

MEDIA RELEASE

9 MARCH 2021

EMBARGOED UNTIL DELIVERY OF MINISTER SPEECH

RSVP SINGAPORE'S VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION DAY 2021

SENIOR VOLUNTEERING MOVES ONLINE, MORE PROGRAMMES TO STRENGTHEN INTERGENERATIONAL BONDING

Singapore, 9 March 2021 – In the past year, COVID-19 has brought about sudden change and restrictions to life as we knew it. Volunteering in this climate has been challenging, more so for seniors. For RSVP Singapore, a non-profit organisation of senior volunteers, its core work of providing regular physical volunteering opportunities for seniors had to change. Its seniors and staff had to adapt quickly to embrace digitalisation.

To keep its seniors engaged during circuit breaker, RSVP kickstarted a series of weekly activities in April 2020 titled “#StayHomeWithRSVP”. In 8 months, 50 volunteers carried out over 50 exciting activities via Zoom, Facebook Live or video tutorials for over 1,000 seniors. With the success of the programme, the “StayHomeWithRSVP” series has now been adapted to a hybrid model (virtual-physical) of activities named ALL@RSVP¹.

RSVP's befriending activities, guiding opportunities at places of interests and museums, IT classes for seniors, and its monthly volunteer recruitment drive Open House@RSVP had to move to the virtual space and new volunteer roles such as virtual hosts, virtual call-in support volunteers and community health literacy ambassadors were created. Since July 2020, over 400 virtual sessions engaged and outreached about 8,300 beneficiaries with 1,500 volunteers participating. Through these virtual sessions, our outreach actually increased by 66%!

Its signature event National Senior Volunteer Month (NSVM)², which was started in 2015 to promote senior volunteerism on a national scale, moved to a virtual platform in 2020, reaching out to over 6,000 participants for just the opening ceremony on 12 September. Through the 200 activities held over four months from July to October 2020, RSVP's 400 volunteers reached out to 5,000 beneficiaries.

¹ ALL stands for Activities, Learning, Lifestyle – covering different topics that interest senior volunteers. Refer to Annex C.

² Refer to Annex D for more information about National Senior Volunteer Month.

Prior to the digitalisation of NSVM, this annual physical event would attract an average of 1,500 participants with an average of 35 activities yearly since 2015. With the move to a virtual platform, attendance increased markedly as there were no constraints in venue capacity and those who could not attend the event 'live' were able to catch the recorded event on YouTube and Facebook later. This greatly boosted RSVP's outreach numbers by 300%. Based on this success, RSVP aims to continue running events on a hybrid physical-virtual model.

Minister for Culture, Community and Youth & Second Minister for Law, Mr Edwin Tong is the Guest of Honour for RSVP Singapore's Volunteer Appreciation Day (VAD) 2021, an annual event where RSVP Singapore expresses its appreciation to their approximately 600 active and dedicated senior volunteers who have served the community through its programmes for the past year. This year, there were nine award recipients, from three award categories. They are the Special Commendation Award, Volunteer of the Year Award and Emeritus Award.

Minister Tong said, "Seniors have a wealth of skills, wisdom, and life experience. RSVP Singapore is a key partner in the SG Cares Movement that aims to deepen our culture of care through senior volunteerism. I commend RSVP Singapore for continuing to engage our senior volunteers amid the pandemic, and our senior volunteers for their selfless efforts. RSVP Singapore is also a partner in one of MCCY's Singapore Together Alliance for Action – a cross-sector collaboration that is tackling emerging needs and volunteerism. I call upon Singaporeans to support the work of RSVP Singapore in growing the spirit of SG Cares, and making Singapore a more caring and inclusive home."

Though the pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges, RSVP's volunteers have stepped up to embrace new technologies for outreach and volunteering engagement, navigating an untrodden path in a post-COVID-19 volunteering landscape.

Two volunteers were given the Volunteers of the Year for 2019 and 2020 awards - Mr Tai Yen Keong and Mr Han Cheng Kwang respectively³.

