

SIWEC INSIGHT

May 2018

SIKH WELFARE COUNCIL, SINGAPORE



ELDERCARE PROGRAMME

VESAKHI JOY

RIDE FOR CHARITY 2018

IN THIS ISSUE



This issue of our newsletter focuses prominently on SIWEC's programmes in support of seniors in our community.

We profile the visit to Central Sikh Gurdwara by Parliamentary Secretary (Health and Home Affairs) Mr Amrin Amin on 12th April to better understand the Eldercare Program (Sunehri Saheliaan & Sunehray Pal).

This year's Vesakhi day celebrations brought extra special joy to 30 seniors under SIWEC's Home Visit Programme. They received Gurbani Radios donated by the Central Sikh Gurdwara Board (CSGB).

Sikh Welfare Council was one of the two beneficiaries of the 2018 Ride for Charity (RFC) which took place between 23 to 26 March 2018. We are especially thankful to the organisers, riders and well-wishers for the effort to raise \$85,000 for our beneficiaries.

Please see the full stories within.

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FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK

Caring for our Seniors

Waheguru Ji Ka Khalsa Waheguru Ji Ki Fateh

This issue of our newsletter focuses on SIWEC's programmes in support of the seniors in our community. While we highlight the achievements of our Eldercare and Home Visit programmes in this newsletter, we wonder if we have done enough for our Sikh seniors, especially for those who are isolated and unknown to us.

According to the latest national figures, Singapore has around 500,000 people aged 65 and older, and this number is expected to almost double, to about 900,000 by 2030.

It is also significant that the number of elderly folk living alone is projected to rise from 35,000 in 2012 to 83,000 in 2030. For some among this group, there are unmet needs, especially the vulnerable and isolated seniors who do not have access to a strong support network.

An estimated 103,000 people will have dementia by 2030. One in 10 people aged 60 and older are now stricken by it; a condition that causes the gradual decline of the brain and such abilities as thinking, memory and judgment. The proportion rises to one in two among those aged 85 and older.

In view of these trends, the government recently announced additional legal safeguards to better protect vulnerable seniors and people with disability. In addition, more resources will be devoted to strengthening community support networks around seniors living in the community.

In this regard, I would like to share two aspects that we believe are critical, before we reflect on SIWEC's role in this respect, and what more we need to do in future.

Community Networks for Seniors

Finance Minister Mr Heng Swee Keat announced that the Community Networks for Seniors programme initiated in 2016, which encourages active ageing and helps lonely seniors find new friends, will be expanded across the country by 2020. This initiative involves government bodies, voluntary welfare organisations and volunteers teaming up to visit seniors, getting them involved in community activities, and caring for them when they turn frail.



The Agency for Integrated Care will be the main coordinator of caregiving services for seniors and their caregivers to reach out to all seniors aged 65 and older. In addition, the Seniors' Mobility and Enabling Fund, which subsidises assistive devices and other items for the elderly, will get a \$100 million boost. Over the next five years, \$150 million will be spent on transporting older folk to subsidised eldercare and dialysis centres.

What is SIWEC's role in the national community network for seniors?

We are well on-track in our programmes to provide a focal point and sanctuary for seniors to gather at our Gurdwaras under our Eldercare Programme which has grown significantly in its active membership. Presently, it has 174 members across two locations; the Central Sikh and Silat Road Gurdwaras; for our Sunehri Saheliaan and Sunehray Pal group activities respectively.

The success of this programme is attributable to two main factors; first of which is a dedicated, highly motivated and cohesive team of volunteers to plan and organise the activities. Secondly, the support of strong partners such as the Health Promotion Board, the Agency for Integrated Care, and the National Kidney Foundation, among others in the community, has been significant.

It is SIWEC's aim to have this success repeated across all Sikh community focal points. We are in discussion with Gurdwara committees to initiate programmes for seniors on weekdays, so that more seniors have access to a social support network anchored around places of worship - for social, educational and recreational activities, beyond the spiritual aspect which places of worship already fulfil.

How can the Sikh community support its vulnerable and isolated elderly, as well as caregiving families of seniors with dementia?

For the past several years, SIWEC has expanded our capacity by hiring an additional staff to conduct visits to seniors in institutions and nursing homes as well as hospitals, to provide emotional support. We continue such support where we assess that these seniors lack a solid support network.

We have made our services known to all major residential senior care homes. This means that we can add any Sikh senior who comes to our attention, to our list of beneficiaries to be supported with visits by our staff. We are mindful, however, to respect the privacy of all individuals and act only with their consent or their family's permission, if there is one. As a consequence, we have refrained from involving volunteers in the home visit programme this far.

