

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Media Division, Ministry of Information and the Arts, #36-00 PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road, Singapore 119963. Tel: 3757794/5

=====

EMBARGO INSTRUCTIONS

The attached press release/speech is EMBARGOED UNTIL AFTER DELIVERY.

Please check against delivery.

For assistance call 3757795

=====

SPRINTER 4.0, Singapore's Press Releases on the Internet, is located at:

<http://www.gov.sg/sprinter/>

=====

Speech by Mrs Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Community Development at the Official Opening of

Daybreak Family Service Centre (Yi shun) on

Saturday 27 November 1999, 12.30 pm at Blk 855 Yi shun Ring Road

Good Morning

Associate Professor Tan Boon Wan, MP for Nee Soon South, Ang Mo Kio GRC

Bishop Wong Kiam Thau, Bishop of the Methodist Church in Singapore

Mr John Cheong, Chairman of the Methodist Welfare Services

Mr Lam Siew Wah, Chairman of Daybreak Family Service Centre

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. It is my pleasure to be with you this morning at the official opening of Daybreak Family Service Centre or FSC.

2. The establishment of Daybreak Family Service Centre today is yet another example of how the Methodist Welfare Services or MWS has been able to harness resources within the Methodist Church in Singapore to serve the community. MWS has a good track record of providing quality social services to meet a wide range of community needs. Daybreak Family Service Centre will be the fourth FSC in the MWS group.

3. Family Service Centres play a key role in bringing about strong families in Singapore. They are repositories of family expertise and resources located within easy reach of residents. All families can turn to the FSCs for information on family enrichment or help in any matter relating to the family. They can do so with full confidence that they will receive professional service, as FSCs are staffed by professionally trained social workers. One of the key programmes MCD has in place to strengthen families is the FSC programme. There are now 26 family service centres in Singapore. Like all FSCs, Daybreak FSC has customised its programmes to suit the needs of the community

#### Well Families Must be Vigilant As Well

4. When a family develops an immediate problem, for example marital conflict, rebellious children, strained relationship with grandparents, the problem is obvious and the need for action is clear. We are fortunate that only a small proportion of our families face such immediate problems.

5. The majority of our families are "well" families, for whom family life is blissful and happy. At the Ministry of Community Development, our concern is not just confined to families in difficulty, but extends to the majority of well families as well. This is because many of the key family trends today are trends that affect the average family, families like yours and mine.

6. For instance, a National Youth Council survey found that youths were most likely to turn to their friends for advice. Less than 25% of youths said they would turn to their mother. This percentage was the lowest when compared to the 9 other countries included in the survey. This is a concern. If parents are not the ones advising their children, how are we transmitting values that are important to us down to our children? Maybe this partly explains why juvenile delinquency figures have risen this year.

7. Dual income families are on the rise. Today, the labour participation rate for married women aged 25-34 years, the age women are most likely to have young children, is 66%, compared to 59% in 1990 and 38% in 1980. Other statistics show that the number of hours we put into work is slowly creeping upwards. The Study on the Singapore Family found the extent to which married couples share household duties is low. It also found that more than half of families do not rely on their parents or in-laws for help with family duties. These trends raise the question of how families will cope with family responsibilities such as upbringing children. Such concerns may cause young couples to find marriage less attractive, or choose to marry later have fewer babies. MCD is also paying close attention to these trends. Earlier this year, it had re-constituted the Committee of the Family to study the trends more thoroughly. In recognition of the trends I mentioned earlier, the Committee has formed two Subgroups, one on Parenting and another on Stress on the Family. The Committee will be completing its report in the middle of next year. This report will help complement and improve the existing programmes that MCD has to promote the family.

8. Hence, the FSC is not a fixed package of family services. While services such as casework, counselling and providing of information and referrals are common

to all FSCs, each FSC identifies its developmental and preventive programmes to suit the needs of the community it serves

9. This customisation is an on-going process. A FSC must review its range of services periodically, to make sure that its services keep pace with evolving community needs. For instance, younger housing estates with young families may need parenting programmes, while older estates may need programmes to mobilise volunteers among the elderly and support the care-givers of elderly. FSCs must therefore be ever ready to re-invent themselves, and be comfortable with change. They need to be continuously creative and innovative.

10. In developing new programmes to meet emerging service gaps, FSCs adapt, modify and replicate services that are well-received and successful. This is sensible and cost-effective. However, this approach relies on the existing knowledge base of services and programmes, and may not be sufficient to fill all service gaps. In certain circumstances, experimentation and innovation are required in the development of new services and programmes that have not been tried out previously elsewhere.

11. The Ministry of Community Development recognises this difficulty and has formulated a new scheme to help FSCs innovate and try out new programmes. I am pleased to announce the introduction of a new funding scheme known as Pilot Project Funding (PPF for short).

12. This PPF Scheme will provide selected pilot projects with a one-off grant to help and encourage FSCs wishing to try new projects to meet the special needs of their clients. The grant is similar to the seed venture capital for a business plan. Only pilot projects which are well-thought through, meet well-identified community needs, have well-defined deliverables and project evaluation criteria will receive the grant.

13. This grant will meet up to 50% of the costs of the supported project, and will come from donated funds administered by MCD. MCD estimates that a typical pilot project will cost nearly \$260,000, hence, the grant will be capped at \$130,000. The FSC should seek community resources for the balance of the project costs.

14. Each year, a few projects may be funded, with the number depending on the quality of projects received, as well as the availability of donated funds. MCD will invite projects once annually. I would like to take this opportunity to invite proposals from FSCs. MCD will be assessing PPF proposals in February next year. We look forward to receiving your proposals between now and end of January 2000.

15. I am confident that the PPF Scheme will unleash the pioneering and innovative spirit among FSCs. A few weeks ago, I had announced a research grant to encourage more research to be done in the social work field. The aim of the research grant is to create a culture of research in the field and to broaden the

yfys19991127h

knowledge base. Similarly, I hope that the PPF Scheme will also encourage a culture of innovation and experimentation. This is necessary if the social work field is to develop, mature and improve over time in line with evolving needs of our families.

16. While social work professionals and community services play an important role in helping our families stay healthy and strong, I must remind all families to play their part as well. Voluntary welfare organisations and the MCD can develop better and more effective programmes for our families, but these efforts will come to nought if families do not play their part to nurture family ties, to spend time with one another, to communicate with each other and cherish their family bonds. Whether or not your family remains strong, ultimately depends on you.

17. On that note, let me congratulate MWS on the opening of its fourth FSC. I am confident that Daybreak FSC will serve its residents well given its capable leadership, strong support from MWS and a dedicated team of professional staff. I wish Daybreak FSC every success in their endeavour to serve the community. I urge all residents of Yishun to make full use of the services available at Daybreak FSC.

18. Thank you

National Archives of Singapore