



Press Release

DADs for Life Turns 10

Singapore, 19 November, 2019 – On this day ten years ago, Singapore’s very own fathering movement, DADs for Life, was launched on International Men’s Day. To commemorate the beginning of what has since grown into a national movement, over 100 fathers and children were mobilised to distribute “Toolkit Packs” for dads all over Singapore.

The national fathering movement began with a vision by Mr Jason Wong to inspire and involve fathers to be good influencers in their children’s lives ... for LIFE. It was launched in 2009 by Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, who was then the Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports.

Mr Wong’s 17-year experience as a prison officer showed him the enormous impact of absent and abusive fathers on families, and inspired him to start a movement that would strengthen father-child relationships in Singapore. “I wanted fathers to act – to be aware of the importance of a father’s role, to commit to being good fathers and role models to their children and spend time, acquire tools and bring transformation to lives,” he said.

Since 2015, the Centre for Fathering (CFF) has been the driving force behind DADs for Life. Mr Richard Hoon, Chairman, