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19 March 2016

Launching more Dementia-Friendly Communities in Singapore

A ground-up movement to create dementia friendly communities (DFC) to support persons with dementia is quickly gaining momentum, with the launch of yet another DFC by Senior Minister of State for Health Dr Amy Khor at Hong Kah North today at the SGfuture focus group discussion on “Building Senior Friendly Communities”.

2. At the launch, the ‘Knowing Dementia’ Toolkit and ‘Mental Health Resource Kit’ produced by AIC were also introduced. In addition, awards of recognition to Friends of Dementia were presented by Dr Amy Khor at the event.

Dementia Friendly Singapore

3. The launch of the DFC at Hong Kah North follows the launch of the ground-up movement in Chong Pang. "The vision is to grow this movement island wide, so we are calling this initiative Dementia Friendly Singapore," said Dr Amy Khor. In Singapore, the prevalence of dementia is about 10% amongst seniors aged 60 and above. With a rapidly ageing population, the number of seniors with dementia is set to rise. This initiative is aimed at building a more caring and inclusive society that can support persons with dementia to age in place. Other communities such as Bedok, Queenstown and Macpherson have also indicated interest to become Dementia-Friendly Communities.

4. A DFC is a neighbourhood where residents, businesses and services, and the community at large, are aware of dementia and understand how to better support

persons with dementia (PWDs) and their caregivers. It is a place where resident PWDs feel respected, valued, and where help is within easy reach so that they can continue to lead independent lives. It is also an environment which PWDs will be able to move around safely and with ease. A DFC can also better support caregivers of PWDs by helping to look out for their loved ones and thus reduce the stress and fatigue they may face.

5. Stakeholders play a crucial role in supporting the effort of a DFC. To date, the partners who have come on board include Alzheimer's Disease Association, Centre For Seniors, Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore, Brahm Centre, schools, grassroots organisations, family service centres, faith-based organisations and community care sector partners such as day care centres.

6. At the heart of a DFC is a support network of dementia-aware volunteers. In each community, citizens-on-patrol, grassroots leaders and volunteers, students and staff of business entities are trained to serve as community lookouts to assist PWDs. They will undergo training on the features of a DFC, common signs and symptoms of dementia, and more importantly, how to reach out to PWDs in the community and how to communicate with PWDs. **To date, over 7,000 persons across Singapore have been trained.**

7. A trained volunteer, Ms Alicia See, 17, said: "Ultimately, we need to be concerned citizens who can contribute back to our community. By being a part of this meaningful cause, we are able to raise awareness about dementia in Hong Kah North and I am now equipped with the knowledge and skills on how to interact with and help people with dementia. The DFC initiative is meaningful. It encourages more positive sentiments towards dementia, in that we should help people with dementia and provide them with an inclusive and helpful community and culture."

New DFC in Hong Kah North

8. In Hong Kah North as well as other upcoming DFCs, a safe return system will be piloted where community partners will form a network of four to five "**Go-To Points**" to help seniors who may be lost to return safely to their family and caregivers.

9. Chief for Community Mental Health Division at AIC, Dr Tan Weng Mooi said: “The leaders at the Go-To Points have been trained to offer general assistance to PWDs, to connect them to their family or caregiver, as well as link them up with appropriate support services such as dementia outreach teams, called CREST¹. These teams will help provide dementia-related resources and services to PWDs. Each Go-To Point has been chosen for its easy access.” (Refer to [Annex A](#) for Go-To Points for Hong Kah North.)

10. Senior Executive of SASCO Hong Kah North Day Care Centre for the Elderly, which is designated as a Go-To-Point, Mr R S Chandrajothi, said: “We can be the point of contact or referral point if any PWD is brought to our Centre, since we are trained and equipped to care for such clients. We are happy to be a helping hand in this DFC, to help PWDs and to help lower the anxiety of their caregivers and give them peace of mind.”

Creating Greater Awareness

11. Apart from creating greater awareness for dementia through community outreach, AIC has developed a suite of resources to equip our community partners and volunteers. A ‘Knowing Dementia’ Toolkit will serve as a resource for service providers, community partners and seniors or their caregivers to increase public awareness of dementia, and this will be made available to all Senior Care Centres and eldercare providers. This ‘Knowing Dementia’ Toolkit also includes an informational toolkit for seniors and their caregivers. This toolkit will help seniors and their caregivers better understand the early signs of dementia, how to engage persons with dementia and tips on keeping the mind active. There is also the ‘Mental Health Resource Kit’ which will comprise a resource directory and magnet with useful tips on mental wellness and helplines. The resource directory, developed for the grassroots leaders, volunteers and community partners, contains information on mental health conditions and where people can go to seek help. This kit will be available online via the Singapore Silver Pages portal (www.silverpages.sg). Going forward, AIC will work with partners to

¹ CREST – Community Resource, Engagement and Support Teams

develop resources customised for different stakeholder groups. For example, AIC is working with Centre For Seniors to develop a training curriculum on dementia awareness for frontline retail personnel such as supermarket staff. Building a Dementia-Friendly Singapore is a team effort, and AIC welcomes more organisations to join.

12. Ultimately, DFC is meant to empower PWDs to lead more independent lives, and provide better support for caregivers of PWDs to reduce their stress and fatigue. Mr Abdul Ghani Bin Hamid, whose mother has dementia and is attending the SASCO Hong Kah North Day Care Centre for the Elderly, said: “My mother requires more care and attention owing to her condition. Having a DFC is important. I know who to turn to if I need additional help. With the support of a DFC, I am more assured that someone will help watch over my mother and look after her if the need arises.”

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Annex A – Go-To-Points in Dementia-Friendly Community in Hong Kah North

Name	Address	Telephone	Opening Hours
Hong Kah North CC	30 Bukit Batok Street 31, S(659440)	6567-3130	Everyday 9.00am to 10.00pm
Hong Kah North Day Care Centre for the Elderly (SASCO)	337 Bukit Batok St 34, #01-06, S(650337)	6425 0462	Mon to Fri 7.00am to 7.00pm, Sat 7.00am to 1.00pm
REACH Youth Powerhouse	417 Bukit Batok West Ave 4, #01-284, S(650417)	6801-0740	Mon to Fri 9.00am to 6.00pm
PPIS Family Service Centre (West)	301 Bukit Batok Street 31, #01-01, S(650301)	6561-3462	Mon to Fri 9.00am to 5.00pm (closed for lunch from 12.30pm to 1.30pm)
Perdus Centre	364 Bukit Batok Street 31, S(650364)	6513-2300	Tue to Sun 9.00am to 5.00pm