



SIWEC INSIGHT

December 2017

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL, SINGAPORE

2018

Happy New Year

Sikh Welfare Council wishes everyone a Happy New Year!

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

RIDE FOR CHARITY 2018

PRISONS VOLUNTEER AWARDS 2017

IN THIS ISSUE

Our feature story highlights the contribution of our Prisons volunteer counsellors, three of whom were recognised at the Prisons Volunteer Awards 2017 in September. We hope you will be inspired upon reading our profile on Dr Kuldip Singh Wasan who was presented the Gold Award for 25 years of committed service as a Prisons volunteer.

Our Chairman's message summarises some of the work done in 2017 and the implications of demographic trends impacting the social service sector in general as well as implications for SIWEC in future.

SIWEC ran one community outreach programme each in the months of October and November, in conjunction the Bandi Chhor Divas/Diwali (October) celebrations at Silat Road Gurdwara, while in November we engaged the sangat at Central Sikh Gurdwara during Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Gurburab celebrations. These efforts were carried out in collaboration with the Health Promotion Board, National Kidney Foundation, and the Singapore Women's Organisation, as well as the Pioneer Generation Office.

We are delighted to announce the launch of Ride for Charity 2018, details of which can be found on the back cover of this issue of SIWEC Insight. As SIWEC is one of two beneficiaries for this edition, we are grateful to the Harmony on Wheels movement for raising funds to help sustain and enhance our programmes and services.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

Managing in a Changing Demographic Environment

WAHEGURU JI KA KHALSA WAHEGURU JI KI FATEH !

During the year 2017, SIWEC provided support to almost 1,000 beneficiaries through our different support programmes. As the years quickly go by, we are seeing that a greater proportion of our population is moving into the "seniors" category. This group will require more care and attention. Keeping our seniors physically and mentally fit, active, engaged and independent is a priority for the community.



Accordingly, besides providing the regular SIWEC services like financial support, food vouchers, education, active ageing, counselling, bereavement services, etc., SIWEC recognises the need to proactively address emerging needs to better support our seniors. There is a greater urgency to focus on "prevention as opposed to cure" by way of educating our seniors on active ageing and addressing health issues faced by seniors. Towards this end, SIWEC embarked on a series of initiatives with our community partners, to educate the sangat on the benefits of healthy lifestyles, early detection of diseases to promote better outcomes in our effort to increase the chances of successful early treatment.

These included the following:

1. Health Screening by National Kidney Foundation at Central Sikh Temple during the Vesakhi celebrations and at Silat Road Sikh Temple during the Bhai Maharaj Anniversary celebrations.
2. Conducted a Diabetic Healthcare Ambassador Course for 15 Eldercare volunteers to help us take care of diabetic clients.
3. Singapore Cancer Society (SCS), Singapore Anti Narcotics Association (SANA) and Pioneer Generation staff set up booths and gave informative talks on their respective areas during the Bhai Maharaj Anniversary celebrations at Sikh Centre. SCS also conducted check-ups and tests for pap smear and breast cancer of the ladies.
4. A talk by the National Addiction Management Services (NAMS) staff at Central Sikh Temple on "Substance abuse".
5. Eye check and screening for eye related diseases were conducted at Silat Road Sikh Temple during Bandi Chhorh celebrations. Of the 152 who conducted checks, a significant number had some form of issue and were recommended for follow up and treatment. Most of these people were not even aware they had a problem until this check-up; exactly the objective for which these tests were conducted.

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6. Conducted a 3 module Seniors Health Curriculum workshop covering "Introduction to Healthy Ageing and Nutrition", "Be Active for Life" and "Take Charge of your Health" at Silat Road Sikh Temple and Central Sikh Temple.
7. Special talks were also conducted on various topics:

a. "Forget us not" – Talk on dementia	b. "Nurture your mind" Workshops (4 modules)
c. "Diet & Osteoporosis"	d. "Fun with Herbs"
e. "Understanding your diabetic medication"	f. "The painful & unstable knee"
g. "Hypertension"	j. "Managing back pain"

This focus on this initiative of continued public education and early detection of certain conditions to improve treatment outcomes will be sustained into 2018 and beyond. Ageing focused programmes for active living and facilities for rehabilitation support in a day-care or residential care settings such as community hospitals and nursing homes have been ramped up by the national health authorities. This situation affects the Sikh community in Singapore as it does the wider population.

