

# Don't leave home without this card

The New Paper 30/07/10

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Pasir Ris team's emergency kit for the elderly wins community award

CONFUSED and disoriented, the elderly woman, in her 70s, walked aimlessly amid the busy crowd at Bedok bus interchange.

The woman, who is senile, had wandered out of her **home**, to the dismay of her frantic daughter.

A kind passer-by who found her noticed a palm-sized **card** in her otherwise empty wallet.

The **card**, which had the woman's photograph, also included vital information such as her name, NRIC number, address, blood type, existing health conditions as well as the contact number of her family.

So the stranger could call the woman's family. Mother and daughter were reunited that same day.

Mr Rene Shepherdson Jr, 52, a grassroots volunteer in Pasir Ris East, recounted the incident, which took place in May last year, to show how useful the **card** is.

The **card** and a special sling bag for emergencies were Mr Shepherdson's idea.

He is the chairman of the Pasir Ris East Community Emergency and Engagement (C2E) Committee.

This pilot project was among the 29 honoured at the National Community Safety and Security Programme (CSSP) Award ceremony last Friday.

Apart from the **card**, each emergency readiness bag contains an alarm to warn off potential criminals, a torchlight, which would be useful in blackouts, medicated oil and some plaster.

Since the project was launched in March last year, 500 senior citizens in Pasir Ris have signed up. Their ages range from 55 (the minimum eligible age) to 91.

Explaining the need for the kit, Mr Shepherdson said: "Some seniors have dementia or they live alone. So if an accident happens, such information can help save lives on the ground."

The bag and its contents are priced at \$2, even though it costs about \$15 to make. The difference is paid for with funds from the police, the Singapore Civil Defence Force and corporate sponsors for CSSP events.

The project also won an award from the Pasir Ris Neighbourhood Police Centre.

The 22-strong Pasir Ris C2E committee worked over three months to roll out the project ahead of its launch.

The exhaustive work included publicising the project, conducting personal interviews with the seniors and taking their photographs for the **card**.

Mr Shepherdson, a recipient of the Pingat Bakti Masyarakat (Public Service Medal) in 2008 stressed: "Getting the right information like medical condition and blood type is very important because if the information listed is wrong, it may very well cost a life."

As health conditions can change, the committee also has to update the information yearly, he said.

Post-awards, the committee will not rest on its laurels. They have targeted another 400 residents for the project this year. Mr Shepherdson says he's also looking to include those who are 50 years old.

He said of the CSSP win: "This was a team effort, so I felt it motivated the whole team to push the project even further."

Madam Lim Ai Choo, 60, a housewife, said she is glad she has the **card** and the bag.

The Pasir Ris resident of 20 years even totes them as a precautionary measure when she travels overseas, usually thrice a year.

The mother of three and grandmother of one also persuaded her husband, 62, a bus driver, to sign up.

Madam Lim said in Mandarin: "It's better to be safe than sorry. If I become a victim of crime, at least I can use the items to attract attention. Or someone can help contact my family."

Her youngest child, Miss Tan See Hua, 21, a civil servant, gave the **card** and bag the thumbs up.

She said: "It gives me some peace of mind because I know that if something happens to my mum, somebody can still contact me because of the **card**."

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