



Helping FINs face the Covid challenge

Vincentians make sure the needy are never alone during this difficult period



Over the past 18 months, the Friends in Need (FINs) cared for by the Society of St Vincent de Paul (SSVP) have had a rough ride. Many FINs are old, highly vulnerable and encouraged to stay at home so they may not fall victim to Covid. For them, the loss of social interaction took a toll on their mental health.

To address this, Vincentians have been reaching out to FINs providing support and friendship over the phone instead. When the national vaccination programme rolled out, Vincentians started to

The items in the carepack (personal protection gear, anti-bacterial wipes, biscuits, Milo, instant cereal drinks, coffee, an SSVP umbrella, medicated oil, medicated plasters, etc.) and packing in progress at Agape Village

follow-up on the vaccination status of their FINs, especially the elderly. The Conference of St Stephen even started a pilot programme to educate and encourage their FINs to keep up to date with their health screenings and vaccinations, helping to facilitate health

Continued on Page 2...



... Continued from Page 1

checks and visits to the doctor.

When safety management measures were tightened and physical meetings discouraged, cash aid was electronically transferred to FINs and essential aid delivered. SSVF partnered Engineering Good (an NGO) to help provide laptops to children of FINs who faced challenges in getting laptops for home-based learning. The tuition programmes run by SSVF Conferences also switched to online classes since the pandemic took hold.

During this period, Vincentians have been mobilised into urgent action especially when FINs, exposed at eldercare centres or in school, are suddenly served with Quarantine Orders and Stay Home Notices. Stuck at home, many FIN families do not have the familial network, financial resources or tech know-how to order a meal or groceries online. Vincentians, across the island, have stepped in

to ensure that the daily needs of the FINs were met and in instances of large cluster outbreaks, worked closely with the local Member of Parliament and grassroots network, arranging for daily meals and groceries to be delivered to the FINs.

Having made two successful nationwide carepack distribution to 2,000 FIN families from all 29 Conferences in June and December last year, the Society received positive feedback that the essential items given were very useful and well appreciated.

This spurred the Society to organise another carepack distribution in September with each pack containing personal protection gear, anti-bacterial wipes, biscuits, Milo, instant cereal drinks, coffee, an SSVF umbrella and must-have “fan favourites” - medicated oil, medicated plasters (“koyok”) and medicated cream!

Said Mdm Sahyah, 88, who is bedridden and lives alone on receiving the carepack: “Thank you very much for the Axe Oil. It came at the right time and saves me the \$\$\$. It’s really useful when I’ve migraines.”




The CHIJ St Theresa’s Convent girls with the cards they made for the FINs

Another FIN, wheel-chair bound Amy, said: “I really need the ‘koyok’, I put them on my legs every night to relieve my aches. Thank you so much.”

The carepack distribution project was also supported by CHIJ St Theresa’s Convent as the teachers and students wanted to reach out to our FINs by writing personalised cards with uplifting messages of love and hope. They also made pretty origami flowers to add beauty and joy to each carepack.

Many Vincentians helped put the carepacks together. Said Philomena Wee, who also brought a friend along to help with the packing at Agape Village: “I enjoyed myself thoroughly and will come back to help next year. It is heartening to see everyone working side by side, chatting and joking as they go along and cheering when they hit the 1000th carepack mark. Though I only know a handful of people, I felt a sense of belonging to this big happy SSVF family.”

SSVF would like to thank Temasek Trust’s oscar@sg fund for their continued support, funding half the cost of the carepacks in addition to the personal protection items. Our thanks also go out to our generous benefactors who donated to SSVF (National Council of Singapore) as well as Lego Singapore for donating Lego sets to our FINs. 



Vincentians delivering the carepacks