She lived in the USA till her grandmother, who was then 86, asked for her to return to Singapore to help her start the Tsao Foundation.

“I didn’t object. If you knew my grandmother, you would know that her wishes, were really commands,” Dr Tsao added with a smile.

Dr Tsao’s grandmother came up with the idea of the Tsao Foundation after her husband’s death. Having lost her life partner, she was depressed and retreated into seclusion for some time.

“Then out of the blue, she called me to come home to start the Tsao Foundation. My grandmother felt that women in general lead lives of sacrifice, so she wanted to make the process of ageing more comfortable for them. So the Tsao Foundation is only for the aged; there are more women beneficiaries as women generally live longer, which leads to more widows.”

Over the years, the Tsao Foundation has expanded its services to include education and advocacy to cater to the growing needs of the elderly.

Today, besides the mobile care clinic, it provides outpatient primary geriatric care for ambulant older people (Hua Mei Senior Clinic), alternative TCM and acupuncture services for pain management and health maintenance (Hua Mei

TCM and Acupuncture Clinic), care management for those with complex medical problems and socio-financial needs (Hua Mei Care Management) training for caregivers and professionals in seniors’ services and public education programmes on active ageing (Hua Mei Training Academy).



Tsao Foundation’s services include education and advocacy to cater to the growing needs of the elderly.

“Ong Teng Cheong, Singapore’s first elected president, is fondly remembered as a gentleman, one with a passion for the arts, and an even greater passion for the people’s welfare.”

qualities marked him as an outstanding leader in the labour movement that he led and transformed. For those of us who had the privilege of knowing Teng Cheong, his personal touch, his many varied talents with his warm friendship will always remain in our memory.”

More insights about the great man came from Madam Halimah Yaacob, Member of Parliament for Jurong GRC,

“Mr Ong had a great sense of contribution and a strong sense of purpose to improve people’s lives.”

That pretty much summed up the man who inaugurated the President’s Star Charity.

Mr Ong, after a 10 year battle with lymphatic cancer, passed away in February 2002.



Registered as Organisation

May Man Fatt Lam Home for the Aged

May Fei Yue Family Service Centre

Jul Metta Welfare Association

Sept Speech-Language and Hearing Association (Singapore)

Oct Ren Ci Hospital & Medicare Centre

Mr Charity Passes Away

He came, he served and stayed for decades. Two years after stepping down, Dr Ee Peng Liang passed away – on 24 August 1994. But many can still remember Dr Ee’s kind round face, which used to beam the same grateful smile, whether he was receiving a \$100 or \$100,000.

He was synonymous with social service and charity for over 50 years and commonly known as Mr Charity.

He was president of the Singapore Council of Social Service (1958–1992) and founding chairman of Community Chest (1983–1992).

In all those years, he helped raise millions of dollars for Community Chest and championed the causes of many voluntary welfare organisations.

He was so committed that even in the few hours before he died, he was still talking about helping the scout movement raise money for its new headquarters.

Despite having held 50 posts and receiving more than 16 awards, Dr Ee was a humble, compassionate and friendly man who would go the extra mile to help others.

Many who had worked with him in the then SCSS remember his altruism, which went beyond his professional calling.

“So much goodness, so much love, so much charity and so much humility has left us.”

– Mr Goh Sin Tub on the death of Dr Ee Peng Liang

In Lily Lim’s article – *We Remember Dr Ee Peng Liang* published in the National Council of Social Service’ Rapport newsletter, Morene Sim, a former manager with the Membership Development Division, recalled that after each event, Dr Ee would send a little thank you note.

“As a staff, I did not expect to receive such notes



Dr Ee’s instinct was to make this a better world. And he did.

from the Big Boss himself but he found time to write to us. It was little things like this that were so motivating and encouraging.”

For Paul Goh, a former executive with the human resources department, those thank you notes were a constant reminder to be humble and appreciative.

“The owner of a goldsmith shop once told me that the only reason he contributed to Community Chest was because he knew Dr Ee was a sincere man working hard for the less fortunate. Dr Ee’s sincerity and humility encouraged others to share his mission.”

But it was his service to the less fortunate for which he will be best remembered.

In an article published in *The Straits Times*, Mr Goh Sin Tub, the chairman of St Joseph’s Institution, Dr Ee’s alma mater, said: “So much goodness, so much love, so much charity and so much humility has left us.”

Father Alfred Chan, parish priest of the Church of the Holy Family, and Dr Ee’s friend of more than

20 years recounted this incident:

“A few years ago, Dr Ee, was helping out at the canteen wiping tables and handing out plates. Someone to whom he had just passed on a plate passed him a 10-cent tip.

“The man probably thought Dr Ee was a lay worker. I saw him accepting the coin graciously as though it was the most natural thing and went on cleaning the plates.”

Dr Tan Bee Wan, former executive director of Community Chest who worked with Dr Ee for more than 14 years, remembers him as a spirited and upright man.

“He used to pay a few thousand dollars every week for seats for himself and his wife at charity dinners for which he was raising funds.”

Dr Robert C K Loh, Dr Ee’s successor at the Council, and a close friend for 30 years, said he had never seen a more patient and caring man.

“Dr Ee’s instinct was to make this a better world as he knows how. And he did.”

Woman of All Time

The year is 1994 and Leaena Tambyah was picked the “Woman of the Year”.

To which she responded: “I feel the woman of the year is the mother of the child with multiple disabilities, the poor woman who has been betrayed time and time again by her drug addict husband, the woman who is battered and trampled upon by her husband who thinks it’s his right to do this. These women have a certain inner strength and a resilience that one can only stand and wonder at.”

“She has lived her entire life putting others before herself, and is always thinking of ways to make this society better for the less privileged.”

Her job requires her to be compassionate, altruistic and creative – which is not difficult for someone like Leaena.

She has lived her entire life putting others before herself, and is always thinking of ways to make this society better for the less privileged.

The social sciences graduate joined Singapore’s Department of Social Welfare as an assistant director in 1960.

By the mid-1960s, she had devoted herself fully to voluntary work.

Of all the achievements she has made, she is easily remembered for being the founder of Asian Women’s Welfare Association (AWWA) Special School.

In 1979, also the International Year of the Child, she initiated a playgroup for children with disabilities. Seven years later in 1986, the pioneering programme was awarded the United Nations Community Excellence Award.

The playgroup developed into a professional education service known as AWWA Special School. It educates children with multiple disabilities, helping them to achieve life skills and build confidence to face the future with hope and dignity.

Leaena Tambyah may have been Woman of the Year but her efforts will remain timeless.

Helping Families

The first Family Service Centre (FSC) was established in 1976 at the MacPherson estate by the then Ministry of Social Affairs. And in the early 1990s, four pilot FSCs were set up by the Ministry of Community Development (now the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports) and voluntary and grassroots organisations.

It was only in 1994 that NCSS became the national co-ordinator, working alongside the ministry to promote FSCs and their wide range of services and programmes for the whole family. By 2007, the number had increased to 36 FSCs throughout Singapore.

FSCs are community-based centres that provide remedial, preventive and developmental services to help families cope with their responsibilities and problems.



The first Family Service Centre was opened in 1976 in MacPherson.

With Dignity and Independence

In 1994, the Disabled People’s Association (DPA) set up an online database EN-ABLENet, to provide information for the visually and hearing impaired, and people with physical and mental disabilities. It provides tips for and gives people with disabilities a guide to accessible places in Singapore

The DPA helps people with disabilities lead a dignified and independent life.

It operates an Independent Living Centre which conducts competency-based training programmes for persons with disabilities. This is to empower them with functional knowledge and skills, so that they can live independently in the community.



The Disabled People’s Association helps people with disabilities lead independent lives.

DPA is also responsible for promoting the “Universal Web Accessibility” – it offers an audit and provides certification for websites on whether they are accessible to people with disabilities.

In 1996, Singapore launched its plans to be an Asia-Pacific internet hub for disability-related information. One of the first steps was to provide a comprehensive collection of disability research findings and issues online. The association also helped other associations for disabilities here host their websites on a \$14,000 computer server donated by Sun Microsystems.

As Singapore strives to be an inclusive society, the DPA seeks to influence decision-makers to make policies and implement programmes that help people with disabilities live, work and play with the rest of the community.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Bizlink Centre Singapore
- Jan Very Special Arts Singapore
- Mar Child at Street 11

- Apr Lions Befrienders Service Association (Singapore)
- May Singapore Hospice Council
- May Golden Years Fellowship

- May Apex Harmony Lodge
- Jun Buddha of Medicine Welfare Society
- Jun Shan You Counselling Centre

- Nov Save the Children Singapore
- Nov Salem Welfare Services
- Nov Care Corner Family Service Centre (Queenstown)

- Nov Care for the Elderly Foundation (Singapore)
- Nov Bethesda Community Services Society

Our Lion-hearted Friends



Many elderly people have found friends through the Lions Befriender programme.

Lions Befrienders, which has a long history in caring for and assisting the elderly to cope with the demands of daily living, was founded in Singapore in 1995.

Its mission is captured in the name: be a lion-hearted friend, to the old, the lonely and the needy. Volunteers give their time and support to people aged 65 years and above who have limited or no

“Their mission is captured in their name: be a lion-hearted friend, to the old, the lonely and the needy.”

Extension of Edusave Scheme Announced

The children here are gifted musically, so I would like to nurture that talent – perhaps offer them violin lessons,” said Koh Poh Kwang, principal of the Singapore School for the Visually Handicapped, when asked on how he would spend the Edusave grant.

It was something that could not have happened prior to 1995.

In the mid-1990s, the Ministry of Education announced that special education schools would join the Edusave scheme. Under this scheme, students are given money for enrichment programmes. Schools are also given a grant based on the number of students they have.

Dr Aline Wong, Minister of State for Education, announced in Parliament that children from 15 special schools would each receive an Edusave contribution of \$130 in 1996. The schools would also receive an Edusave grant of \$50 a pupil. Some 3,000 students were expected to benefit.

The Edusave scheme was established in 1993. At the start, it was limited to secondary school students but this was extended to primary schools, junior colleges, independent schools, the Institute of Technical Education, centralised institutes, and later, special education schools.

Special education schools were delighted to learn that they would be part of the Edusave



Students from the Singapore School for the Visually Handicapped enjoying music lessons.

“Dr Aline Wong, Minister of State for Education, announced in Parliament that children from 15 special schools would each receive an Edusave contribution of \$130 in 1996.”

family support – whether rich or poor.

Under its island-wide programme, nearly 900 trained Befrienders or volunteers carry out weekly visits to the homes of some 1,700 lonely seniors, providing companionship. With 26 per cent of Singapore’s population aged 60 and above by 2030, this will be a much-needed service.

It also has an outreach programme for another 1,700 seniors through a variety of daily activities at three neighbourhoods.

Many a bond has been forged between Befrienders and elderly citizens. Take Ho Koon Thye, a 70-year-old Befriender, and his 26 years of friendship with Chow Moi, aged 87.