Over 1,100 persons including its volunteers, key personnel from government agencies, community partners and corporate donors attended the first ever virtual Volunteer Appreciation Day.

³ Refer to Annex E for volunteer stories.

Curating programmes to strengthen intergenerational bonding has always been on RSVP's agenda, and this will continue in the years ahead.

In 2019, it had piloted a "Football Forward" programme with AMKFSC Spright Academy (Cheng San) and We Wanted To Be Footballers (WWTBF). The 10-week pilot started in July 2019 with 5 RSVP volunteers and 20 beneficiaries from AMKFSC Spright Academy. The soccer outreach programme targeted children of low-income families to engage them physically, academically, and socially. It also gave opportunities for both the children and senior volunteers to interact with each other and form bonds. The programme received much positive feedback from all stakeholders. Due to COVID-19, plans to continue the programme in 2020 were put on hold. The programme will resume in March 2021 with safe management measures in place.

Another intergeneration initiative which RSVP piloted was a "Digital Literacy Programme" (DLP)⁴ for primary school students in December 2020. Together with Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC), I Am Talented and Engineering Good, RSVP conducted two DLP pilots. Its objective was to increase students' readiness and ability to use laptops for learning, which is critical in this climate of home-based learning and virtual activities. Through these two pilots, 23 RSVP volunteers and 13 youth volunteers impacted 50 students. Plans are underway to roll out this programme to more primary schools and community partners.

Mr Koh Juay Meng, PBM, Chairman of RSVP Singapore, said, "Despite the challenges of COVID-19, I'm heartened that our senior volunteers are very eager to continue volunteering and have done so with safety measures in place. Our shift towards digitalising our service and programmes is an on-going process and we are proud that we are nimble enough to adapt to this change. We are also aware of the importance of engaging the young ones and giving them the opportunities to interact with our seniors who can share their knowledge and values with them."

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⁴ Refer to Annex F for more information on the Digital Literacy Programme.

RSVP Singapore

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About RSVP Singapore

RSVP Singapore The Organisation of Senior Volunteers is an Institution of Public Character and the National Centre of Excellence for Senior Volunteerism under the patronage of Mdm Halimah Yacob, President of the Republic of Singapore. The organisation started in 1998 and was launched by then-Prime Minister Mr Goh Chok Tong. RSVP Singapore is a registered society under the Societies Act and a member of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

Since its inception, RSVP Singapore has been actively engaging seniors in purpose-driven volunteerism. With over 2,500 volunteers, RSVP Singapore serves more than 200,000 beneficiaries each year including the mentally disadvantaged, at-risk children from low income families, and socially isolated seniors through its community service programmes.

www.rsvp.org.sg

Event Programme
RSVP Singapore's Volunteer Appreciation Day 2021
(Live stream)

Time	Description
02:30PM	Arrival of Guests and Volunteers
02:45PM	Welcome Introduction by Emcee
02:50PM	Welcome Address by RSVP Chairman
03:00PM	Speech by Guest-of-Honour Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth & Second Minister for Law
03:10PM	Award Presentation
03:40PM	Performance and Entertainment
04:20PM	Lucky Draw
04:30PM	End of Virtual Appreciation

About ALL@RSVP

As Singapore is in Phase Three post-Circuit Breaker, RSVP's programmes and activities have resumed in physical form partially with safe management measures in place.

Seniors are now able to leave their homes and engage in limited social activities, hence the "StayHomeWithRSVP" series will be rebranded to "ALL@RSVP". ALL will stand for Activities, Learning, Lifestyle – covering different topics that interest our senior volunteers.

This initiative will continue to include talks and activities that are hosted by our volunteers for our volunteers on a monthly basis. As a brand name, "ALL" also conveys the concept that our volunteers will be able to find topics and activities of interest to them all under one roof i.e. All at RSVP.

