



#SGOCares

Behind-the-Scenes of SGO COVID-19 Outreach

Silver Generation Office (SGO)
Agency for Integrated Care (AIC)



The Silver Generation Office (SGO), an outreach arm of the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), is appointed by the Ministry of Health (MOH) to reach out to and support seniors with their ageing needs through personalised face-to-face house visits.

On 7 February 2020, the Ministry of Health (MOH) raised the Disease Outbreak Response System Condition (DORSCON) status from yellow to orange due to the community spread of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). A nationwide Circuit Breaker period was also instituted on 7 April 2020 for two weeks, and extended to 19 June 2020 to combat the spread of COVID-19.

The Circuit Breaker period hit seniors hard, especially those who lived alone, had poor family support or faced mobility challenges. Many of these seniors were anxious as they had no one to turn to for help with daily activities and could not continue with social activities.

SGO stepped up its care and support for these vulnerable seniors during this period. Adhering to COVID-19 precautionary measures, SGO adjusted its engagement modality from house visits to telephone engagements to connect with seniors during the Circuit Breaker period and help them adapt to the new normal.

During this Circuit Breaker period, SGO reached out to 47,000 vulnerable seniors and responded to more than 3,000 requests for assistance.

This book shares the behind-the-scenes of SGO's outreach efforts for vulnerable seniors during the Circuit Breaker period and beyond, as a tribute to our volunteers, staff and community partners who worked tirelessly to support seniors in our community.







PRE- CIRCUIT BREAKER

“Stay Home, Stay Safe.”

In late February 2020, SGO reached out to about 27,000 vulnerable seniors to provide them support in coping with the COVID-19 situation. It was important to remind seniors to stay home, educate them on COVID-19 precautionary measures as well as connect them with relevant support and services to help them with daily living.

Pre-Circuit Breaker

Over 500 Silver Generation (SG) Ambassadors reached out to about 27,000 vulnerable seniors to share COVID-19 precautionary measures and to assuage concerns they might have due to the increase in the community cases. SGO ensured that the SG Ambassadors deployed to seniors' homes adhered strictly to precautionary measures and safeguards mandated by the Ministry of Health (MOH), including the wearing of masks, twice-daily temperature taking, basic health screening and checking of travel history.

Seniors were aware that they were more susceptible to the virus as compared to the general population, and expressed concerns about keeping themselves safe.

Some seniors were less prepared during this period. They did not know who to turn to for help with daily activities since it was not safe for them to be travelling outdoors. Seniors who lived alone were anxious about not being able to meet their family and friends, or engage in activities outdoors.



Dr Amy Khor, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health, joined the SG Ambassadors in their house visits to vulnerable seniors in Ang Mo Kio.

Distribution of Hand Sanitisers

The distribution was part of the Stay Prepared initiative by Temasek Foundation to support Singaporeans during the COVID-19 outbreak.



Circuit Breaker: Preparing for Change

SGO staff worked tirelessly behind-the-scenes to re-strategise the engagement of seniors in a safe way, following the announcement of the Circuit Breaker.

While meeting the needs of our seniors, SGO ensured that the well-being of our volunteers was not compromised. To protect our senior volunteers from transmission risk, those aged 60 and above were not allowed to continue with house visits. Given that 1 in 6 active SG Ambassadors were seniors, there was a significant drop in our volunteer pool during this period.



However, this did not dampen our spirits or our commitment to our seniors. SGO staff and volunteers worked extra hard during this period to reach out to as many seniors as they could, to ensure that they were not isolated during the Circuit Breaker.



“Food Delivery!”

When safe distancing measures were tightened in early April 2020, SGO partnered JTC Corporation to distribute food packs to more than 30,000 vulnerable seniors who live alone so that they can stay home and avoid exposure to COVID-19.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Behind-the-Scenes

The sun may not have risen yet, but our volunteers were ready to start packing and organising the island-wide distribution of food packs to seniors' homes.



Distribution

SGO staff and volunteers from the 20 Satellite Offices distributed food packs to our seniors. Each food pack, weighing 7 kgs, comprised essentials such as canned food, milk, cooking ingredients as well as sanitary supplies to ensure that our seniors would be self-sufficient at home for at least two weeks.



It was back-breaking work, but SGO staff and volunteers were energised knowing that what they were doing would help keep our seniors safe.



And we're ready to give



“Thank you so much.”

