

It gives a sense of meaning and purpose

FROM C1

DESPITE BENEFITS, FEW OLDER ADULTS VOLUNTEER

Volunteering gives older adults a sense of meaning and purpose. Experts say it also keeps them mentally and physically active.

Despite all these benefits, only a

small number of seniors in Singapore volunteer regularly. Allkin Singapore, for example, has 3,000 registered volunteers of which just over 160 people are aged 60 and older. It engages about 5,000 clients in that same age range through its active



They are my motivation. I find this so meaningful.



MS SURIANI SOO, who trains Special Olympics Singapore athletes

Ms Suriani Soo, 65, has been a volunteer coach for bocce with Special Olympics Singapore since 2007. ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

volunteers are deployed across these programmes.

The number of senior volunteers has not changed much in the past few years, says a spokesman for the agency.

An overwhelming majority of older Singaporeans are non-volunteers, according to a 2022 study by Singapore Management University's Centre for Research on Successful Ageing. It looked at the volunteering habits of Singaporeans and their spouses aged 56 to 75. The study found that only 7 to 8 per cent of HDB residents and fewer than 14 per cent of those residing

in private apartments or private property had volunteered in the previous year.

Madam Park had some misgivings in the beginning. She started visiting Allkin Singapore's active ageing centres near her home in Ang Mo Kio when she turned 60, attracted by the exercise activities. Soon, she was helping with small tasks.

However, she refused to sign up officially as a volunteer when first asked. She worried that volunteering at Allkin Singapore would eat into her family commitments. She worried about being too old, or being unable to handle the clients at the active ageing centre.

Continued involvement changed her mind. She was inspired by the patience of the staff as they served clients. She also felt the need to help out the older members, whether it was with tech support or helping them communicate with the centre staff.

"Being able to help them makes me happy," she says.

"I like volunteering to the extent that now, when my daughter wants to take me on holiday, I say no," she adds.

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