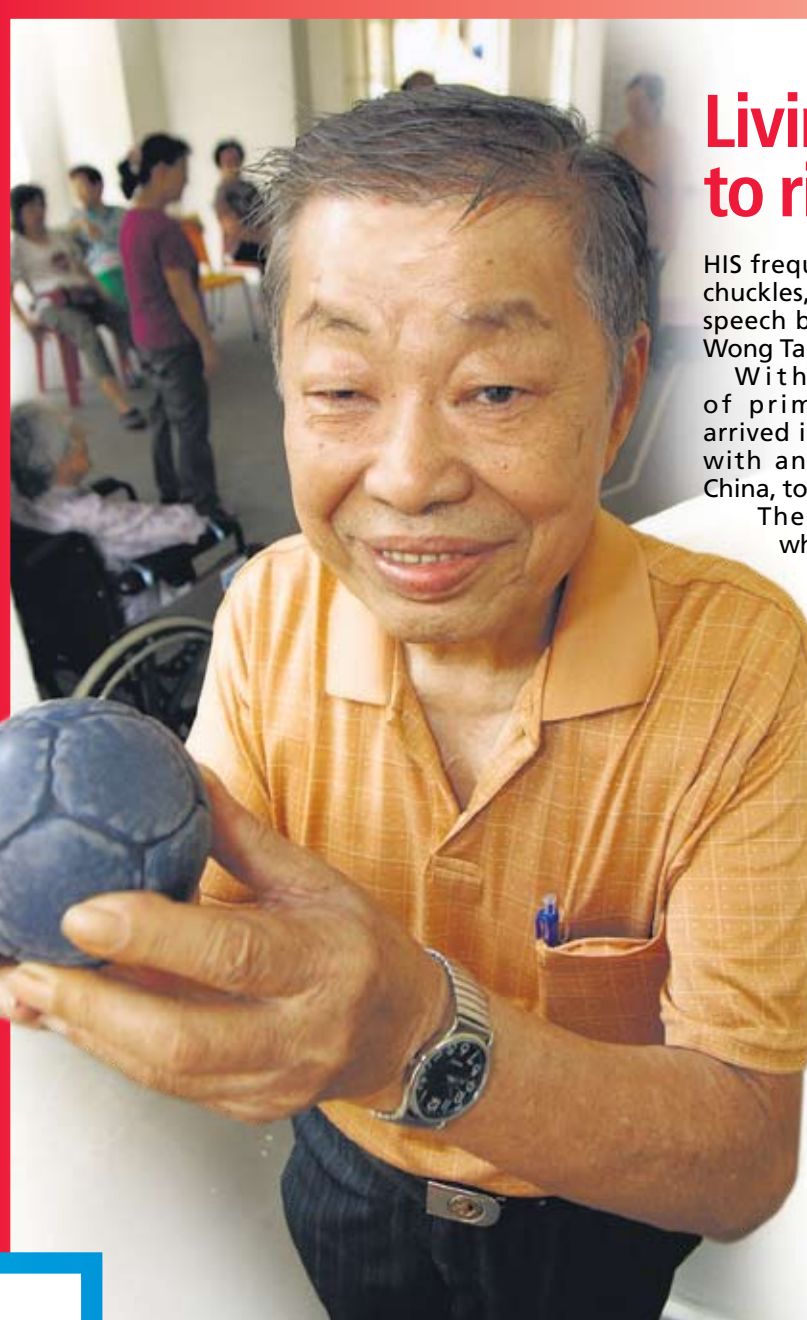


# Give a little, help a lot

The President's Challenge celebrates 10 years of giving by Singaporeans this year. It aims to increase awareness about how the community can help the less fortunate, either through volunteering their time or donating money. It also wants to attract funds for the social services. Last year, it raised over \$12 million for 41 beneficiaries. Three of these beneficiaries involving volunteer services, training programmes, and charities are featured here

**I would like to call on Singaporeans to extend some kindness and cheer to those affected by the economic downturn. We need to express the spirit of President's Challenge, with everyone doing a little something for another person who needs help. Every contribution helps, be it a monetary donation or the giving of time.**

— President S R Nathan



## Living an active life to ripe old age

HIS frequent smiles, occasional chuckles, and gentle manner of speech belie the tough life Mr Wong Tar Lee, 74, has led.

With only two years of primary education, he arrived in Singapore at age 13 with an uncle from Hainan, China, to seek a better life.

The prospects were dim when he started work as a coffeeshop assistant in 1948 with a monthly wage of \$5.

But he worked hard and his wages rose to \$60 a month after four years.

He tried to start his own business some years later, including running a coffeeshop with a partner.

That left him with little time to socialise with other people or enjoy leisure activities with his homemaker wife and their three children.

It was only when Mr Wong reached the venerable age of 70 did his social

life change markedly.

