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Health Promotion Board
3 Second Hospital Avenue
Singapore 168937
Tel. 6435 3500
Fax. 6438 3848
www.hpb.gov.sg

HEALTH PROMOTION BOARD CELEBRATES INAUGURAL HEALTH AMBASSADOR DAY WITH 1,000 HEALTH AMBASSADORS

The Health Promotion Board (HPB) recognises the outstanding contributions of its Health Ambassadors by celebrating the inaugural Health Ambassador Day with about 1,000 Health Ambassadors.

2. After all, the wellbeing of our community has been the topmost priority of these Health Ambassadors since HPB launched its Health Ambassador Network in October 2011 to encourage people of all ages and walks of life to become advocates of healthy living.
3. With a united passion for leading a healthy lifestyle, Health Ambassadors are equipped by HPB with the knowledge and functional skills they need to mentor their peers, conduct simple health-related activities such as BMI and blood pressure tests, and share health tips and information.
4. This includes information about government health policies and the various health assistance schemes available, such as the Community Health Assist Scheme (CHAS), as well as advice on how to sign up for these schemes.
5. A testament to the diverse texture of its Health Ambassador Network, HPB counts among its Health Ambassadors professionals such as doctors, dentists and nurses, who want to give back to their communities by volunteering their services and expertise at various HPB outreach activities.
6. As a feedback channel, HPB's Health Ambassadors help to fine-tune health policies and programmes by relaying to HPB what Singaporeans think about them.
7. To pay tribute to the invaluable contributions of these Health Ambassadors and encourage more Singaporeans to come on board, Guest-of-honour Dr Amy Khor, Minister of State for Health, is stepping forth as Chief Health Ambassador.

8. “The ambassador is the ‘new’ volunteer. Beyond participating in altruistic activities for the good of others, he or she is a role model and change agent. Not only do HPB’s Health Ambassadors volunteer at various outreach events, they walk the talk of healthy living and inspire those they care about to do the same. I am honoured to be in their company,” said Dr Khor.

9. “HPB’s Health Ambassador Network has injected new energy into a social movement that will eventually carry the message of healthy living to every household in Singapore. This is the kind of ground-up approach in health promotion, tapping on something as simple as the social networks of ordinary Singaporeans, which HPB celebrates. This network will be integral to HPB’s vision of co-planning, co-creating and co-implementing with Singapore residents, health-promoting communities across the island,” said Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive, HPB.

10. HPB aims to have 10,000 Health Ambassadors by 2015, generating and sustaining a nationwide social movement that promotes a healthy lifestyle as the preferred choice for every Singaporean.

11. Today, the latest batches of 234 Senior Health Ambassadors and 183 Youth Mental Health Ambassadors are joining the ranks of existing Health Ambassadors to form a growing network of about 2,000 Health Ambassadors.

12. To celebrate the inaugural Health Ambassador Day, HPB is also signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the National University of Singapore’s Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health (SSHSPH), paving the way for a Health Promotion Academy.

13. Managed by HPB, the Health Promotion Academy will function as a Centre of Excellence for Health Literacy, developing programmes and curricula for training Health Ambassadors in health promotion and disease prevention.

14. Not the same as health education, health literacy is a relatively new area of knowledge and research aimed at raising awareness of health-related issues so as to effect behavioural change.

15. “By setting up a Health Promotion Academy, our Health Ambassadors will have access to even more rigorous training and development opportunities. This means they will be even more confident and effective in their roles as peer mentors, sharing healthy living messages with families and friends, and raising the level of health literacy across Singapore,” said Mr Ang.

16. The training curriculum for new ambassador recruits comprises a 12-hour basic module. Subsequently, Health Ambassadors will be strongly encouraged to take intermediate and advance modules to gain in-depth knowledge on specific health topics such as physical activity, nutrition, mental wellbeing, as well as health, cancer and functional screenings.

17. The Health Promotion Academy also offers several specialist pathways. For example, a Health Ambassador may work towards becoming a smoking cessation counsellor or a Master Trainer, training new volunteers or ambassadors.

