

[For Immediate Release]

Neighbours For Active Living Programme by Changi General Hospital and South East Community Development Council celebrates 10 years of care in the community

- *Neighbours has touched the lives of more than 13,000 residents, through over 100,000 care calls and home visits, in partnership with more than 70 community partners and 900 volunteers trained*

Singapore, 11 March 2023 – Pioneered by Changi General Hospital (CGH) and South East Community Development Council (CDC), the Neighbours for Active Living Programme (Neighbours in short) celebrates 10 years of delivering trusted care to more than 13,000 seniors, in collaboration with over 70 community partners and Friend-A-Senior @ South East volunteers. In commemoration of the decade of care, the Neighbours Volunteers' Appreciation Day (VAD) was hosted by Mr Mohd Fahmi Aliman, Mayor of South East District and graced by distinguished guest, Mr Heng Swee Keat, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic Policies at Crowne Plaza @ Changi Airport today.

A Neighbours commemorative book on 10 years of care in the community was also presented to more than 200 volunteers and partners at the VAD. The commemorative book captures milestones, special achievements and awards and heart-warming stories of the volunteers and seniors in the Neighbours journey.



Mr Heng Swee Keat, Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Economic Policies, Mr Mohd Fahmi Aliman, Mayor of South East District, Prof Ng Wai Hoe, CEO, Changi General Hospital and Adj Prof Lee Chien Earn, Deputy Group CEO (Regional Health System), SingHealth, celebrate 10 years of care in the community with the volunteers at the Neighbours Volunteers' Appreciation Day.

An innovative integrated health and social care model

As an early champion of the population health approach with a strong foundation in healthcare delivery in the community, CGH recognises the importance of preventive health and has been steadfastly providing holistic, person-centred care for residents in the community.

Piloted in Bedok and Siglap in 2013 and subsequently expanded to cover the Eastern region of Singapore, Neighbours was co-created by CGH and South East CDC to support vulnerable seniors with complex health-social needs, ensuring that they continue receiving good care after their discharge from the hospital. The proactive and preventive care approach ensures that the patients' care needs are met after their discharge from hospital, and aims to reduce unnecessary readmissions to hospitals and visits to the emergency departments.

Underpinning the Neighbours' care approach is the philosophy of 远亲不如近邻, which translates to "a neighbour living nearby is better than a distant relative". The care support for seniors is provided by two teams. Firstly, under the Neighbours Friend-A-Senior @ South East programme, volunteers are matched with the seniors from the South East District. Friend-A-Senior @ South East befrienders play a pivotal role in providing companionship to the seniors, while assisting to monitor their health and well-being.

More than 900 volunteers have been trained in befriending and communication skills as they befriend seniors, provide social support and assist with simple but important tasks, such as reminding the beneficiaries to take their medications and attend medical appointments. The volunteers live in the same neighbourhoods as the beneficiaries that they support, promoting the forging of long-term relationships that enrich the lives of both the beneficiaries and the volunteers. More than 26,000 volunteer hours have been put in so far. (*Refer to Annex*)

Secondly, the Neighbours Community Care Team, comprising over 50 healthcare professionals with nursing and social work expertise, lead care in the community and develop new care approaches such as social prescribing. They support these patients in the community and help to reduce chances of readmissions to the hospital. Home visits are conducted on a daily basis to assess residents' conditions, formulate care plans and coordinate with community partners to address their care needs and social determinants of health. They also provide interventions in a timely manner, when alerted by Friend-A-Senior befrienders to any health issues faced by the seniors. Since 2013, they have supported over 13,000 residents through more than 100,000 care calls and home visits.

Neighbours has also forged strong partnerships with more than 70 national agencies, social purpose entities, religious groups and grassroots organisations, enabling the development of an extensive eco-system of care support for vulnerable seniors. In addition, it facilitated the development and delivery of community nursing services in eastern Singapore in 2018. Together, Neighbours and community nurses will support population health as part of HealthierSG.

Over the past decade, Neighbours has received public recognition and various national awards:

- PS21 ExCEL Awards Most Innovative Project (Merit) 2015
- PS21 ExCEL Awards Best Practice Award (Inter Agency Collaboration) 2016
- Municipal Services Office Municipal Services Award 2017
- People's Association Community Spirit Award 2015, 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020 (*awarded to CGH*)

As CGH celebrates 88 years of trusted care for our patients and community in 2023, the hospital also commemorates ten years of care, commitment and camaraderie of the Neighbours Community Care Team, community partners and volunteers in partnership with South East CDC, to bring about better health outcomes for the community.

Adj A/Prof Eugene Shum, Chief Community Development Officer, CGH, said, “We are grateful for the very strong support from South East CDC and our community partners over the last 10 years. Together, we have developed and scaled an innovative health and social care programme that has benefited over 13,000 residents.”

