

Embargoed until 23 April, 10:30am



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To News Editor

DEDICATED TO DOING GOOD DESPITE COVID-19 CHALLENGES

Community and corporate volunteers recognised for making key contributions to the North West community in 2021

For the 117 selfless individual or group volunteers, the pandemic merely made them more determined to serve the less-privileged, often through new and novel ways. Instead of being deterred by the prevailing safe management measures, volunteers opened their hearts and strengthened their resolve to reach out safely to residents who are in need. These passionate individuals, organisations and school partners will be recognised for their outstanding commitment in caring for the community and environment, as well as dedicating their time and service to serve the vulnerable community. In addition, the students will be recognised for contributing significantly to the community through the **North West Community Development Council's (CDC)** programmes and excelling in their CCA, leadership and academics.

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2 One of the awardees is **Mr Varadarajan Sivanandan**, an active volunteer and befriender at the Sree Narayana Nursing Home. Since 2018, he would visit the nursing home every weekend to keep the residents company and engage in regular conversations with them. When the pandemic struck and the nursing home was forced to close its doors to visitors, Mr Varadarajan had to think out of the box. As a certified Yoga Instructor, he started conducting virtual yoga sessions through zoom every fortnight for the residents to keep their bodies and minds active. Through these sessions, residents learn proper breathing and relaxation techniques to help them cope with the isolation, stress, and anxiety that the pandemic may have brought.

3 Mr Sivanandan will be among the 117 individual and organisational volunteers who will be recognised at the **North West Volunteers' Appreciation 2022**. The awards are based on five categories, including North West WeCare Volunteer Award, North West WeCare Partner Award, Outstanding School Partner Award, and Outstanding All Rounder Student Award. The CDC will also honour volunteers under the North West Special Recognition Award to appreciate volunteers who have gone the extra mile to help the vulnerable during the pandemic.

4 Hosting the CDC's first physical large-scale event in two years, **Mayor of North West District, Mr Alex Yam** says, "As we move forward into a Covid-19 resilient nation, the support of our community becomes increasingly crucial in overcoming challenges. As the CDC plans to launch new schemes and programmes, the role our volunteers and partners play is extremely important in supporting and uplifting our North West residents. I'm heartened to see many of our volunteers and partners who have demonstrated outstanding commitment in serving our community, and we hope to continue inspiring more volunteers and partners to come on board and join us on this meaningful journey."

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5 This year, 43 schools will receive the Outstanding School Partner Award. Six schools – the highest ever tally – will be lauded with the Platinum award in recognition of their outstanding efforts to provide a platform for students to contribute back to society.

6 First time Platinum awardee, **Fuchun Secondary School**, has participated in 11 North West CDC programmes and encouraged their students to actively engage and support those in need. Over 560 students have stepped forward to serve the community, benefitting over 10,000 beneficiaries and participants. **Mr Shawal Hussin, Principal of Fuchun Secondary** says, “I am proud of our students who have supported in every way to bring joy and serve the community, understanding the happenings around them beyond their classrooms. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, they were able to think out of the box and created new initiatives to spread important messages to the vulnerable community. We will continue to impart the value of giving back to our students through future collaborations with the North West CDC.”

7 The CDC will continue to assist vulnerable residents by connecting our partners to the needs in the community and playing the enabler role to support our residents, partners, volunteers and colleagues in the North West. To explore partnerships and volunteerism opportunities, please write to northwestcdc_partnerships@pa.gov.sg.

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Annex A – Profile stories

About North West Community Development Council (CDC)

The Community Development Councils (CDCs) were established to build a tightly-knit, compassionate and self-reliant community. North West CDC works closely with various community and corporate partners to strengthen Singapore's social fabric; and encourages the more able and successful to come forward to help the less successful, and to foster greater sense of community ownership and self-help among the residents.

We strive to align our activities and efforts with our mission:

(a) Assisting the needy

To help the less fortunate through local assistance programmes

(b) Bonding the people

To bond the community through projects & programmes to bring them closer to one another

(c) Connecting the community

To develop strategic partnerships with corporate and community partners to better serve our residents

The North West District comprises Holland-Bukit Timah GRC, Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC, Nee Soon GRC, Sembawang GRC and Bukit Panjang SMC.

Profile Stories

Mr Varadarajan Sivanandan, 48

Residents living in nursing homes often faced social isolation and loneliness, which affects their mental and physical health. A befriender helps these residents engage in regular conversations and company. Mr Varadarajan started volunteering at the Sree Narayana Mission in 2018 as a befriender every weekend to accompany these senior residents and engage in regular conversations with them.

When the Covid-19 pandemic strike and the nursing home was forced to close its doors to visitors, Mr Varadarajan did not stop. Instead, he started conducting fortnightly Yoga sessions over Zoom for the residents. Through these sessions, residents learn proper breathing and relaxation techniques to help them cope with the isolation, stress, and anxiety that the pandemic may have brought.

Mr Varadarajan was quick to adapt and has shown willingness to change his mode of volunteering in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. He has shown resilience and abilities to leverage technology as a volunteer, and instead of halting volunteering due to the suspension of physical volunteering, he came up with creative ways like leveraging Zoom platform to teach Yoga online, to continue giving back to the community.

Fuchun Secondary School

A long-time partner of the North West CDC, Fuchun Secondary School continue to encourage their students to participate in the CDC's programmes as well as spearhead ground-up initiatives for the community. In 2021, the students and staff participated in 11 North West programmes including creating creative initiatives and volunteering their time to support the vulnerable.

Despite the Covid-19 pandemic that led to the suspension of physical interactions, the students of Fuchun Secondary School came together to creatively create an

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initiative to encourage elderly to stay healthy and active during the pandemic. Tapping on the North West WeCare Fund, which provides funding for community projects to uplift the lives vulnerable residents, 74 student volunteers engaged the senior beneficiaries virtually by conducting simple exercises, DIY origami lessons and preparation of healthy sandwiches.

The school also rallied students and staff to support the WeCare @ North West – Service Weeks, in packing over 250 care packs for the vulnerable residents. Instead of seeing the pandemic and evolving measures as a deterrence to serve, Fuchun Secondary School continues to support the CDC's work and programmes to serve the North West community.