18. The MoU between HPB and the SSHSPH aims to facilitate a strong exchange between applied research and policy formulation, as well as the co-creation of innovative solutions on the ground to meet population needs. Research is a key collaborative area, where HPB and SSHSPH will jointly identify research opportunities and conduct research projects of mutual interest.

19. In addition, HPB will be working with the International Union for Health Promotion and Education, Nanyang Polytechnic, medical schools and other tertiary institutions to develop and offer health promotion curricula and courses, and formulate a national framework on the certification and recognition of health promotion disciplines.

- Annex 1 Fact Sheet – Health Ambassador Network
- Annex 2 Fact Sheet – Senior Ambassador Programmes
- Annex 3 Fact Sheet – Youth Ambassador Programmes

Issued by Health Promotion Board

Health Ambassador Network (HAN)

As part of the 3Ps (people in the community, public sector and the private enterprises) approach, HPB will be tapping into the power of social networks - leveraging on the network of Health Ambassadors to create a healthy living social movement to:

- Disseminate HPB's health messages to the community.
- Empower the community to be health literate.
- Provide effective peer support to introduce and sustain behaviour change in individuals.
- Catalyse the recruitment of more Health Ambassadors in the community.

The Health Ambassador Network (HAN) Department has been formed to establish and manage the framework for effective recruitment, training, engagement/support, evaluation and recognition of the Health Ambassadors.

A HPB Health Ambassador should be practising healthy living, i.e. regular physical activity, healthy eating, not smoking and staying positive and having regular screening. He/she is passionate about helping others lead a healthy lifestyle and is committed to participate in HPB activities on a regular basis.

He/she can choose the following role(s):



Engagement Framework

- *Training:* Equipping Health Ambassadors with the knowledge and skills to help them carry out their role(s) well.
- *Supervision/Support:* Providing feedback to Health Ambassadors through regular group meetings and networking sessions.
- *Recognition:* Recognising and motivating the Health Ambassadors for their efforts and contribution such as testimonial features in media/newsletters, invitations to annual appreciation dinner and award ceremony, etc.
- *Evaluation:* Annual reviews by HAN and Ambassador Leaders to provide performance feedback to Health Ambassadors.

HAN will also be forming an Ambassador Leader Committee in the respective CDCs. Each Ambassador Leader Committee will plan and implement activities specific to the various ambassador interest groups of the various CCs. Activities include:

- Conducting simple health screening, e.g. measure Body Mass Index (BMI) and take blood pressure, recruit and mentor residents towards healthy living.
- Educating residents on healthy living and health literacy at the Healthy Lifestyle Corner of the CC.
- Providing follow-up and support to residents including encouraging residents to see a doctor, if need be.
- Inviting residents to participate in healthy lifestyle courses, workshops or seminars.

Examples of Interest Groups

I Quit Champions

These Champions are ex-smokers who have managed to overcome the challenges of quitting smoking and are very passionate about helping others quit the habit. Through the I Quit Club Facebook page, “White Belt” training sessions are organised for the ex-smokers, and thereby transforming the virtual Club on Facebook into a face-to-face platform for the I Quit Champions to meet up and learn new skills.

Healthy Agers

The Healthy Agers are older adults (aged ≥ 40 years) recruited originally under the Senior Health Ambassador Programme, launched in March 2011. This group of Health Ambassadors are trained and equipped with knowledge and skills on healthy ageing related topics as well as communication and mentoring. These Health Ambassadors will then reach out to their social networks to mentor and empower their peers through a series of engagement initiatives on healthy ageing, such as workshops, talks, exercise classes, sharing sessions, roadshows and one-to-one health discussion sessions.

Lose-to-Win Champions

Lose to Win (LTW) is a holistic weight management programme initiated in 2009 which has successfully encouraged overweight individuals to lose weight the healthy way. Past participants who have benefitted from the LTW experience and are interested in helping others to lose weight the healthy way will be recruited to be Champions. They will help new participants lose weight the healthy way, raise awareness of losing weight the healthy way, and create and strengthen social support networks for weight loss and maintenance.