- Mdm Rubella



“How are you?”

In late April 2020, the Circuit Breaker was extended and safe distancing measures were tightened. SGO had replaced its face-to-face engagements with Tele-Engagements to continue engaging and monitoring the well-being of about 21,000 vulnerable seniors (those who live alone, are empty nesters and have little or no family support) through weekly or fortnightly calls.

It was a new model of engagement that SG Ambassadors were not familiar with, but they were game to try for the benefit and safety of our seniors.

To ensure that staff and volunteers were well-equipped to conduct Tele-Engagements, SGO tapped on online meeting platforms such as Zoom to conduct trainings, with digitised engagement materials for easy dissemination.

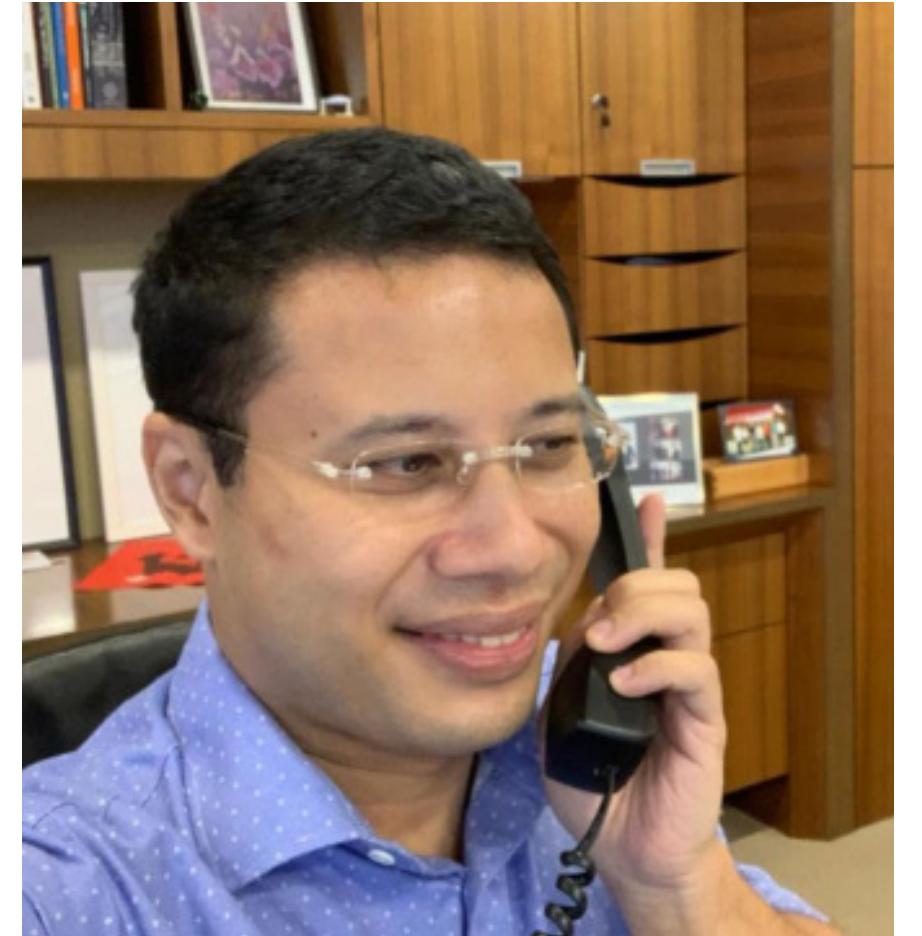
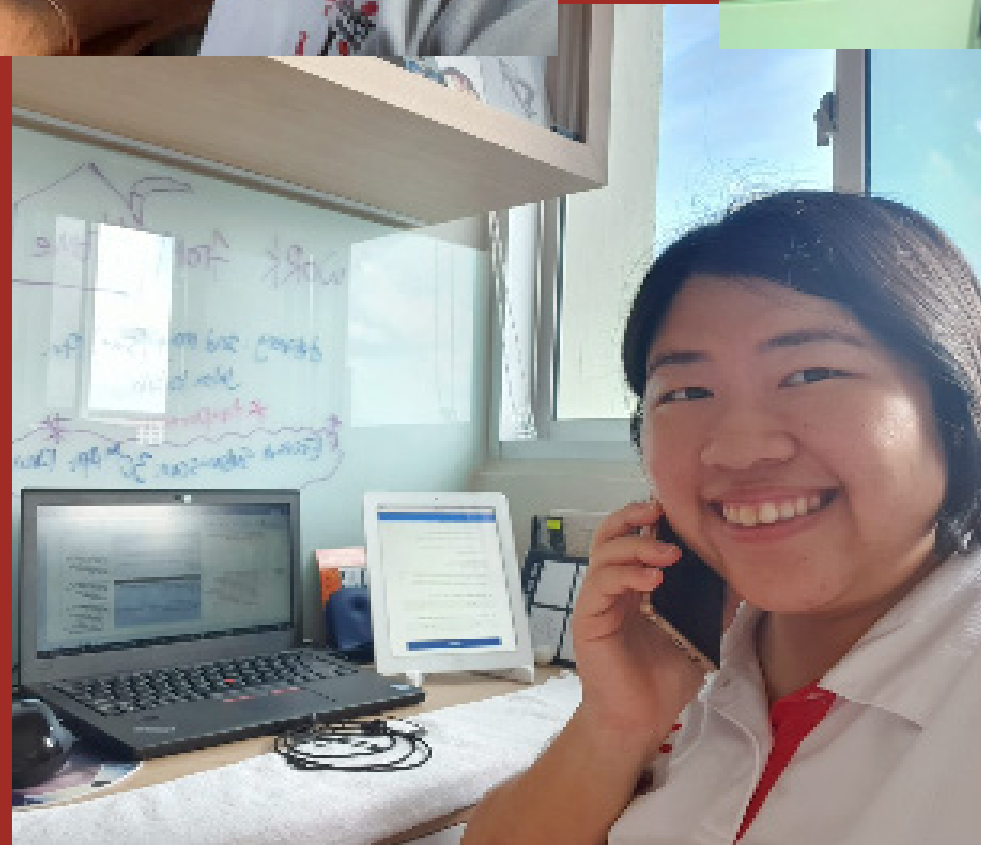
To support Tele-Engagement for vulnerable seniors who live alone or have poor family support, SGO partnered GovTech to develop a new system to allow staff and volunteers to track and document their engagements with seniors as well as deploy relevant support.



