

Dignity in death: Funeral company helps seniors carry out final wishes

Clay Lim

When Madam Yong died in 2024 at the age of 88, her funeral was executed smoothly despite her not having any next of kin.

She was a Buddhist and wanted a same-day cremation. The next day, her ashes and her spirit tablet were placed in a cremation niche at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery.

A Buddhist monk chanted and prayed at the monastery on the first day and 21st day after her death. The monk service and her spirit tablet, which amounted to \$450, were fully paid by Mr Jeffrey Lee, sales and marketing manager at funeral company Simplicity Casket, which had kick-started her funeral plans 13 years ago.

Since starting these services in 2011, the company has worked on more than 90 pre-planned funeral arrangements, with 40 of them done pro bono.

For its efforts, Simplicity Casket was honoured alongside 12 other recipients at the annual Friends of

Community Care Awards on May 28.

The company was recognised under the corporate category for small and medium-sized enterprises alongside two other awardees - CK Holdings (2003) and Goshen Consultancy Services.

Launched in 2020 by the Agency for Integrated Care, the awards honour organisations that contribute to community care in Singapore.

In 2009, Simplicity Casket had reached out to Madam Yong's active ageing centre in Kreta Ayer to introduce its pre-planning funeral arrangement service.

Interested, Madam Yong set up a session with Mr Lee. She told him that she had previously bought a cremation niche and wanted to park some funds for the cremation process as she had no next of kin.

Mr Lee worked with her to finalise other details, such as the clothes she wanted to wear for her cremation - a black robe.

In another instance, Madam Fong, 82, from Man Fut Tong Nursing Home in Woodlands, had her social worker reach out to Simplicity Casket when she learnt about its service in 2013.

Mr Lee visited her in person and took her funeral photograph portrait on the day of meeting her.

As she was Catholic, she wanted her ashes to be placed in a Catholic church. To fulfil her wishes, she needed to present her baptism certificate, which she had misplaced. Her son, her only next of kin, had no information about the church that Madam Fong was baptised in.

Given only the approximate location of her church in Katong, Mr Lee painstakingly called churches in the area in order to find her place of baptism.

Eventually, he managed to identify the church as the Church of Our Lady Queen of Peace, and gathered the relevant documents.

In 2014, when Madam Fong died at the age of 83, Mr Lee helped her son with the funeral arrangements.

Her wake was three days long, with white and pink carnations around her coffin as she requested. Her ashes were later placed in the Church of St Mary of the Angels.

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Simplicity Casket sales and marketing manager Jeffrey Lee says his firm is motivated by being able to send off individuals in a dignified manner.
ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

Beyond offering funeral services, Simplicity Casket also helps families preserve memories of their loved ones.

It provides support for the Loving Hands Project started by Peacehaven nursing home in late 2024, which allows seniors to make a hand imprint in clay plaster that gets passed on to their next of kin.

Scanning a QR code sticker on the clay plaster takes users to a

webpage with images of the senior.

For seniors with no next of kin, their imprints are placed in Peacehaven nursing home in Changi.

Volunteers from Simplicity Casket visit the nursing home monthly to help with the project.

Simplicity Casket also provides welfare for the nursing homes that it works with.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Simplicity Casket, with the help of its parent company Singapore Cas-

ket, provided nurses in Peacehaven nursing home with Sheng Siong vouchers.

Asked what motivates the firm in its work, Mr Lee said: "Being able to send off individuals in a dignified manner motivates us to promote our pre-planning services so that we can help seniors have their wishes carried out according to what they want."

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