

Swinging sixties in good shape, on a roll

Some of the activities this band of spry men and women pursue can give the young a run for their money

BY PHILIP LEE

They may be silver-haired and in their golden years but they are not frittering away their lives in idleness.

For this group of seniors, there are many activities to enjoy and they do this with enthusiasm.

The public has identified 442 such people — 264 women and 178 men — whom they believe are notable examples of elderly folk who pursue active, healthy and fulfilling lives.

The nominees, all aged at least 60, were named by relatives, friends and neighbours as deserving of the Active Agers Award 2008.

It is organised by the Council for Third Age (C3A) to debunk the image of seniors as old fogies languishing idly at home.

These folk keep busy by being engaged in outdoor activities and community work. They also travel, attend courses, or mind their grandchildren.

Says the chairman of C3A, Mr Gerard Ee: "With more than 400 nominations received this year, we are heartened to know that more people are taking the initiative to honour the Active Agers in their midst."

"We hope through the awards, C3A can provide seniors in Singapore with role models of active agers who will inspire and motivate other seniors to look at growing old in a positive light, and not let age be a barrier to leading active and purposeful lives."

As Singapore's greying population continues to grow, these seniors have also been identified as an important consumer market since many of them also have the means to buy health care products, vitamin supplements, exercise machines, and specially-tailored labour-saving home appliances. Or they can go on long and leisurely holidays abroad.

Senior citizens, especially the active ones, are most likely to spend on such things to improve their lifestyles, and many do.

The C3A will pick five winners for this year's award, which was introduced last year.

A winner each will also be selected from among the five for two

new categories of awards — the Active Agers-Prudential Prime Award 2008 and the Active Agers-Infocomm Award 2008.

For the Active Agers Award 2008, the council is looking for seniors who continue to grow in the six dimensions of their lives — social, emotional, intellectual, physical, vocational and spiritual.

The Prudential award is for those with positive attitudes and a youthful outlook on ageing. They are the ones with a passion for activities not usually associated with people of their age.

The Infocomm award is for seniors who embrace mobile and digital technology as a part of their

daily lives.

Among the nominees are Mr James Lee Siew Hong, 69, and his wife, Madam Foong You Hon, 67, who are both deeply involved in digital photography, a hobby they picked up two years ago.

Mr Lee, who retired 15 years ago as an advertising executive, spends about three hours a day roaming the streets and keeping a watch for interesting subjects to capture with his Nikon 200 camera.

While Mr Lee specialises in street scenes, his wife prefers images of insects and animals. Together, they have a variety of Nikkor lenses and a photoshop facility to edit their pictures.



Says Mr Lee: "We picked up this hobby after we visited a communications exhibition in 2006. Since then, I have attended many photography courses and workshops and have become a licentiate in photography."

"This is a more fruitful way to spend our retirement years. I urge other seniors to get busy as well."

The winners of each award will each receive more than \$5,000 worth of prizes. Those who nominate them stand to win \$500 worth of prizes.

The winners will be announced on Oct 4 at an open-air gala on the historical Cavanagh Bridge near Empress Place.



Mr Lee's photography interest is in street scenes while his wife prefers nature shots.