Since his early days as a volunteer with Lions Befrienders, the father of three grown-up sons has been a good friend to scores of elderly residents located in one-room rental flats in Geylang Bahru for the past 25 years. He helps the elderly with groceries, cooks their meals, and brings them on outings to places like Clarke Quay, sometimes at his own expense.

In Madam Chow’s heart: “He is more than a good friend to us. He is a brother – and a good man,” she said.

Down But Not Out



Down Syndrome Association children in Sentosa, clicking away with the cameras they received from Kodak.

The Down Syndrome Association (DSA) was started in October 1995 as a support group for parents of children with Down syndrome.

“Most people think that children with the condition cannot increase their mental capabilities after reaching the age of six or seven, but this is untrue,” said its chairman, businessman Eddy Szeto, who has a Down syndrome child.

“...DSA has played a part in helping parents with Down syndrome children understand the condition and guide them towards independent living.”

Said Dr Balbir Singh, DSA’s advisor: “Down syndrome adults in America have even entered universities. They develop and learn like other children, but at a slower pace.” His daughter, Jaspreet Kaur, has Down syndrome. “She can do

a lot of things I cannot – swimming, playing the piano, and she dances better than I can,” said Dr Singh with a laugh.

Helped early, a Down syndrome child can learn skills and even develop special talents in music, arts or sports.

In Singapore, teenagers with Down syndrome have gone so far as to attend Basic Education in Skills Training (Best) classes to pursue the equivalent of Primary Six qualifications.

Children with Down syndrome usually attend a special school until they are 16 or 18. They have no formal avenues to take up studies in normal schools.

For the past 12 years, DSA has played a part in helping parents with Down syndrome children understand the condition and guide them towards independent living.

Minister for Community Development Abdullah Tarmugi said: “Our aim must be to enable persons with Down syndrome to live with dignity and as independently and as productively as each one can.”

And DSA does its best.



Registered as Organisation

Jan Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital & Nursing Home
Feb Kidney Dialysis Foundation
Mar Singapore Buddhist Lodge Welfare Foundation
Mar Hope Community Services Centre

Mar Life Community Services Society
Apr Youth Guidance Outreach Services
Jun Bethesda Care and Counselling Services Centre
Jun Fei Yue Community Services

Jun Cornerstone Community Services Centre
Sept Yong-En Care Centre
Sept Sathya Sai Social Service (Singapore)
Sept Down Syndrome Association (Singapore)

Nov Care Community Services Society
Dec Singapore National Stroke Association
Dec Bethesda Community Assistance and Relationship Enrichment Centre

Dec Parkinson's Disease Society (Singapore)

Successful Networking

By 1996, the National Council of Social Service (NCSS) was on its way to launch four networks: the Children's Home Network, the Youth Services Network, Community Care Network (East) and the Mental Health Community Care Network.

welfare organisations (VWOs) to share information and best practices, identify service gaps and develop new services.

The Sheltered Home Network was the first network. Some 20 members came together to discuss the role of social workers for residents in these homes.

The success of this pilot led to formation of two other networks, the Nursing Home Network which

developed a training programme for dealing with the elderly in nursing homes. It also conducted computer training for members of the network.

The Community Care Network (West), on the other hand, completed a directory of services as well as a list of training needs and available training courses. It also launched an initiative with two companies for the storage, transport and repair of wheelchairs.

NCSS subsequently went on to form the Family Service Centre Network and Community Care Network (Central) after the four launched in 1996.

Today, as platforms for information sharing and dissemination, these networks promote inter-agency collaboration and co-ordination, resulting in better integration of services and effective identification of service gaps in the different sectors. The networks are attended by representatives from various agencies as well as key stakeholders from government ministries and Community Development Councils.



A KDF staff nurse helping a dialysis patient.

To Those Who Need Help Most

1996 was a busy year for the social service calendar with several VWOs started up to provide care to those who need it most.

The Kidney Dialysis Foundation

In 1996, the Kidney Dialysis Foundation (KDF) was founded to make sure that no needy kidney patients in Singapore would die because they did not have money for dialysis.

The KDF adopts a niche approach which distinguishes it from other kidney organisations - they focus solely on patients from the lowest rungs of the income ladder - people who earn \$1,600 and less, who are referred by medical social workers

The Good Doctors from St Luke's



St Luke's Hospital provides quality healthcare services for post acute and rehabilitative care.

In March 1996, amid a rapidly greying population, St Luke's Hospital boldly opened its doors with an initial capacity of five wards and 151 beds to provide affordable healthcare for the elderly.

The small hospital was inspired by a report by the Ministry of Health in 1988 on the growing needs of the elderly. It sparked off an idea in Dr Lawrence Chen, a member of the Graduates' Christian Fellowship; at the time, the concept of a dedicated hospital catering to the elderly was a unique concept.

A small group of volunteers and government officials including Dr Bobby Sng, Dr Lee Soo Ann, Prof Lee Hin Peng, Dr Eileen Aw, and St Luke's Honorary Advisor, S Dhanabalan spoke at regular meet-the-people sessions to explain to the residents the concept and reasons behind setting up such a facility.

Today, St Luke's is a full-fledge community hospital, providing quality healthcare services for post-acute and rehabilitative care. It has provided holistic and quality professional care to over 12,500 elderly patients at highly subsidised rates.

Like the case of Mdm Ng, an amputee on Public Assistance, who was sent to St Luke's for rehabilitation after an operation in Alexandra Hospital. Unable to walk and staying alone in a one-room rented flat, Mdm Ng did not have anybody to turn to for help. To resume independent daily living, she required a wheelchair with detachable footrests which she cannot afford.

Recognising her financial hardship, St Luke's Hospital used its Patient Welfare Fund to purchase the wheelchair for Mdm Ng, enabling her to resume her daily life at home.

from the restructured hospitals. So, their patients would include blue-collar workers such as cleaners, hawker assistants, store assistants and taxi drivers.

To date, the charitable organisation has served more than 390 patients, of which 48 have undergone successful kidney transplants. One of them is Madam Ang Siang Chng, who was on the brink of despair and suicide. A patient with the KDF since 2004, she learnt to come to terms with her illness, as well as her husband's death, which had deeply affected her and her two sons emotionally and financially. She received highly-subsidised dialysis from the KDF. Her sons too, received help for their schooling.

Ju Eng Home for Senior Citizens

Ju Eng Home for Senior Citizens, a Christian organisation, opened its doors as a nursing home to shelter and care for the poor, sick and frail aged. Ninety per cent of their residents are referred and subsidised by the Ministry of Health.

The home, which can house 314 residents, pioneered the sharing of services with four other Christian welfare organisations. They share ambulances, volunteers, nurses, social workers, doctors and even job applicants.

This initiative helps them make full use of one another's resources.

The home also supports the new Community Involvement Programme, launched by the Ministry of Education, which requires each student to contribute a minimum of six hours in community work a year.

Having students talk with residents does wonders for the elderly, who often feel neglected.

And the benefits flow two ways - it's equally an enriching experience for students, who are sometimes surprised that, just by being there one particular afternoon, they have brought so much sunshine into another person's life.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Family Life Centre
- Jan Hope Centre (Singapore)
- Feb Lakeside Family Centre
- Feb Adventist and Nursing Rehabilitation Centre

- Mar Highpoint Community Services Association
- Jun Bo Tien Welfare Services Society
- Jul Lotus Light Charity Society (Singapore)
- Aug City Harvest Community Services Association

- Oct Eagles Mediation & Counselling Centre (EMCC)
- Nov Care Corner Family Service Centre (Woodlands)

Living Right to the End

Death makes people uncomfortable, which is why not many people volunteer to work with the terminally ill. Despite this, Dover Park Hospice has managed to gather a dedicated pool of people who regularly help out at the hospice.

One of its most active groups is the Mandarin Group, which was formed in 1997. This is a group of about 100 Mandarin and dialect-speaking volunteers who regularly go to the hospice to befriend the dying. These volunteers also help do basic nursing care, and organise social activities and outings.

For their efforts, the group received the President's Social Service Award in 2002.

When B Q Yap had to admit her mother into Dover Park Hospice, she was grateful that the hospice had volunteers who spent time with her mother before she died. "The volunteers who visited my

"Through their efforts, volunteers of Dover Park help the terminally ill to live each day to the fullest."

mother daily paid close attention to her psychological needs, listening and talking with her," she wrote. "Singaporeans should salute such people for they are truly great and selfless."

The family of Goh Hwee Eng, another patient, also wrote to thank the volunteers: "Our mother enjoyed her stay at the hospice very much. She liked the company of the volunteers who were always there for her."

Through their efforts, volunteers of Dover Park help the terminally ill to live each day to the fullest.



Befriending the dying, volunteers bring cheer at the Dover Park Hospice.

Heart Education

Since 1997, lessons in Singapore schools have never quite been the same. Students spend part of their lessons visiting elderly residents at homes and talking to them. They also potter around in parks, tutor needy students younger than themselves and engage in a bit of song and dance.

Their teachers, meanwhile, organise flea markets, charity golf competitions and once in a while, put up a performance of their own.

They are all taking part in the Community Involvement Programme (CIP), started in 1997, by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The MOE had set out the objectives of formal education, which were published in the Desired Outcome of Education.

In a departure from more traditional, grades-based assessments, these outcomes spoke not only to head knowledge but also to the goal of cultivating Singapore's students into socially responsible citizens.

This is where CIP comes in. With CIP, students spend part of the school year involved in activities benefiting the community at large, such as fundraising, visits to homes, and special schools, caring for the environment, school performances at organisations, joint activities with residents' committees and community clubs, and tutoring and mentoring.

Today, students are part of their community in many ways – taking care of neighbourhood parks, organising events, cleaning up their environment and even conducting talks and tours.

"...these outcomes spoke not only to head knowledge but also to the goal of cultivating Singapore's students into socially responsible citizens."

More teachers and MOE staff at HQ soon caught the bug as well. They, too, join in fundraising and volunteering, as part of MOE's corporate policy to encourage officers to participate actively in community service and to promote volunteerism.

The Good Sisters of Marymount

Faced with rapidly declining numbers within their order in 1997, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd at Marymount Centre closed down the Marymount Teenage Centre and Hostel for working girls.

It looked like the end of an era that had begun in nearly 60 years earlier when two Irish Good Shepherd Sisters arrived in December 1939 from Colombo. By early 1940, the first convent of the Religious of the Good Shepherd Sister was set up. Over the years, they have operated among others, a home for orphans, Marymount Convent School, and the Marian Centre for latchkey children.

But it was not the end. Sister Susan Chia, Provincial of the Good Shepherd Sisters was convinced that in order "to sustain the effectiveness and future of the Good Shepherd mission, Marymount Centre needs to continually employ lay leaders and staff who are able to combine professionalism with service that reflects the Good Shepherd mission, vision and values. We also need to ensure that our services have appropriate guidelines for ethical practices and integrity."

"...to sustain the effectiveness and future of the Good Shepherd mission, Marymount Centre needs to continually employ lay leaders and staff who are able to combine professionalism with service that reflects the Good Shepherd mission, vision and values."

