



Incoming Rotary Club of Singapore West president Stephen Lim (third from left) and outgoing president Lai Bou Leong (fourth from left) blowing candles on a 50th anniversary cake with the club's past presidents: (from left) Mr Kester Chia, Mr Tommie Lien, Dr Chew Kia Ngee, Mr Henry Tan, Dr Dominic Leung (partially hidden) and Mr Peter Kong. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

\$1m Rotary club fund to help nursing students

Launch of scheme at 50th anniversary dinner

By ANG YIYING

A \$1 MILLION fund to support needy nursing students and provide financial assistance to children with special needs, among other things, has been set up by the second oldest Rotary club in Singapore, which is made up of only 47 members.

The fund was launched last night at the 50th anniversary dinner of the Rotary Club of Singapore West.

The club has already collected

about \$750,000 in existing funds and pledges, but it is still about a quarter short of its \$1 million target.

This is its first step towards starting a foundation - a vision held by the club - although no details of this were revealed.

During last night's dinner at the Conrad Centennial, Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports Vivian Balakrishnan lauded the invitation-only club for having so many help schemes and a fund despite its small numbers.

Dr Balakrishnan said: "It's not just about money... Far more important than money is the fact that when someone receives help from an organisation like yours, the key message which that young person realises is the sense that 'I am someone worthwhile. Someone else cares enough about me to extend help to me, to invest in me and believes in my future'. It is that personal touch."

There are 23 Rotary clubs in Singapore that have played a crucial role in providing care, comfort and support to the needy in the community.

Dr Balakrishnan said Rotary Club of

Singapore West members have played a major role in organisations such as the Singapore Cancer Society and the Singapore Eye Bank.

They have also helped tertiary students from Singapore Polytechnic, the National University of Singapore and Nanyang Technological University.

"The fact that you have organised yourselves suddenly means there is a huge reservoir of deep talent, talent connected to good hearts and minds, and a collective will to do good. This means there is far greater potential for assisting people... for reminding people, especially children who are disadvantaged - there are others who believe in me," the minister told 300 guests last night.

He added: "It is very difficult for any effort and any project, any club to be sustained over the decades... It's very easy to recognise an urgent need, to raise funds for a specific cause, to get together, to gather a few good friends, to do something to deliver."

"To be able to do it year after year, decade after decade, 50 years or 100 years, that requires something special. That something special has to transcend politics, sometimes has to transcend even religious organisations on the ground - it has to transcend social relations."

At the dinner, awards named after prominent Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Singapore West - the late Tan Sri Tay Teck Eng and Mr Tan Geok Tian - were given out to individuals and organisations who gave at least \$10,000 to the new fund.

Among them is Dr Dennis Hang-chi, 82, the club's longest-serving member who has been with it from the start.

The retired obstetrician and gynaecologist, who always had a heart for mothers and children, donated \$100,000 to be used to help children with special needs.

He said of his commitment to the club: "When we are doing this sort of community service, it gives us a lot of satisfaction. That's what keeps us going."

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