This was four years ago when a friend took him to Block 318 in Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1 and introduced him to the Lions Befrienders Ang Mo Kio (AMK) Neighbourhood Link (NL), an outreach programme for the elderly.

Mr Wong leads this group on some days and is the referee for games played in the void deck. The seniors also take part in chair yoga, a more sedate form of the exercise.

He is popular and his peers had picked him as one of three recipients for the NL's Active Senior Awards last year.

The Lions Befrienders' Outreach programme, which has benefited Mr Wong and another 530 seniors in the AMK neighbourhood, has been made possible by funds from President's Challenge.

Last year, it contributed \$205,000 to this outreach programme located in three NLs at Ang Mo Kio, Bendemeer Road and Mei Ling Street.

Mr Wong says the NL also conducts dancing and singing sessions.

"I come here from Monday to Friday. This has become my second home. I have many friends now."

## Straight from the heart

IT IS a small charity organisation that makes a big difference to the lives of many needy people.

Food From The Heart (FFTH), started seven years ago by an Austrian couple living in Singapore, feeds about 11,000 individuals every month.

Besides the 20,000 kg of bread it distributes a month, it also hands out cooking oil, canned food, rice and noodles.

FFTH also makes deliveries to 120 welfare homes and selected neighbourhood schools. Food packages under the Food Goodie Bag programme are given to families of needy pupils.

More than 2,400 pupils and their families have benefited from this so far.

It also runs projects such as Toys from the Heart and Birthdays from the Heart.

FFTH has been able to diversify its activities because of the generosity of President's Challenge, corporate sponsors, donors, bakeries and hotels, and its army of 3,000 volunteers who collect and deliver the food. On any given day, at least 1,700 volunteers are active.

Says Ms Christine Laimer, 47, FFTH's founding executive director "Our volunteers are truly

the pillar of our organisation."

Of President's Challenge, she observes: "It is the best scheme ever created to give assistance to charities with their fund-raising efforts, especially the smaller ones like ours."

"There were years when funds from President's Challenge truly came in as a last-minute rescue."

She says FFTH received about \$120,000 from it last year and to date the charity has received a total of more than \$300,000.

On the future, she adds: "For our bread programme, we are planning to set up more Self Collection Centres in collaboration with Resident's Committees in housing estates. For this, we will need more volunteers."

A total of 19 centres are now in operation islandwide.

FFTH is also looking for corporations to "adopt" 50 needy families per neighbourhood school and sponsor their food rations for a year under its Food Goodie Bag project.

One FFTH beneficiary is Madam Pakiam Ammal, 76, who lives alone.

She says: "My children don't support me. The programme came at the right time for me. I am very thankful for the help."

## Facing the future with confidence

MR Victor Sim, 45, has hopes for a brighter future, even though he is wheelchair-bound because of chronic gout and osteoarthritis.

He wants to do administrative work with opportunities for on-the-job training. Mr Sim used to work in the airfreight industry.

He believes that his willingness to try new things and his ability to learn fast will give him an edge over other job-seekers.

Through the Infocomm Accessibility Centre located at the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD), he completed his Microsoft Certification Application Specialist training.

Set up in 2007, the IA Centre is a national IT training

programme which caters to all disability groups. Some of the courses at the IA Centre include Word, Excel, Powerpoint, Photoshop and Dreamweaver.

The IA Centre gets donations through the President's Challenge. The IA Centre is a collaboration between IDA, the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports, the National Council of Social Service, Tote Board, Microsoft and SPD, and needs about \$12.7 million in capital and operational costs.

The funds are used for the centre's operating expenditure, such as manpower costs, facilities, equipment, and transport subsidies for trainees.

The centre aims to offer 4,000 training places by the end of 2010. Up to March, it has provided 940 training places to more than 330 trainees.

Mr Sim, who is single, relies on financial assistance from South-east CDC and SGH Medical Social Services.

He initially tried to look for a job that required little movement, such as a packer. But he was turned away whenever the prospective employers learnt of his condition.

Says Mr Sim: "I felt alone and helpless. I worried about getting money for my medical bills, house rental utilities — there were occasions when the power and water supply got cut. But I told myself to keep going. Fortunately, my new computer skills have allowed me to set new goals for myself and given me more confidence to face the future."

## Contribute to a good cause

The President's Challenge is about the spirit of generosity. Whether as an individual, as part of a corporation or society as a whole, you can help those in need by donating generously to the President's Challenge 2009.

Donate online at [www.pc.org.sg](http://www.pc.org.sg) OR SMS 78888 in the following format: SMS Code<space>NRIC, example: PC20 S1234567A

SMS code: For \$2 donation: PC2  
For \$10 donation: PC10  
For \$20 donation: PC20

The SMS platform is powered by Ericsson Telecommunications Pte Ltd.

Note: Participants under 18 years old must seek parental consent. Administrative charges for all SMS donations are waived.