The latest demographic forecasts for Singapore highlighted that the proportion of the population above 65 years of age will equal the proportion of the population below 15 years of age in 2018. This trend suggests a greater need to keep our seniors active to prevent diseases and other problems from setting in; when care becomes all the more difficult and costly. In an environment where most adults are working into their mid-60s; if our senior loved ones' health deteriorates, providing care will be costly; either with a helper at home or admitting the senior into a residential care facility such as a nursing home.

We have identified about 50 elderly Sikhs in nursing homes across Singapore. Unfortunately, a significant number in this group have no family support and rarely receive visitors. Consequently, they are lonely, and as many of them do not speak English, they do not have meaningful conversations at the nursing homes. Also, they long for Punjabi food. SIWEC visits them on a regular basis to ensure that they do not feel abandoned by the community. We are especially grateful that a well-wisher had stepped forward to arrange for Punjabi food to be delivered weekly to each of these individuals. SIWEC is also in discussion with some of the families to urge them to occasionally visit these lonely souls who crave company and interaction.

We believe that over time, this number is only going to increase. In view of this, SIWEC has engaged a fulltime Healthcare Ambassador to visit and engage this group of isolated seniors on a regular basis. Meanwhile, we are also looking into how we can group them into clusters at care facilities located closer to our Gurdwaras. It is our hope that meeting their social needs, promoting visits by families or by our Healthcare Ambassadors, and sending food from a Gurdwara, would be more easily facilitated.

Evaluations are also underway into the feasibility of operating a dedicated senior activity or day care centre for these seniors within the Sikh community. The expansion in scope of such activities will likely increase the future costs incurred by SIWEC in providing much-needed services. Even as we contemplate this, we would like to assure our well-wishers and members of the sangat that every effort will be made to work with community partners where there are synergies, to only spend money where it will be prudent whilst ensuring that no member of the community who needs help, will ever be left out.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity thank all our patrons, trustees, generous donors and all Sikh Institutions in Singapore for their contributions and support during the past year, without which SIWEC would not be able to effectively provide all the services and programmes for the community in Singapore. SIWEC appreciates and looks forward to your continued support in the years ahead.

I wish you all a Happy New Year and the best of health and happiness in 2018!

In Guru Ji's Seva

Gurdip Singh Usma

Chairman, Sikh Welfare Council

Prisons Volunteer Awards 2017

478 awards were presented to volunteers, befrienders and voluntary welfare organisations at the 2017 Prisons Service Volunteer Awards on 22 September 2017. The ceremony was officiated by Mr Amrin Amin, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health.

This year, the Singapore Prison Service introduced the Gold Awards – a new award category that recognises individuals who have volunteered with SPS for at least 15 years. The award highlights the dedication of volunteers whose unwavering support has made a positive change in the lives of inmates, ex-offenders and their families, and is a testament to the community's continuous support.

Dr Kuldeep S Wasan was among a select group of 16 volunteers recognised in the Gold category for those having dedicated 25 years of service.

In addition, two SIWEC counsellors were also recognised for their support of Sikh inmates over the years. Mr Dalijeet Singh, who was unable to attend the ceremony, was awarded for 15 years of service as a counsellor. Mr Baldev Singh, SIWEC's Senior Welfare Officer, received the award for five years of service with Prisons.



SIWEC was awarded a plaque for its role as a partner organisation. Receiving the award was Mr Albel Singh, Chairman of SIWEC's Sub-Committee for Prisons Counselling.

He reflected with pride on the work of our Sikh volunteers, "We are indeed fortunate to have a dedicated group of volunteers whose devotion to seva in the cause of helping our Sikh inmates is commendable. It is not easy to sustain enthusiasm for so many years. Dr Kuldeep and Mr Dalijeet are exemplary pillars of support whose devotion inspires not only the Sikh inmates but also fellow volunteers".

Mr Albel Singh also commended Mr Baldev, SIWEC's staff responsible for all coordination with Prisons, sourcing for counselling resources, planning for counsellor's rosters, besides also managing the quarterly meet-up sessions. He said, "Baldev's work ethic and his commitment to ensuring that a counsellor is available for every counselling session is remarkable. Despite having to balance his other key responsibility managing bereavement support in SIWEC, he strives to improve the counselling materials, whilst coordinating support, training and management of counsellors."

Dr Kuldip Singh Wasan's Volunteer Journey over 25 Years

SIWEC's editorial team met up with Dr Kuldip S Wasan, 79, soon after he received the Singapore Prisons Service Gold award for 25 years of volunteer service as a counsellor.