ALL@RSVP started in January 2021, replacing the "StayHomeWithRSVP" series and will be officially announced during Volunteer Appreciation Day 2021 on 9 March by RSVP Chairman Mr Koh Juay Meng, PBM.

To view past activities under "StayHomeWithRSVP", visit the webpage [here](#) or watch videos on YouTube [here](#).

About National Senior Volunteer Month

In line with its mission to provide opportunities for seniors to serve the community, RSVP led the first major volunteering movement targeted at seniors in 2012, encouraging them to embark on their volunteering journey. Working with various VWO partners, volunteering opportunities were created to allow new and would-be volunteers to have a taste of volunteering.

This movement, called Senior Volunteer Week (SVW), has grown from a months-long celebration from 2015 onwards. SVW was rebranded as National Senior Volunteer Month (NSVM) to highlight its significance at a national level of increasing the number of senior volunteers in Singapore. NSVM is now an annual signature event of RSVP to promote volunteerism among seniors and their families.

Visit <https://rsvp.org.sg/nsvm/> for more information on past NSVM events.

Volunteer Stories

Volunteer of the Year 2020 – Mr Han Cheng Kwang, 64



Mr Han, a retired civil engineer, has been a volunteer since 2018 in RSVP's Cyberguide Programme as a trainer training seniors. Due to his keen interest in IT, Mr Han challenged himself to move from learner to trainer, to developer and finally project team leader.

As a volunteer, Mr Han is exemplary in his passion to learn and share technology with fellow senior volunteers and empowering them to train other seniors in the community. After being introduced to drones programming classes conducted by ITE, he took the initiative to lead a group of senior volunteers to design and develop a new IT course "Introduction to Drones" to be conducted by RSVP's senior volunteer trainers. The course has been running since 2019.

Mr Han is currently leading a group of seniors to research and learn e-learning design and course development. He continues to keep abreast of the new norm and delivered the first virtual training course on "Using WhatsApp". Mr Han's passion for volunteering with a purpose has impacted seniors around him at the Senior Activity Centres, organisations and the community.

Volunteer of the Year 2019 – Mr Tai Yen Keong, 67



Mr Tai is currently involved in RSVP's Senior Guiding Programme as a facilitator for fringe activities at the Indian Heritage Centre and a docent at Kwong Wai Shiu Hospital. Apart from this, Tai is a receptionist for the Cyberguide Programme. He readily assists those with enquiries and goes the extra mile to make them feel at ease. He carries out his volunteering duties with enthusiasm and commitment.

Tai is a dependable volunteer, always ready to mentor new volunteers and share his experience and skills with his peers. He was a part of Videocast team

and Volunteer Management Committee for two years and is currently the Vice President of Gavel Club.

Modest and humble, Tai has contributed much to the organisation. He is notable not only for his zeal in his volunteering responsibilities, but also for his willingness at all times to lend an extra hand when needed such as helping out for ad-hoc volunteer outreach programmes and covering manpower shortages.

About Digital Literacy Programme

RSVP piloted the “Digital Literacy Programme” (DLP) for primary school students in December 2020. Together with Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC), I Am Talented and Engineering Good, RSVP has conducted two DLP pilots. The objective of DLP is to increase students’ levels of readiness and abilities to effectively use laptops for learning. It equips students with digital skills to complement schools’ efforts in imparting cyber-wellness and readies students to embrace education in the digital space as they progress to higher education.

The collaboration with Central Singapore CDC and I am Talented took place on 8 and 9 December 2020 and impacted 10 beneficiaries from CATCH Plus Centre through five senior volunteers and four youth volunteers.

The other collaboration with Engineering Good had 18 RSVP volunteers step forward as support trainers for nine youth volunteers who conducted digital literacy workshops on computer hygiene habits to 39 primary school students in Naval Base and Corporation Primary Schools. Engineering Good also fundraised and provided refurbished laptops to 20 Naval Base Primary School students and 19 Corporation Primary School students.

Plans are underway to roll out this programme to more primary schools and community partners.