

# Volunteer claims bodies of elderly

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**S**HE'S visited the mortuary no fewer than three times in the last five years.

Each time, it was to identify and collect the body of someone she barely knew.

Madam Sally Gui is a volunteer with the Lions Befrienders, which reaches out to the lonely elderly.

Said the 33-year-old secretary: "These elderly have no-one else to claim their bodies or perform their last rites for them."

Madam Gui had her first taste of death just three months into volunteering.

She accompanied another volunteer to claim the body of a woman, in her 60s, who had died of a stroke in hospital. She said: "It is sad when someone has to spend his or her last days, suffering alone."

"And even when you're dead, no-one misses you."

Madam Gui has since helped claim the bodies and make funeral arrangements for two other elderly people.

One died in a traffic accident, and another died in hospital of diabetes.

Madam Gui visits the elderly living in one- and two-room rental flats in York Hill and Jalan Muiyakk every week.

She and her team of some six volunteers serve some 36 households in the Chinatown area, offering them food and goodies, taking them out on

excursions and to see the doctors.

She recalled the plight of a woman in her 90s.

The woman lived with her two sons, one of whom was mentally disabled.

The other son did odd jobs.

Recalled Madam Gui: "There was one time when the old woman fell at home and knocked her head against a cabinet. She bled profusely and needed medical help."

"But because the sons didn't know any better, they didn't take her to a doctor."

When Madam Gui visited a few days later, she was shocked to find the woman's head covered in dried blood and bruises.

Together with another volunteer, she rushed the woman to the Singapore General Hospital, where doctors gave the woman 12 stitches.

The volunteers helped pay the woman's medical bill of a few hundred dollars.

Such compassion has not gone unnoticed.

Madam Gui and 10 others were given the outstanding befriender award by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports last year.

She said: "Previously, most weekends were spent shopping."

"But there are people out there who need our attention and company. Why not give them my time instead?"



◆ Madam Gui visiting one of her charges in York Hill.

Picture: CHUA PUAY HOE

## 180 grassroots volunteers to be trained

MADAM Sally Gui is a classic example of the type of volunteers who will be needed to reach out to the really needy.

As part of ComCare, the Southwest Community Development Council announced last week that some 180 grassroots volunteers will be trained to assess which help-seekers are really needy.

This is crucial, as grassroots leaders can now tap the ComCare fund to help the poor in their constituencies.

The Central CDC is also building up a pool of social service volunteers for ComCare though it could not give exact figures.

Said its spokesman: "The number of

volunteers we need will depend on the rate our social service voluntarism projects develop."

The ComCare fund was launched last month by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong with an endowment of \$500 million.

The fund, which will eventually be built up to \$1 billion, will provide up to \$55 million a year for assistance schemes for the poor.

It targets a small but growing minority: Those hit by economic restructuring and globalisation; family breadwinners who have lost their jobs; those unable to afford kindergarten fees; the elderly poor; and the disabled, among others.