However, we do realize that there is scope for volunteers to work with our staff team, when we need to scale up support for more Punjabi speaking seniors requiring emotional support. This could be in the form of befriending programmes, where younger and more active seniors can support older seniors who are frail or increasingly cognitively-challenged.

Another way that volunteers can be a great help is by offering help to caregivers of persons with dementia, in practical and non-intrusive ways. In this regard, SIWEC is considering an education and support network of family caregivers of persons with dementia. We envisage that there is scope to harness the insights of experienced caregivers to provide emotional support to those who are just beginning or struggling with their caregiving roles.

We will share more about our plans when we they have been firmed up. Meanwhile, I trust you will gain insight into our continuing work in the eldercare space from the features on seniors in this issue, as well on as some of our other programmes.

In conclusion, we are always thankful to all Gurdwaras and other Sikh institutions; without whose support our programmes cannot succeed, and we look forward to working with them on our new initiatives to serve the community's needs better.

In Guru Ji's Seva

Gurdip Singh Usma

Chairman, Sikh Welfare Council

Our Golden Girls (Sunehri Saheliaan) meet Mr Amrin Amin, Parliamentary Secretary, (Health & Home Affairs)



After enjoying a simple vegetarian meal, Mr Amrin met the volunteers behind the highly successful Sunehri Saheliaan programme.

Parliamentary Secretary (Health and Home Affairs) Mr Amrin Amin visited Central Sikh Gurdwara on 12 April 2018 to understand the Eldercare Program (Sunehri Saheliaan & Sunehray Pal) run by the Sikh Welfare Council (SIWEC). The visit was facilitated by the Health Promotion Board. He was received by President of Central Sikh Gurdwara Mr Harbahjan Singh and Chairman SIWEC Mr Gurdip S Usma, together with their committee members.



He was impressed that a small group of 30 ladies who first joined the programme in 2014 at one location had morphed into 174 members by 2018, who now enjoy various indoor and outdoor activities conducted at two locations!

Mrs Sarjit Khosa (who oversees the programme) reflected, "Mr Amrin was quite impressed with what has been achieved by our volunteers at Central Sikh Gurdwara & Silat Road Gurdwara, he wished us continued success and growth. He also expressed the hope that we consider combining the activities with other organisations such as Community Centres and mosques in future.

Mrs Sarjit added, "All this would not have been possible if we did not have a group of highly dedicated volunteers who make such a great team! I am very proud of them for their devotion and heartfelt seva to engage our seniors and raise their spirits with such an exciting range of diverse activities. May Waheguruji bless all my volunteer ladies!"



Mr Amrin gamely joined in the energizer exercise with the ladies of Sunheri Saheliaan, before they dived into the main activity for the day-jewellery box making.

Before departing, Mr Amrin snapped a few photos of our cheerful golden girls as a memento of his visit!

Our Eldercare Programme - Sunehri Saheliaan & Sunehray Pal

The Eldercare Programme is organized and run by our team of dedicated volunteers over 3 terms per calendar year. In 2018, we achieved the highest enrolment ever, with 174 participants across two locations!



Our first term comprising 11 weeks of activities was conducted between the last week of January to 11th April 2018; for Sunehri Saheliaan at Central Sikh Gurdwara, and for Sunehray Pal at Silat Road Gurdwara.

The second term of 12 weeks will run between early May to end of July 2018 while the third term of 12 weeks is between early September to mid November 2018.

Our sessions typically commence with light exercises for about an hour. This is usually followed either by talks, film-screenings or hands-on activities such as art and craft, games or healthy nutrition-focused cooking sessions.



We recently introduced a new segment called Taja Khaber, where we provide updates on the latest news from around the world. This helps to keep our seniors better informed of significant events or issues in the community.

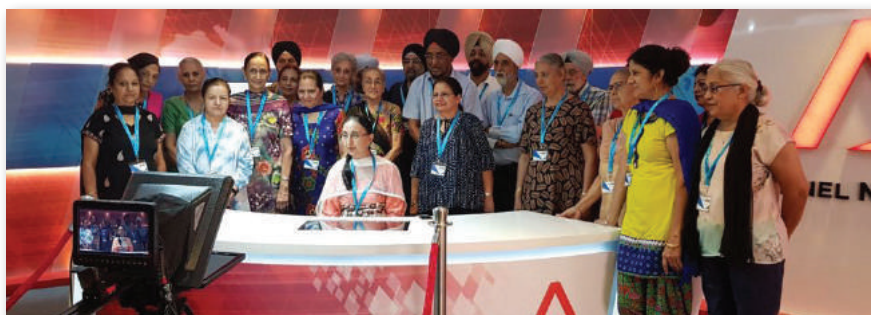
The photo-montage on these two pages provides a sense of the fun our seniors have while learning and spending meaningful time among friends.