They continued to run a primary school and two kindergartens. In 2005, they began a new residential programme for children at risk called the Ahuva Good Shepherd Centre Children's Home. In Yishun where their headquarters is, they opened the Good Shepherd Centre, a shelter for women and children who are victims of family violence. Rose Villa, which takes care of unwed and teenage mothers, is part of this centre.

There are currently only 11 Good Shepherd sisters including a 91-year-old Sister Ita from Ireland, possibly the oldest volunteer welfare worker around.

First Stop for Help

The National Family Service Centre Helpline, 1800-838-0100, provides anyone seeking social services with easy access to the family service centres. It is a toll-free number supported by four languages and connects the caller directly

to a neighbourhood family service centre. The helpline has significantly assisted individuals seeking social services to cut down the time required to locate and get in touch with the nearest family service centre.

To increase public awareness and generate higher visibility for the helpline, the National Council of Social Service launched a national campaign in 1997. The helpline number currently appears on various publicity materials with a diverse distribution list and continues to receive over 20,000 calls annually.



Family Service Centres are the first-stop social service agency in the community.

As Simple as ABC

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong first mooted the idea of Community Development Councils (CDCs) during his National Day Rally speech in 1996.

By November 1997, the nine CDCs were up and running. In 2001, nine became five, each headed by a mayor and ran by MPs assisted by grassroots leaders.

The motivation behind CDCs' formulation of its assistance schemes, community programmes and projects is based on three strategic thrusts, abbreviated as the simple ABC – Assisting the needy, Bonding the people, and Connecting the community.

The CDCs administer various government programmes and schemes to help needy residents by providing social and job assistance. In 2008,

Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) channelled \$67 million to the CDCs to provide direct financial assistance schemes to the poor, in areas like Job Matching Service; Government Assistance Schemes; Skills Upgrading Programme and Healthcare Assistance for Elderly.

Residents can also volunteer and get involved in community projects and programmes in their area of interest or expertise. To engage the community, the CDCs work closely with the stakeholders and partners to build synergy within the community.

NCSS plays the role of matchmaker between the voluntary welfare organisations and CDCs and particularly in projects involving the youths, elderly, poor, and those with disabilities.



Registered as Organisation
 Jan Sikh Welfare Council
 Feb Tanjong Pagar Family Service Centre
 Oct HOPE Worldwide (Singapore)

Oct Wicare Support Group
 Oct REACH Community Services Society

Winning Mentality



Dr Myrne Blake (left) and Ang Bee Lian were joint winners of the Outstanding Social Worker Award in 1999.

In 1998, a large oil company decided to recognise the spirit of giving and community services by sponsoring awards for the Outstanding Social Worker Award (OSWA).

ExxonMobil offered the prize money of \$5,000 to the individual award winner, on top of a certificate, a trophy and a cash award of \$1,000 from the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.

A year later, the same spirit of giving was displayed by the recipients of the award themselves – Ang Bee Lian and Dr Myrna Blake, joint winners of the OSWA in 1999, who decided to pool their total prize money of \$10,000 to run courses to upgrade the skills of new social workers.

Dr Blake, a National University of Singapore senior fellow actively involved in social work for more than 40 years, said she did this because she felt that new blood was important for the sector and that they must be recognised for the key role they play in society.

“...the search for qualified personnel is especially important because of the increasingly complex social problems cropping up.”

According to Miss Ang, who is now the chief executive officer of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), the search for qualified personnel is especially important because of the increasingly complex social problems cropping up.

Over the years, the award has shown that there are many people who answer the call of compassion, for a variety of reasons. For Winnie Phoon, 60, the first OSWA co-winner in 1998, her compassion for the underprivileged stemmed from her weekly visits with her mother to an elderly, blind woman 40 years ago.

Every time the woman heard their voices, her face lit up with joy, recalled Mrs Phoon. And that, to her, was reason enough.

All for the Needy

In 1998, Singapore Pools stepped in to underwrite the operating expenditure of Community Chest, the fundraising arm of NCSS. As a result, all donations made by the public to Community Chest go to beneficiaries and no funds are used to pay for salaries or fundraising costs.

Singaporeans do not hesitate to donate their money to worthy causes. However, most donors would prefer that their money go towards helping the beneficiaries directly. With the help of Singapore Pools, Community Chest is able to ensure that all the money donated to Community Chest goes to charity.

In the financial year 2007/2008, Singapore Pools and the Singapore Totalisator Board donated \$15 million to Community Chest. In return, Community Chest raised \$52 million to support 57 charities delivering 147 programmes.

More than 310,000 people were helped. 49 per cent of the funds were distributed to children charities, 21 per cent towards services for people with disabilities, 19 per cent for families services, and 11 per cent for helping the elderly.



Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong gives fundraising for charity a leg up.

Good Old Days

In his speech at the launch of RSVP Singapore in October 1998, Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong said: “Tomorrow’s senior citizens have the ability to contribute to the well-being of the society after their formal retirement. Senior citizens form an important resource which have up to now not been fully tapped. Elderly volunteerism is one area which we should develop.”

“Tomorrow’s senior citizens have the ability to contribute to the well-being of the society after their formal retirement. Senior citizens form an important resource which have up to now not been fully tapped.”

– Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in his speech at the launch of RSVP Singapore

In many developed countries such as the United States, Britain and Australia, talented retirees volunteer their time and expertise to help others in the community, under the Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (RSVP).

RSVP was such a success in more than 30 countries worldwide that Singapore adopted it when it wanted to engage the active elderly here in the mid-1990s. The Singapore chapter of the RSVP was soon launched, offering senior citizens the chance to share their time and expertise through community service.

The majority – 80 per cent – of RSVP’s 600 members have ‘O’ levels or higher qualifications. And more than 55 per cent hold a diploma or de-

gree. Their career background are as colourful and diverse as the general population – from the academia (23 per cent), and managers (18 per cent), to finance, legal, and health care professionals (56 per cent).

RSVP’s programmes focus on the areas of education, health, IT and inter-generation integration. For instance, computer lessons are conducted in English and Mandarin and taught by their IT-savvy senior citizens. Some are also mentors to groups of school children under the mentoring scheme. This scheme runs after-school care programmes in three primary schools, whereby senior volunteers supervise these children in their homework and leisure activities.

For instance, retired secretary Susan Loh, 62, and her husband Alphonsus, 65, are mentors to a group of latchkey kids from the Bukit Ho Swee Primary School. Spending two afternoons a week with about 40 pupils of the school, Mrs Loh supervises them while they are doing their homework. For the couple, this work with the children makes them “feel useful”. For the kids, whose parents come home only at 10pm on some days, the mentoring time provides a safe and fruitful haven.



Registered as Organisation

- Jan Life Spring Community Network
- Feb Kampung Senang Charity and Education Foundation
- Apr MacPherson Moral Family Service Centre

- Apr Good News Community Services
- Jun Friends-In-Deed Counselling Society
- Jun Eden Community Services Centre
- Jun Society of Moral Charities

- Jul Christian Care Services (Singapore)
- Jul Serangoon Moral Family Service Centre
- Aug St Luke's ElderCare
- Sept Woodlands Social Centre

- Oct RSVP Singapore: The Organisation of Senior Volunteers
- Oct Parkway HealthCare Foundation
- Nov Autism Resource Centre (Singapore)

- Nov Endometriosis Association (Singapore)
- Dec Light and Love Welfare Services Centre



Stanley Tan took over as NVPC fourth chairman in 2007.

working agency to foster the giving spirit in Singapore, whether of time, money or in kind.

It works in partnership with non-profit organisations, companies and public sector bodies to facilitate and strengthen community-giving efforts through its promotional and networking platforms, and other means.

Bank officer Gina Poh had found Promise-Works, a voluntary youth group through NVPC. She had left her name with NVPC indicating her interest in volunteering.

“What we want to do is to invest in capacity building. Donors sometimes say they want every cent of what they give to go to the cause. But you need people to perform some tasks – you need people to provide good leadership and ensure good execution.”

– Chairman of NVPC, Stanley Tan

Ms Poh subsequently found herself giving up her weekends and her time after work to coach a boy in mathematics. She was working against the clock because his examination was in a month. The boy passed.

Appropriately, a few years later, NVPC moved into a \$15 million premises donated by Far East Organisation.

In July 2008, its new office space, called The Giving Place, was officially opened at The Central at Clarke Quay. Just as well, as giving tops the agenda.

NVPC's current chairman Stanley Tan has the last word on giving: “What we want to do is to invest in capacity building. Donors sometimes say they want every cent of what they give to go to the cause. But you need people to perform some tasks – you need people to provide good leadership and ensure good execution.”

NVPC, according to Mr Tan, is a mechanism to get people involved in that selfless act of giving.

Yes to Fathers

In 1999, Edwin Choy, Wong Suen Kwong and a childhood friend Raymond Koh, formed the Centre for Fathering (CFF) and officially launched it on Father's Day of 2000.

Despite teething problems in the first two years, the founders soldiered on. Their perseverance paid off when CFF won the outstanding New Initiative Award during the inaugural National Volunteerism Awards in December 2001 – no mean feat as it was a young organisation serving a need that some might not have recognised as important at that time.

Since its inception, CFF has created much public awareness, on the importance of fathers' involvement in children's lives. From adventure-based Father-Child Bonding camps and Beginning Parenting programmes for fathers and fathers-to-be, to Eat with Your Family initiative and Back to School with Dad project, CFF has helped fathers in Singapore develop close and enduring bonds with their children.

No to Violence

HOME is a safe haven, a refuge from the busy and often unfriendly world. But for some people, where they live is a place of violence, fights and pain.

To help them, the Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVe) was born in 1999, a brainchild of Dr Sudha Nair, a former executive director of the Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centre. The specialised service, the first of its kind in Singapore, is a one-stop centre targeted at families living with violence in their homes.

Apart from counselling, it also heals family ties by teaching people how to enhance their family life, such as parenting, parent-child communication and partner communication. The centre also conducts group and individual sessions for children from violent homes and for abusive men.

In 2006, PAVe saw 660 cases of interpersonal abuse, with almost 80 per cent involving married couples.

Runs in the Family

Tan Sri Runme Shaw once said: “We make money from the public, we want to give the money back to the public. What is the best way to give money back to the public? So we came up with the idea of Shaw Foundation.”

In 1999, it gave out the highest amount ever given out in a single year by the foundation – \$17.7 million. The money was given to more than 300 charities, hospital endowment fund and educational institutions.

The foundation in Singapore was set up in 1957 by movie magnate brothers Sir Run Run Shaw and Tan Sri Runme Shaw with the overriding principle that wealth contributed by society should be returned and in generous measures. Since it was incorporated, it has donated over \$245 million to the needy.

The Shaw Brothers began the tradition of giving to the needy in 1948 when they personally gave out parcels and cash to the aged during the Chinese New Year period.

Since then, the Shaw family members continue this tradition faithfully each year. Old folks in Malacca, KL, Ipoh and Penang would all be given bags of gifts at the same time as Singapore. The ‘gift bag’ would consist of 3kg of rice, two tins of milk,

1.2kg of sugar, a towel and a red packet (which increased from \$2 in 1960 to \$50 in 1985 and then \$100 in 2005).

