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President's Challenge to champion national senior volunteerism movement



SINGAPORE – The President's Challenge will champion a national senior volunteerism movement to encourage more seniors to contribute their talents and experience to community development, said Singapore President Tony Tan Keng Yam at the opening ceremony of the National Senior Volunteer Month 2015 at HDB Hub.

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SINGAPORE – The President's Challenge will champion a national senior volunteerism movement to encourage more seniors to contribute their talents and experience to community development, said Singapore President Tony Tan Keng Yam at the opening ceremony of the National Senior Volunteer Month 2015 at HDB Hub.

This will be done through a Silver Volunteer Fund, which will be established to support the training of seniors as volunteers and build capabilities in various community

organisations to recruit, develop and support seniors as volunteers.

This is the first initiative under the Action Plan For Successful Ageing unveiled by Minister Gan Kim Yong, Minister-in-Charge of Ageing and Chairman of the Ministerial Committee on Ageing on last month.

The Silver Volunteer Fund aims to provide funding support to volunteer host organisations to recruit, develop and recognise their senior volunteers.

It will support programmes that offer volunteer opportunities to seniors, volunteer training, establishment of volunteer management systems, as well as provide recognition for volunteers.

It can also serve as a platform for volunteer host organisations to come forward and offer seniors a wide range of volunteer opportunities in areas such as aged care, health and wellness, arts and heritage, horticulture, learning and community development.

The Tote Board has pledged close to S\$10 million to the Silver Volunteer Fund over the next five years and the Government has matched this amount.

The President's Challenge will aim to raise S\$10 million via donations to the Silver Volunteer Fund, which will be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Government, capped at a total of S\$20 million from the Government. (This will bring the Fund to a targeted size of S\$40 million.)

To encourage more seniors to come forward as volunteers, the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre will introduce a new senior volunteerism category in the annual President's Volunteerism and Philanthropy Awards for deserving senior volunteers.

President Tan said: "Many seniors say that with their children grown up, they now have time to contribute more to society as volunteers – both to pursue meaning in life as well as to stay in touch with society. Some think that by volunteering, they are acting as role models to show the young that one can contribute back to society at any age."

He added: "This can-do spirit is what brought us to SG50, and we should empower older Singaporeans to continue to play a part in building Singapore. Through senior volunteerism, we can harness the immense creativity, energy and talents in our older Singaporeans ... (they) can be a positive new social force in our nation building beyond SG50, helping to drive our nation forward in the years to come."

Various organisations have applauded this move. Ms Anthea Ong, the president for Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully (WINGS), a volunteer host organisation that helps women to embrace ageing with confidence, said: "Our action-learning programmes are all led by senior volunteers who embody our fundamental belief that volunteerism is a key tenet to active and happy ageing."

She added: "We want to do more to engage our community of over 6,000 WINGS women to volunteer for WINGS and our mission partners. With the Silver Volunteer Fund, we can now build more capacity and opportunities in meaningful volunteerism."

Mr Edmund Song, executive director of RSVP Singapore, who organised the National Senior Volunteer Month this year, said: "The setting up of this fund will give a much needed boost to the growth of senior volunteerism in Singapore."

"It is a strong signal by the Government to encourage our seniors to keep active and healthy through meaningful volunteer activities, which will also at the same time create a giving and caring Singapore society."

The President's Challenge Silver Volunteer Fund will be administered by the Council for Third Age (C3A). More details on the fund application process and eligibility criteria for volunteer host organisations will be released next year.

The national senior volunteerism movement was one of the initiatives included in the whole-of-nation Action Plan. The aim of starting the movement is to encourage seniors to age actively through volunteerism, and the target is to reach out to an additional 50,000 seniors to participate in volunteer activities by 2030.

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