



PHOTO: DESMOND WE

TOUCHING LIVES: Kampung Senang co-founder Joyce Lye (left) with Madam Irene Yeo, who manages the group's Aljunied lifestyle centre for cancer patients.

# Community care with a dash of kampung spirit

Group's centres reach out to cancer patients, the elderly and young

BY ADELINE CHIA

FORMER hotel housekeeper Irene Yeo knows a thing or two about picking up after someone's mess — including the mess one's spirits are in after having been diagnosed with cancer.

The 58-year-old fought breast cancer three years ago and has since been given the all-clear.

She is now the centre manager of the Kampung Senang Holistic Lifestyle Centre in the void deck of Block 106, Aljunied Crescent. She not only runs the place but also helps patients and their families at the centre cope with the disease.

The centre's new premises officially open today. It has 372 sq m of space where counselling sessions are held for cancer patients and where workshops and talks on healthy lifestyles and attitudes are open to all.

The Aljunied centre is the fifth one run by Kampung Senang, a charity organisation that marries care for the environment and care for the community.

Its four other centres are hubs for a range of community services.

## Charity facts

**Name:** Kampung Senang Charity & Education Foundation

**What it does/who it helps:**

It runs a wide range of services and programmes, such as support and health services for cancer patients and their families, and daycare services for the elderly, students and children.

**Money it needs each year:** \$1 million

**How it raises funds:** It raises money through pledges from members and ad hoc donations.

**Premises:** It runs five centres — two in Tampines, and one each in Hougang, Aljunied and Kovan. Its headquarters is at Block 840, Tampines Street 82.

These include two kindergartens, a childcare centre, a daycare centre for the elderly and a free clinic.

True to its name, Kampung Senang preserves a rustic, natural simplicity in its operations.

For example, the fruits and vegetables grown on its small organic farm at its Tampines headquarters go straight into the lunches at its daycare and childcare centres.

The greens are also delivered islandwide to cancer patients and the

**How much in the kitty?:** \$180,000

**How many staff?:** 35

**How many volunteers?:** 200 are registered, among whom 90 are active.

**Is it online?** Yes, at <http://www.kg-senang.org.sg/home.htm>

**Are its financial records online?:** Yes.

**Why you should donate:** "Your support will give many afflicted people and their families relief from their suffering and a fighting chance to survive their illness," said co-founder Joyce Lye.

elderly poor at a subsidised rate of \$10 a pack. Poorer recipients get them free.

Although cancer patients form the bulk of Kampung Senang's 1,000 beneficiaries now, they were not the organisation's focus until three years ago.

At that time, Kampung Senang made the news when it continued delivering vegetables during the Sars outbreak.

Ms Joyce Lye, 54, who founded

the welfare group with her husband in 1999, recalled: "We went with masks and stickers on our shirts showing our temperatures. We wanted to show some kampung spirit during that time of fear."

After their story ran in The Straits Times, 150 cancer patients — including Madam Yeo — called up Kampung Senang to inquire about its activities.

Inspired by the response, the organisation started home visits and wellness programmes such as yoga and *qigong* classes for these patients at its Tampines headquarters.

Then these patients themselves volunteered to give support and advice to fellow patients on how to prepare for and cope with radiotherapy and chemotherapy sessions.

By the time the number of cancer beneficiaries went past 600, Kampung Senang's premises at Tampines were bursting at the seams. This was how the new lifestyle centre at Aljunied, exclusively for cancer patients, came to be.

Madam Yeo, the centre's mother hen, bustles around, playing chief befriender and counsellor.

She visits cancer patients' homes, lends a listening ear and invites them to the centre to join in the activities and eventually integrate them into working life again.

Said the energetic single mother of two girls: "Cancer is not a life sentence. We carry on."

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