Funding comes from investments as well as various prime properties donated by the Shaws

to the foundation. This includes the Shaw Centre, which sits on prime land at Scotts Road.

Since the late 1970s, all the revenue collected from the 25-storey office block has been given to various charities.



The Shaw Foundation gave out \$177 million in 1999, its highest ever in a year.

Salt of the Earth

The National Volunteer Centre (NVC) was set up in 1999 to promote and develop volunteerism across all sectors in Singapore. Its roots date back to 1997 when Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong convened a committee to come up with a vision of Singapore for the 21st century.

The Singapore 21 committee released its findings two years later and among its conclusions was that Singapore should have active citizens. A few months later, the NVC was born.

By 2003, the centre's role was expanded to include promoting philanthropy as well. Its name was changed to the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre (NVPC) to reflect its new goal. It functions as a first-stop centre, catalyst and net-

The Kampung Spirit is Alive and Well

In a world of skyscrapers and corporate sponsorship, the spirit of charity still thrives in a kampung (village). Kampung Senang Charity and Education Foundation is a unique mix of the practical and the charitable – operating an organic farm and running daycare services.

It was set up and is managed by a husband-and-wife team in 1999. Joyce Lye gave up her high paying job with a bank to help her husband, James Low, run the unique project.

The centre encourages recycling and conserva-

tion efforts; their Wheels of Hope project recycles used wheelchairs and ambulatory aids, cutting down on wastage and pollution to the environment. At the same time, it helps more than 800 people with disabilities.

In addition, they harvest ingredients from their organic farm to make meals for the elderly, chronically ill, and children. For example, Madam Tan, a former student-care teacher and mother of two, had surgery for breast cancer in 1999.

She was diagnosed with brain tumour two years

ago. After years of radiotherapy and medication, she switched to an organic diet. She said that the pack of free organic vegetables from Kampung Senang lasts her family a week. “I don't have to worry. I know the vegetables will be there every week.”

The centre mobilises their volunteers to deliver fresh organic produce to cancer patients all over Singapore each week.

Kampung Senang's efforts at combining both community and eco-concerns are successful, thanks to volunteers like Alice Ng, a 40-year-old housewife who helps out in the centre's kitchen on most days while her four-year-old daughter attends the day care centre. She says: “This place is like a second home for me. We are like a big family here.”



Registered as Organisation

Jan Children-At-Risk Empowerment Association
 Jan Assemblies of God Community Services Society
 Mar Muscular Dystrophy Association (Singapore)
 Mar New Life Community Services Centre
 Apr Heartware Network

Apr Society of Sheng Hong Welfare Services
 Jun NTUC Eldercare Co-Operative
 Aug Society for the Promotion of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Research and Knowledge (SPARK)
 Aug Charis Centre

Sept Marine Parade Family Service Centre
 Oct Ain Society
 Dec Friends of the Disabled Society

A Challenge from the President

In September 2000, President S R Nathan launched the President's Challenge, a series of community-based activities aimed at getting the community more involved in fundraising for the less fortunate.

In its first year alone, thousands of people volunteered at open houses to increase community awareness and \$3 million was raised for 33 charities. A group of volunteers was Raffles Girls Secondary School student, Zhao Meiping and her Secondary three classmates who feverishly made paper clay rings that had to be painted and varnished. "My father at first said I was wasting my time until I told him it was for charity," said Meiping. They were sold to raise funds for the Hospice Care Association.

In 2002, SBS Transit literally took the President's Challenge to the roads. People signed their names on heart shaped stickers that were pasted on the exterior of 20 double-decker buses.

Speaking at the launch in 2008, President Nathan described how the event has changed over the years. He noted: "We have come a long way since 2000. In its earlier years, the Challenge used to be confined to a narrow window focused on just a few

fundraising events. Now, the President's Challenge-related events and activities span almost an entire year, raising awareness of the beneficiaries among the public, and providing more opportunities for the public to give their time and resources to the various causes."

In its first seven years, the President's Challenge raised \$62 million for about 400 voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) and their beneficiaries.



President S R Nathan, encouraging school children to join in fundraising for the less fortunate.

I'm Not Naughty

It's possibly the longest name for a VWO, the Society for the Promotion of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder Research and Knowledge; so it's called SPARK for short. It was formed in 2000 by some parents to raise awareness of the problems faced by children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). They had been members of a parent support group that was set up two years earlier after a mother's painful and frustrating search for answers to her ADHD son's problems.

Apparently, in the late 1990s, few professionals had heard of the condition. So, all its printed literature are entitled "I'm Not Naughty" to remind parents, teachers and caregivers of the usual misconception of this hidden disability. Society members continue with their talks to student, teachers, schools and the public as well as support ADHD children and their families.

No Money, No Recess

The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund began on Children's Day in 2000 to heighten public awareness of the plight of children from low-income families who were attending school without proper breakfast or pocket money to sustain their day in school.

The aim was to alleviate the financial burden faced by parents in providing for their children's education. At the same time, the funds would help children who are already facing difficulties in remaining in school to stay on.

When the local economy shrank following the 9/11 attacks, many schoolchildren had to skip recess to save on pocket money. Like 10-year-old Farah whose single parent mother who was raising three school-age children on an \$800 monthly salary. Or Madam Sharifah Rahayu, who got \$160 a month for her four children. Said Mdm Sharifah: "I use the money we get to buy food... It would be difficult for us to survive without it."

In the past few years, members of the public, schools and corporations responded generously after reading stories highlighting children especially those from single parent families.

When Jared Loo's mother asked him in 2004 to pick a charity to donate a third of his annual savings to, the 11-year-old student of Maris Stella High picked the School Pocket Money Fund and dropped off his \$15.90 at SPH.

Prominent corporate leaders who have pitched in included Creative Technology founder Sim Wong Hoo in the first year and Osim International founder Ron Sim in 2004. By 2007, it had collected over \$20 million and about 10,000 students benefited from the fund annually.

The NCSS administers the funds and makes disbursements to agencies, such as the family service centres, special schools and children's homes to benefit eligible children.



Soh Qjulin chips in to help needy children by donating to the ST School Pocket Money Fund.



Community Chest wants to focus on helping more children with disabilities like Malcolm Yew, seen here with chairman Jennie Chua.

Chest Gets New Head

On 1 August 2000, Jennie Chua was appointed chairman of Community Chest, the fundraising arm of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

Ms Chua said she was confident she could draw

on her extensive network of friends, in the public and private sectors, to helping her reach the fundraising targets for Community Chest.

"I received a stack of congratulatory messages from friends after they read about my new

appointment as Community Chest chairman. I would like to think that they are not just congratulating me... they are also saying 'we are around, if you need help.' So there are friends across a wide spectrum whom I can draw on for support as a fundraiser," she declared.

It would also be because "Singaporeans are generous by nature and respond when they know there is a need. People will give if they believe in the cause. I don't believe in donor fatigue. It's just that in affluent, well-off Singapore, not everybody realises that there are people around who need help, whether it's financial or 'I'm-there-for-you' kind of support," she added.

But she took pains to dispel the misconception that Community Chest was cash-rich and was a black hole sucking an endless amount of public funds. She stressed that funds raised by Community Chest would only go to charities and not toward salaries or administrative costs.

"We need to dispel the wrong understanding that part of the donation is for salaries and administrative cost," she said.

Community Chest's entire operational expendi-

ture is met by Singapore Pools and the Singapore Totalisator Board, making it possible for all funds collected to go directly to the beneficiaries.

"It is important to be transparent and to use funds optimally. At any one time, we must be able to look people in the eye and tell them, 'This is the money and this is where it's going.' We are accountable for every cent we receive," said Ms Chua.

"Community Chest does not raise more than it needs. Every dollar raised is given out to funded charities so fresh funds need to be raised every year."

Community Chest "does not raise more than it needs. Every dollar raised is given out to funded charities so fresh funds need to be raised every year," she explained.

Asked if the new appointment would affect her work-life balance, she replied: "It's all a matter of time management. Besides, I am a firm believer in the philosophy of doing good."

Peace and Hope on Earth

In early 2000, the Salvation Army established Peacehaven Nursing Home for the Aged, a significant upgrade in facilities and services from the former Lee Kuo Chuan Home for the Aged it had run since 1972.

The improvements continued. Three years later, its multi-disciplinary care programme went beyond nursing care, physiotherapy, and occupational and recreational therapy to include on-site access to a general practitioner, geriatrician, psycho-geriatrician, podiatrist, speech therapist, pharmacist and dietician.

When SARS hit Singapore that year, Peacehaven was quick to implement the necessary precautions and was widely lauded by the Health Ministry as a role model in preventing the potential spread of SARS. President S R Nathan presented a Certificate of Commendation for its actions during this critical time.

In 2004, it was renamed Peacehaven Nursing Home to cater to younger residents, the youngest admitted when he was barely two years old. In 2006, it set up Hope Centre, a home for dementia patients who were ambulant but required supervision.

Together, it is the largest nursing facility in Singapore. Almost 1,000 residents have passed through its doors with about a third having no family who want to own or look after them.

Serving the Community

City Harvest Community Services Association became a member of NCSS in 2000 although it had been established in 1966 to

serve the less fortunate among us.

It has eight full-time staff and over 700 volunteers providing services for the elderly, children, hearing impaired, terminally ill, family, youths and prisoners through community service. In 2007 alone, it had about 14,500 clients.

Registered as Organisation

Feb Care Corner Family Service Centre (Admiralty)
 Mar Viriya Community Services
 Mar Kang Ming Free Clinic
 Mar Centre for Fathering

May Thong Kheng Welfare Services Society
 May RiverLife Community Services
 Jun Concern & Care Society
 Jun Geylang East Home for the Aged

Jun Jia Ying Community Services Society
 Jul TOUCH Community Services
 Jul National Kidney Foundation
 Aug Philippine Bayanihan Society (Singapore)

Aug Bright Vision Hospital
 Oct Healthy Aging Association (Singapore)
 Sept St Gabriel's Foundation
 Sept St Hilda's Community Services Centre

Oct The Tent
 Nov Singapore Association for the Study of Obesity
 Dec Focus on the Family Singapore



Speaker of Parliament Abdullah Tarmugi sings along with an autistic child.

Lost and Fund

In November 2001, a \$200,000 fund was established to train teachers to care for autistic children. Over the next four years, as the funds were disbursed, the number of special schools that ran classes for autistic children shot up from two to 11.

The Education Ministry's education programmes director, Ho Peng, said in a media interview: "The fund enables teachers to be equipped with the expertise to teach and manage autistic children."

Up till 2001, parents of autistic children had only two schools to turn to – Balestier and Margaret Drive special schools. Inevitably, the waiting list for each school was long, stretching up to 150 applicants each.

At that time, there were an estimated 3,000 autistic children. Medical studies have shown that with proper guidance, some children with autism could lead normal lives. Parents who could not get their children professional help often had to struggle with taking care of their autistic children on their own.

