



Service from the heart

People's Association officer Wendy Zeng is passionate about improving the quality of life of the elderly

by susan chen

MS WENDY Zeng, 24, wants to make a difference to the lives of people who are more than twice her age.

As Constituency Manager (Wellness) of the Kebun Baru Constituency Office@Kebun Baru Community Club, Ms Zeng is responsible for engaging residents aged 50 years and above in activities which promote a healthy and active lifestyle.

Some of the activities she has organised include health talks on traditional Chinese medicine, health screenings and one-day tours to the Yakult factory and television studio as well as family carnivals.

On average, she organises two to three activities in a month, working closely with grassroots leaders and external agencies including hospitals and government agencies such as the Health Promotion Board.

Being able to serve and bring joy to the elderly makes her happy, says Ms Zeng, who joined People's Association (PA) after graduating from the National University of Singapore with a bachelor's degree in the Arts and Social Sciences in 2009.

She says: "To have an uncle or aunty coming up to tell me that they have enjoyed themselves tremendously in my event and thanking me for making their day, that feels really good."

Ms Zeng says she was drawn to the PA job after a part-time stint at the community clubs during her university holiday breaks.

She recalls: "Through my interactions with PA staff and grassroots leaders, I grew to love the nature of the job and the people."

She was also influenced by her father,

a group constituency director with PA for 20 years.

"From young, he has shared with me many stories of those he has come across in his career and took me to attend the activities and events that he organised. I grew to have a keen interest in this job and therefore, made the decision to join to make a difference in the lives of others," she says.

"It allows me to come into contact with people from all walks of life. It is a very rare opportunity to be able to learn the life stories of others, stories which I might not have come across if I was not in this job."

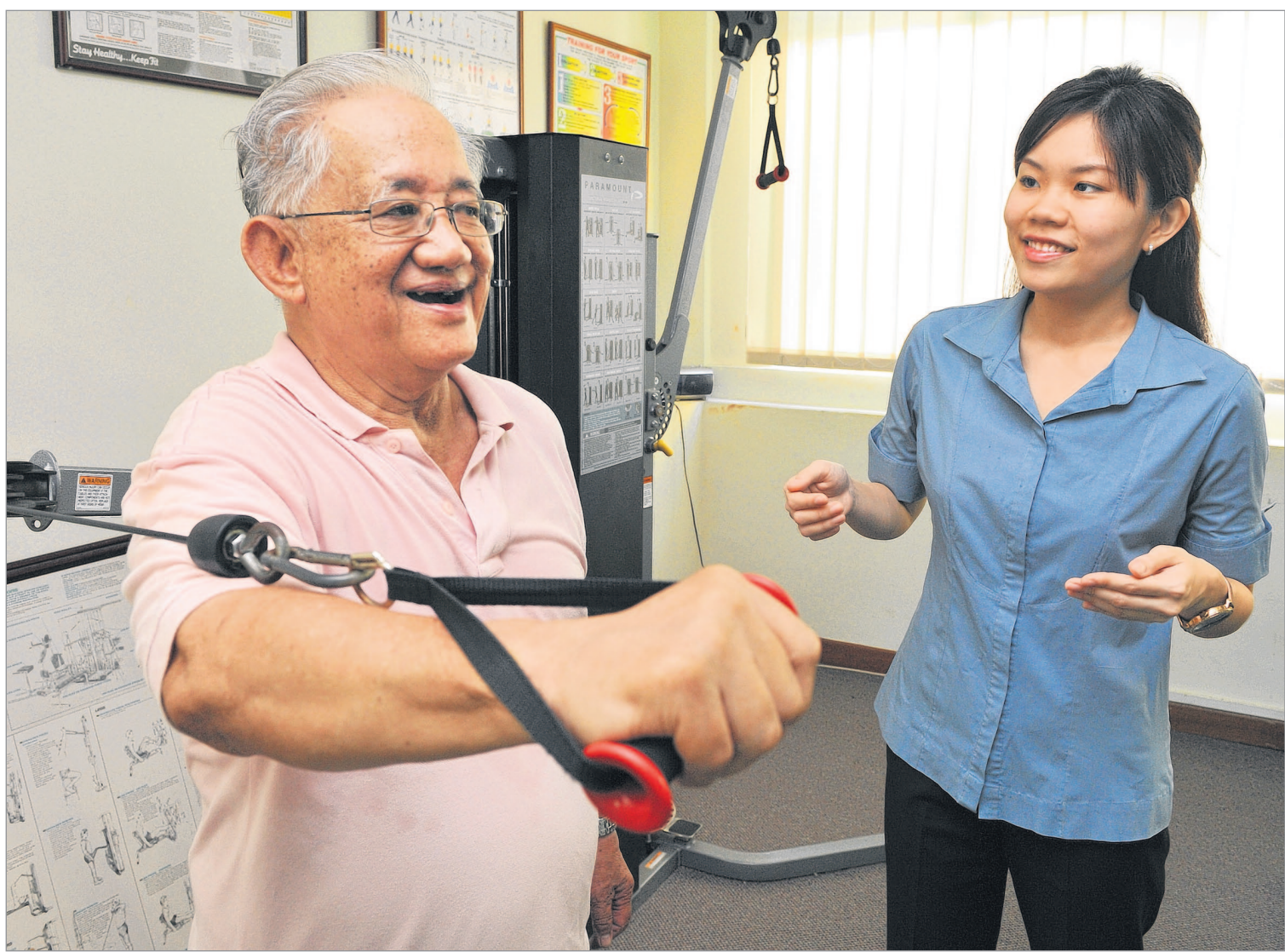
The greatest challenge she faces is reaching out to those elderly who are either not aware of the wellness activities or are simply not interested.

Ms Zeng spares no effort in working with grassroots leaders to build relationships with the elderly, increase awareness of the wellness programmes with posters and banners hung at void decks' notice boards and outside the community club.

Language, too, poses a challenge, she concedes. "I am able to understand dialects but I do not speak them well. As many of the elderly speak dialects, I found it hard to converse with them at the beginning. But with practice, I am getting better at it."

She has picked up Hokkien after more than a year on the job.

The job has added to her personal growth, says Ms Zeng. "I have learnt to be empathetic. In my job, I come across many cases of the less fortunate and elderly who are less cared for. To be able to do something for them, and then see how appreciative they are of it makes me very happy and proud of myself," she adds.



Being able to serve the elderly and bring them joy makes her happy, says Ms Zeng. PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG