

THE STRAITS TIMES

Nursing homes bring CNY cheer to residents despite suspension of visits due to Covid-19



Residents, clients and staff working together to decorate the All Saints Home on Jan 28, 2022. PHOTOS: ALL SAINTS HOME/FACEBOOK



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PUBLISHED 5 HOURS AGO

SINGAPORE - Restrictions and a rise in Covid-19 cases have not dampened the festive spirit of staff and residents in Singapore's nursing homes, as many prepare to usher in Chinese New Year this week.

To spread festive cheer, staff at Thye Hua Kwan Nursing Home as well as All Saints Home put up decorations and distributed Chinese New Year goodies and mandarin oranges to the residents last week.

These festive arrangements are especially meaningful at a time when in-person visits to hospital wards and residential care homes continue to be suspended amid a surge in Omicron Covid-19 cases in the Republic.

The suspension, which is expected to last till Feb 20, means that senior residents will not be able to meet their loved ones in person for Chinese New Year.

Mr Ardi Hardjoe, chief executive officer of Thye Hua Kwan Nursing Home in Hougang, said that there was a small hike in the number of visitors to the nursing home on Jan 22 and 23, right after the suspension was announced on Jan 21, as loved ones rushed to meet their elderly relatives before the month-long break in visitation started.

"Both visitors and residents have taken the suspension in their stride, as they know the importance of stepping up safe management measures right now. We want to make Chinese New Year as memorable as we can for the residents despite the situation," he said.

The nursing home, which has more than 270 residents, has put in place strict measures to safeguard the seniors. Staff members are assigned to separate wings with no intermingling between groups.

White fungus soup, chicken cutlet and shiitake mushrooms are some of the items on the menu for residents, who will also be able to take part in the virtual tossing of yusheng using a lohei app.

"Our biggest concern is that cases may climb during the festive period and our staff will be affected. In the meantime, we have to carry on," Mr Ardi added.

At All Saints Home, which houses about 700 residents across four centres in Tampines, Yishun, Jurong East and Hougang, staff members have been helping seniors keep in touch with their families through video calls since the suspension was announced.

Staff and residents will be treated to food items like crab meatballs, Japanese style cod fish and herbal chicken for Chinese New Year.

As a personal tribute to residents, the home's chief executive, Mr Samuel Tan, plans to serenade them with classic Chinese New Year songs on the piano next week.

Mr Tan, who thanked donors, volunteers and staff for their efforts to support the seniors, said: "The suspension of visitation to nursing homes during the Chinese New Year period will undoubtedly dampen the spirits of our residents. However, this is necessary for their protection.

"I hope my performances, with the proper safety measures, will contribute in a small way in lifting up their spirits and bringing them cheer."

In previous years, 62-year-old resident Pang Chye Heng used to enjoy dragon dances, karaoke sessions and movie screenings during Chinese New Year. Mr Pang, a resident at All Saints Home (Hougang), was also able to leave the home to join the rest of his family for a steamboat feast and collect red packets.

He said: "This year's celebrations may not be as festive due to the visitation restrictions, but I support the new suspension during this period so we can curb the spread of this virus and keep nursing home residents safe."

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