Denise Phua, MP and parent of an autistic child said: "I am glad because low-income families can get better therapy for their children. Like my son, I got him private therapy and it helped a lot, but it is costly. Not everyone can pay for that, so this fund will really help more families."



More than 200 needy families living in the north eastern part of Singapore have received help from RiverLife.

Blessed are the Strong

RiverLife Community Services (RCS) was started in 2001 by a group of people committed to building strong family units. Its Family Food Provision Sponsoring Programme, a poverty relief project aimed at providing aid to families facing financial hardship due to disabilities, loss of employment or incarceration, was launched two years later. The programme is called Bless.

Its name stems from RCS director Vincent Lun's desire to see families progress from being recipients of welfare to becoming a "blessing" to the nation. His hope is to enable families to break

out of the cycle of poverty and attain upward social mobility. More than 200 needy families living in the northeastern part of Singapore have received help.

RCS has also reached out to children in the community through a learning support programme called Story@The Void. Students take part in a series of interactive sessions, where they learn moral values through songs and story telling. The goal is to impart wholesome values to young children, helping them to become responsible, productive members of society – a "blessing" to the community.

Setting Up Camp

The Community Addictions Management Programme (CAMP) was launched in April 2001. CAMP is run by the Institute of Mental Health and provides treatment for substance addictions, including alcohol, nicotine, prescription and non-prescription drugs; and behavioural addictions, including compulsive gambling, sex addiction and internet addiction.

For now, the two main problems that CAMP sees are alcoholism and drug addiction. "The challenge for CAMP is to keep people in treatment; alive and focused on recovery. Addictions treatment is a life-and-death issue," said its programme co-ordinator Suresh Anantha.

"There is no one form of addiction that is hardest to overcome. It depends on how long it has been and how severe. If a person took to drinking at a young age, he would probably have learnt to cope with difficult situations by drinking. Getting the person to stop would be more difficult," he added.

That is why dealing with the addiction is about recovery from ingrained habits that have taken over a person's life. Treatment has to be for the person as a whole. It is not just about the medical aspect, but also helping the person psychologically, sorting out legal issues and working through family issues.

A key component of CAMP's activities is BRIDGE, an intensive, group-based outpatient programme designed to address critical, unresolved issues that are likely to lead patients to chronic relapse.

Various topics ranging from emotion and anger management, social and communication skills to family issues and recovery are covered, and the programme has been very successful – 90 per cent of those who go through BRIDGE stay "clean" afterwards.

"The fear, pain, self-pity, anger, anxiety and resentment started to pour out and it was so ugly. BRIDGE changed me. I can now speak up and not bottle my feelings. I found my self-esteem and do not feel so 'small' anymore. Keeping calm, being aware, honest, open and taking one day at a time are steps I will practise in my recovery," said a former BRIDGE patient.



Registered as Organisation

- Feb Sri Krishna Mandir Welfare Society
- Feb Ang Mo Kio – Thye Hua Kwan Hospital
- Feb Student Advisory Centre
- Mar Habitat for Humanity Singapore

- Mar Make-A-Wish Foundation (Singapore)
- Mar Care Link
- May Alife
- Jun Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence (PAVe)

- Sept Lutheran Community Care Services
- Sept We-sharecare Society for Children & Youth (Singapore)
- Sept Leukemia and Lymphoma Foundation

- Sept Morning Star Community Services
- Oct Alive Community Network
- Oct Pasir Panjang Hill Community Services Centre

- Nov Promisedland Community Services
- Dec Student Volunteer Corps (Singapore) (SVC)

Have a Tax Break

Many charities struggle with fundraising. That's why, to encourage contributions, taxpayers in Singapore get a dollar-for-dollar tax break for their donations. In the 2002 Budget, the deal got even sweeter; those who donated to charities known as Institutions of a Public Character would be granted double tax deductions.

In other words, for every \$1 given, a \$2 tax deduction was disbursed. Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Lee Hsien Loong said: "We must continue to show our care and concern for fellow Singaporeans, and to contribute as members of our society to worthy community projects and services."

Local welfare organisations welcomed the move. "We are pleased and encouraged by the government's initiative," said National Council of Social Service (NCSS) chief executive Benedict Cheong.

"Donors invariably give from the heart but such measures will definitely help foster greater philanthropy among Singaporeans," he added.

And indeed, the policy worked. Donations in 1998 stood at only \$242 million. Figures for 2002 released the following year, showed it had shot up to a whopping \$382 million.

This was despite the decline in corporate donations, with about a third of the donations coming from individuals. Each person donated an average of \$90 to charity.

"And indeed, the policy worked. Donations in 1998 stood at only \$242 million. Figures for 2002 released the following year, showed it had shot up to a whopping \$382 million."



Prime Minister Lee presents 9-year-old Abdul Qayyum with his first pair of glasses.

He Ain't Heavy

The caregiver shoulders a hefty responsibility – he, or more commonly, she is expected to care for family members who are chronically ill and often heavily dependent. With these pressures and daily challenges, it is not uncommon for some to burn out mentally and physically. By 2030, when an estimated 27 per cent of Singapore's population hit 60 years and above, the demands and pressure of care giving is expected to increase.

In 2002, TOUCH Caregivers Centre was set up to extend a helping hand to these caregivers. Run by TOUCH Community Services, the centre trains caregivers with techniques and approaches to care for the elderly. Medical staff provides consultancy and advice on the creation of elder-friendly spaces and on elder-proofing their homes.

One such caregiver is Amanda, who has been taking care of her father, who has Alzheimer's disease. For three years, her life has been a roller coaster ride – on a high some days when her father recognises her and converses with her. On

other days, he becomes a stranger. As a result, Amanda found it hard to find a balance between caring for her father and maintaining her own emotional health. The centre provided her the support to give her a renewed lease of life to continue in caring for her father.

"Run by TOUCH Community Services, the centre trains caregivers with techniques and approaches to care for the elderly."

In recognition of its contribution and support to the caregivers of the community, TOUCH Community Services was awarded the Best Volunteer Management Award (Merit) given by the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre, and the Family Friendly Firm Award (Merit), which is awarded to pro-family organisations in Singapore.



Dr Wong Meng Ee, winner of the President's Social Service Award in 2002.

Blind to Any Obstacles

In 2002, the President's Social Service Award went to Dr Wong Meng Ee for his devotion in raising the awareness of the less fortunate in the community, and for his fundraising efforts for various charities including the Parkway Healthcare Foundation and the Singapore Sports Council for the Disabled.

Dr Wong is also a dedicated volunteer, companion and counsellor to many elderly and people with disabilities.

He also happens to be blind. From 1999 to 2002, he helped develop and found the Retinitis Pigmentosa Society, Singapore and was involved

in a fundraising project known as the Blind Cow Restaurant Project 2002 under the Singapore Association of the Visually Handicapped for the visually impaired community.

On the sporting front, Dr Wong has represented Singapore in various international meets, including the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester.

In July 2001, he represented Singapore in the 50m, 100m and 200m freestyle at the World Blind Sports Championships in Madrid and was in the top 20 for all three events.

Dr Wong has demonstrated that visual impairment is not an impediment to nation building and contribution to Singapore. Besides his involvement in various organisations and societies, he also chairs the Accessibility Consultative Focus Group of the Remaking Singapore Committee.

"Dr Wong is indeed an excellent role model for all Singaporeans," added the citation.



Caregivers are trained with techniques and approaches to care for the elderly.

Registered as Organisation

Jan Loving Heart Multi-Service Centre
 Jan Cornerstone Life Skills Centre
 Feb Food from the Heart

Feb 365 Cancer Prevention Society
 Mar EN Community Services Society
 Mar Queenstown Multi-Service Centre

Mar Whispering Hearts Family Service Centre
 Apr Association for Psychiatric Rehabilitation (Singapore)

Apr Lions Community Service Foundation (Singapore)
 May Tung Ling Community Services
 Jun Neighbour Ring Community Services

Nov Thong Chai Institute of Medical Research
 Dec B.Well
 Dec Toa Payoh Senior Citizens' Health Care Centre



Fever is the first possible signs of SARS. The outbreak which lasted about three months, infected hundreds and killed 31.

Commended by the President

In early 2003, Singapore was almost brought low by a deadly virus that caused Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars). The outbreak lasted about three months, between March and May 2003, but had infected hundreds of people and killed 31.

Those diagnosed with Sars were treated at Tan Tock Seng Hospital but those on home quarantine needed assistance from affiliates of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS). Five voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) were picked to set up a national support system for those on quarantine.

Volunteers from the Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centres, Fei Yue Community Services, 4PM-Mendaki Family Service Centre, Methodist Welfare Services and Thye Hua Kuan Moral Society provided support services for those on quarantine who needed it.

Social workers from 13 family service centres and two counselling centres also pitched in to help recovered Sars patients return to a normal life.

The initiative was funded by a \$52,000 donation from the Lien Foundation. Said NCSS chief executive officer Benedict Cheong: "The hospital

social workers have done quite a lot already. What we want to do is to complete the counselling, and make sure that there is a sense of closure as patients and their families leave the hospitals and return to their daily lives."

Under the programme, hospitals referred cases to NCSS and social workers then made house visits or provided telephone counselling.

Later that year, NCSS and all five agencies received the President's Certificate of Commendation during the National Day Awards for their part in overcoming SARS.

Past Tens e, Future Perfect

The Social Service Training Institute (SSTI) was set up in 2003 to ensure there would be training for professionals in the social service sector.

The institute has more than 100 programmes in areas like rehabilitation and residential care, understanding mental disorders, and disability studies. The programmes are for existing social service personnels as well as newcomers.

NCSS president Gerard Ee was instrumental in setting up the SSTI. He also presided over the \$30 million Voluntary Welfare Organisations' Capability Fund. This fund was launched in 2002 and was managed by NCSS. The fund was used to help welfare groups to finance training, research, IT upgrading and even overseas scholarships.

When the fund was launched, it was restricted to members of NCSS. In 2007, the fund was expanded and boosted. The government announced that it was setting aside \$45 million to build the capabilities of the 1,900 charities, VWOs and Institutions of a Public Character (IPCs). The fund will enable these groups to

develop the expertise of their boards, professional management and manpower so that these groups can operate effectively and efficiently. The fund was renamed the VWOs-Charities Capability Fund and now covers all registered charities and IPCs.



NCSS president Gerard Ee was behind the SSTI.

Mr Ee joined NCSS as its president in 2002. He is the son of Dr Ee Peng Liang, Singapore's Mr Charity and one of the founders of the Singapore Council of Social Service, the forerunner to NCSS.

An accountant by training, the younger Ee was a partner at Ernst & Young until his retirement in 2005. He chaired the Assisi Home and Hospice before joining NCSS. He also helped establish Bizlink Centre, an employment programme for people with disabilities, and was its chairman until 1992.

In 2005, he was appointed interim chairman and acting chief executive of the National Kidney Foundation and was tasked to help the organisation reform and regain public confidence.

