

SILVER INFOCOMM WELLNESS AMBASSADORS

Introduction

One of the key highlights of this year's Silver IT Fest 2015 is the appointment of 20 seniors as **Silver Infocomm Wellness Ambassadors**, which brings the total number of seniors lauded as **Silver Infocomm Wellness Ambassadors** to 102 since 2012. This is collaboration between the People's Association (PA) Active Ageing Council and Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore (IDA) to appoint IT-savvy active agers as Silver Infocomm Wellness Ambassadors to encourage active ageing and lifelong learning in the community!

2 These Silver Infocomm Wellness Ambassadors are inspiring role models who can encourage other seniors to learn to use IT and social media to expand their knowledge, pursue their hobbies and interests and stay connected with the rest of the community. One of the roles of the Silver Infocomm Wellness Ambassadors is to lead IT Interest Groups formed under the PA Wellness Programme, where seniors come together to learn and explore basic IT skills such as Smartphone clinics or social media knowledge such as Facebook.

Profile of three Silver Infocomm Wellness Ambassadors appointed in 2015

I. Mr Lee Yee Kong, Freddy 66 years old

- Freddy's IT learning journey began with a new job in 1994. Unknown to him the job required the use of the personal computer (PC) to perform tasks. However, Freddy gave up the job due to his shortcoming of computer illiteracy. The feeling of helplessness and inadequacy made Freddy determined to learn IT from then on. The IT learning journey was not plain sailing for Freddy. He sought the help of his children and friends as well as reading up books from the library. Painstakingly, Freddy mastered the operation of the PC and the use of MS Office Suite to write letters, reports, compile spreadsheets as well as power-point presentation. After learning IT in 1994, he went on to take on a job that required IT skills for the next 17 years.
- Freddy discovered that he could search for information on the internet, communicate with friends and colleagues via email. From the internet, Freddy learned about various social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google, and Flickr where he shares information and pictures with like-minded friends. He watches movies on the YouTube and from a few other websites. He also uses the internet to perform i-banking such as making online payments and funds transfer from the comfort of home. Freddy no longer subscribes for newspaper as he can read news directly from the internet.
- Freddy keeps close contact with his family and friends via WhatsApp on his mobile phone. He even shares a game with his grandson on his mobile phone.

Freddy finds that IT helps maintain the bond within the family even though members can be thousands of miles apart.

- He now looks forward to pick up additional skills like setting up his own Blog and PC repair.
- As a senior who had not the privilege to be taught in school, learning and embracing IT has made his life more fulfilling and accomplished. In 2015, Freddy was appointed as a Silver Infocomm Wellness Ambassador and he encourages other seniors to take up IT.

II. Mr Kathirithamby Selvakrishnan 63 years old

- Mr Kathirithamby Selvakrishnan likes to help people and have been volunteering his services at Hougang Community Centre and he had received his 30 years community Service Award at this year's National Day Celebrations.
- Mr Selvakrishnan finds that it is important to learn how to use Internet and mobile applications such as WhatsApps, Facebook and WeChat to order to facilitate communication with people and staying in touch with the latest information.

A strong advocate in lifelong learning, he believes that it is never too old to learn and the need for seniors to embrace ICT. He enjoys teaching the seniors on usage of smartphone and emailing which can help them enrich their daily lives. As part of the Hougang Wellness Programme, he is currently leading an interest group made up of seniors around Hougang Ave 2, whom he will meet up about once a week to teach them how to use smartphone and the mobile applications. Recently, he has been requested by the seniors at the Sunlove Senior Activity Centre to teach them on smartphone usage after a short volunteer session there. Seeing the seniors want to learn ICT, gave him great satisfaction, especially when he is able to volunteer his service.

III. Mdm Zaiton Binti Abu Bakar 60 years old

- Mdm Zaiton Binti Abu Bakar is a strong believer in technology to sustain personal growth in individuals. She does most of the tasks online including iBanking, booking travel accommodation and storing of photos.
- She enjoys sharing with friends on the usage of ICT, including smartphone. She finds it easier to teach them since they are of a similar age and are able to understand the difficulties of learning ICT better. As times goes by, she made lots of friends, who always approach her for help on smartphone matters. At times, she too learned from her friends who know more.

Introduction

The PA Wellness Programme was piloted in March 2008 in 12 constituencies. The nationwide rollout of the PA Wellness Programme took place in May 2010. The People's Association (PA) is leading this Programme, with the support of the Ministry of Health (MOH), Health Promotion Board (HPB) and Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).

2 The PA Wellness Programme seeks to reach out to Singaporeans and Permanent Residents, aged 50 and above, to engage in programmes and activities so as to be mentally, physically and socially active. The aim is not only to achieve a mindset change, but to see a change in behaviour where more residents adopt healthy lifestyles in a sustained manner, resulting in more people enjoying a healthier lifespan and higher quality of life.

3 The target is to reach out to 50% of the senior population aged 50 and above in every constituency. This requires a concerted effort by multiple agencies and grassroots organisations in order to reach out to all seniors and engage them. PA, residents and other agencies and institutions in the community would need to work in synergy to better serve and reach out to seniors in the community.

Health Screening with Intervention

4 PA is working with various Regional Health Systems (RHSes) and HPB to conduct health screening for seniors. Those found to be at-risk of developing chronic illnesses will be persuaded to participate in follow up interventions by the RHSes and HPB and adopt a healthier lifestyle. The PA Wellness Programme message is simple – Stay active. Eat healthy. Exercise regularly. Enjoy more years free from disease and disability.

Social Interest Groups

5 It is not enough for individuals to be healthy alone. They need to be socially engaged too. Evidence-based studies have shown that people who are socially active tend to be mentally and physically active too. The PA Wellness Programme promotes a myriad of activities for its participants. There is something for everyone in the community.

6 Seniors are encouraged to come forward and make friends. They can participate in the wide variety of programmes organised by the Community

Clubs, Senior Citizens' Executive Committees, Active Ageing Committees and Residents' Committees or even form interest groups among themselves. Examples of programmes include easy-entry activities like briskwalking, health qigong, line-dancing, handicraft and gardening, as well as niche activities like conductorcise, rummy-O mind game, ukulele, Information Technology and sports stacking. They learn something, make new friends, feel at home with the group, bring in their own friends to join the group and become happier and healthier as a result.

7 These interest groups also serve as a form of informal roll call. If a member from any group is absent or exhibits a change in behaviour, others would notice or come to know, and be able to help. Seniors can establish strong social networks with other seniors through these interest groups. Important information and advisory can also be disseminated to members of these groups through talks, workshops and programmes.

Senior Volunteerism

8 When seniors volunteer in community programmes, and help others to be active and engaged like themselves, they develop a sense of meaning and fulfilment in life. Seniors can volunteer in many ways. They can lead interest groups or even start new interest groups so as to reach out and engage like-minded seniors, and help them live good quality of lives.
