



Actor Edmund Chen persuading Madam Jamelah Khatun Mohd Ali to donate to Project Rice at a Sheng Siong supermarket yesterday. The project to raise funds for needy families was started in 2008 by the Singapore Management University's Red Cross youth chapter. PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

Project Rice goes beyond food items

By AMELIA TENG

HOUSEWIFE Judy Tan, 60, spotted actor Edmund Chen at a Sheng Siong supermarket yesterday.

Mr Chen was not shopping for groceries, though. Together with volunteers from the Singapore Red Cross, he was at the Bedok Central outlet encouraging people to donate to the less fortunate.

In previous years, the organisation had collected and distributed rice to needy families.

This year, for the first time, 1,250 families, or 5,000 individu-

als, will receive a variety of items, including household products, condiments and food. Every person will get \$15 worth of items.

Mr George Zhou, 22, a youth volunteer with the Red Cross who is heading this year's initiative, said items other than rice were included following feedback from family service centres.

"People usually think only of food items when they donate, so this year we tried to include... items that are based on the wish-lists of families," he said.

"We realised that some of these other items, such as tooth-

brushes and tissue paper, are also essential, but families have trouble getting them," said the second-year political science student at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

The initiative, known as Project Rice, was started in 2008 by the Singapore Management University's (SMU's) Red Cross youth chapter.

This year's Project Rice team is made up mostly of students from SMU, NUS and Nanyang Technological University.

"We wanted to deepen our impact and provide more targeted help this year," said Mr Zhou.

People can donate cash, in multiples of \$10, at any of the 38 Sheng Siong outlets islandwide until Sunday.

Mr Chen, who has been supporting Project Rice since 2010, said: "I believe in what the Red Cross is doing. It is for a good cause. Once you tell Singaporeans about the initiative, they respond positively, and many have donated."

One such person is Madam Tan, who donated \$10.

She said: "There are still a lot of poor people in society, so it's good to help them."

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