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Media Release

For immediate release

MORE SENIORS VOLUNTEER IN COMMUNITY TO SERVE THEIR PEERS 7 out of every 10 volunteers at NTUC Health are above 60 years of age

1 Seniors are stepping out of their comfort zones to actively volunteer in the community. At NTUC Health's Appreciation Lunch for more than 150 volunteers today, it was shared that 7 out of every 10 volunteers were above 60 years of age. The annual event, which was graced by NTUC's Deputy Secretary-General Heng Chee How, acknowledges NTUC Health's many volunteers who help out regularly at their SilverACE Senior Activity Centres or visit vulnerable seniors in their neighbourhood to care for their well-being.

PARTNERING WITH THE COMMUNITY TO CARE FOR VULNERABLE SENIORS

2 The volunteers contribute in a wide variety of ways. At SilverACE Senior Activity Centres which serve as club houses of sorts for low-income seniors in the neighbourhood, the volunteers support Centre staff to run programmes such as exercise sessions, talks on healthy living, cooking classes, and even organise outings for the seniors. (See Annex A for information on NTUC Health's SilverACE Senior Activity Centres)

3 Other volunteers have stepped forward to keep a watchful eye on seniors in their neighbourhood who have weak family support. Some of these are Community Befrienders while others are CAN Carers, CAN being an initiative of the Ministry of Social and Family Development and Agency of Integrated Care. These volunteers support NTUC Health by visiting the seniors regularly at their homes, lending a friendly listening ear and helping hand. With medication non-compliance as a key concern for seniors, CAN Carers also perform the important task of monitoring and reminding them to take their medications. (See Annex A for information on the CAN and Community Befriending programmes)

SENIOR WHO RECEIVED SUPPORT PAYS IT FORWARD BY CARING FOR OTHER SENIORS

4 One such volunteer is 64-year-old Mdm Elizabeth Ho who is the main caregiver for her 86-year-old husband and now deceased mother, both of whom are bed-ridden and fully dependent on her for support. Having previously received support from NTUC Health's Care Managers, Mdm Ho took on the responsibility to similarly care for seniors in her neighbourhood while at the same time, caring for her husband and mother. Despite her personal struggles, she maintains a cheerful disposition and regularly goes the extra mile for her clients – looking for them when she does not find them at home, or buying breakfast out of her own pocket to bring a smile to them. Seniors whom she has served describe her as patient, kind-hearted, and understanding towards both their needs as well as that of those around her.

5 Shared Mdm Ho who was also one of the recipients of the Outstanding Individual Volunteers Award at the event, "I am very grateful for all the practical and emotional support that NTUC Health gave me when I was going through a difficult phase in life. After I became a volunteer, I feel that life is now more fulfilling and meaningful when I know that these elderly have someone to look out for them." (See Annex B for profiles of Outstanding Individual Volunteers)

INCREASING POOL OF VOLUNTEERS

6 "As our population ages, we will need a many helping hands approach to look out for those who require more care and attention. It is therefore encouraging to see so many seniors who are volunteering their time and energy to contribute to society, and to bring care and laughter to their peers." shares Mr Leon Luai, Head Clinical Services & Wellness and Head Home Care, NTUC Health. Mr Luai also added, "NTUC Health is able to reach out to more seniors because of our many volunteers, both young and old, who partner with us in our work."

7 With less than 10 individual volunteers when NTUC Health opened its first Senior Activity Centre in 2012, the pool of active volunteers today has grown by more than 20 times and is expected to reach more than 200 by the end of 2016.

8 NTUC Health continues to welcome dedicated volunteers who have a heart for seniors. At the event, it marked a new two-year collaboration with Singapore Polytechnic for students to plan and organise community service activities for seniors at 4 SilverACE Senior Activity Centres (Lengkok Bahru, Telok Blangah, Henderson and Taman Jurong), under the guidance of NTUC SilverACE centre staff.

PROVIDING A MORE REWARDING VOLUNTEERING EXPERIENCE

9 NTUC Health will also be adopting a volunteer management framework developed by the National Council of Social Service, to put in place good volunteer management practices, to share current best practices with other organisations, and as a result engage more deeply and effectively with volunteers, attracting new ones and be better at managing the current active volunteers. With this framework, volunteers will find it more rewarding to volunteer with NTUC Health.