Keeping the Body & Mind active through exercise, yoga, meditation and stimulating games and talks.



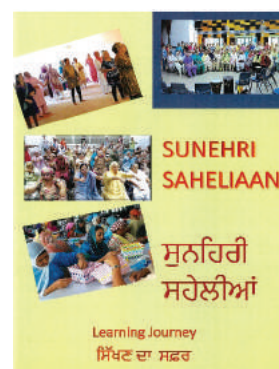
We also aim to organize one outing every term as these require more coordination and logistics planning. These outings have proven to be a hit with our members as most of them would otherwise not be able to experience going to places such as the MediaCorp studios, Gardens by the Bay, Dragon Boat, MPA Singapore Maritime Trail, Sikh Gurdwaras in Malaysia and many more exciting places.



The MediaCorp experience was truly memorable – both educational and fun for all. Our volunteers have compiled all the experts' tips and activity photos into the Learning Journey booklet for the seniors to use as a reference and to reminisce good memories. This book can be purchased at \$2.00.

Our second term starts on 8th of May, we are open for registration at \$24 per term. Ladies - 65 years old and above can join Sunehri Sahelian at Central Sikh Gurdwara. Men - 55 years old and above are invited to join Sunehrey Pal at Sikh Centre, Silat Road Gurdwara.

Kindly contact Mdm Charanjeet Kaur at 9739 0446 for details. Register soon as slots are filling up!



Gurbani Radios bring Vesakhi Joy!

This year's Vesakhi day celebrations brought extra special joy to 30 seniors who are visited fortnightly at nursing homes and residences across Singapore under SIWEC's Home Visit Programme.

This came in the form of Gurbani Radios donated by the Central Sikh Gurdwara Board (CSGB) for our beneficiaries.



Our Healthcare Ambassador, 68 years young Mdm Kartar Kaur, who joined SIWEC in 2013, personally presented the radios to our clients over the two weeks leading up to Vesakhi.

She said, "The seniors were overjoyed and so grateful to receive the Gurbani Radios. It is our hope that by listening to Bani & Kirtan daily, it will help uplift their spirits daily and connect them to Waheguru-ji, whilst adding meaning to their lives."

Our beneficiary, Mdm Ranjit Kaur's daughter said "Thank you so much for the lovely present for my mum. This is exactly what she needs. She really enjoys listening to it now. Whoever thought of this is brilliant!"

Mdm Kartar conducts monthly visits to 56 seniors identified as requiring support. Most of them are housed in institutions across the island, while 6 are still residing in their own homes.

Mdm Kartar reflects, "Some of these seniors have little or no family support, while others seldom receive any visits.

Her visits are now monthly highlights for these lonely souls whose day is brightened with the parshad, langgar, conversation and companionship that Mdm Kartar provides.

For the 30 seniors who have received the Gurbani radios, Waheguruji's bani and kirtan is their constant companion and guide to provide daily solace and comfort.



Vesakhi Joy for our beneficiaries in Prison

SIWEC volunteers, staff and Gianis from Central Sikh Temple and Pardesi Khalsa Dharmak Diwan visited the inmates at the Prisons on 3rd April and 17th April 2018.

The two visits were organised to celebrate Vesakhi @ Prisons with kirtan prayers and refreshments for about 50 beneficiaries of our counseling support service.

The inmates were highly appreciative of SIWEC's continued efforts to organize such visits annually for their benefit and spiritual well-being.

While inmates heartily joined in the kirtan to sing as a small but powerful sangat, the highlight for them is always the Chana and Parshad, prepared at Central Sikh Temple in accordance with Sikhi tradition.



"Besides engaging in naam simran and singing kirtan relating to the birth of Sikhism, it is always a heartwarming experience for all when we commemorate Vesakhi at the Prisons Complex," reflects Baldev Singh, Senior Welfare Executive and main coordinator of SIWEC's counseling support programme at Prisons.

"During and after such occasions, the inmates are often motivated to re-dedicate themselves to their personal reform journey, especially after engaging with the Gianis and volunteer counselors who pray together for their well-being."

Vice-Chairman Manmohan Singh reflected, "Such visits are a reminder to the inmates that the Sikh community has not abandoned those who have strayed from the righteous path. Our counseling programme is designed to instill the spirit of optimism and joy in a better future ahead as embodied in the concept of Charhdi Kala; that there will always be brighter days ahead with a life anchored on Sikhi values and lived by its tenets."