Brisk Walking Champions

Brisk walking leaders from the various CDCs/CCs who have been trained by HPB on brisk walking techniques will be recruited to be Champions to educate and motivate their brisk walking group members on other aspects of healthy living, as well as to create and strengthen support networks for physical activity.

To sign up as a Health Ambassador, please log onto HPB’s website <http://www.hpb.gov.sg/healthambassador.aspx> or email HPB_HAN@hpb.gov.sg

Senior Health Ambassador Programme

The Senior Health Ambassador Programme (SHAP) is a key initiative under the Holistic Healthy Ageing Programme (HHAP) by the Health Promotion Board (HPB). By adopting a peer mentoring approach, SHAP engages older persons as volunteers and empowers them to age healthily by improving and maintaining their physical and mental well-being, functional health and that of their peers.

Senior Health Ambassadors will be trained and equipped with knowledge and skills on healthy ageing related topics, communication and mentoring. Senior Ambassadors will then reach out to their respective networks to mentor and empower their peers through a series of engagement initiatives such as workshops, talks, exercise classes, networking sessions, roadshows and one-to-one health discussion sessions.

Objectives of SHAP include:

- Engage older persons as volunteers (Senior Health Ambassadors) and equip them with knowledge and skills to maintain and improve their own health and that of their peers;
- Empower Senior Health Ambassadors with the soft skills (such as communication and counselling skills) so that they are able to effectively mentor their peers on issues relating to healthy ageing;
- Allow Senior Health Ambassadors to act as referral points for health information and services;
- Create a supportive network of older persons who advocate healthy ageing within their communities.

This programme is targeted at individuals aged 40 years and above. The programme will be implemented mainly in community settings. Participants of the programme will go through the following stages:

- a) Recruitment
- b) Induction
- c) Training
- d) Assessment & Profiling
- e) Engagement
- f) Retention

Collaborating partners are Council for Third Age (C3A), People's Association (PA), NTUC ULive, TSAO Foundation, National Library Board (NLB), Sage Action Group for Elders (SGAE) and WINGS.

Persons interested to become a Senior Health Ambassador may write in at:

hpb_healthy_ageing@hpb.gov.sg

Profile of Senior Health Ambassadors

Name : Teoh Gin Wah
Gender : Male
Age : 62

Mr Teoh Gin Wah, 62 years old, recognises the importance of healthy ageing. Like many other seniors, he fears being a burden to his family when he grows old. Hence, he believes in taking responsibility of his own health and this includes going for regular health screening to pick up conditions early.

When possible, Mr Teoh keeps himself physically healthy and mentally active. He enjoys his daily brisk walk exercise, meditation, reading (he reads both English and Chinese materials to maintain his language skills) and Sudoku. After his retirement, he kept himself busy by engaging in meaningful projects such as creating a photo book for his children that details their family roots.

Mr Teoh joined the Senior Health Ambassador Programme as he thought it was a good opportunity to learn useful health information. Ever since he has become a health ambassador, he felt more active and passionate about health than ever and hopes to spread what he has learned and experienced.

Name : Lu Kee Hong
Gender : Male
Age : 52

Kee Hong, 52, was diagnosed with high blood pressure, which he was taking medication for, early in life. In 2008 he decided to do something about it and the same year marked a milestone in his life when he finished his first marathon.

Since then he has lost weight, has become fitter and has been taken off the high blood pressure drugs by his GP. Today, he is passionate about keeping a healthy lifestyle, eating appropriately and exercising regularly. He believes that as one ages, one needs to be wiser and more skilled. One needs to keep healthy to enjoy life and contribute whatever little to others.

To age healthily means having a well functioning body and mind and be purposefully engaged. Given the opportunity, he would like to share the many benefits of being healthy to those who are keen to learn and develop healthy lifestyle as well. He believes that thinking about being healthy is not good enough. It is the doing that is challenging and motivating. Being able to achieve the goals that he has set for himself at the end of each year is his motivation. To him, healthy ageing is primarily an individual responsibility well supported by loved ones, family members and friends.

He is a dedicated husband and a loving father to 3.