In 2006, Mr Ee stepped down from his post as NCSS president and was succeeded by Rear Admiral (Retired) Kwek Siew Jin. Mr Ee is now focused on his new project, the Council for Third Age, an independent body that promotes active ageing to enable seniors to achieve a better quality of life in all the six dimensions of wellness – social, intellectual, physical, vocational, emotional and spiritual.

Prison Break

Prison puts more than convicts behind bars. When someone serves time in prison, family members also suffer: they lose their sole breadwinner and their main source of financial support. It may be an emotional time for all concerned, as they struggle to deal with it. They need a break. It came in 2003, when the Family Programme Centre was opened.

Set up by Care Community Services Society, in partnership with Singapore Prisons, it is a one-stop centre providing assistance to the families of inmates.

It provides practical assistance such as job referrals and information. Families can seek counselling and support groups to help them deal with

relationships, stress and parenting issues. The Play-and-Wait programme engages children of inmates through play, before and after their visits. It serves to help the child understand and deal with his or her thoughts and feelings with regard to the parent who is in prison.

Volunteers make home visits to better understand the family's dynamics and assess its needs. The centre also organises open visits on festive occasions, which take place inside the prison, to encourage bonding and better reintegration when the inmates leave prison.

Originally operating at the Selarang Park Drug Rehabilitation Centre, the success of the project prompted the opening of three more centres in other prisons in 2006, and was renamed Family Resource Centre.

Make a Wish

In April 2003, the Singapore affiliate of the worldwide Make-A-Wish movement was launched to dedicate itself to creating hope and happiness by granting heartfelt wishes to children with life threatening illnesses.

Since then, it has granted about a new wish every week. But with only a handful of full time staff, it relies on an army of more than 200 volunteers to help grant wishes and raise funds.

In 2008, Make-A-Wish Singapore stands tall as it celebrates its sixth anniversary having granted over 350 wishes.



A delighted Jun Ming (left) with his idol Phua Chu Kang.

It is part of a global organisation that began in 1980 after a group of people granted the wish of a young boy in Arizona whose dream was to be a policeman. He had leukaemia and would not have the chance to realise it. His family, community and everyone who sympathised with him wanted to make his wish come true.

So, with the help of the local police, Chris Gericius was sworn in as an honorary cop, with his very own uniform and a special badge. After the ceremony he was whisked off on a helicopter ride as the people who attended the ceremony waved at him with tears of joy.

The story caught the attention of many. Inspired by Chris' story and with the motive of seeing that same smile on sick and terminally ill children, the world's largest Wish Granting Foundation was formed.

Twenty-eight years later, all over the world, over 200,000 children between the ages of three and 18 suffering from life-threatening illnesses have had their most special wishes come true.



Registered as Organisation

Jan New Hope Community Services
 Jan O'Joy Care Services
 Feb FaithActs
 Feb Glory Centre Community Services Association
 Mar Credit Counselling Singapore Society
 Apr Lawn Bowls Association for the Disabled (Singapore)

Apr Caregiver Counselling Welfare Association
 Apr Muslim Kidney Action Association (MKAC Association)
 Jun Cheng Hong Welfare Service Society
 Jun MILK (Mainly I Love Kids Fund)
 Jul Loving Heart Multi-Service Centre (Jurong Central)
 Jul Filos Community Services

Aug Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises (SCORE)
 Aug Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2)
 Aug Bethel Community Services
 Aug Oikos.Community@Sengkang
 Sept Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics

Sept Action for Mental Illness
 Oct Joyful Charity
 Nov Crime Library (Singapore)
 Dec Moral Family Service Centre (Bedok North)
 Dec Moral Home for Disabled
 Dec Moral Home for Disabled Adults

Dec Moral Family Service Centre (Bukit Panjang)
 Dec Nulife Care & Counselling Services

Welcome Home

Approximately 11,000 ex-offenders are released from prisons and drug rehabilitation centres each year. Focus on rehabilitation and aftercare efforts alone will not be adequate, as most ex-offenders will have to return to their families and the community in the long run.

The community plays an important part in the creation of an inclusive social environment where ex-offenders and their families can find hope to start life afresh and become contributing members of society.

The Yellow Ribbon Project, a nation-wide campaign, was conceptualised to raise the awareness of Singaporeans towards the needs of ex-offenders and their families and how they could help to unlock the second prison. The Yellow Ribbon Project was launched by the Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-Offenders (CARE) Network in 2004.

The CARE network brings together major community and government organisations to

implement initiatives for ex-offenders and their families. The CARE network partners include the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), Singapore Prison Service, Singapore Corporation of Rehabilitative Enterprises, National Council of Social Service (NCSS), Industrial & Services Co-Operative Society Ltd, Singapore After-Care Association and Singapore Anti-Narcotics Association.



The Yellow Ribbon Project creates awareness to encourage the community to be more open to the needs of ex-offenders.

Where Everything Clicks

In 2004, a website was launched. It was not just another dot in cyberspace. Called the Disability Portal (www.disability.org.sg), it is a one-stop site providing information on disability services and resources.

The portal complies with Universal Web Accessibility guidelines to facilitate ease of web navigation by people with visual or physical disabilities. For instance, portal content is customised such that hearing impaired users are able to navigate the website by listening to the text description of the images or the links provided, which the screen reader can read out. The elderly and visually im-

paired can also use the site with its adjustable font sizes and colour contrast scheme.

A year later, the portal opened its real life office in Tampines. It's called the Disability Information and Referral Centre (DIRC) and is run by the Society of Moral Charities.

Said DIRC executive director Satyaprakash Tiwari: "Before DIRC, people with disabilities, their caregivers and families, had to contact individual voluntary welfare organisations for information about their services. Mostly they would have heard of the VWOs by word of mouth. When they did contact the VWOs, they had to make detailed enquiries as to the suitability of the service for their loved ones. Often if there was a mismatch in the expectations, leading to frustration, and caregivers had to go through the search process all over again."

With DIRC, one call and all the information about all the voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) will be available at a single place. In addition, they will also be given information on which



Today, more than 400 students attend classes at Pathlight School.

Lighting the Path

Pathlight School, the first autism-focused school in Singapore that offers a unique blend of mainstream academics and life readiness skills opened in 2004 to 41 students.

Today, more than 415 students attend classes – a sign of its tremendous success.

The education offered at Pathlight is significant because it blurs the line between mainstream and special schools. The school developed a structured integration model and strives to achieve three levels of integration in its student, namely, physical, academic and social.

Thanks to their undying commitment, special children are less stereotyped now and can choose to study in either mainstream or special schools, depending on their suitability.

of the services is suitable for people with disabilities as well as the nearest centre offering that service.

He added: "On their request, DIRC will also approach the VWOs to complete the admission formalities required. In all, this gives comfort to the client and their family that there is an agency which is concerned for them, and that will let them know about the options available to them."

DIRC was a joint project by the MCYS and NCSS. It continues to receive full funding from the MCYS.

A Flood of Relief

On 26 December 2004, the world watched in horror as a tsunami swept across the coast of various countries in the Indian Ocean and killed more than 200,000 people in 11 countries.

Singaporeans wasted no time in helping.

Scores of individuals began donation drives among friends and neighbours to collect food and clothing. Businessman Loh Sien Chi and his two children posted mailers to the residents of Greenridge Crescent asking for donations of medicine, canned food, tents and blankets. Physiotherapist Miss Thilaga turned her Balestier Road clinic into a collection centre for relief items.

Companies also chipped in, donating in cash or kind. NTUC FairPrice donated \$50,000 worth of food staples to Sri Lanka, Khong Guan Biscuit Factory donated 200 cartons of biscuits and LifeBrandz sent 75,000 bottles of mineral water.

BreadTalk used its 24 outlets as collection



The Red Cross Medical Relief mission station giving medical treatment, supplies and basic necessities to the tsunami victims.

points for the Singapore Red Cross Society that started a Tidal Waves Asia Fund. Large local companies also pitched in. The UOB Group donated \$300,000 to help relief efforts while its group chairman and chief executive Wee Cho Yaw, personally donated \$100,000 to the Red Cross.

SingTel donated \$200,000 and DBS Bank \$100,000 to the Tidal Waves Asia Fund. Its subsidiary, PT Bank DBS Indonesia, donated another \$100,000 to Indonesian relief efforts.

"Singaporeans wasted no time in helping."

One local non-government organisation that came to the fore in the aftermath of the tsunami was Mercy Relief. It took an active role in fundraising, donation drives and sending supplies to affected countries.

Between December 2004 and August 2005, Mercy Relief shipped out 1,400 tonnes of supplies to Sri Lanka, Aceh and the Maldives. The supplies included food, water, clothing, medical supplies, tents and blankets worth about \$4 million.

Soldiering On

The Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) has a culture of giving that spans 20 years. One of its most well known projects is the Army Half Marathon.

In 2004, more than 60,000 people took part in the marathon, from a six-year-old to a fit 82-year-old man, and raised more than \$1.2 million.

The half marathon, which was incorporated into the Sheares Bridge Run in 1998, is the country's largest mass-running event. Participants run

past Singapore's landmarks of the Marina Bay area – the Padang, Esplanade, and of course, the Benjamin Sheares Bridge.

The SAFRA Sheares Bridge Run & Army Half Marathon was re-branded in 2008, as the SAFRA Singapore Bay Run & Army Half Marathon. This time round, runners got to experience the run for the first time through the Marina Barrage.

But it is not just giving money that makes the SAF stand out. It is the very real engagement of the citizen soldiers with the beneficiaries that makes the real difference.

For example, during its open houses, SAF personnel take the extra effort to plan special tours for different groups of beneficiaries, who are given the rare opportunity to experience the different types of advanced technology like aircraft and warships.

In recognition of its pioneering and persevering efforts in giving back to the community, the SAF was given the 2004 President's Social Service Award for the public sector.



Children getting a taste of army life during its open house.

Tidings of Joy

Joy Link is a neighbourhood focal point for residents. It was started in 2004, with a simple aim of keeping residents of all ages gainfully engaged. Since then, its facilities have played host to many get-togethers for elderly residents who bring their grandchildren along to enjoy the afternoon.

Joy Link also arranges activities ranging from local and foreign tours, cooking and fitness demonstrations, guitar lessons, enrichment lessons for children and even courses on hair styling.

This neighbourhood magnet is the brain-child of the Jia Ying Community Services Society, the community arm of the Glad Tidings Church.

Over the past two years, they have served the needs of many residents through educational activities, financial relief, counselling services and vocational assistance.

The Safety Net

Faster, more focused funding, and care with grassroots touch. That was the aim of the ComCare Fund when it was launched in 2005, against the landscape of economic restructuring across the island.

The result – a small but growing minority of Singaporeans facing hardship, such as when the breadwinner loses his job, a family member falls ill, or when children have extra school expenses.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in launching the fund spoke of the focused goals of ComCare that he termed a safety net. “With ComCare, no needy family who is prepared to work hard towards self-reliance will be left hungry. No child will be deprived of schooling because of poverty. No poor elderly or persons with disabilities will be left alone without

community care and support,” promised Mr Lee. Which is good news for James Soh.

