

# Active Ageing fest's rallying call: Follow your passion

**New campaign aims to debunk myth that elderly are past their prime**

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THRICE every week, Mr S. Veerasamy heads for Bedok Stadium for a brisk 4km walk followed by a 400m run.

Nothing unusual there – except that the Siglap resident is 85. A competitive athlete till barely five years ago, the sprightly former tax officer describes these evening workouts as a “passion” which keeps him “fit, active and alert”.

A new campaign has been launched to persuade more people to follow their “passions” like he does.

The Active Ageing Festival – the former Senior Citizens Week reinvented – will tell the elderly that they can celebrate current pursuits instead of just focusing on past glories.

The festival will be held over two weekends next month and climax with the Active Agers Awards being given out on Dec 1. The drive is being organised by the Council for Third Age (C3A).

The weekend festival will be the first in a series of events C3A will hold to debunk conventional mindsets that frame the elderly as passive people past their prime.

Council chairman Gerard Ee said yesterday that people needed to shift focus from “ageing” to “living”:

“Whether you are 30, 50 or 70, your concerns are essentially the same – you must have a purpose in life.”

That purpose can come from anything, including line-dancing, theatre, photography, cycling, taiji or yoga.

Pursuing activities with others is how older folk can build “social networks” that provide support and companionship as they age, added Mr Ee.

The campaign will not confine itself to those well into old age, but also reach out to those in their 50s.

Said Mr Ee: “We want to offer them choices early, so

these future generations of old folk can look at the festival and say, “That’s what ageing should be about’.”

For a start, he hopes to attract 5,000 to 7,000 people excited enough about “active ageing” to win their peers over to the cause.

C3A’s chief executive officer, Mr Henry Quake, said the organisation was keen on working with grassroots bodies, welfare groups and even private, commercial entities to design year-round events to keep older folk active.

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**Check out the new look to the re-branded Senior Citizen's Week. Click on our free video news at [www.straitstimes.com](http://www.straitstimes.com)**

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## 3 key events

The Active Ageing Festival will have three main events:

» **The Active Ageing Carnival on Nov 18:** The one-day event at the open space above the Dhoby Ghaut MRT station is designed to help older folk discover the various ways in which they can stay active and alert.

» **Grandparents’ Day on Nov 25:** Highlights include a 1km “gentle walk” along the Singapore River from Raffles Place to the Asian Civilisations Museum for the elderly to enjoy with their grandchildren.

» **Active Agers Awards on Dec 1:** Five seniors will be honoured. Nominations are open from today till Oct 26. For details on how to nominate someone, log on to [www.activeageingfestival.com.sg/awards/](http://www.activeageingfestival.com.sg/awards/) or call C3A on 6358-0333.

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