

Students from 5 polytechnics to help seniors under pact with care agency

Lee Li Ying
Correspondent

Students from five polytechnics are set to get more hands-on experience in helping seniors age better in the community after their schools signed agreements with the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC).

Nanyang Polytechnic, Ngee Ann Polytechnic, Republic Polytechnic, Singapore Polytechnic and Temasek Polytechnic signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with AIC on Nov 27.

The event was held at eldercare centre Tzu Chi Seniors Engagement and Enabling Node (Nanyang) in Jurong West.

Under the MOUs, AIC will make volunteering opportunities in community care settings available to students across different specialisations and years of study.

The students will be able to get experience at active ageing centres and participate in the Silver Generation Ambassador (SGA) programme, where they will visit seniors in their homes.

Mr Sng Hock Lin, chief of the Silver Generation Office, which oversees the SGA programme, said AIC worked with the five tertiary institutions to integrate the volunteering opportunities for students in different formats and settings.

A six-month pilot began in July and involved 60 students from the five schools.

Some schools weaved in the volunteering opportunities to the curriculum in diploma courses such as social sciences, social work, gerontology, and sports and health.

"For example, the SGA programme could be part of the practical section for their course of study. They would learn in the classroom and apply their learning to the real-world context," said Mr Sng.

Students whose modules incor-



Temasek Polytechnic student Donald Lee joined the Silver Generation Ambassador programme as part of his introduction to the health and social service module. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

LEARNING LIFE LESSONS

Students have actually gained deeper insights about ageing. They've learnt that ageing is not always sad, it can be positive. They also learn a lot of life lessons from the seniors... Seniors also like the students a lot because they offer fresh and energetic perspectives.

”

MR SNG HOCK LIN, chief of the Silver Generation Office, which oversees the Silver Generation Ambassador programme.

porate SGA programmes into the practical part of the course must participate in the volunteering initiatives, he added.

Temasek Polytechnic Year 1 student Donald Lee, 19, who is taking a diploma in social sciences in gerontology, joined the SGA programme as part of his introduction to the health and social service module.

He then visited seniors at home in Redhill under the programme. "We try to find out from the seniors things like which hospital or polyclinic they go to and if they have upcoming screenings. Some seniors do like to talk a bit more... Some engagements can take up to an hour. We are there to give them a

chance to speak," said Mr Lee.

Volunteering opportunities can also be offered through service learning or co-curricular activities with the polytechnics, said Mr Sng, citing the example of Singapore Polytechnic's Silver Generation Ambassador Club.

"Students have actually gained deeper insights about ageing. They've learnt that ageing is not always sad, it can be positive. They also learn a lot of life lessons from

the seniors... Seniors also like the students a lot because they offer fresh and energetic perspectives," said Mr Sng.

He added that AIC is hoping to expand collaboration with the polytechnics to offer opportunities to around 300 students by 2024.

The signing ceremony was witnessed by Health Minister Ong Ye Kung, who said that for a long time, corporates, schools and universities viewed community work as so-

mething to be done on a one-off occasion.

But increasingly, more sustained and constant volunteering efforts are needed, especially as the population in Singapore ages.

"If we can do that, and everyone puts in a bit of constant effort to help out in the community, we would have a very different society," he said.

liyinglee@sph.com.sg