Mr Soh had chronic psoriasis. His skin itched and peeled. His rental flat was dark and damp, the walls covered with dirt and blood – the itch would be so bad that he would rub himself against the walls to scratch.

“With ComCare, no needy family who is prepared to work hard towards self-reliance will be left hungry. No child will be deprived of schooling because of poverty. No poor elderly or persons with disabilities will be left alone without community care and support.”

– Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

Then he met Bhan Singh.

Mr Singh is a volunteer with the Ang Mo Kio Community Care Network (CCN) in Kebun Bahru constituency. Mr Singh, who is self-employed, said: “He was like a decomposing corpse with skin flaking and blood all over. I asked myself, ‘Why is he like that?’”

Once alerted to his plight, grassroots volunteers cleaned up his home, threw out his mite-infested, bloodied bed and got him a new mattress.

Other volunteers check on him to make sure that he went for his medical check-ups regularly.

The CCN office also arranged help for him from Sunlove Abode for Intellectually Infirm.



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at the launch of the ComCare fund.



Technology can help people with disabilities overcome their physical challenges.

Level the Playing Field

Starting 2005, the National Council of Social Service has appointed the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD) as the Specialised Assistive Technology Centre (ATC) for people with physical disability.

Its centre uses special keyboards, motorised wheelchairs, speech augmentation devices and note taking tools to help them move around, communicate and use the internet. Having disabilities no longer means having to depend on others for basic things.

“We want to use technology to overcome their physical challenges, and to help level the playing field,” enthused Chia Woon Yee, ATC’s Director of Technology.

SPD has also developed technology solutions with local educational institutions. For example, three students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic worked with the centre to develop a way to control the television by tracking the movement of eyebrow muscles. The device can also work by detecting muscle movements from blinking.

SPD’s senior speech therapist, Sarah Yong, believes that these types of devices have a lot of potential to change the lives of people with disabilities. “Creations like these make patients feel less trapped by their inabilities. They open doors for them to be able to call someone through the alarm bell or to change the channels. It is a form of empowerment,” she said.

Another service from SPD is a Therapy Hub. The hub offers rehabilitation services such as physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy to voluntary welfare organisations that do not have the means or the economies of scale to provide such services on their own.

Running to Help

Spain has its famous bull runs in the streets of Pamplona, but the herd that pounded the streets of Singapore’s Central Business District comprised financial head honchos.

In the 2005 Bull Run, the \$1 million barrier was broken when \$2.3 million were raised for charities.

Dressed impeccably in shirts and ties, but wearing shorts and running shoes as well, the financial industry rallied to give charities a boost when more than 2,000 participants took part in the second running.

The inaugural charity Bull Run in 2004, organised by the Singapore Exchange (SGX), attracted more than 150 organisations and SGX-listed com-

panies in a novel 2.8km run around the Central Business District.

It broke the mould of corporate giving – oversized cheques given out in air-conditioned rooms. Looking out from their floor-to-ceiling glass window, bankers and traders could see their colleagues giving to charity and having a good time as well.

Since then, help has been extended to include the needy in the region. The 2007 Bull Run was held at the Padang, and for the first time, funds were donated to charities in the region. It was flagged off by the Second Minister for Finance Tharman Shanmugaratnam and raised a record \$3.5 million from the 2,600 runners.



Temasek Holdings executive director Ho Ching with Jackie Chan and SGX chief executive Hsieh Fu Hua at the 2005 Bull Run.

Yes and Yes

Yes, young people have boundless energy to help others. To harness that impressive vigor, the Youth Embrace Social Services (YES2) was set up in 2005. And no, the story didn’t end there.

Instead, it started to pique the youths’ interest in social services, by promoting better understanding. In YES2, the youths have opportunities to be exposed to the areas of fundraising, volunteering and research or public education.

Rather than just allocating assignments or tasks

to them, YES2 takes the less travelled road of asking students themselves to decide how they want to help.

By doing this, YES2 wants to inspire students towards greater and more innovative community involvement, and award them for contributions. The inaugural Youths Embrace Social Services! Competition received more than 20 entries.

This also broadens the education of students, bringing learning opportunity from outside of the classroom. Over the years, student projects have helped the poor, the frail and lonely elderly, people with disabilities, the terminally-ill and youths at risk.

Sailing into Social Service

Barely two weeks after succeeding Gerard Ee as National Council of Social Service (NCSS) president on 1 August 2006, Rear Admiral (Retired) Kwek Siew Jin already had a plan for actions to look into where the gaps are in the social service safety net, and whether some people are getting the help they need. Also on top of his priorities were improving the standard of service provided by voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) and ensuring that beneficiaries are well-served.

With this in mind, RADM (Ret) Kwek mooted the Centre of Specialisation concept where leading VWOs in the different areas of social service would share their best practice in service delivery, to build up a body of specialised knowledge and expertise in the sector. The sharing of specialised knowledge by these Centres of Specialisation was instrumental to elevate the overall standard of social services rendered by VWOs.

“We want to give beneficiaries better, more adequate and effective services but we also want to enable VWOs to do their work better.”

Under his sterling leadership, NCSS continued to strengthen the standards framework for social services through continuing education, as well as, training on Outcome Management. To-date, more than 2000 social service personnel have been trained to use outcome management to track the



Top of NCSS president Kwek Siew Jin's priorities was improving standard of services by VWOs.

effectiveness of their services and programmes.

RADM (Ret) Kwek added “VWOs must be able to articulate and provide evidence-based outcomes to show how their services have helped clients in a purposeful way. With informed giving, donors want assurance that their money is being put to good use. Also, when VWO staff and volunteers can see that their clients are being helped in a meaningful way, they will feel more fulfilled and motivated.”

RADM (Ret) Kwek also planned to help the nearly 400 VWOs under its umbrella cut cost by pooling administrative services.

“For smaller VWOs, it's sometimes a bit hard for them to recruit people to do administrative services like bookkeeping, accounting, maintain IT services and the like, either because they can't afford to or they just can't find people for the job,” he said.

So NCSS hopes to leverage on the size of its

membership to find organisations that can provide these services to a number of VWOs, allowing the cost to be shared out. “The VWOs can then put all their effort into providing services for their beneficiaries,” he said.

As he was also chairman of the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC), the synergy between his role in NCSS and NVPC was already evident in his drive for both organisations to identify and groom new leaders to serve on VWO boards.

“NVPC has started on this system of matching corporate level volunteers to serve as VWO board members. NCSS will complement this effort by grooming these volunteers and board directors on how to work on VWO boards,” he said.

The former Navy chief sailed into his new job armed not only with clear targets, but also a generous dose of optimism.

Taking Flight Over 40

For biological and emotional reasons, some women tend to get a raw deal when it comes to ageing. It leaves them high and dry. It need not be so, says the Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully, or WINGS.

It was launched on 20 June 2006 by the Singapore Council of Women's Organisations and Tsao Foundation for women over 40.

WINGS wants to help these women achieve more in health, wealth and happiness. Its priority

is to help them take responsibility for their physical health, teach them to plan for their financial health and guide them to find and hold on to their psychological health.

It is a one-stop education, referral, counselling and enrichment centre for the mature women in Singapore.

In two years, it has taken flight. By end 2007, it had more than 3,000 members and was registered as a charity with IPC status.



Massage therapist Naty Chua shows women how to massage each other at the Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully (WINGS).

Morning Has Broken

Since July 2006, two prisons in Singapore have had quite a different set of visitors. Volunteers from the Morning Star Community Services have started two Family Resource Centres (FRCs) to help inmates and their families. Up to February 2008, more than 1,000 families have benefited from its services.

35-year-old Siti, a mother of eight, is one such beneficiary. “Without the FRC at Khalsa Crescent Prison, I will not be able to get help so quickly. I feel so much more relieved with the financial aid and having a social worker to talk to about my problems.”

To help them get back on their feet after release from prison, the FRCs also conduct Family Focused Programmes for them. Many inmates who have attended say they have “never in their lives” been able to share and talk with their families in

such an intimate way. This small, practical step has been a vital part on the road to recovery.

The prison service may be relatively new for Morning Star but as a Catholic community organisation formed in 1999 to enrich and strengthen family relationships, it runs a full range of services for children, youths, parents, family, elderly and community.

These services are delivered by a group of 30 passionate volunteers, whose mission is to identify families in need and to link them to community resources, including Community Development Councils for financial and employment assistance, family service centres and schools for counselling and financial assistance. They also make referrals to the HDB, town councils, Singapore Power for refinancing of housing loans and instalment plans.

From Bengali to Tagalog

A gracious society takes care of its citizens – and transient workers too. So on International Migrants' Day in 2006, the Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) launched a helpline for migrant workers.

The TWC2 Helpline handled about 383 calls in its first year. Beginning 2008, it was getting about 15 calls a day. A growing pool of volunteers handles these calls in languages from Bengali and Burmese to Tagalog and Tamil.

Good working relationships with Singaporean institutions and embassies of sender countries played a part in ensuring that the helpline had a high rate of success.



Registered as Organisation

- Mar TOUCH Family Services
- Apr Bishan Home for the Intellectually Disabled
- May Council for Third Age
- Jul *scape
- Nov Tech Ghee Youth Centre
- Dec Society for WINGS

Enabling Those with Disabilities

The maturity of a society is reflected in the way it treats and supports those who are disadvantaged," said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

And with those words echoing in the background, the Steering Committee for the Five-Year Enabling Masterplan 2007-2011 for the Disability Sector submitted its report to the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports on 12 February 2007.

The committee, chaired by Prof Lee Eng Hin, president of the Rainbow Centre, stressed its vision was for Singapore to be an inclusive society where persons with disabilities were viewed as equal and contributing members of society.

- And that meant:
1. Children with special needs would receive effective intervention services and education to maximise their potentials;
 2. Persons with disabilities would have equal employment opportunities and be self-reliant through work;

3. Families would be empowered to care for their dependants; and
4. Parents would be assured that the well being of their children were taken care of after they pass on.

In all, the committee submitted 31 recommendations. The four key recommendations were:

1. Set up a national office of disability to strengthen inter-ministry approach to disability issues.
2. Achieve better outcomes for children with integrated early intervention and education system and develop a curriculum framework for academic and life skills.
3. Allow persons with disabilities to be gainfully employed based on industry needs.
4. Empower families to look after their members with disabilities through caregiver training and extend the foreign domestic worker levy concession to persons with disabilities needing care giving assistance.

The full report can be found at www.mcys.gov.sg/enablingmasterplan.



Persons with disabilities should be viewed as equal and contributing members of society.

Eight Who Made a Difference

Eight pioneers were honoured at the first Social Workers' Day held in Singapore on 20 January 2007 to celebrate 58 years of the profession.

The six women and two men, had left a rich legacy through their work and spirit.

Janet Yee

Mrs Yee began work in 1956 as an assistant youth officer in Social Welfare Department and was largely responsible for the setting up of Girls' Clubs and Boys' Club for juvenile delinquents. She still serves on the Board of Visitors for Destitute Homes and on the Singapore General Hospital Medifund committee.