Asked how he felt on the evening of the awards presentation ceremony, Dr Kuldip responded, "Honestly, I was quite surprised to receive the award for performing seva. Equally, I feel it is very nice to be acknowledged. I'm grateful for the efforts by Prisons Headquarters to recognize volunteers."



Casting his mind back 25 years, Dr Kuldip confesses, "I held a rather simplistic view of drug addicts as being weak-willed persons who were not disciplined enough to control their cravings. I got frustrated in my early days, asking 'what's the difficult part in letting go of addiction? Surely something can be done?' It took years of learning and reflection as a volunteer counsellor before I started to adopt a more enlightened humanistic approach towards the hard-core drug addicts. I must say I had difficulty fully empathising with them in my earlier years, both as doctor and as a counsellor."

Dr Kuldip recalls, "Coincidentally, one of my earliest postings in the 1970s had prepared me to work with addicts against the context of a growing drug problem in Singapore in the late 1960s and the 70s. The Ministry of Health (MOH) posted me to work with early offenders at the drug treatment centre on St John's Island and at Alexandra Hospital."

Dr Kuldip reflects that MOH had also sent him to the United States on a solo study trip covering five cities over one month. "It was an excellent trip with rich insights from visiting drug rehabilitation centres and interacting with professionals in Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco, New York and Washington." He returned to continue his work at Alexandra Hospital with the early drug offenders until the mid-1970s when he was posted to assume a clinical role in a government polyclinic."

Almost two decades later in the 1990s, the by then middle-aged Dr Kuldip decided to join pioneer Sikh counsellors and signed-up as a volunteer and attend training with the Singapore Anti Narcotics Association (SANA). There was by then a growing number of Sikhs incarcerated for drug-related crimes. The Prisons authorities had invited the major religious groups in Singapore to provide spirituality based counselling to complement Prisons in-care programmes. It was against this context that Dr Kuldip started weekly counselling sessions at the Prisons Selarang Centre.

Asked to share key highlights and low-points as well as how he remained committed to the mission over the last 25 years, Dr Kuldip's response was candid. "Experienced counsellors soon realize that addiction is quite enslaving. Breaking free from an ingrained habit is an inherently difficult process for each person with addiction. Acceptance of each person's human nature and of their difficulties are important first steps towards building empathy and nurturing a trusting relationship with each inmate. I reached that stage only after taking a critical inward look at myself to name my own blind spots and imperfections."

"That was an important self-realisation. It was like a door that needed to be unlocked to enable me to adopt an empathetic stance towards the men I counselled. Until then, I faced some moments when I felt like my efforts were futile, especially after some of the boys turned back to drugs within a few months or couple of years after release from incarceration. I had to constantly remind myself that we need to maintain our role as befrienders to these lost souls in order to keep their hopes up, that they too could do good, be responsible family men and dutiful citizens upon their release."

Dr Kuldip underlined the significant role that counsellors play, "Befrienders like us providing weekly counselling support are a potential lifeline for some who cannot break fully free from their enslavement. At a time when some of their families may have wavering or little hope, our connection with these offenders helps sustain their hopes, that they too have the potential to embrace reform and one day in future, live a life of purpose and meaning."



Donation from the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations (SFCCA)

On Saturday 11 November morning, SIWEC Chairman Mr Gurdip S Usma received a donation cheque for \$20,000 from Mr Ong Ye Kung, Minister for Education and Second Minister for Defence. He was the Guest-of-Honour at the Alliance for Betterment of Community Day organized by the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan, Teochew Poit Ip Huay Kuan, Kowloon Club and Jiangsu Association (Singapore).



SIWEC Chairman Mr Gurdip S Usma said, "We are grateful to the Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations for this benevolent gesture as part of their Community Day outreach. We will channel the funds to programmes for our beneficiaries."

Sikh Community (CSGB-SIWEC) Visit to the Ashram

Two representatives from Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC), Manager Mr Ranjit Singh, together with our Secretary Mr Harmit Singh, accompanied eight members of the Central Sikh Gurdwara Board as part of the Sikh community delegation's visit to the HEB-Ashram hosted by its management committee on Saturday, 7th October 2017.

The HEB-Ashram was set up in 1999 as a halfway house for inmates serving the last phase of their sentence prior to their release. In the HEB-Ashram's safe and supportive environment, its residents receive emotional and spiritual guidance through the range of support programmes to help equip them with life-skills and the motivation to secure a job and remain employed post-release.

