

A new council to champion active ageing

THE COUNCIL, chaired by Mr Gerard Ee (right), will take over the responsibility for Senior Citizens' Week, and administer the GO! Fund on behalf of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.



Gerard Ee will chair the council, pulling together various groups in organising activities for seniors

► Tan Dawn Wei

VETERAN social worker Gerard Ee, 57, belongs to what he describes as the Third Age.

This is the time when a person is done with education and employment, and wants to use the retirement years to the fullest.

He will chair a council for Third Age, which will pull together the work of myriad groups organising activities and programmes for seniors. It will also help them network and make new friends.

A staff of about 15 will help him with his task and they will operate out of Junction 8 in Bishan. It is called the Centre for Third Age or its fancier acronym, C3A.

The council will play an "aggregator role", Mr Ee said.

"We'll gather feedback and have the overall radar screen and operate on a very national level," he told The Sunday Times when contacted yesterday.

Announcing the council's aims yesterday, Mr Lim Boon Heng, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, said it will take over the responsibility for Senior Citizens' Week, and administer the GO! Fund on behalf of the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports.

The fund supports programmes to keep Singapore's ageing population healthy and active.

The Centre will also hold regular dialogues with seniors to hear their views and recommendations on active ageing, and present them to the Government.

Mr Lim, who chairs the Ministerial Committee on Ageing, spoke at a symposium on positive ageing to an audience of active seniors like Dr Kanwaljit Soin and Dr Chiang Hai Ding.

Dr Soin is the chairman and founder of the Women's Initiative for Ageing Successfully (Wings), and Dr Chiang is the executive director of the Centre for Seniors.

Mr Lim said seniors should remain active, self-reliant and contribute to society. Strong bonds are also needed.

"We need to feel wanted; we need to feel useful; we need to feel appreciated."

He also suggested that educated baby boomers – who will be the seniors of the near future – contribute by conducting courses for less-educated seniors who want to pursue further studies.

The council's work will be all the more important, since there will be an estimated 873,200 persons over the age of 65 by 2030 – three times more than the figure now.

It will promote activities through the various non-governmental organisations, statutory boards and the commercial sector.

The symposium was organised by the National University of Singapore Society and University Women's Association (Singapore).

Mr Ee declined to reveal who the other council members are, saying it was still "premature to say too much".

The government-funded body is in the midst of getting incorporated and will be launched in June.

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