Thung Syn Neo

Mrs Thung graduated in 1955, became a social worker, lecturer, trainer and researcher. Her biggest achievement is starting the first Family Service Centre (FSC) in the 1970s bringing social work into the heart of the community. Today the FSC is a major part of the social service landscape.

Daisy Vaithilingam

Ms Vaithilingam hails from the first batch of graduates from the social work degree course in National University of Singapore (NUS) in 1950. She started her career – and retired – as a medical social worker, with a teaching stint in the NUS in between. She was involved in setting up the Singapore Association of Social Workers.

Chen Swee Soo

Mrs Chen was a medical social worker from 1952 to 1979 in Tan Tock Seng Hospital, Singapore General Hospital, KK Hospital and Trafalgar Home. She also initiated the setting up of Tampines Home for children with severe disabilities.

Dr Sushilan Vasoo

Dr Vasoo is an associate professorial fellow in the Department of Social Work at NUS. He was also the first social worker cum politician and was recently appointed a Justice of the Peace.

Joyce Fung Yong Siang

Mrs Fung is fondly known as Singapore's first local social worker and has spent close to six decades

helping the ill and disadvantaged including 30 years at Singapore General Hospital, Toa Payoh Hospital and Trafalgar Home. She remains the advisor to the Breadline Group.

K V Veloo

Mr Veloo started in 1964 in Probation and After-care and stayed for more than 35 years becoming the first social worker to hold the post of Chief Probation & Aftercare Officer. Key achievements include the setting up of the Community Probation Service and Prison Welfare Service.

Ann Wee

Mrs Wee worked in social welfare before teaching at the university in 1952, becoming head of the Social Work Department from 1968 to 1986. She was conferred the Public Service Star in 1972 and Public Service Star (Bar) in 2004. She has been a member of the Panel of Advisors to the Juvenile court for over 30 years.

It Pays

Social workers at 70 voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs) were given a pay rise in 2007 after the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS) decided to increase its funding to VWOs by \$11 million.

According to the Singapore Association of Social Workers (SASW), the basic entry pay for a social worker in 2007 was between \$1,800 and \$2,200.

Centre director at Clementi Students Care Service Wong Cher Meng said: "At a certain point, people want to start a family and pay becomes an issue. So adjusting salaries will be very helpful in attracting and retaining people."

According to the ministry, 10 per cent of social workers left in 2007 compared to two years before when the attrition rate was 17 per cent.

Apart from the pay, MCYS Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan announced two new initiatives – a Professional and Leadership Development Scheme and a Sabbatical Leave Scheme. MCYS will fund each successful applicant up to \$45,000 for a co-week paid leave and professional advancement.

The initiatives are part of a \$1 million professionalism package for the sector.



Sandra Berrick, winner of the 2007 President's Social Service Award.

Mother Figure

The individual winner of the 2007 President's Social Service Award was Sandra Berrick, an Australian expatriate who has dedicated 26 years to helping the needy. In 1994, she lost her youngest son, Hamilton, to cancer at the age of seven and has since made a career of voluntarism.

Mrs Berrick has channeled her time, energy, and resources to serve the needs of the community through various organisations such as Gracehaven Salvation Army Children's Home, Dover Park Hospice and Spastic Children's Association.

She has been invited by many VWOs to kick-

start their programmes or improve existing ones. Some of these have gone on to become government-funded programmes, like Project Challenge and First Challenge for the TEACH approach to autism education; AWWA SMILES – the first before-and-after school care programme for children with disabilities and EIPIC – Early Intervention Programmes for Infants and Children. She also advocated for compulsory education and for Edusave to be made applicable to children with special needs.



Registered as Organisation

- Feb Casa Raudha Women Home
- May SAGE Counselling Centre
- Jun Special Needs Trust Company
- Jun MCYC Community Services Society

Who is At Risk?

This government has set up an Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) to review the help for dysfunctional families with children. It is chaired by the MCYS Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan and supported by several government agencies, social work agencies, self-help groups and other people sector representatives who work with dysfunctional families.

Explaining its rationale, the ministry said: "Every child is important, and children from dysfunctional homes are particularly vulnerable to falling behind in their development. Left without help, they may perpetuate an inter-generational cycle of dysfunctionality."

The IMC is expected to come up with recommendations to help these families so that they can overcome the challenges they face, and give their children have a better chance to do well.

It will focus on four key areas.

How to better identify at-risk or dysfunctional families. The committee will look at improving the co-ordination between the various touchpoints (like schools and family service centres) in the community that these families may come into contact with.

How to give at-risk families early support to ensure the children have a chance to do better. The committee will review all the current available initiatives like the Healthy Start Programme that provides intensive casework and the Home Ownership Plus Education Scheme which incentivises needy families to keep their family small.

How to strengthen specialised community agencies to address specific issues faced by these families, such as substance addiction, family violence, gambling and minor marriages.

And lastly, how to raise the capability of the social service sector so that it can effectively deliver the programmes that will help dysfunctional families.

The IMC will consider taking a phased approach to implementing any initiatives, as it has to take into account the existing capabilities of the sector.

The recommendations are expected in 2009.



Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Manpower Hawazi Daipi sticking up the ComCare hotline number with Madam Tomirah Sebon.

1800-222-0000

This Number Could Help You

ComCare Call is a 24/7 hotline is open to anyone in a fix. The three parties behind it, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), People's Association and National Council of Social Service (NCSS) say it will help individuals and families in need.

From helping them with utilities, to giving waivers for kindergarten fees, this straightforward service using one number will simplify the help process.

It is linked to social agencies like the Community Development Councils and Family Service Centres. The operator first hears out the request, and then directs the caller to the relevant agency.

But simplicity will not come cheap – about \$500,000 to set it up. But to the man in need, who is at a loss about where to start looking for help, this connection is priceless. MCYS Minister Dr Vivian Balakrishnan said at its launch: "Really, there are no wrong doors, there are no wrong numbers. Just

call this number and we'll make sure help will get to you."

The hotline can handle up to 6,000 calls a month, with 18 operators fluent in the four official languages plus dialects.

Brochures have been distributed and publicity posters placed at housing estates, hospitals, and polyclinics to make sure that the number becomes a familiar one.

"From helping them with utilities, to giving waivers for kindergarten fees, this straightforward service using one number will simplify the help process."

Specialisation and Sabbaticals

Seven VWOs were appointed by NCSS on 10 July 2008 as Centres of Specialisation. These seven VWOs are – the Alzheimer's Disease Association, Presbyterian Community Services, Students Care Service, Tsao Foundation, Centre for Promoting Alternatives to Violence, Singapore Children's Society and HCA Hospice Care. These centres will emphasise research with the aim of building up a body of knowledge and expertise in

their particular sectors. Projects include the development of good practice or process guides on conducting needs assessment, programme planning and evaluation, and development of training guides for volunteers.

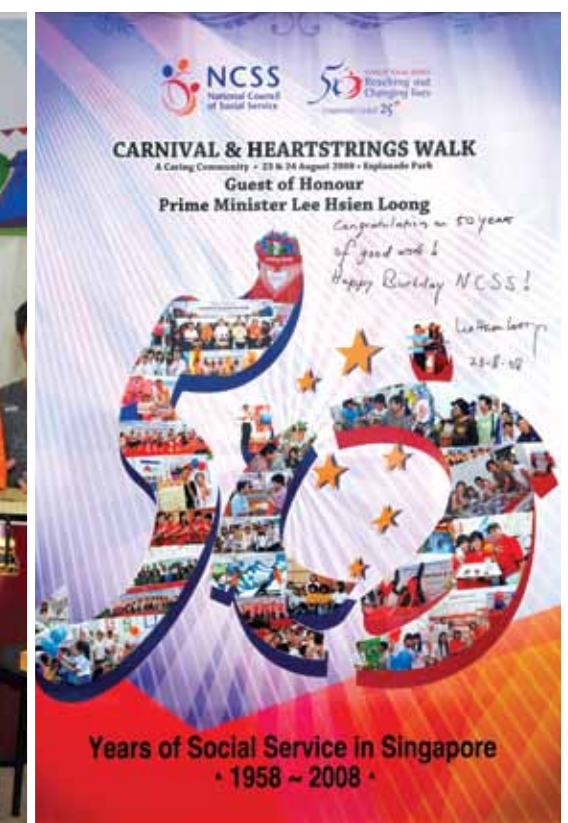
The year also saw NCSS and MCYS rolling out of the Sabbatical Leave and Professional and Leadership Development Schemes for the first batch of social workers. These schemes are meant

to enhance the standard and development of social workers. Ten senior social workers were selected for sabbatical leave and seven social workers for leadership development in the first batch.

On sabbatical leave, the social workers will be able to engage in activities such as attending part-time or full-time courses, study trips, exchange programmes for professional and personal advancement during their leave. The development scheme is aimed at grooming and developing promising social workers into leaders of the sector by providing professional and leadership training for them.



Prime Minister Lee leads 100 staff and volunteers from various VWOs in a drumming session.



Poster with a congratulatory message from Prime Minister Lee.

Magic, Song and Dance

A two-day carnival was held at the Esplanade Park in August 2008 to celebrate the 50th anniversary of structured social service in Singapore.

About 20,000 people turned up on 23 and 24 August for the carnival. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong also led a drumming session together with 100 voluntary welfare organisations (VWOs).

NCSS president, Rear Admiral (Retired) Kwek Siew Jin said: "Today's carnival celebrates the achievements of our pioneers, volunteers, VWOs, and many others who have contributed in this grand

effort to create a more caring community."

There was a festive atmosphere thanks to the magic shows, game stalls, carnival rides and the 100 game, food and exhibition stalls manned by the different VWOs.

There were also lots of performances. The Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore received huge applause for its Taiko drumming and line dancing numbers. MediaCorp artistes Daren Tan, Tan Di Ya and Nat Ho also made an appearance while Jack and Rai from popular local band EIC entertained the audience with songs

from their debut album In Stores Now.

Over 1,000 volunteers from the Boys' Brigade, National University of Singapore, Ngee Ann Polytechnic and National Institute of Education helped out at the carnival.

While NCSS celebrated its 50th anniversary, Community Chest was celebrating its 25th anniversary at the Esplanade Park. The 25th Anniversary Heartstrings Walk on 23 August raised \$750,000 for 58 Community Chest supported charities. And the 2.5km walk was flagged off by Mr Lee with some 5,000 people taking part, all decked in costumes.

Everything Counts

Many people and organisations contributed generously to the successful publication of this book. Our grateful thanks to them all. And our apologies to those whom we may have inadvertently left out.

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www.ncss.org.sg

The Book Team:

Dr Tan Bee Wan *Chief Executive Officer, Tsao Foundation*
Richard Tan *Director, Communications and International Relations Division,
Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports*
Stanley Tan *Chairman, National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre*
Tina Hung *Deputy Chief Executive Officer, National Council of Social Service*
Goh Siew Hian *Assistant Director, Corporate Communications Division,
National Council of Social Service*

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