TELE-ENGAGEMENT

Behind-the-Scenes

Our volunteers worked tirelessly in their own homes to ensure that vulnerable seniors received the support they needed.



Minister Desmond Lee supported us in our tele-engagement efforts by personally calling some of the seniors.

“Picked up the phone on Wednesday to call four seniors living on their own in different parts of Singapore, to find out how they were coping during the Circuit Breaker and whether they needed assistance.”

“I’m here to help!”

With Circuit Breaker extended and restrictions tightened, SGO stepped up to help seniors cope with daily living by running simple errands (e.g. buying food and groceries, collecting medication top-ups, etc.) so that they could stay home. Over 500 Public Service (PS) volunteers, across 89 Ministries and Statutory Boards, were recruited to help run errands for vulnerable seniors, to support SGO’s outreach efforts.

For many PS volunteers, this was their first time volunteering with seniors and they found it very meaningful.



ERRANDS

“Can help me get some groceries?”

SGO volunteers assisted many seniors with grocery runs so that they could stay home and stay safe. It was interesting to learn about the different ingredients seniors used for their cooking and their tips on healthy eating!



“The weather is too hot!”

Singapore experienced some of its hottest days during the Circuit Breaker. Some days, the temperature hit as high as 40 degree celsius.

Some seniors from poor financial backgrounds shared that they felt stifled in the heat and could not tolerate being cooped up in their homes, as they did not have fans or air conditioning for better ventilation. Our volunteers went the extra mile to source sponsors for fans and had them delivered to these seniors who appreciated the “cool” gesture!



“We gathered the resources, fixed a burst pipe and changed a lightbulb for 69-year-old Mdm Lim”

- Johnny Yeo, SGO Volunteer



“72-year-old Mr Er needed help to download several mobile applications and I’m glad I could help!”

- Mardhiyah, SGO Volunteer



“Television delivery for 73-year-old Mr Chan.”

“Mr Chan’s house was very empty with only one mattress and chair. He tried to stay home as much as possible, especially during the Circuit Breaker period, and often felt very bored.

He was so happy that we found him a TV and helped to set it up. Now, he can enjoy his drama shows and watch the latest news updates.”