After a briefing by the Ashram team on its rehabilitation services and programmes to reintegrate Singaporean ethnic Indian inmates back into society, the Sikh community delegation visited the accommodation and dining areas, as well as the ECO garden created by the residents. The visit concluded with a discussion over lunch.



SIWEC Manager Mr Ranjit Singh notes, "SIWEC has developed a close and collaborative relationship with the Ashram. We are grateful that one of the rooms there is designated as a prayer room for Sikh residents. It is a quiet space for reflection and individual or group prayer and counselling. Each year the Ashram supports 4-5 Sikh residents in their transition from Prison. One of our counsellors, Mr Dalijeet Singh, regularly visits the Ashram to support our Sikh boys in the very critical period of transition from life at Changi prison via the Ashram, before they return to their family and society. We also have an arrangement where Yishun Gurdwara provides langgar for the Ashram one day per week. In turn, residents from the Ashram are provided the opportunity to perform seva at Central Sikh Temple".

Mr Harmit Singh reflected, "As a small community, it is important for the Sikh community to work with other agencies such as the HEB Ashram, so that we are able to utilise our limited resources for maximum impact wherever we can.

SIWEC Community Outreach Activity in Conjunction with Bandi Chhor Divas/Diwali

Sikh Welfare Council together with Silat Road Sikh Temple co-ordinated with 3 agencies – the Singapore Women's Association, the Pioneer Generation Office, and Glyph Concept - to engage members of the Sangat visiting the Silat Road Sikh Temple as part of our community outreach during the Bandi Chor Divas/Diwali holiday weekend.

A total of 152 participants had accessed the eye screening service provided by a team of three volunteer doctors assisted by 10 volunteers and committee members from the Singapore Women's Association (SWA), a non-governmental and non-profit organization.

95 females and 57 male members accessed the screening service. Of these, 98 were seniors between 50 to more than 80 years old.

The SWA screening team established four stations; one to check for visual acuity using eye-charts; the second was the auto-refract test to determine if one needed to wear reading glasses or to change the present pair; the third was the non-touch tonometer station to check eye pressure and detect early signs of glaucoma; while the fourth station had eye doctors using the slit-lamp machine to examine each person's eyes for cataracts or other eye-related problems.



After screening, 29 participants were referred for assessment and follow-up treatment by eye-specialists. 10 of them who were identified with suspected glaucoma were urged to seek follow-up consultation and treatment. Another group of 5 were referred to optometrists to be fitted with reading glasses.

Besides the eye screening, Pioneer Generation ambassadors hosted a booth where they engaged 16 eligible seniors about the benefits available for them.

In addition, a booth operated by Glyph Concept, a private welfare provider seeking to serve marginalized families, engaged a few families on their programmes and services. Many were interested to learn more, with 1 person signing up.



Community Outreach at Central Sikh Gurdwara in conjunction with Guru Nanak Dev Ji Gurbpurab Celebrations.

Sikh Welfare coordinated a series of community outreach events in conjunction with Guru Nanak Dev Ji's Gurbpurab at the Central Sikh Temple from the 2nd to 4th November 2017.

A Community Health Screening post was established at Central Sikh Temple on 3 Nov, by staff from National Healthcare Group. They conducted screening for 4 tests - Body Mass Index (BMI), High Blood Pressure (BP), High Blood Cholesterol and Diabetes. The screening was targeted at Singaporeans and PR, aged 40 and above without existing chronic condition(s). 51 participants took part in the screening. They were subsequently seen by the Health Coach on 28 November. Those who were not able to meet the Health Coach received their results by post. The next session when the Community Health Post will be established again will be in February 2018.



A team from Health Promotion Board hosted a games booth to engage the sangat at Central Sikh Gurdwara on 3 November. The aim was to raise the community's awareness and to promote participation in the National Steps Challenge Season 3!

