

Being named S'porean of the Year is 'win for mental health'

GOHYAN HAN & AMRITA KAUR

After overcoming her struggles, Ms Angie Chew, 56, channelled her efforts towards helping others by setting up centres that provide emotional and mental support.

For her contributions to society in helping those with mental health issues as well as the elderly, Ms Chew was yesterday named The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year 2019 at the Istana.

She said receiving the award was "a real win for mental health", as it is an area that is under-invested, with more resources devoted to physical ailments than mental health problems.

She added: "I hope this will also inspire more people to talk about their mental illness and also give support to people who have mental illness, because it is not an easy journey (and is) often misunderstood."

Ms Chew started Brahm Centre in 2012 to provide free health education, as well as other services such as befriending, counselling and dementia screenings for seniors who are frail and lonely.

There are now three centres, with a fourth to open later this year. The centres also teach mindfulness skills to help people better cope with stress.

Last year, Brahm Centre launched a hotline to offer support to students and parents in distress, in response to increased rates of depression and suicide among youngsters.

Yesterday, Ms Chew received a trophy and a \$20,000 cash prize from President Halimah Yacob.

The other 10 finalists who were in the running received \$5,000 each. They are education consultant Chalmers Chin; delivery rider Muhammad Riau Alfian; entrepreneur Gillian Tee; policeman Ahmad Fauzi Sani; hedge fund founder Danny Yong; Carousell founders Quek Siu Rui, Marcus Tan and Lucas Ngoo; students Seng Ian Hao and Seng Ing Le; Abraham Yeo and Homeless Hearts of Singapore; civil servant Sarabjeet Singh; and botanist Veera Sekaran.



Ms Angie Chew (left) with President Halimah Yacob.

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