



**11 April 2005**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **LAUNCH OF CAREGIVERS WEEK 2005**

#### ***- TOUCH Caregivers Centre drives home healthy living message to caregivers***

Caregiving is a challenging task that can impact a caregiver emotionally and psychologically, as seen in a 2004 survey conducted by TOUCH Caregivers Centre (TCGC). The survey involved over 80 caregivers nominated from 17 organisations including hospitals and voluntary welfare organisations. 33% of caregivers interviewed were looking after more than 1 recipient and 42% of them found caregiving “highly stressful”. The three aspects of caregiving rated “most stressful” were the “emotional aspects”, “financial obligations” and “lifestyle change”. On the experience of caregiving, about 68% of caregivers felt that caregiving was “confining”.

Are you a caregiver? A caregiver is someone who looks after a family member or friend who is frail, has a disability, chronic, life-threatening condition or mental illness. Caregivers can be parents, spouses, brothers, siblings, relatives or friends.

In Singapore, our old age dependency ratio is currently 10 working adults to one elderly person. By 2030, there will only be three adults supporting an elderly person. An increasingly ageing population, where in less than 20 years one in five Singaporeans will be elderly, will place greater demands and strain on the working population.

Also, the 2000 Population Census showed that about 87% of the elderly live with their families and their needs are looked after mainly by family members. Couple this fact with a shrinking population growth and the importance of providing support to caregivers in Singapore becomes significant.

“With an ageing population, we will all be receivers or givers of care at some point in our lives. I am glad that the TOUCH Caregivers Centre is helping caregivers learn how to take the best care of their dependents and themselves.

My Ministry will continue to work hand in hand with the National Council of Social Service, TOUCH Caregivers Centre and the community to provide caregivers with the necessary support needed”, said Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State for Community Development, Youth and Sports.

In 2000, NCSS saw the need to reach out and increase services to caregivers. TCGC was selected by NCSS in 2002 to run a national support service. To further bolster services to caregivers, NCSS also funded and developed two specialised caregiver support services for caregivers of dementia and terminally ill clients run by Alzheimer’s Disease Association and Hospice Care Association.

Mr Benedict Cheong, Chief Executive Officer of National Council of Social Service (NCSS) said, “Caregivers are selfless people, many of whom stay at home to look after their loved ones. NCSS recognises that they need help in coping strategies and the alleviation of stress. NCSS is committed to providing support services to this special group of people.”

Organised by TCGC, the national resource centre for caregivers, Caregivers Week 2005 hopes to convey to potential and existing caregivers that information and support are available in the community. This year’s campaign will also focus on the health and well-being of caregivers (Please refer to Annex 1 for programme details).

The **Launch of Caregivers Week 2005** on 14 April 2005 will be officiated by Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Minister of State, Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS). This event is also supported by the MCYS, NCSS, Health Promotion Board and the Singapore Kindness Movement.

At the launch event, caregivers will be taught simple exercises using household items by an occupational therapist from TCGC. They can also let their hair down at a laughing session conducted by the Joo Chiat-East Coast Laughter Club and hone their culinary skills at a healthy cooking demonstration by SHATEC trainee chefs.

Caregivers Week will consist of a series of activities organised by the various voluntary welfare organisations to create greater awareness on caregiving, including appreciation events, support group meetings, and talks and seminars relating to caregiving (Please refer to Annex 2 & 3). In support of Kindness Week from 10 – 16 April, various voluntary welfare organisations will also be encouraging family members to show appreciation to caregivers in their midst.

Said Mr Eugene Seow, Executive Director of TOUCH Community Services, “Caregivers are ordinary folks like you and I. They have needs too. This is why we want to actively encourage caregivers to take care of themselves. Caregiving can be tough especially when you are confined at home 24 hours a day. Caregivers should recognise that sometimes, they, too, need some relief - in

attending to their own personal needs. If they can look after themselves well, they will be in a better stead to care for their dependents. Family members, neighbours and even care recipients should do their part by showing kindness and giving support to caregivers in their midst.”

