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DFSG e-Newsletter

GOOD PRACTICES

Pioneering dementia-friendly design prototypes in Yio Chu Kang

What does it take to make an entire neighbourhood dementia-friendly? The answer can be found in Yio Chu Kang, Singapore's first ethnographic research-based dementia-friendly neighbourhood!

Back in 2019, researchers consulted residents, persons living with dementia and their caregivers on how to enhance the neighbourhood to better meet their evolving needs. From the findings, several infrastructure prototypes were built and tested to enable persons living with dementia to live and age well in the neighbourhood.

This "hardware" is complemented by "heartware" where organisations such as Thye Hua Kwan Active Ageing Centre (THK AAC) and AWWA work closely together to run tailored and enhanced cognitive programmes at the Blue Court, a dementia-friendly neighbourhood space.

We spoke to Darren Li, Centre Manager for THK AAC @ AMK 645, and Cheryl Pua, Social Worker at AWWA and part of the CREST Community Outreach Team, to find out more about how these prototypes have benefitted seniors and persons living with dementia.



Darren Li
Centre Manager,
THK AAC @ AMK 645



Cheryl Pua
Social Worker,
AWWA



"NeighbourRING", an activity designed to exercise users' hand-eye coordination.

How have you made use of these dementia-friendly design prototypes?

Darren: At THK AAC @ AMK 645, we use the prototypes to incorporate cognitive exercises into our weekly dementia programme. For example, we curate games for them to play, such as spinning the number wheel or stepping on number

patterns. Injecting an element of competition really gets the seniors going, as they feel more motivated to understand the game better and win!

Could these prototypes also be used for other programmes?

Darren: Yes, we are looking into incorporating more circuit games for cognitive engagement — through the use of the hard court and prototypes — into our HAPPY Programme, a weekly exercise and mobility session for seniors. We could also potentially incorporate more muscle training and strengthening programmes to ensure seniors get their weekly exercise.

Have the prototypes been well received?

Darren: Yes, our seniors love using them and request for us to bring them for the exercises every Saturday! This is very heartening because initially, some did not understand the purpose of the prototypes and why they had to go outdoors to use them. So we explained the purpose of doing the activities, made them fun, and now seniors look forward to them!

What does it take to collaborate successfully to support persons living with dementia?

Cheryl: Maintaining open communication regularly is important. For example, sharing updates on our common clients helps us to take in diverse perspectives and leverage our respective strengths to address their unique needs more effectively. This also ensures that our plans are aligned with the broader needs of the community.

Resources for your Dementia Friendly Community

Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhood Study Research Report

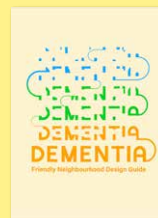
Gain useful insights from the YCK DFN study findings, including a background of Singapore's dementia landscape, the research process, design principles and prototypes built in YCK.



Scan now to download.

Dementia-Friendly Neighbourhood Design Guide

This guide shows how design principles from our DFN study can be applied during planning and development. Includes resources from agencies such as HDB, NParks, MOHT and URA.



Scan now to download.



CASE STUDY

Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth Low Yen Ling (in pink blazer) at the Café of Mistaken Orders. Photo credit: The Salvation Army Singapore

Savour good vibes: Welcome to the Café of Mistaken Orders

There is a common misconception that once a person is diagnosed with dementia, they will be unable to work. The pop-up **Café of Mistaken Orders** proves otherwise!

This concept originated from the Restaurant of Mistaken Orders, an award-winning restaurant founded in Tokyo in 2017. As the waitstaff are persons living with dementia, there is a possibility that customers may not be served with what they ordered. But in this café, mistakes are not only allowed, they are celebrated. In the Café of Mistaken Orders, persons living with dementia have a safe space to work and hone their customer service skills, without fear of reproach. At the same time, visitors can also learn more about dementia. This can help engender a more accepting and empathetic society to support persons living with dementia.

Serving happiness to residents and customers

Last year, the restaurant made its overseas debut as a pop-up café at the World Ageing Festival 2023 in Singapore. Over two days from 24-25 May, residents and clients living with dementia from The Salvation Army Peacehaven Nursing Home and Bedok Day Care (or Peacehaven for short) had the opportunity to show off their table-waiting skills to enthusiastic guests, with supervision from staff such as Assistant Manager (Therapy) Ng June Ren.

“The Japanese team overseeing the Restaurant of Mistaken Orders was looking to collaborate with overseas partners, so Ageing Asia [the organisers of the World Ageing Festival] put them in touch with us,” Ng said. “We had three training sessions to learn more about the programme philosophy, how to set up the café, and ways to encourage interaction between the waitstaff and patrons.”

Finding purpose, embracing challenges

Living in an institution does not mean one can no longer contribute, Ng explained. “Dementia may derail a person’s life. But if we are able to tailor a purposeful programme to build their self-worth and keep them engaged in society, it can have a positive effect on their psychosocial well-being.”

Initially, it was not easy to convince their clients to step up to this new challenge. “When we approached those in our care to take part in the programme, some were resistant as it wasn’t part of their routine and took them out of their comfort zone,” said Ng. “But they became receptive and more enthusiastic after trying out the role.”

Ng shared that having family support also helped. “Family members liked that their loved ones could do something so purposeful and had no concerns, so long as we took care of their safety.”

Where forgotten orders are all part of the service

As professional care staff, Peacehaven staff also had faced some challenges getting used to the programme. “We’re so used to taking care of our residents that we had to learn to take a step back,” Ng laughed. “This created more opportunities for them to interact with café patrons and made them feel independent and needed.”