Ride For Charity 2018

The organisers of the 2018 Ride for Charity presented a cheque for \$85,000 to SIWEC Chairman Mr Gurdip S Usma at an appreciation dinner on 28th April. The ride took place between 23 to 26 March, covering 500km from Singapore to Malacca via Batu Pahat and back.



The funds raised will support SIWEC's Academic Excellence Programme. This is a collaborative effort with the Singapore Sikh Education Foundation (SSEF) which is now in its 4th year. The programme matches weak students' facing difficulties with their studies with guidance and tutoring on a sustained basis to give them an even chance to catch up with their more advantaged peers. Presently, there are 29 students on the programme between the age of 7 to 12.

Mr Gurdip Singh Usma said, "The spirit of the riders in embarking on this challenge is indeed remarkable. I am especially grateful to the organisers and well-wishers for their support of this initiative, and for adopting SIWEC as one of the beneficiary organisations, for the third time over the last 6 years. Please accept our heartfelt gratitude for your effort".

The riders' return a month earlier - on 26th March - was met with a rousing welcome as sounds of the dhol and loud cheers filled the air at Sri Guru Singh Sabha. Its President Mr Tirlok Singh Kler together with committee members and the assembled sangat, had turned out in full force to support the charity ride's completion, as part of Singh Sabha's centennial celebrations.



They were joined by families, friends and well-wishers of RFC 2018 participants, who had also gathered to cheer the cyclists and welcome them home. There were more than a few teary eyes as everyone shook hands and hugged after completing a seemingly formidable 500-kilometre ride.

4 Days, 32 Riders, One Mission!

Early on Thursday, March 23rd morning, the group of 32 cyclists and 15 support crew gathered at the Tune Hotel in Johor Baru (JB) where Mr Rajpal Singh, Consul-General of the Republic of Singapore in JB, formally flagged off all riders for the first leg to Batu Pahat.



The collective quest for all; Ride to Malacca and back to Singapore safely over 4 days covering over 500 km in the process, to raise funds for beneficiaries of SIWEC and Sunlove Home for The Intellectually Disabled.

Both the northbound and return trips included overnight stops at Batu Pahat, to recuperate, refuel and refresh sore bodies and stiff back and leg muscles.



On 26 March, as the riders embarked on the final leg back to Singapore, they were blessed with overcast skies in the morning and light showers along the final stretch into Johor Baru in the late afternoon. The final group of riders crossed the causeway by 5 pm and after regrouping at Sophia Road, the entire group completed their quest at 6 pm with their triumphant ride up Mt Emily, Singapore.

Melvinder Singh Leil, a first-time participant in RFC, said, "It was a truly memorable experience. It was exciting to meet other fellow riders, train together and crack jokes over durians and icy chendols in between our rides. My biggest takeaway was the effort put in by the organising committee. It was a hot and tiring 4 days of leg-aching rides for us riders, but the organisers and event marshals took really good care of us. All we had to do was focus on our ride. I truly enjoyed the journey to Malacca and back to Singapore, and I urge other new cyclists to take the opportunity to join the next Harmony on Wheels event if you are a cycling enthusiast like me."

Luvinderpal Singh, the organiser of RFC 2018 remarked, "We are all very happy to have raised a total of SGD \$120,000 in total, for SIWEC and for Sun Love Abode for Intellectually-Infirm. This has been a meaningful undertaking for us all."



OUR SERVICES

**Academic Excellence
& Education Support
Program**

**Community Mediation
Program**

Eldercare Program

**Family Bereavement
Services**

**Financial Assistance
& Food on the Table
Program**

**Home Visit & Family
Support Assistance**

**Hospital Visits
& Healthcare
Ambassador Program**

Outreach Activities

**Prisons Counselling &
Aftercare Program**

YOU CAN HELP AND MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Donations

A small contribution from you translates into huge benefits for the less fortunate. You can donate by:

- A one-time Donation - Cash, Cheque or Bank drafts.
- GIRO - Making a GIRO application to provide monthly (recurring) donations.
- A Bequest (Will) - Leave a legacy in support of SIWEC's clients.
- A Memorial Donation - A thoughtful way to remember a loved one while giving support to others.

Donors will be able to claim tax deduction, 2.5 times of the amount donated to SIWEC.

Volunteers

Your efforts as a SIWEC volunteer enables us to successfully run our programmes and hence, make a difference to the community. We are looking for volunteers to strengthen our services and programmes. To find out more, kindly contact us at info@siwec.org today!

WHOM WE SERVE

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

Website: <http://www.siwec.org>

