

# 6 Months on, Agape Village takes flight.



*Just as a body, though one, has many parts,  
but all of its many parts form one body,  
so it is with Christ. (1 Cor. 12:12)*

In 2013, Agape Village was conceived as the Church's response to the needs of the poor, with the aim to build a community to serve all, especially the poor, the oppressed and the afflicted, bearing in mind the multiple challenges each family faces.

Today, it stands as a four-storey building at Lorong 8, Toa Payoh. A mere six months after its opening last November, the facility is bearing the first fruits of its endeavours, with close to 200 new beneficiaries being served by multiple social and community organisations under one roof.

## Combining strengths for greater care

Working in close proximity at Agape Village has facilitated staff from 13 organisations based there to coordinate their efforts and to respond more effectively.

"Previously, we were scattered across the island and it would be time consuming to set up meetings with the other organisations, wait for responses and then trek across Singapore for conferences to discuss specific cases," said Ian Ho, a social worker with Catholic Welfare Services (CWS). "Now, I can go over to the next cubicle or pop out of my office and down the stairs to speak with the other organisations."

"Locating our facilities in Agape Village has made a big difference," added Gail Dragon, who handles corporate and administrative duties at Abilities Beyond Limitations and Expectations (ABLE), which serves the physically-challenged and their caregivers. "Having the rehabilitation and respite centres located next to each other gives us the advantage to develop programmes and services where clients, care recipients and family caregivers can either participate together or separately."

Psychologist at Clarity Singapore Cynthia Yeo says she has also benefited from the advice and expertise of others at Agape Village in the course of her work, which has helped her to better care for the clients she sees.

"I can now also walk with my client down two floors for her physiotherapy appointment, after our counselling session, simply because we are co-located! It is a simple act, but an impactful one, contributing to our journey with our client."

## A home for new programmes and enhanced services

The Village has also become home to some new programmes, and even organisations. One such example is Mamre Oaks, which has opened a day activity centre to serve the persons with intellectual and developmental-disabilities.

Parents and caregivers of these adults (above the age of 18) are faced with lengthy waiting lines to register their children with the few service centres here, so Mamre Oaks helps bridge this gap by providing a day activity service for them.

Joseph Lim, centre manager of the day activity centre said that "A mother of one of our member had to quit her job four years ago to take care of her daughter. She is now back to the workforce, whilst her 23 year-old daughter with Cornelia de Lange Syndrome (CdLS) is being taken care of at our centre."

Singapore's Catholic Lawyers Guild (CLG) has found a home at Agape Village for its free legal clinic after years of working out of various Parishes without the convenient access to meeting rooms.

## Holistic care

Ms Kee (not her real name), 60, is unemployed due to physical and cognitive issues. Prior to being referred to Agape Village, she depended on her family for financial assistance, suffered bouts of depression and even contemplated suicide. Fortunately, her medical social worker from the National Health Group Polyclinic connected with a social worker from CWS.

Using Agape Village's Integrated Case Management System – an IT-platform which centralises pertinent case information to help social workers, counsellors and other service providers address a person's challenges with the right care – CWS connected with ABLE and Clarity Singapore located in the Village. They were then able to collectively provide assistance to Ms Kee in the areas of mental wellness, physical rehabilitation and financial assistance all from one location. Quick intervention helped arrest Ms Kee's downward spiral and significantly improved her confidence and quality of life.

"Centralising our free legal clinic activities in one location has enabled us to provide better quality outreach and fewer cases have fallen through the cracks," said Francis Wong, who is a CLG committee member, responsible for legal clinic and pro bono legal representation.

Agape Village also served as temporary home for the Alzheimer's Disease Association's New Horizon Centre (Toa Payoh) while its original site underwent renovation works. It also hosts Club Rainbow, which provides tuition to students who are chronically ill, and free hair-cut services for those in need, which was initiated by Caritas Singapore.

## More to Come

It does not stop here – by the end of this year, the Village's suite of offerings will expand to include a medical and dental outreach clinic run by Mount Alvernia Hospital and computer classes for senior citizens, among others.

"The past 6 months, has seen the impact of the holistic and integrated approach of Agape Village with the 13 member organisations deliver their collective impact to the beneficiaries. There is still much to do. With God's grace, and continued teamwork we will continue to build on and extend that impact," said Agape Village Management Committee chairman Teo Jin Lee.



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