- Vincent Lai and Wong Poh Yee, Volunteers of SGO



“He was so happy!”

“ 90-year-old Mr Quek wanted to make a trip to the ATM but was afraid to leave home alone.

Our volunteers fetched Mr Quek from his door step and drove him to a nearby ATM so that he could withdraw some money, and then sent him back home to his doorstep again.

Mr Quek seemed really relieved to finally have some cash on hand for his daily needs. Knowing that he’s happy makes us happy too.”

- Li Ling and Dolly Cheng, Volunteers of SGO



A Special Request

SGO received a request from a vulnerable senior to help bathe, groom and walk her dog, her sole companion of 14 years, since she lived alone. The senior suffered from cancer and her condition had worsened during the Circuit Breaker. With non-essential services closed during this period, she could not send her dog for grooming services it required or take it for walks. She felt depressed and blamed herself for her dog's plight.



“I was very thrilled to lend a hand, being a dog-lover myself. Glad to be of help to the senior and her dog during this period of time.”

-Bhavani Nyanajegaran, SGO Volunteer



Subsequently, the senior fell ill and was hospitalised. Our volunteer went the extra mile and brought the senior's dog home so that the senior could rest more and concentrate on recovering.

Swab Kits Delivery

SGO delivered swab kits to hospitals and nursing homes across Singapore to support the efforts to battle COVID-19.

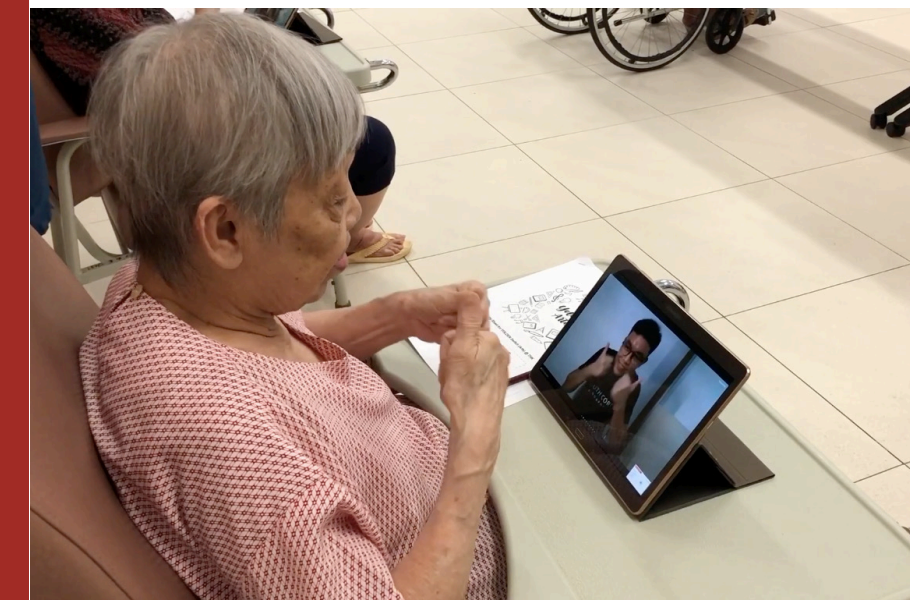


Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Masks

SGO worked closely with MOH and key partners, to distribute Masks as well as PPEs to Community Care partners so that they could be safe during their interactions with the public.



Delivery of Repurposed Samsung Tablets to Nursing Homes in Singapore so seniors can do video calls





POST-CIRCUIT BREAKER

“Only the start.”

SGO continued to tele-engage vulnerable seniors even after the Circuit Breaker had ended, realising that they would need time and additional support to cope with the new normal. It also expanded its outreach pool to help other groups of seniors, such as elderly caregivers and those with mental health conditions. SGO continued to leverage on SG Ambassadors for the Tele-Engagements and deployed Public Service volunteers to help these seniors with errands, minimising the need for them to go out.

TraceTogether Token

Close to 10,000 vulnerable seniors received the first batch of TraceTogether tokens from Smart Nation and Digital Government Office (SNDGO) through SGO staff and volunteers who visited them at home to explain the use of the device and assist in its activation.



“I don’t know how it works, but I was told that if I was near a COVID-19 patient, the authorities would know and I would be informed. That makes me feel quite assured. I just know that I should carry this everywhere I go. Since it is meant to help me, I don’t mind.”

