

## Put values first, honour the elderly: Chan Chun Sing

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Put values before material wealth, and appreciate the elderly in society, Minister for Social and Family Development Chan Chun Sing (pictured) said at a symposium for students on Saturday, Feb 15, 2014. -- ST FILE PHOTO: LAU FOOK KONG

By Amelia Teng

Put values before material wealth, and appreciate the elderly in society, Minister for Social and Family Development Chan Chun Sing said at a symposium for students on Saturday.

"Between values and money, values come first... How we treat our elders sets an example of how our children will treat us. We lead by example," Mr Chan said, adding that the recent Pioneer Generation package was intended to honour the elders who have contributed to the country.

He was speaking to some 150 secondary school students at the service learning symposium held at the Singapore Management University (SMU). The event, in its second year, served as a platform for young people to learn skills related to community service and discuss ideas.

Mr Chan urged the students to take a different perspective towards community work. "We seem to be very concerned about doing things for them," he said, referring to the elderly and vulnerable. But a better approach would be to "enable them to achieve, and not just to deliver for them". This would allow those being helped to have greater ownership and pride, he said.

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"Appreciate any person in society for what they can do, much more than what they cannot do," he added, referring to people with disabilities.

The Pioneer Generation package announced on Sunday includes enhanced subsidies for outpatient treatment, additional annual Medisave top-ups and help with premiums for the new national insurance scheme, MediShield Life.

Those who qualify must be 65 or older by the end of this year. They must also have become Singapore citizens before 1987. About 450,000 people are expected to benefit.

The service learning symposium was organised by the SMU's Centre for Social Responsibility and a social enterprise called Positive Intentions that provides coaching and training for people.

Participants came from eight secondary schools, including Xinmin Secondary and Bowen Secondary. In groups, they spent some time brainstorming ways to help different groups of people in the community, like the elderly, youth and people with disabilities.

They were guided by 30 university student leaders, 17 of whom were from SMU. The other facilitators were from youth volunteers from Positive Intentions.

Pioneer Secondary student Eraggaven Kumar, 15, said that his group discussed how to help young people going through depression or are being bullied. "So we thought about setting up anti-bullying clubs in schools made up of teachers and students. This club will reach out to bullied students, help to counsel them and organise outings for them," he said.

Another group, which Swiss Cottage Secondary student Nurul Amirah, 15, was part of, talked about how to raise awareness of people with disabilities. "We want to change misperception of the disabled by maybe giving other people a chance to experience what it's like to be in their shoes through simulated disabilities," she said. "For instance, we could let them sit on wheelchairs, or blindfold them."

Students were also encouraged to develop their ideas into projects that could be implemented in the community. SMU and Positive Intentions will provide resources and youth facilitators to coach them during the next few months.