

Seniors take on micro-jobs like meal deliveries to stay active while getting paid

Syaratana Shafeeq

Along quiet Pipit Road in MacPherson, residents are used to seeing 72-year-old Shue Teng Lee ride his bicycle around the neighbourhood twice a day during lunch and dinner. Hung on his bicycle handles are packets of food for 10 to 15 families.

Mr Shue is one of 47 seniors who took on "micro-jobs" offered at active ageing centres by Thyne Hua Kwan Moral Charities (THKMC).

The project recruits active and healthy seniors to take on simple community-based tasks, like delivering meals and medication reminders to other seniors. The seniors are given a small allowance of \$1 for each delivery of food or medicine reminders.

Active ageing centres are located in residential estates around Singapore to support seniors. They provide a range of services such as activities to keep seniors engaged within the community, befriending services and making referrals for care services.

As the number of active ageing centres is set to increase from the current 119 to 220 by 2025, some centres are coming up with more activities for seniors to spend their days meaningfully and reduce so-

cial isolation.

By 2030, about one in four Singaporeans will be aged 65 and above.

This group of seniors is expected to live longer and healthier. And with active ageing being a key pillar in Singapore's Healthier SG strategy of preventive care, efforts are being enhanced so that seniors can live well and age gracefully in their communities, said chief executive of the Agency for Integrated Care Tan Kwang Cheak.

THKMC launched the micro-jobs project in January with the aim of empowering seniors to continue doing some form of work, earn some income and retain their sense of purpose after retiring.

Human resource business partner for THKMC Teo Wen Yao said: "As we move into becoming a super-aged society, this allows us to supply additional manpower for senior care services in the silver economy. With the involvement of the seniors, it will increase the capacity of what we can do."

The project has plans to add more micro-jobs for seniors other than meal delivery and medicine reminders, like being a medical escort to those who need to travel for appointments or planning activities in the active ageing centres.

Madam Green Lilian Janet, 83, is another senior delivering meals to stay active. "I am so old, can I really



Mr Shue Teng Lee and Madam Green Lilian Janet delivering food to MacPherson residents. The micro-jobs project aims to empower seniors to continue doing some form of work, earn some income and retain their sense of purpose after retiring.

ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

HELPING OTHERS

I took on this micro-job because I feel that I am so fortunate to be able-bodied and have filial children. I have a happy life, so I feel that I should help others.

— MR SHUE TENG LEE

do it?" was one of the first thoughts she had when the active ageing centre staff told her about the micro-jobs project.

She plucked up the courage to try, and now delivers food three times a week. She prefers to hand-carry the packets as she finds using a trolley troublesome when she has to use the stairs.

She enjoys chatting with the seniors she comes across during her deliveries.

She said: "Most of them are very kind and appreciate what we do. They will tell me, 'Oh, you are doing this job? You must be tired, you have to carry so many packets of food!' I enjoy talking to them and making new friends."

Mr Shue said that delivering food to seniors gives him the opportunity to check on their safety and well-being.

He recalled instances where he would go to deliver dinner to a household, only to see that the lunch packet was still hanging uneaten on the door handle. He would check to see if everything was okay, or alert the centre to send a staff member there.

Mr Shue said: "I took on this micro-job because I feel that I am so fortunate to be able-bodied and have filial children. I have a happy life, so I feel that I should help others."

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