

Interest groups nurture family ties

More activities to promote active grandparenting and newly-weds' involvement in community

BY ANG YIYING

GRANDPARENTS and newly-wed couples have caught the eye of grassroots leaders keen to nurture closer families.

More interest groups will be started in the coming year to encourage active grandparenting on the one

hand, and newly-weds to be involved in the community on the other, the People's Association (PA) said yesterday.

There are now 10 interest groups for grandparents to spend time with their families in activities such as cooking, karaoke and yoga, and these will be ramped up to 14, said the PA.

The director of family life and active ageing at PA, Ms Joan Pereira, said seniors are a focus because of the ageing population.

One in five people in Singapore will be aged 65 and older by 2030.

Getting seniors to participate in grandparenting groups not only strengthens intergenerational bonds but also allows them to stay mentally or physically active, she said.

Newly-weds are another new focus as they tend to be caught up in career commitments or starting a family and are not engaged in the community.

One way to reach out to this group is through marriage solemnisers who are also family life champions.

Of the 84 family life champions here, 54 are licensed solemnisers who are able to keep in touch with couples and their needs and interests.

One of them, a licensed solemniser and family life champion for Punggol East constituency, Mr Wilson Lim, 44, said he is keen to start a wakeboarding group for newly-weds.

Mr Michael Palmer, an MP for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC, said promoting family life to residents requires grassroots leaders to come up with innovative ideas and is not an easy task. "You can't force the family life thing in their faces."

The appointment of one family life champion per constituency was started in 2005 as a way to comple-



(At rear from left) PA director of family life and active ageing Joan Pereira; family life champions Daisy Koh and Wilson Lim; and Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC MP Michael Palmer mingle with participants of a three-generational baking interest group, one of many such groups aimed to promote closer family ties within constituencies. ST PHOTO: ASHLEIGH SIM

ment pro-family measures by the Government.

Activities organised by these champions have more than doubled from 204 in 2005 to 493 last year.

The profiles of these grassroots leaders are also younger. About half of them are now aged 50 or

younger, compared to only two in 10 in 2005.

Outstanding grassroots leaders and programmes in promoting family life will be recognised at an award ceremony organised by the PA on Saturday.

ayiying@gmail.com