Instead of making things perfect, all aspects of the table service were treated as opportunities for interaction. For example, by not setting the table in advance, café patrons had to request cutlery from waitstaff, leading to further conversations.

Empowering persons living with dementia

Singapore’s Café of Mistaken Orders has been a positive journey for everyone involved, from persons living with dementia and their families to the Peacehaven team.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to empower persons living with dementia,” said Low Mui Lang, former Executive Director of The Salvation Army Peacehaven. “They can be contributing members of society and we want to affirm their sense of self-worth and dignity with the support of the public.”

“Our residents were very happy to take part and contribute,” Ng added. “Some are noticeably more cheerful and chatty than before. If the opportunity arises, they’d love to take part again.”



Ng June Ren
Assistant Manager (Therapy),
The Salvation Army Peacehaven

GET PERSONAL

"Refresh and Reconnect", a programme for seniors living with mild cognitive impairment and dementia.
Photo credit: National Museum of Singapore

"Dementia does not define who they are"

For National Museum of Singapore (NMS) Programme Manager Matilda Hong, this has been the key learning from being part of the core team behind **Reunion**, a first-of-its-kind space within the museum, designed specifically for seniors, including persons living with dementia and mild cognitive impairment.

"I've learnt to have a growth mindset myself (when engaging persons living with dementia)," shared Matilda. "Even if they have dementia, it does not define who they are. New neural pathways can still be created as we help them learn new skills, recall memories and interact with new people. So there is hope."

And Reunion is purpose-built to bring such hope to life.

A place for recalling memories and creating new ones

Launched in April 2023, Reunion started with NMS wanting to give seniors in the community their own physical space for meaningful activities related to the museum's artefacts — to reconnect with the past, make friends, share stories, and even learn new skills.

Foo Min Li, Assistant Director at NMS, shared more with us: "We want seniors to 'reclaim' the museum, to have a sense of community here. A place to spark memories, start conversations and create new experiences for the elderly."

Step in to Reunion, and you'll find music booths, an immersive space where seniors are guided by facilitators to curate their own virtual exhibition, and a group activity area for anything from dance lessons and craft workshops, to opportunities for seniors to share stories based on the museum's early Singapore artefacts such as kerosene lamps and spittoons.

A place where stories are shared, told and made

Reunion has played host to many persons living with dementia as well as their caregivers in the past year.

From usually-unresponsive seniors opening up to share their stories about life in Singapore's kampongs in the 1950s, to caregivers who refuse to give up on bringing their loved ones to Reunion programmes, Matilda had much to share about the many encounters that made an impression on her.

"It's really heartening to see the transformation and journeys here. Seeing participants open up and exchange stories, or just having a good time sharing memories with one another," shared Matilda. "It's our hope that they will find meaningful engagement here. That really is what keeps us going in running this space."



National Museum of Singapore staff Foo Min Li, Assistant Director, Curatorial and Programmes (left), and Matilda Hong, Manager, Programmes (right).

A personal journey

For Matilda, driving the Reunion programme has been especially meaningful because of her own experiences with seniors and dementia. "I grew up with my grandmother and late great-grandmother. So I've always had a soft spot for seniors," shared Matilda. "My late great-grandmother had dementia at the end stage of her life. So I had some experience with how this condition can affect a loved one."

"There are not many spaces designed just for seniors living with dementia, much less in a museum. So to be able to contribute to this first-of-its-kind space and really learn from the whole process has been a very meaningful personal journey for me."

And as it's often the case, those who seek to make an impact in making Singapore truly dementia friendly, find themselves truly impacted as well.



Happening now at NMS:
#DementiaFriendlySG
Exhibition
6 Jan-31 Mar 2024, 10am-6pm



Scan the QR code to find out more.

HELPFUL RESOURCES

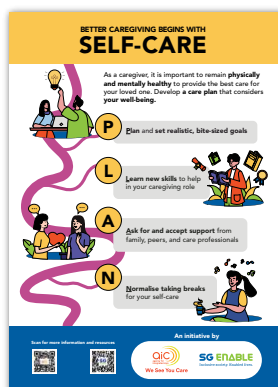
Check out these resources brought to you by AIC and SG Enable, specially for caregivers and the loved ones of persons living with dementia.

Tips on understanding the role of a caregiver and self-care

Are you a caregiver? Do you feel burnt out caring for a loved one? Check out these handy infographics that distil must-know information and caregiving tips. Share them with your fellow caregivers to support them in their journey!



Scan the QR code to access the infographics.



Caring Together – A video series on caregiving and support

Follow the stories of two families caring for their loved ones with different health conditions, as they lend support to each other and go through similar experiences and challenges. Learn more about the support and resources available for caregivers at www.weseeyoucare.sg



Scan the QR code to watch the videos.



Visitors at the programme.
Photo credit: National Heritage Board

"Art With You" Programme

Come by the National Gallery Singapore for "Art with You", an evidence-based programme that combines people-centred care with arts to foster positive and meaningful engagement. The "Art with You" Caregivers Guide and Art Kit are available at the Gallery's Visitor Services Counters to support your self-guided visits.



Please scan the QR code for more information.

AIC Activity Repository

Calling seniors, healthcare staff, volunteers, and caregivers! Check out the AIC Activity Repository, a one-stop site to access an array of activities and resources to engage and help in the care of seniors. There are eight different categories, and resources are available in various languages and dialects.

Scan the QR code to access the repository.



Stayed tuned for new developments in April 2024

Are you from a community care organisation? If you are interested in organising complimentary guided group visits, please get in touch at community@nationalgallery.sg



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Ask: 1800-650-6060 (AIC Hotline)

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Feel free to drop us an email [ccmh@aic.sg] if you would like to contribute content!

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