- 82-year-old Mr Ng Cheong Hwee

“What drives us?”

SGO's mission is to touch lives and honour seniors. Here are some of the stories that drive our SG Ambassadors to continue serving, especially vulnerable seniors who need extra support and supervision. Some seniors find it hard to cope with daily living because of disabilities and poor finances. The tightening of Covid-19 safety measures to curb the community spread further worsened their difficult situation.



GOING THE EXTRA MILE

Circuit Breaker Stories



68-year-old Mr Teo had not had a haircut or shaved for a few months and he hoped to have one. However, his mobility issues kept him from doing so.

With no family support, Mr Teo shared that he was glad to have volunteers check in on him to make sure that he could cope well.

After his haircut and shave, he said that he felt younger and fresher. He was so thankful for the services rendered. A little act of kindness goes a long way in making a senior's day.

Just-In-Time

On some occasions, SGO was there just-in-time to assist seniors who required urgent medical attention.



“Mdm Goh’s neighbour alerted SGO as she was worried when Mdm Goh did not answer her door or phone during a meal delivery. We rushed down and activated the Police to open the door for us. Mdm Goh was found lying semi-conscious on her bed. The ambulance came in time and Mdm Goh was admitted to the hospital. Thank goodness the neighbour contacted us and that help arrived in time!”



“SGO received a call from a concerned neighbour at around 9:00 PM, saying that there was a smell of something burning from within the senior’s house. We rushed over to his place and found him standing inside his house, at the gate, trapped. He was anxious and told us that he could not find his keys to open his gate. We immediately activated the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) and Police for assistance. We also accompanied the senior to the hospital and sent him home after he was discharged.

So thankful that the senior is now doing well and that his helpful neighbours were quick to react.”



“When we met the senior near the road, he kept pointing to his home and telling us that he was feeling giddy. He looked very frail so we assisted him across the road. We managed to borrow a wheelchair from the nearby Senior Activity Centre and sent him home. At the gate, senior shared that he could not find his keys! As he seemed very weak, we decided to contact the paramedics to check in on him. In the meantime, we also managed to find his daughter’s contact with the help of the police. While waiting for her to arrive, staff from the nearby community centre offered some food and space for the senior to rest. SGO is currently working with the senior’s daughter on his care plans to make sure that he is alright. We are glad we stopped by to help.”

Connecting Seniors to Care Needs



76-year-old Mdm Tay is a retired teacher and currently lives alone. She goes for regular medical check-ups at the hospitals and polyclinic but uses a walking aid to get around as her legs are not strong.

“Mdm Tay requested help to purchase a meal because of her condition, and she was signed up for the Meals-on-Wheels meal delivery programme. On a separate occasion, I taught Mdm Tay how to use some mobile applications and basic phone functions. We also managed to source for a new wheelchair to replace her broken one. She told me that she was very thankful that we took the time to befriend her and to check in on her frequently. She is really happy to have many of her concerns addressed and is comforted that the seniors are taken care of.”

— Thomas Chia, SGO Volunteer.



Mr Manuel Welen had a haircut and his beard shaved, in time for his 68th birthday. Due to his mobility challenges, and the tightening of safety measures, Mr Welen could not leave his house during the Circuit Breaker period.

SGO heard that he wanted his hair trimmed before his birthday and made special arrangements for a hairdresser to attend to his request. Our volunteers sweetened the experience when they surprised him with a birthday cake and celebration!

- Irene Ho, SGO Volunteer



OUR VOLUNTEERS

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

A huge Thank You from the bottom of our hearts to all our volunteers for stepping up to join SGO in this effort despite the challenging COVID-19 situation. Together, we worked tirelessly through the months to ensure that our seniors could stay home and stay safe. You are the unsung heroes to the many seniors whom you serve and they appreciate you as much as we do!

Once again, thank you for your compassion and big heart! The efforts of #SGOCares would not have been possible without each and every one of you.

“I wanted to give back to society and make a difference in whatever way I could. I was very delighted to have an opportunity to serve this lady this week - when I saw the joy and delight that I brought to her when I delivered her groceries, I felt a sense of fulfilment and it really was something I could tell my son about. I feel like this is how we should be like in the society - being kind and helpful to one another. That would really go a long way in making someone else’s life better.”