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About NTUC Health Co-operative Limited

NTUC Health is an NTUC social enterprise that provides quality and affordable health and eldercare services. Building on more than four decades of experience and expertise, it provides an integrated suite of services to meet the growing needs of families and their dependents. It operates day / senior care centres, home care services, nursing homes, a family medicine clinic, dental clinics, pharmacy retail outlets, a sheltered / senior group home and senior activity and wellness centres. Its team of dedicated doctors, dentists, pharmacists and care professionals supports more than 300,000 people in our community every month.

About NTUC Health's SilverACE Senior Activity Centres

SilverACE senior activity centres are drop in centres for vulnerable elderly in lower income neighbourhoods that promote active ageing and wellness. The aim is to encourage elderly to remain engaged in the community. An initiative by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, SilverACE works closely with partner organisations, institutions, grassroots, and companies to bring events, outings, health talks, health checks, and activities to these elderly. The SilverACE centres also serve as information and referral points to government or other services for elderly should they need advice or assistance. There are currently 7 SilverACE centres in Singapore.

About NTUC Health Cluster Support

NTUC Health Cluster Support aims to enable vulnerable seniors with no or little family support to age in place in their home and community for as long as possible by connecting them to resources and services for their physical, functional, financial, mental, social, and emotional health. Its Care Managers do this through comprehensive assessments, case management and close monitoring of the seniors to ensure their safety and wellbeing.

About the CAN Programme

The Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) jointly initiated the Caring Assistance from Neighbours (CAN) programme in 2013. It empowers neighbours in the community to assist vulnerable seniors. CAN Carers visit such seniors regularly and help to spot and report signs and symptoms of self-neglect, deterioration of senior's physical/mental health, and provide emotional support by befriending and engaging the seniors in social activities.

About the Community Befriender Programme

The Ministry of Health (MOH) piloted a community befriending programme in October 2014 in Bukit Batok, Bukit Batok East, and Taman Jurong. The befrienders, who live in the same neighbourhood as the seniors they befriend, call and visit these seniors at least twice a month. During each visit, the befriender is trained to look out for any change in the seniors' mood, physical condition or living environment. If the seniors need help, the befriender then informs the care provider who will decide the next relevant step. Going forward, MOH wants to work with various voluntary welfare and grassroots organisations to recruit volunteers in at least 50 neighbourhoods who can befriend seniors living alone in their communities and provide social support.

Profiles of Outstanding Individual Volunteers**Mr William Lim**

Mr William Lim, 80, is a well-known volunteer in SilverACE (Henderson) and resident in the Henderson community. Not only is he passionate about serving the seniors, he also helps in fundraising efforts, and sourcing for sponsors for food rations, and more.

Mdm Patti Ho

Mdm Patti Ho, 72, who is a volunteer of SilverACE (Telok Blangah) is a classic example of an active ager. This volunteer encourages others to age healthily through exercise classes, talks and roadshows. She also teaches seniors simple techniques to care for themselves at home and Mandarin dialects to young ones. Not only does she volunteer at SilverACE Telok Blangah and Taman Jurong, she also actively volunteers at other volunteer welfare organisations, and is a Health Ambassador of the Health Promotion Board.

Mdm Elizabeth Ho

Mdm Elizabeth Ho, 64, a CAN Carer from NTUC Health Cluster Support (Bukit Merah), has been caring for other seniors while juggling her caregiving duties to her husband and now deceased mother who were both bedridden. Years of caring for her dependents have equipped her with the skills – patience, empathy, and to also be a friend and helper to other seniors. She has been a CAN Carer for 2 years and has cared for 10 clients, visiting them regularly and reminding them to take their medication.

Mdm Rohana Bte Musa

Mdm Rohana Bte Musa, 56, a CAN Carer from NTUC Health Cluster Support (Taman Jurong), possesses strong and positive interpersonal skills to connect and communicate with clients effectively. She often goes out of the way to serve the seniors whom she visits, sometimes even paying from her own pocket to get meals or daily essentials for vulnerable seniors.