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# Getting young and old to bond

New inter-generational interest groups are helping families bond through shared activities

By ANG YIYING

NEARLY three in four of 502 grandparents surveyed here believe that sharing activities with their children and grandchildren will promote bonding.

The truth, however, is that only about a third of them walk the talk.

A grassroots movement led by the People's Association (PA) has thus arisen to form inter-generational interest groups, in which family members across the generations get into activities – including doing sports and picking up languages or skills such as cooking.

At least four such groups have come up at the constituency level in the last four months. Meeting monthly with instructors or facilitators, these groups have learnt yoga, cooking and karaoke singing, or taught one another Chinese dialects or English.

One group formed last year brings together seniors who trade grandparenting tips and go on outings to the Science Centre or on picnics with their grandchildren.

The PA's goal is to have at least one such group in every one of the 84 constituencies.

It is a step up from promoting inter-generational bonding through mass events such as family days and festive celebrations.

PA's director of family life and active ageing division Joan Pereira said: "In a large-group setting like one for the



Both the young and old can enjoy the yoga sessions at Geylang Serai Community Centre. ST PHOTO: ASHLEIGH SIM

## Yoga helps keep it all together

EVERY month, a group of young and old people gathers at the Geylang Serai Community Centre to practise yoga.

Club Yoga, which started in July, was the idea of Madam Fu Chuan San, 68, a family life champion in the Geylang Serai constituency.

It was a way to get seniors to stay active through exercise and get families together, said the retiree. "When grandparents look after the grandchildren, they usually watch TV, so it's not very active. Yoga is not a very tedious exercise, so grandparents and grandchildren can do it together and move about together instead of sitting down and watching TV."

Up to 15 families may come for the sessions, which are facilitated by yoga instructor Anthony Loy, 54.

To ensure it is suitable for participants of all ages, Mr Loy said he makes the class do only "very simple stretching".

After the yoga stretching at sessions, games would also be held for the grandchildren. Sometimes, birthdays and festive occasions are celebrated afterwards.

Maid agency director Low Moon Heng, 37, has attended sessions with his mother, wife and two children.

He said it was a way for the family to do things together and that they try to recap what they have learnt in their free time at home. Mr Low's mother, Madam Chan Kum Ho, 65, said in Mandarin: "I will practise a little bit."

Madam Chewah Mat, 72, was at a recent session with her grandson, Zikry Mohamed Yusoff, eight. She said she enjoyed having her grandson along and that she felt closer to him.

Zikry said: "It's fun and you can play games."

Mid-Autumn Festival, there may be 200 to 300 people, so the bonding would be a bit superficial. You would either be carrying a lantern or eating."

Interest groups foster closer communication because families have to work together at the activity, she said.

Most of these interest groups are led by family life champions, who are grassroots leaders appointed by the constituencies' citizens consultative committees.

One such group in Buona Vista is a ka-

raoke group for families. Called Golden Tunes, it started out as a group of seniors who met frequently to sing, said the constituency's family life champion Jackie Goh, 36.

It has since added sessions which include younger members of their families. About once a month, 30 people from up to nine families pass the microphone among themselves at "My Buona Vista Place", a neighbourhood service centre.

Mr Goh noted that the grandparents

have since widened their repertoire to include newer songs, instead of sticking to golden oldies.

A group in Yio Chu Kang which calls itself Grandma's Recipes has set out to share family recipes. At each session, a grandparent-and-grandchild team will share one, which the other teams try to replicate.

So far, more than 10 grandparent-grandchild pairs have whipped up goodies like konnyaku jelly, pumpkin

rice, curry chicken, cupcakes and roti jala (a Malay lacy pancake or crepe).

Madam Susan Lim, 56, has been at two of these sessions with her granddaughter, aged three.

At one of them, she showed the others how to make konnyaku jelly, her granddaughter's favourite.

She said, in Mandarin, that her granddaughter had exclaimed: "Ah Ma can cook very well!"

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