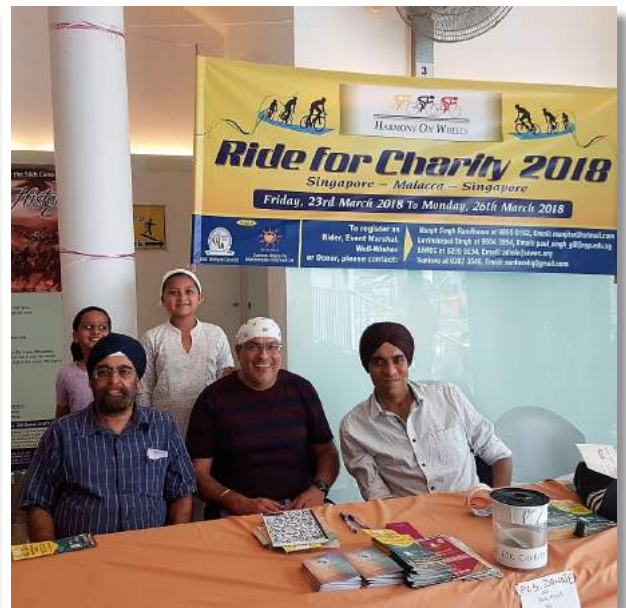


The Eldercare programme which includes Sunehri Sahelian & Sunehray Pal hosted a mini-exhibition on Friday, 3rd November in the afternoon, showcasing their handmade crafts as well as photographs of their year-long journey. The photo exhibits featured a range of activities such as talks, workshops, exercise therapy as well as outings to places of interest. 20 new members were successfully recruited. This brings the total membership for the programme to 87 people.



SIWEC coordinated with Harmony on Wheels to launch the outreach effort for Ride for Charity 2018 simultaneously at Central Sikh Gurdwara, Singh Sabha and Gurdwara Katong with volunteers hosting booths to engage the sangat over three evenings on 4th, 5th and 6th November.

The third edition of the Ride for Charity (RfC) series in this decade builds on the two-preceding fund-raising rides which were successfully staged in 2014 and 2016. RfC is an initiative of the Harmony on Wheels movement which is steered by a group of motivated riders who believe in coming together as an inclusive group to support charitable causes and impact society positively. The 2018 ride will be staged from Singapore to Malacca and back to Singapore from 23rd -26th March 2018.



Please see the back page of this newsletter for additional information including details on how you can contribute or join the ride, either as a rider or as an event marshal.



SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL

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**SIWEC welcomes on board,
Ms Gursharan Kaur**

Education Project Officer

SIWEC is here to help. If you or someone you know requires assistance or is interested to know more about our services, please email, call or come down to meet us at:

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL

2 Towner Road, Level 6. S(327804)

Opening Hours: Monday – Friday 9am to 6pm

E-mail: info@siwec.org or contact our 24-hour Helpline @ 6299 9234



To be able to give is a blessing itself!

What are you doing from the 23rd – 26th of March 2018?

Ride for Charity 2018! Raising funds for the needy as we pedal over 500 km from Singapore to Malacca and back to Singapore from 23rd – 26th March 2018. An event that brings together all the elements of sharing & giving, bonding & camaraderie, bearing with the heat and rain, firmly rooted in the belief that we are ONE. Embracing inclusivity in every form. Levelling up society by reaching out to the less privileged. Raising funds so that others can continue and expand their welfare projects. Sustaining their programs to ensure a noticeable outcome over the years.

WE can ALL help SIWEC and SUNLOVE. There are many ways of helping:

- i) Participate in RfC 2018 either as a rider or event marshal
- ii) Take a pledge card to raise funds
- iii) Donate to the cause.

It is worthy to note that funds raised will go ENTIRELY to the beneficiaries. Participants of RfC fully pay for their own cost of participation. All participants must register and take a pledge card. They are encouraged to raise a minimum of \$500 each.

The event involves cycling 170 km to Batu Pahat on Day 1. On day 2, participants ride another 100 km to Malacca. On the return leg, participants ride back to Batu Pahat on Day 3. The event concludes with a ride from Batu Pahat to Singapore on Day 4.

The registration fee for the 4-day event is \$340. It covers 3 nights hotel accommodation (twin sharing) in Batu Pahat and Malacca, some meals, jersey/t-shirt, insurance and project overheads and an appreciation dinner subsequently. A surcharge of \$100 is applicable for a single room.

To see how you can contribute to the cause or participate in the event, please contact:

- Manjit Singh Randhawa: 9855 0192 / Email: manjitsr@hotmail.com
- Luvinderpal Singh: 9004 3954 / Email: paul_singh_gill@nyp.edu.sg
- Sikh Welfare: 6299 9234 / Email: admin@siwec.org

Details on the organizer, Harmony on Wheels, and pictures and videos of its past fund raising activities may be seen at **<https://www.facebook.com/harmonyonwheels/>**