Name : Siti Mariam
Gender : Female
Date of Birth : 51

Siti Mariam, 51, believes that in order to lead a happy lifestyle, one has to be physically, mentally and financially stable, so early preparations are crucial. She believes that one must be responsible for their own well-being. Age is just a number, so one should think positive and think young.

To age healthily means eating the right food, in moderation. She believes in exercising and also picking up new skills to keep her mind active. She enjoys brisk walking, stationary cycling and exercising in the gym with her group of regular friends who share the same philosophy about healthy living.

She enjoys spending time with her two grown-up daughters and husband.

Youth Health Ambassador Programme

1. The **Youth Advolution for Health (YAH)** was established in September 2005. It is Singapore's first youth-led health advocacy programme for youths aged 17 to 25 years old. First launched in September 2005, YAH started off with only six passionate youth, focusing only on smoke-free messages. Now, YAH has expanded to a big family of more than 400 members and the topics have also expanded to include sexual health, mental wellness, nutrition and physical activity.
2. The **Youth Mental Health Ambassador (YMHA) Programme** started in October 2010. This programme aims to groom youth opinion leaders in mental health, by empowering them with knowledge and skills essential for peer-led mental health promotion. The ambassadors are required to attend a two-day training workshop, in which they are equipped with basic knowledge on mental wellbeing, mental illnesses, mental health promotion strategies and project management skills. After the workshop, they organise and implement mental health promotion projects to reach out to their peers. As of February 2012, 149 youth leaders from various Post-Secondary Educational Institutes (PSEIs) and community organisations have participated in the two-day training workshop. Various mental health promotion outreach projects have also been organised by the trained mental health ambassadors, some of which were implemented in their schools and some on the social media platform.
3. **Audible Hearts** is an online peer support network which is run by youth volunteers aged 17 – 25 to provide anonymous peer support. Started in November 2006, Audible Hearts comprises a management team and a group of 'youth pals'. These volunteers undergo a customised three-day core training on online peer support skills. The training covers pertinent youth issues such as sexuality and suicide prevention to help them in their replies to users of the Audible Hearts website.
4. The **Primary School Health Ambassador Programme** targets upper primary students while the **Secondary School Health Ambassador Programme** involves lower secondary school students to take the lead in health promotion activities and initiatives within their schools. Student ambassadors undergo 18 hours training on health promotion topics, communication and project management skills, and teamwork and leadership skills. These health ambassadors then plan and implement student-led projects in which they share their knowledge with their peers and encourage them to adopt a healthy lifestyle. In 2010 and 2011, 120 primary school students successfully completed the programme. By 2012, another 100 primary school health ambassadors will be trained in addition to 100 new health ambassadors from secondary schools.

Profile of Youth Health Ambassadors

Youth Mental Health Ambassadors

Neo Chee Hui, Youth Mental Health Ambassador, 19 years old

Chee Hui participated in the Youth Mental Health Ambassador (YMHA) training workshop in March 2011. He signed up for the programme through Ci Yuan Community Club Youth Executive Committee (YEC), where he is an active volunteer.

Having suffered from low self-esteem in his secondary school days and having friends around him who sometimes break down because of stress, Chee Hui feels very strongly for youth mental health. He participated in the YMHA programme to learn positive coping skills so that he can help his friends achieve positive mental wellbeing.

“Having gone through down times myself, I understand the importance of learning positive skills and engaging in positive activities to build up one’s self-esteem and mental resilience. The Youth Mental Health Ambassador programme not only taught me many useful coping skills that I can share with my friends, it also provided me with many opportunities to grow my interest in event planning. I have spearheaded two mental health outreach projects – the ‘I Love Myself 7-Day Challenge’ on Facebook and the ‘Stay Healthy, Stay Positive Walk’ in my school.”

Moving forward, Chee Hui plans to further his passion to promote mental health to a wider audience, through his volunteer work in the community.

Arun Mathyvanan, Youth Mental Health Ambassador, 22 years old

Arun participated in the Youth Mental Health Ambassador training workshop in March 2011. Currently a Fine Arts student in La Salle College of the Arts, Arun makes use of his artistic talent to further the cause of mental health promotion. A member of the team behind the “I Love Myself 7-Day Challenge” online social movement, Arun created a unique badge design to promote positive self-appraisal and self-esteem among youth.

