

STAR SERVICE, 3i AWARDS GIVEN OUT AT MINISTRY'S EXCEL FEST EVENT

MHA honours officers for service, innovation

67 students who worked with Home Team on urban safety solutions also recognised

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SINGAPORE – When Staff Sergeant (SSgt) Tan Kok Beng received complaints about an elderly woman cluttering a common corridor with junk in March last year, he doggedly visited her Housing and Development Board (HDB) unit in Yishun every week for a month to persuade her to clear out the items.

Even when he went out of his way and offered to help her clear out the junk, he was met with aggression and hostility.

“She kept shouting ‘Don’t throw, don’t throw!’,” said SSgt Tan. “She even threatened to burn everything and kill herself, so she was referred to the IMH (Institute of Mental Health).”

But SSgt Tan persisted in getting the lady to consent to the junk being cleared. “She eventually agreed, because she could not do anything (from the IMH),” he said.

Yesterday, SSgt Tan and another 65 Home Team officers were present-

ed with the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) Star Service Award, which recognises officers for delivering outstanding service to the public. Another Star award recipient at the ministry’s biennial Excel Fest yesterday was Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) officer SSgt Muhammad Hafidz, who had rescued a man from a burning HDB unit even though he was off duty.

The MHA’s 3i Awards were also presented yesterday to 32 Home Team officers for their contributions towards innovation in the ministry.

One of the recipients was SCDF chief medical officer Ng Yih Yng, who devised a live, over-the-phone coaching solution for SCDF dispatchers to walk bystanders through the steps of performing cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on heart attack victims.

“Previously, the dispatchers would ask bystanders if they wanted to do CPR. Most would decline. Either (they were) fearful or (they) lacked experience,” said Dr Ng. “So we changed our approach by telling bystanders that they have to perform CPR.”

Every year, about 1,800 Singaporeans suffer from sudden cardiac arrest and only 3 per cent of them survive the attack. Dr Ng said the coaching solution has almost doubled the number of bystanders performing CPR on heart



Staff Sergeants Tan Kok Beng (top) and Muhammad Hafidz both received the MHA Star Service Award at the ministry’s Excel Fest yesterday.

PHOTO: WEE TECK HIAN

attack victims annually from 391 to 782. “Cardiac arrest victims could die within 10 minutes. There are so many things a bystander can do to help a heart attack victim survive. That’s what we want people to understand,” he said.

The MHA also presented the Safety Awareness for Everyone, or SAFE, Awards to 67 students who had worked with Home Team officers to create solutions that enhance urban safety.

One such solution was the Speed Photofit App developed by Ms Carol

Cheng, 21, a third-year Electrical Engineering student at the National University of Singapore.

Using the app, the public would be able to sketch suspects from a crime they just witnessed by using its range of facial and body mark templates.

Ms Cheng said the app was still being developed and that the MHA has said it might be utilised in future. She added: “I don’t know when the app will be commercialised, but I’m hoping it can help more people.”