

Here's Hope for the elderly and destitute

Apart from befriender service, charity also does community outreach, counselling, workshops

BY STEPHANIE GWEE

HOPE keeps people alive.

When Madam Lee found herself homeless 13 years ago, it was volunteers from Hope Worldwide Singapore who encouraged her to carry on.

The organisation, which seeks to bring optimism to the destitute, works with everyone from single parents to low-income families and the elderly, such as Madam Lee.

When she was thrown out of her five-room apartment in Newton Road by her only son with only \$2,000 in her bank account, the 72-year-old nearly gave up on life. She asked that her full name not be used, but told The Straits Times in Mandarin: "I could not get along with his wife, so he thought that it was better for me to move out."

She now lives in a home for the elderly in the west, but admits that she feels lonely. The feeling is eased somewhat by monthly visits from Hope Singapore's volunteers who play games, read the newspapers to her and help with the gardening.

The faith-based organisation is a 16-year-old international charity based in Philadelphia, in the United States. Its Singapore affiliate was set up in 1998 by the Central Christian Church.

Its senior befriender service includes an annual clean-up and painting of homes for the elderly. Last year, more than 800 volunteers cleaned 50 flats.

Other community outreach programmes include health education and Family Life Education, and workshops on marriage, parenting and inter-generational bonding.

It operates skills training programmes for the unemployed, with student volunteers from the National University of Singapore conducting eight- to 10-week computer courses for youth and senior citizens.

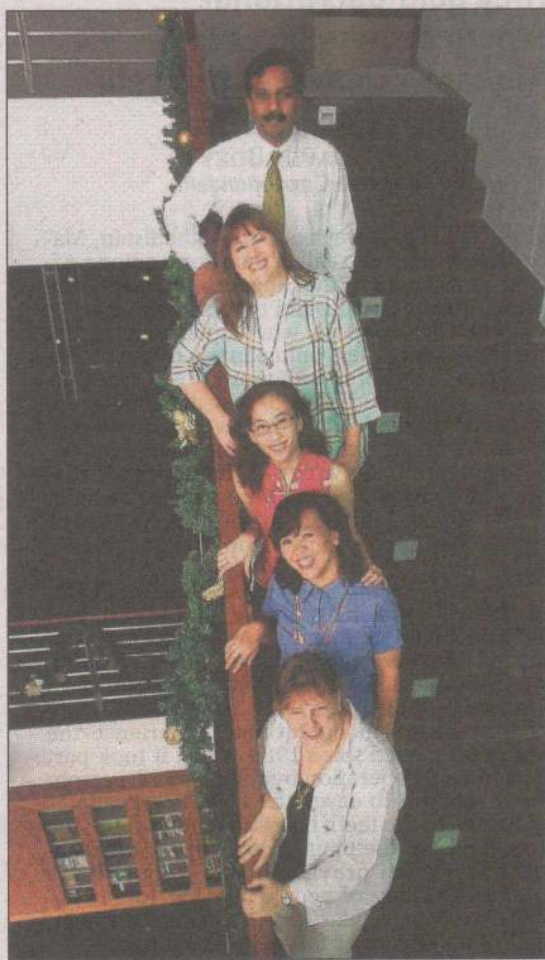
Its counselling methods include a Movie Therapy service, which uses movies and films to help people work through their problems. Films used in its programme for smokers, for instance, highlight success stories of those who succeed at snuffing out the habit. To date, more than 10,000 people have attended these movie workshops, including staff from the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) colleges.

Mr Mok Soh Hah, head of the Student Management and Academic Services Division of ITE College West, said: "The sessions were effective and impactful. They removed the monotony normally associated with such talks."

Indeed, Hope Singapore's chief executive officer Joyce Tan promised: "More programmes on the dangers of pornography, dealing with addiction and premarital sex can be expected in the future."

The organisation currently has about 1,000 volunteers, among them 750 regulars. It needs about \$400,000 annually, with funds being raised from the church, corporations and members of the public.

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ST PHOTO: AZIZ HUSSIN
BRINGING HOPE: Among those helped by Hope staff and volunteers are the elderly and the jobless.

Charity facts

Name: Hope Worldwide Singapore

What it does: Runs programmes on Family Life Education, health education and senior befriender services.

Money it needs each year: \$400,000

How it raises funds: Government and corporate grants, donations from Central Christian Church and the public, and

fund-raising activities.

Staff: 18

Volunteers: 1,000

In the kitty: \$100,000

Is it online?: Yes, at www.hopewsea.org. Its financial records will be available online from next month.

Why you should donate: It has a wide array of programmes targeted at the elderly, youth as well as the unemployed.