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S\$40 million targeted to aid growth of senior volunteerism movement



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SINGAPORE — A Silver Volunteer Fund will be established to champion a national senior volunteerism movement, with the Tote Board pledging S\$10 million for the next five years.

The fund will support the training of seniors as volunteers and build capabilities in various community organisations to recruit, develop and support seniors as volunteers.

The S\$10 million has been matched by the Government, and the President's

Challenge will throw its weight behind the movement to raise another S\$10 million in donations. This will also be matched dollar-for-dollar by the Government, which would bring the fund to a targeted size of S\$40 million.

The President's Challenge's support was announced by President Tony Tan at the opening ceremony of the National Senior Volunteer Month 2015 today (Sept 4).

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 last month.

The fund will also 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 organisations to offer seniors volunteer opportunities in areas such as aged care, health and wellness, arts and heritage, horticulture, learning and community development.

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.

In his speech at the ceremony today, Dr Tan said: "Many in our pioneer generation will continue to play an important part in nation building. Though Singapore is faced with a rapidly ageing population, our seniors in the next one to two decades will be healthier, more active and more talented. We are already seeing the emergence of a generation of "modern active agers" in Singapore — older Singaporeans who are more educated, more confident and with so much more to offer."

He added: "Through senior volunteerism, we can harness the immense creativity, energy and talents in our older Singaporeans. Through senior volunteerism, older Singaporeans can be a positive new social force in our nation building beyond SG50, helping to drive our nation forward in the years to come."

In a media release, 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: "We want to do more to engage our community of more than 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 Retired and Senior Volunteer Programme (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. 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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