

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**USHERING A NEW ERA OF SENIOR VOLUNTEERISM**

**4 September 2015** – The National Senior Volunteer Month (NSVM) was officially launched earlier today and President Tony Tan Keng Yam presided over the opening ceremony at Toa Payoh HDB Mall. Also present were senior government officials from various ministries and agencies, including the CEO of the National Council of Social Service, Mr Sim Gim Guan and the CEO of the National Volunteer & Philanthropy Centre, Ms Melissa Kwee.

The morning ceremony kicked off with light entertainment by RSVP senior volunteers, a Cantonese opera duet and freestyle football. RSVP Singapore President Mr Koh Juay Meng then gave the welcome address followed by a speech by our Guest of Honour, President Tony Tan Keng Yam.

Guests witnessed a special tribute to senior volunteers in the form of a video showcasing the many individuals, VWOs, governmental and corporate partners who generously gave time, talent and other support to a wide range of NSVM volunteer projects, activities and events.

A special highlight of the ceremony was the live Skype session between President Tony Tan and specially selected clients of RSVP. All who are gathered watched, via Skype, two groups of RSVP volunteers in real time action. Senior volunteers were seen engaging clients from the Down Syndrome Association with IT games. They also observed our members teaching delicate handicraft making to senior residents from Pioneer Zone 9 RC. It was an encouraging exposition of seniors sharing their time not only with fellow seniors but with youth as well.

The afternoon continued to be action-packed with stage performances characterised by its variety and colour. Visitors and passers-by were treated to electrifying Spanish & Eurasian dances, enchanting Peranakan songs, a hilarious skit and a healthy cooking demonstration by celebrity Chef Eric Teo. The audience was kept enraptured.

The exhibition area was also a buzz of non-stop activities. The full-day event was visited by a huge crowd estimated to be more than 2000 people; amongst them were many seniors who signed pledge cards indicating their wish to learn more about volunteering.

Opportunities and places to volunteer were offered not just by RSVP but also RSVP's 16 co-exhibitors comprising VWOs and government agencies. They each showcased their programmes, activities and mission. All exhibitors shared one common aim - to engage more seniors to volunteer in their respective organizations.

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RSVP's NSVM campaign started in earnest in January and will continue till the end of the year. In so doing, it is meant to signify the contribution seniors can offer as selfless volunteers in this SG50 year. Throughout these 12 months, a huge array of brief and practical volunteering activities is offered to seniors who otherwise may not have had a chance to try their hand in community service as volunteers. As of 4 September, 50 activities have been completed, activating a total of 4,075 volunteers, out of which 64 per cent are seniors. The campaign and its activities such as the memorable Project "Baking a Difference" and the computer refurbishment project for Jamiyah Home have led to increasing awareness of senior volunteerism, resulting in an encouraging increase in volunteer recruitment with some 1,337 new seniors joining volunteer activities.

All is not over yet. Seniors who are interested to join as a volunteer can sign up to befriend elderly patients at Ren Ci Nursing Home or volunteer at the annual Singapore Health and Biomedical Congress, amongst other upcoming activities.

### **Seniors: a vital resource of Singapore**

In his official address at the event, President Tony Tan announced the creation of a new Silver Volunteer Fund. The Silver Volunteer Fund, which is expected to provide funding support to partner organisations to build capabilities to create sustainable volunteering opportunities, as well as to provide training and appreciation for committed senior volunteers, is highly anticipated to reframe and redefine the local volunteer scene.

During his opening address, RSVP Singapore President Koh Juay Meng said that, "Fulfillment in volunteering comes not in giving just money or even time - up close and personal involvement - getting your hands and feet wet - with sweat - that to me is a Real Volunteer". He also added that to promote senior volunteerism is to celebrate longevity.

### **Media Contact**

Mr Edmund Song  
Executive Director  
Mobile: 9226 2005  
Email: [edmundsong@rsvp.org.sg](mailto:edmundsong@rsvp.org.sg)

Ms Sabrina Chew  
Assistant Manager, Corporate & Marketing Communications  
Mobile: 9150 7480  
Email: [sabrinachew@rsvp.org.sg](mailto:sabrinachew@rsvp.org.sg)

### **About RSVP Singapore**

RSVP Singapore - The Organisation of Senior Volunteers is a non-profit organisation launched by the then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong in October 1998 and approved as an Institution of Public Character in 1999. Its mission is to provide opportunities for seniors to serve the community with their talent and experience through purpose driven volunteerism. Its major programmes are Cyberguide, Mentally Disadvantaged Outreach, Mentoring, Enriching Lives of Seniors, Silver IT Care, Senior Guiding, MyBuddy, Changi Service Ambassadors and Hosting.

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