

Scoring Solid Gold on keeping seniors fit

Project helps charities get the elderly to exercise with simple equipment

BY ANG YIYING

CHARITIES catering to the elderly, such as nursing homes, do not need expensive or complicated equipment to get seniors to be more active.

Simple horizontal and vertical grip bars, hand pulleys and hand or foot pedals could well do the trick, according to the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation's Project Solid Gold.

The programme, which started in 2008, assigns a consultant to assess the needs of charities working with seniors and to fit their premises with simple exercise equipment suitable for old folk.

The consultant, who is a physiotherapist, also trains the charities' staff on how to use the equipment properly so they can teach and supervise the elderly.

The foundation picks up the tab for the consultant's fees, equipment and installation.

This year, the foundation has also produced an instructional DVD that can be used to teach charities' staff and seniors.

The foundation's programme director Yap Su-Yin said the project is a way of giving practical help to the charities and dispelling the misconception that exercise has to be done using pricey, high-maintenance machines.

The programme has benefited 14 groups since its launch.

One of them is the Moral Home of the Aged Sick, located off Bedok Road, which is run by the Chee Hoon Kog Moral Promotion Society.



Mr Ong Ah Lay, 85, a resident at the Moral Home of the Aged Sick, using exercise rope equipment. The home has two exercise areas courtesy of the Tan Chin Tuan Foundation. ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

The home has about 120 residents, mostly aged 80 and above. Seven in 10 are in wheelchairs.

The home's administrator Winnie Koh said that some of the elderly have made it a habit to exercise at two areas in the building which were retrofitted by the foundation last year.

Madam Koh has seen the payoff for the residents. "They have more strength and they are happier," she said.

More seniors could benefit as the foundation is working with more groups.

One such interested group is the Nam Hong Welfare Service Society, which runs a medical centre providing medical care at a nominal fee of \$2 to patients, mostly aged 50 and above.

Its executive director Leonard Lee said: "The challenge is to push the inactive to be a bit more active."

ayiying@sph.com.sg