

# New mental health centre to help residents

It hopes more people understand mental illness and get help

By Ho Ai Li

IN ONE corner of Hougang yesterday, residents' committee member Yeo Lee Yin, 60, asked an elderly woman in Teochew: "Do you feel sad most of the time?"

With fellow grassroots worker

Gn Ee Hung, 60, she was helping residents mingling in the void deck at Block 616, Hougang Avenue 8, fill up a "depression checklist".

The occasion was the opening of Tze Hng Wellness Studio, a first-of-its-kind neighbourhood centre to promote mental health in the community and help mental patients get jobs.

The centre will provide – for free – job-search services, job skills workshops and a weekly psychology clinic.

Besides matching job hunters and businesses in the area with vacancies, the centre will also hold talks on mental health and workshops on how to handle job interviews.

Its library is stocked with brochures on mental illnesses; its activity area invites residents to drop in to use its computers or its foot massage machines.

The idea for the centre was born when Aljunied GRC Member of Parliament Yeo Guat Kwang met Ms Porsche Poh, the

executive director of Silver Ribbon, a non-profit organisation which helps mental patients, at an event in July.

He told her he had noticed how some residents who came to see him when they lost their jobs were irritable and anxious.

And this irritability and tension was spreading from the breadwinners to their stay-at-home wives.

Mr Yeo said that many such people were not aware they needed help, and that if left unchecked, their mental health could worsen.

In a matter of months following that conversation, Tze Hng Wellness Studio – a joint project between Silver Ribbon and the Aljunied-Hougang Citizens' Consultative Committee – got off the ground.

Mr Yeo said the centre could reach out to those who might otherwise shy away from seeking help.

Referring to Singapore's mental hospital by its wider name, he said: "If you tell them they need

to go to Woodbridge a fright."

Ms Poh said she hoped the centre will become a safe place for students to mix with real mental patients and could understand them better.

Housewife Chan Yee Hui, 44, who was at the opening yesterday, said it was good as "a lot of people lead busy lives and face a lot of

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