Mr Mohd Fahmi Aliman, Mayor of South East District, said, “South East CDC and CGH have always enjoyed a special relationship. The Neighbours for Active Living is a very meaningful and impactful collaboration that started since 2013. Volunteers from all walks of lives partner closely with the Neighbours Community Care staff to support seniors in the community. I am very happy to hear volunteers share about their personal experiences. The seniors look forward to having volunteer visits and these volunteers often become an important part of the seniors’ lives. South East CDC looks forward to many more years of partnering with CGH. I encourage more volunteers to join us in this enriching and meaningful journey.”

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About Changi General Hospital

Changi General Hospital (CGH) is an academic medical institution caring for more than 1 million people in Singapore. A tertiary referral centre with over 1,000 beds, CGH is committed to medical research and education, clinical innovation and care for patients through a comprehensive range of medical specialties and services. Helmed by a multi-disciplinary, dedicated team of healthcare professionals, CGH consistently delivers positive health outcomes for patients. Changi General Hospital has consistently ranked among the World’s Best Smart Hospitals 2023 & 2021; World’s Best Specialized Hospitals 2023 & 2022; and World’s Best Hospitals (Singapore) 2019 - 2023; by Newsweek and data firm Statista.

For more information, visit www.cgh.com.sg

About South East Community Development Council

South East CDC was set up on 24 November 2001. It oversees the Marine Parade Group Representative Constituency (GRC), East Coast GRC, MacPherson SMC and Mountbatten SMC. It serves a population of about 550,000 residents. At the helm of South East CDC is Mayor Fahmi, who steers efforts in achieving the three strategic thrusts that guide the work of the CDCs. Termed the “ABCs of Community Bonding” — Assisting the Needy, Bonding the People and Connecting the Community — South East CDC initiates and manages programmes in collaboration with both community and corporate partners along these three strategic thrusts, so as to nurture a vibrant and self-reliant community.

More information on South East CDC at www.cdc.org.sg/southeast or be our Facebook fan at www.facebook.com/secdc

Annex: Strengthening community ties through Neighbours

South East District residents, Mr Danny Goh, 86 years old, and Mrs Lois Goh, 76 years old, joined the Friend-A-Senior @ South East programme in 2018 to help others in the community, and underwent training on befriending seniors. They were eventually matched with Mdm Annie Tan, who is of the same age as Mrs Goh. Mdm Tan who has chronic conditions such as hypertension and high cholesterol and lives alone, had expressed to the Neighbours Community Care Team then that she found living alone sometimes difficult to endure.

It was an exciting time for Mdm Tan when the volunteer befrienders first visited her house in 2019. Soon after, they discovered a common interest — a love for singing. Mr and Mrs Goh generously invited Mdm Tan to join the vocal lessons conducted by their daughter, a singing coach. The companionship brought much joy and laughter, while the vocal lessons boosted Mdm Tan's confidence, and increased opportunities for engagement. During the pandemic, they continued with the vocal lessons online. Mdm Tan felt more energised when she participated in the singing sessions with Mr and Mrs Goh along with their family members and friends, and the cherished interactions uplifted her mood tremendously. What's more, Mdm Tan's singing improved significantly and she is now able to belt out songs on her own, hitting even high notes, with self-assurance.

Their friendship blossomed over the years as they connected regularly and met up during festive occasions. Mr and Mrs Goh also found to their surprise that Mdm Tan is in fact an avid hand crafter, and took the time to visit the exhibition at a community centre where Mdm Tan's works were showcased.

They often checked on Mdm Tan's mood and whether she was coping well at home, keeping a close eye on Mdm Tan's condition and sending out alerts to the Neighbours Community Care Team when Mdm Tan is not feeling well. In August last year, Mrs Goh heard from Mdm Tan about her painful gum issue, and promptly alerted the Neighbours team to follow up with a home visit to render the necessary assistance. To empower Mdm Tan to maintain her health, the Neighbours Community Care Team also coached her on how to recognise her symptoms and when to seek medical help.

The senior couple also actively encouraged Mdm Annie and constantly reminded her on the importance of self-care. Mdm Tan shared, "Danny and Lois are very caring and gave me security and confidence. When I feel unwell, I can go to them and I feel better knowing that someone is there for me. I have also learnt to love myself better and look at life positively, which also helps in improving my health."

"We work hand in hand with the Neighbours Community Care Team and are grateful that our efforts are well appreciated, and by sharing our story, we hope to encourage more volunteers to make a difference," added Mrs Goh.

With the caring support by Mr and Mrs Goh and the strong teamwork with the Neighbours Community Care Team, Mdm Tan's overall health has improved significantly since 2018. The synergies achieved through the Neighbours programme has helped to address social determinants of health, thereby contributing to better health outcomes.



Changi
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Mr Danny Goh and Mrs Lois Goh befriended Mdm Annie Tan (middle) under the Neighbours Friend-A-Senior @ South East programme.