



KEEPING AGILE AND ACTIVE is no chore for Madam Daisy Chee, 71, who does aerobics and deep-sea fishing on a regular basis.

ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

Five seniors honoured for leading active lives

► Shuli Sudderuddin

IT IS difficult to pin down 71-year-old Madam Daisy Chee over the course of a week.

On Tuesdays she does aerobics, while on Thursdays she cuts a rug with youngsters at Latin and line-dancing events. And every fortnight, she spends her weekends going deep-sea fishing in the South China Sea.

Says the plucky single retiree: "I once caught a groupa weighing 10.2kg. You really require strong muscles to reel in something that size!"

Madam Chee is one of five seniors who received the Active Ager's Awards 2007 in a ceremony last night.

The awards, presented by the Council for Third Age, recognise and honour seniors who lead an active ageing and active living lifestyle.

The ceremony was the third and final event of the Active Ageing Festival, previously known as Senior Citizen's Week.

Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports and Second Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, who presented the awards, noted that the recipients possessed the four essential active ageing qualities – an active body, mind, social life and a happy heart.

IT-savvy Madam Sunanda Devi Senan, 70, picked up computer skills at the age of 58 when her son gave her a PC.

She learned the basic skills from him and borrowed books from the National Library to further her knowledge.

She now teaches other seniors computer skills at the Sree Narayana Mission and reminds her charges to "go to the cybercafe often".

Another award recipient, Haji Mohammed Hassan Haji Hatib, 67, spends his time doing exercises such as push-ups, playing pingpong with youths and doing his share of the household chores.

He provides religious advice and direction as an imam at Hajjah Rahima Bi mosque.

For Mr Harbhajan Singh, 67, one of Singapore's longest serving male nurses, work is still a passion.

As a senior nursing manager at Tan Tock Seng hospital, he continues to mentor young nurses.

Said Tan Tock Seng Hospital's nursing director, Madam Kwek Puay Ee: "Mr Singh is a treasure as he provides experience to our young staff."

The fifth award recipient, Madam Lee Kim Eng, used her husband's death in 1985 as a turning point to volunteer at Braddell Heights Community Centre, cooking meals for the needy elderly.

Said the 71-year-old who also keeps active through singing and dancing lessons: "I thought I was unlucky till I saw seniors who were worse off than I.

"I realised, I'm still able and I can help others. That's what keeps me going."

► Tips for great golden years

► **Start taking care of yourself early.** "I cut down on my salt and sugar intake at 55," said self-professed health nut, Madam Daisy Chee, 71.

► **Practise lifelong learning.** Madam Sunanda Devi Senan advocates learning the computer to keep in touch with grandchildren through MSN and Skype.

► **Think positive.** "Being happy goes a long way to being young at heart," said Madam Lee Kim Eng. "If you can't dance, remember, you can still sing."

► **Stay active.** Mr Harbhajan Singh exercises at the gym twice a week and incorporates brisk walks into his weekly routine to stave off boredom.

► **Plan your time well.** Haji Mohammed Hassan Haji Hatib's packed timetable allows him to send his grandchildren to school, help with the housework and exercise all in one day.