

TAKING HEART

PSA Corp, FairPrice Foundation among winners of AIC's Friends of Community Care Awards

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AS SINGAPORE heads towards becoming a super-aged society by 2026, the number of seniors living alone is expected to increase also—from 76,000 in 2023 to 122,000 in 2030, said Minister for Health Ong Ye Kung on Wednesday (May 28).

The number of seniors with chronic illnesses could grow from 375,000 to 500,000 in just five years, he added.

Ong said: "The major change is to become a lot more proactive, helping those who are healthy to stay healthy, and those with chronic diseases to manage them optimally. This is what we mean when we say the centre of gravity of care will shift from hospitals to communities."

This is where corporates are stepping up their efforts in the community, to make greater social impact in eldercare.

He was speaking as the guest of honour at the Agency for Integrated Care's (AIC) Community Care Work Plan Seminar and presented the Friends of Community Care (FOCC) Awards, where 13 recipients were recognised.

Port operator PSA Corp bagged one of the awards in the corporate (large enterprise) category, due to its PSA Health@Home (H@H) programme, which focuses on supporting senior citizens. Its current partners include St Luke's ElderCare, HCA Hospice and Lions Befrienders.

Growing number of volunteers

The H@H programme started with just under 100 volunteers, but has since grown to more than 800 volunteers – including employees who have retired.

Ong Chiew Suan, head of corporate communications and commercial for South-east Asia at PSA Corp, said: "Since the programme began 10 years ago, PSA has organised over 700 related activities for our volunteers, including volunteering sessions, training workshops and talks. Some of the volunteering activities involve centre-based engagements such as craftwork, festive celebrations and outings."

Besides grocery shopping at supermarkets, volunteers have taken beneficiaries to Gardens by the Bay, the zoo and the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum. "The beneficiaries generally look forward to outings as these give them a chance to go out and enjoy experiences beyond their regular

activities at the centre," she added.

In addition to volunteering, PSA helps to raise funds for community care organisations. For example, H@H raised close to \$570,000 for Lions Befrienders' Our Kampung app, which helps seniors stay digitally connected.

Ong added: "With Singapore's rapidly ageing population and ongoing manpower challenges, PSA believes that encouraging active volunteerism among our staff is a meaningful way to support capacity-building in Singapore's healthcare sector."

Health and nutritional needs

Another recipient was FairPrice Foundation, which won under the non-profit organisation category. As FairPrice Group's philanthropic arm, it focuses on three strategic areas: food and nutrition for lower-income households, community engagement, and worker welfare.

Jean Khong, general manager of FairPrice Foundation, said: "Our purpose as FairPrice Group is to keep daily essentials within reach for all of Singapore."

The foundation runs several programmes, such as the Cheers Breakfast Club which provides breakfast bundles to students undertaking their Primary School Leaving Examination, as well as A Full Plate, Singapore's largest food donation drive. "Last year, we raised more than \$51.6 million (for A Full Plate), of which the foundation funded \$51 million, and we were so encouraged that the community came together to donate \$5600,000," Khong noted.

One of its most recent programmes is Protein Pledge. The FairPrice Foundation has committed \$51 million over the next five years to provide various proteins to vulnerable communities. It also supports NTUC Health's programmes to benefit seniors, such as by donating to the Health for Life Fund, which aims to improve mental and physical well-being.

Since 2019, the FairPrice Foundation has supported SPD's Transition to Employment programme. This has equipped more than 300 persons with disabilities with the skills and confidence to join the workforce.

Khong said the foundation is currently working on programmes to roll out to the elderly, to help them maintain their health.

"By 2026, we're going to be a hyper-aged society. One in four is going to be above the age of 65, and they're going to have more nutritional needs. What FairPrice can do

is make sure that they have access to healthy choices on the shelves."

Launched in 2020, the FOCC Awards recognise organisations that have made significant contributions in the community care sector.

Gerard Ee, chairman of AIC, said: "With Singapore's rapidly ageing population, the community care sector will only become more integral to our healthcare system, empowering seniors to live well and stay healthy throughout their lives."

AIC aims to deepen partnerships within the broader healthcare system to address this.



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