When asked what his greatest achievement as a YMHA was, he recounted his experience as the spokesperson for his project team at the National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign (NHLC) in October 2011, **“I was honoured to be the spokesperson for my team at the National Healthy Lifestyle Campaign launch event. I described the details of our project to the Guest of Honour Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean. I felt a great sense of achievement when he affirmed and commended our effort to promote self-esteem among our peers”.**

Nicole Chia, Youth Mental Health Ambassador, 23 years old

Nicole participated in the Youth Mental Health Ambassador training workshop in August 2011. She was nominated for the training as she was a member of the organising committee of a World Mental Health Day carnival in her school.

Her reasons for participating in this programme are: To learn more about mental health issues; to get to know and interact with more people through the training; to be able to encourage someone in need by sharing with them the positive coping skills learnt.

When asked what her greatest gain from the Mental Health Ambassador Programme was, the outgoing girl did not hesitate to say that it was the camaraderie forged with her teammates when they organised the event “Bounce Back Stronger” at ITE College East to commemorate World Mental Health Day.

“The knowledge I gained about mental health and resilience, as well as the friendships forged with my project teammates through this journey as a Youth Mental Health Ambassador are invaluable and precious to me. I am really grateful for the opportunity to be part of this meaningful initiative to spread positive mental health to my peers.”

Youth Advolotion for Health (YAH) Ambassadors

Camelia Tang, Vice President of Youth Advolotion for Health (YAH), 18 years old

Camelia started volunteering with YAH two years ago after joining a street outreach activity as part of the YAH Birthday Bash in 2009. She felt most proud of taking part in this initiative as she was at Orchard Road, encouraging fellow youths of her age that she did not know, to pledge to a healthy lifestyle. To the 16 year old Camelia, it proved that despite their age, youths were capable of coming up with innovative ways to influence Singaporeans to live healthily.

When asked whether she sees herself playing the role of a health advocate in 20 years time,

“I believe in that everyone can do our part to advocate and to encourage healthy living among our friends and loved ones. 20 years on, I foresee myself being a health advocate, not in the youth scene, but rather advocating for health issues that are relevant to my age. No matter how small the effort may seem, I will continue to encourage those around me to lead a healthy lifestyle and to do my part in making a difference to our generation.”

Just last year, Camelia successfully persuaded a friend, Cheryl, against trying out shisha. Cheryl heard rumours about shisha being a healthy and good alternative to relieve stress, and wanted to try it out. She was not ready to go to Arab street alone, and hence wanted to organise a group outing to try shisha after school one day. Upon hearing it, Camelia strongly protested and shared all the negative effects of shisha with Cheryl to dispel the myths and rumours that was spreading in school. Camelia also showed Cheryl the video on “Shisha Lies” that was prepared by the YAH team for the World No Tobacco Day 2011. Cheryl finally gave up the thought of trying shisha.

Camelia shared, “I was glad I managed to convince her to not give tobacco a try. I was also happy that what I learnt from YAH has been put to good use.”

Chua Bing Xu, Vice President of Youth Advolotion for Health (YAH), 21 years old

Before Bing Xu started volunteering with YAH, he was already a beneficiary of a fellow health advocate in his family – his father. The NTU student shares, **“My father has been inculcating healthy living habits in me since young, reminding me to sleep early, exercise and eat healthily. When I was in secondary school, we would play badminton and basketball together and jogged together when I went on to the army.”**

Today, Bing Xu pays it forward by encouraging his colleagues, relatives and friends to do physical activities together, and also to look out for what they eat and the nutritional value.

As the Vice President (Projects) of the Youth Advolotion for Health Executive Committee, Bing Xu hopes to encourage more peer advocacy with the provision of YAH grant for projects on health promotion - by youth, for youth.

“The most rewarding experience has been the opportunities to evaluate and read about a wide range of projects that my peers embark on to promote healthy living, to give them feedback from what I have learnt on health issues, and to empower them with the YAH grant so as to make a difference.