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MEDIA RELEASE

NTUC FIRST CAMPUS AND NTUC HEALTH CHAMPION STRUCTURED APPROACH TO ENHANCE INTER-GENERATIONAL INTERACTION IN SINGAPORE

Seniors are engaged and have a stronger sense of purpose; pre-schoolers learn empathy and compassion

Singapore, 27 March 2017 – NTUC First Campus and NTUC Health announced today their structured inter-generational programme to facilitate interaction between pre-schoolers and seniors. NTUC Secretary-General Chan Chun Sing was the guest-of-honour at the event.

The programme stems from the close collaboration between NTUC First Campus' My First Skool (MFS) centres and NTUC Health's senior centres over the past two years. The centres have worked out details of an inter-generational model to enable young children and seniors to participate in shared activities, so that they can learn from one another and learn about one another.

An action research component is also embedded in this model. This is to enable NTUC First Campus and NTUC Health to better understand the intended benefits accrued, the challenges faced, and the potential recommendations for further enhancement to the programme.

The objectives of the structured inter-generational interactions are two-fold. First, it is to empower the seniors by enabling them to have a stronger sense of purpose through mentoring the children during the activities. Second, it is to inculcate in pre-schoolers values of empathy and compassion, and respect for the seniors.

Instead of just carrying out inter-generational activities in an *ad hoc* manner, focusing on festivals and celebrations, NTUC First Campus and NTUC Health have worked towards a more structured approach to develop a framework comprising three-tiers of interaction. They are the basic tier with *ad hoc* activities; intermediate tier with activities that are more regular; and advanced tier with a structured programme weaved into the childcare curriculum and eldercare daily activities. *See Table 1.*

Table: NTUC First Campus and NTUC Health Inter-generational Collaboration Model.

Basic	Intermediate	Advanced
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-off or infrequent • Opportunistic • Informal partnerships • E.g., festive celebrations, non-regular events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular intervals • Each partner working autonomously • Can be short-term or long-term • E.g., birthday celebrations, monthly activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular, intentionally planned • Activities worked into the childcare curriculum & senior centre’s schedule • Independent with partner empowerment • Aligned vision and purpose • Long-term • E.g., structured programme throughout the year

These three tiers are meant to cater to the varying capabilities and resources of the centres. Today, 14 sets of MFS centres and NTUC Health’s senior centres jointly offer at least one of the three tiers of the inter-generational programme. A list of centres is at [Annex A](#).

Advanced tier

Leveraging on the advantage of co-location, MFS at Braddell Heights and NTUC Health Silver Circle (Serangoon Central) were selected to pilot the advanced tier of the programme last year. Open to all Kindergarten 1 and 2 children, as well as selected seniors who are more participative¹, the programme has seen pre-school teachers and eldercare staff working regular and structured activities into the pre-school curriculum and the senior centres’ weekly schedule. A list of the activities, which have been tested out as suitable for the “advanced” tier is at [Annex B](#).

This differentiated and new approach to inter-generational interaction is a continuation of NTUC’s journey in childcare and eldercare, going beyond caring for the young and old to fostering greater bonding between young children and seniors. This is in line with NTUC social

¹ Majority of the seniors at the Silver Circle (Serangoon Central) Senior Care Centre have varying degrees of dementia, and receive dementia care at the centre. The seniors selected for the inter-generational programme are seniors whose dementia conditions range from mild to moderate, so as to enable them to benefit from the programme.

enterprises' commitment to constantly innovate in the social space to better serve emerging needs of the Singapore society.

Contributing factors to the success of the programme

There are three factors that favour the success of the inter-generational programme: the close collaboration of the NTUC Social Enterprises; dedicated and like-minded staff who support the inter-generational interaction efforts; and the advantage of co-location of childcare and senior centres.

Collaboration of NTUC Social Enterprises

As members of the NTUC group of social enterprises, NTUC First Campus and NTUC Health are focused on driving social outcomes, such as addressing concerns about “ageing” to enable the seniors to age-in-place. Led by the common focus to facilitate inter-generational interaction, both social enterprises committed themselves to investing resources, manpower and time to collaboratively develop and implement the programme in their centres.

“With smaller family units in Singapore becoming more prevalent, children now have limited opportunities to bond and interact with their own grandparents, much less with the seniors in our community,” Said Mr Chan Tee Seng, Chief Executive Officer of NTUC First Campus, “What is unique about our collaboration with NTUC Health is that we are not only bringing two generations together, but also engaging them with thoughtful programming and specially designed activities that bring about the best possible benefits for both the young and seniors. For our children, we believe that such meaningful interactions inculcate good values in them, which are important traits that the younger generation should possess amidst an increasingly ageing population.”

Dedicated and committed staff

The dedication and commitment of the staff in both NTUC First Campus and NTUC Health also contribute extensively to the good outcomes of the programme. The teachers and centre facilitators are able to engage both young and old in activities tailored to suit their needs and interests.

Mr Chua Song Khim, CEO of NTUC Health, said, “As we experience a rapidly ageing population, we also see an increasing prevalence of dementia in seniors. As our seniors participate in various activities within the inter-generational programme, their cognition and physical functions are strengthened. For many of them whose grandchildren have already grown up,

this is also an opportunity for them to relive their nurturing experience as they interact with these preschoolers, while sharing life stories. This helps improve the seniors' emotional health and gives them a stronger sense of purpose and dignity, enabling them to age successfully."

Co-location of senior and childcare centres

The co-location of senior and childcare facilities better facilitates the success of the inter-generational programme. MFS@Braddell Heights and NTUC Health Silver Circle (Serangoon Central) are a case in point. They are situated just a stone's throw away from each other on the ground level of Blk 264 Serangoon Central. Their proximity not only facilitates the regular weekly contact between seniors and children, but also enables the staff of the two centres to have regular face-to-face discussions to plan effective programmes.

Positive findings of action research

The initial findings of the action research on the "advanced tier" show that the inter-generational activities achieved the objectives of the programme. The children demonstrated varying degrees of learning in their ability and willingness to relate to seniors, and the seniors appeared to enjoy the sessions interacting with the children. Both seniors and parents of children have shared positive feedback about the benefits of the programme at [Annex C](#).

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