Melvin Au, Ministry of Education

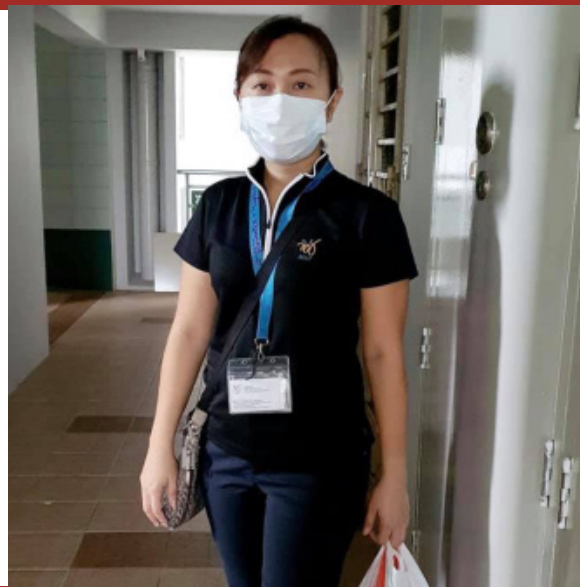


“I helped Mdm Wong get groceries today! As I don’t cook much, it was an eye-opener learning that there were so many different types of spinach(es), I shall endeavour to eat more veggies (haha). Mdm Wong also specifically requested “greener” bananas, and I found out that this would help keep the bananas longer! When I delivered the groceries to her, she shared that some of the vegetables were for her neighbour, so I helped to send them over too. It was inspiring to see the seniors looking out for one another.”

Sherilyn Lim, Workforce Singapore

“Volunteering has always been part of my life since JC days and I have been volunteering for the past six years. It’s always a blessing to be in a position to help others and perhaps because of my relationship with my late grandparents, I have a soft spot for the seniors. Mdm Wong is a nice and sociable lady. While she was a bit apprehensive to meet me at the beginning, her uneasiness was put at ease quickly when we started chatting. She has been keeping to the Circuit Breaker measures and clearly misses some amount of social interaction. We took a leisure walk to the nearby supermarket as she has weak knees and could not walk fast. It was helpful that she had written out her shopping list so that I could plan the route around the supermarket to get her things quickly without her making too many rounds. She was thoughtful to bring a trolley bag along as she had purchased a lot of heavy items. After helping her to carry the items home, we bid farewell and Mdm Wong was very thankful for helping her with the errand. Overall, it was a good experience to meet a new senior within my neighbourhood and chat with her.”

Chloe Yeo, Ministry of Social and Family Development





75-year-old Mr Mohamed Kassim may be visually challenged, but he is still very strong and healthy! It was our pleasure to meet him and to help with some grocery run.

“No better way to start a morning than to be delivering groceries to one of our friendly seniors, so that they can stay safe during this crucial period.”

Sze Gin

Monetary Authority of Singapore

Yee Hsueh Wah

Maritime and Port Authority

“That’s me in the corner. It was heartwarming to see how Mr Nedumaran cared for his 77-year-old mother despite being on a wheelchair. Recently, his electric wheelchair broke and he could not bear for his mother to push him for grocery shopping. Fortunately, I lived in the same neighbourhood and immediately popped by the supermarket to help buy some groceries for them.”



“Who would have thought that something I learnt in Year 2 Design would come in handy 14 years later? Changing this senior’s ceiling lamp brought back these memories. My father also lent a hand by sharing his knowledge of old lighting fixtures, so I was all prepared to change the light bulb! Seniors helping seniors through their children.”

Amanda Lim

Ministry of Education

Melvin Lim

Public Service Division

“I was very happy to hear that 70-year-old Mr Lim was coping well. So thankful to have this opportunity to support and care for seniors in this trying time. Every bit counts. Let’s spark joy!”



“I was so happy to meet such a lovely lady living in my neighbourhood! Mdm Wang is 73-year-old but still very eager to learn about mobile applications. I was glad that I could help her with that. Hope to see her around and catch up again after Circuit Breaker. Stay safe and healthy, Mdm Wang!”

Judith Soh

National Parks Board

SG Ambassadors are everywhere in the neighbourhood

SGO is just a call away and we are here to care for our seniors. The COVID-19 pandemic is a reminder for us to stay strong and resilient, while looking out for each other in the community.

If you would like to play a part in serving seniors around you,
JOIN US AS SG AMBASSADORS TODAY.



Special Thanks

To our partners & sponsors:

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