Especially for the occasion, TCGC has published a seven-day self-care flip chart - *Healthy Mind, Healthy Body* - containing useful tips on healthy living to encourage caregivers to look after themselves physically and mentally. This includes tips on simple exercises, healthy recipes, how to deal with stress and where to get help. Caregivers can also assess their stress level through the Caregiver Strain Index. The flip chart will be made available to caregivers at various voluntary welfare organisations, hospitals, CDCs and libraries. Please refer to Annex 4 for a caregiver story.

We are pleased to invite your reporters and photographers / film crew to cover the event.

**Date:** Thursday, 14 April 2005 (Thursday)  
**Time:** 9 am to noon  
**Venue:** National Council of Social Service Centre  
Auditorium Level 2, 170 Ghim Moh Road, Singapore 279621  
(Please refer to the attached location map.)

Jointly issued by:



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**About TOUCH Community Services (TCS)**

TOUCH Community Services (TCS) is a not-for-profit voluntary welfare organisation established since 1992. We are a member of the National Council of Social Service.

TCS has an integrated network of 16 services located at different parts of Singapore, including Bukit Merah, Clementi, Geylang Bahru, Hougang, Serangoon, Toa Payoh, Ubi and Yishun. Each month, it supports some 4,000 regular clients. Over the last 13 years, TCS has reached out to more than 40,000 individuals from all religions and races, including children, youths, families, people with special needs or disabilities and the elderly.

**About TOUCH Caregivers Centre (TCGC)**

Set up in 2002, TOUCH Caregivers Centre (TCGC) is Singapore's first caregivers' centre - a national resource centre that helps caregivers cope with the challenges of caregiving. The Centre was officially opened by Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, then Minister of State for National Development in October 2002. Located at Blk 173, Toa Payoh Lorong 1, TCGC provides information and referrals to the various resources (medical and community services) available in the community; information on equipment and home modifications; counselling service; and training in caregiving skills. The centre is also furnished with various suitable fittings, such as non-slip flooring, ramps, grab bars, assistive devices and utensils, as well as disabled/elder-friendly furniture and appliances. TCGC also has a dedicated helpline (1800-352 1622) that provides assistance to callers and channels enquiries to the appropriate agencies. Caregivers can also log on to TCGC's website at [www.caregivers.org.sg](http://www.caregivers.org.sg) for a directory of services, tips and product guides. Caregivers Week is an annual public education campaign organised by TCGC.

**PROGRAMME FOR LAUNCH OF CAREGIVERS WEEK ON 14 APRIL 2005  
AT THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE CENTRE AUDITORIUM**

- 9:00 am**      **Media registration**
- 9:30**            **Arrival of Guest-of-Honour, Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon  
Minister of State, Ministry of Community Development, Youth  
and Sports**
- 9:35**            **Welcome by Mr Eugene Seow  
Executive Director, TOUCH Community Services**
- 9:45**            **“Let’s get Sporty”- Stretching and relaxation exercise for  
caregivers led by Ms Wong Li Peng, Occupational Therapist,  
TOUCH Caregivers Centre**  
Mrs Yu-Foo, together with caregivers and guests, will participate in a session  
involving simple bending and stretching exercises using mineral water bottles  
and bandanas. *(Photo Opportunity)*
- 10:00**          **“Let’s Unwind” – Laughter therapy for caregivers by Mrs  
Zareena Bana, Joo Chiat-East Coast Laughter Club**  
Mrs Yu-Foo, together with caregivers and guests, will participate in the laughter  
therapy. *(Photo Opportunity)*
- 10:15**          **“Let’s Thank Them” – Family members/ care recipients to  
present tokens of appreciation to caregivers.**  
Caregivers will be invited on stage to receive bouquets of flowers from family  
members, care recipients and representatives. *(Photo Opportunity)*
- 10:30**          **Presentation of Tokens to Sponsors**
- 10:35**          **“Let’s Makan”- SHATEC chefs to conduct cooking  
demonstration on healthy meals.**  
A cooking demonstration featuring ‘Poh Piah’, Fried Spaghetti Goreng and Roti  
Jala, will be conducted by SHATEC trainee chefs for caregivers. Mrs Yu-Foo will  
be guided by SHATEC chef to prepare a ‘Poh Piah’. *(Photo Opportunity)*
- Reception / Media Interviews**
- 11:15**          **End of event**