

Community care staff get award to help them upgrade skills

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Despite having a successful career in the travel industry that spanned more than two decades, Ms Jenny Ang decided to call it quits in 2016.

She wanted to do something that contributed to society, and to put her caregiving skills to good use.

Her mother had a mild stroke in 2012 and Ms Ang, who is in her 50s, was her primary caregiver.

In 2017, she joined St Luke's ElderCare as a centre manager, where she oversaw the daily operations at its Chong Pang branch, which caters to about 50 senior citizens.

She currently manages the Ang Mo Kio branch, which she helped start in 2020 during the early days of the Covid-19 pandemic. It features an integrated nursing home.

On Monday, she was among 121 community care staff who received the Community Care Manpower Development Award (CCMDA) to further develop their skills.

Ms Ang, who is studying for a master's degree in applied geron-



Mr Sathish Kumar Lakshmanan and Ms Jenny Ang were among 121 community care staff who received the Community Care Manpower Development Award.
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tology at Nanyang Technological University, will have some of her course fees covered by the award.

The award provides new joiners and current community care staff with training support and opportunities to advance their careers, with almost 700 awards given out since 2017 by the Agency for Integrated Care.

Citing Ms Ang as an example, Ms Rahayu Mahzam, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Health and guest of honour at Monday's ceremony at Suntec Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre, expressed hope that more mid-career entrants would consider the sector.

She also lauded community care staff for their resilience during the pandemic, and stressed the need to prepare for future challenges.

"It is encouraging to see many CCMDA recipients pursue studies in areas such as palliative care and

gerontology. With an ageing population, these areas will become more important and the sector must be equipped with the right skills to meet these changes," she added.

Award recipient Sathish Kumar Lakshmanan, 46, believes more needs to be done to prepare for that future.

The principal physiotherapist at Bright Hill Evergreen Home chose to pursue a master's degree in gerontology at the Singapore University of Social Sciences to better serve the needs of elderly patients.

"While the hardware to support seniors can be made available easily, it is the 'heartware' that truly makes a difference," he said.

Echoing the sentiment, Ms Ang said what drives her is the "passion for the elders... (and being able) to make a difference to them".

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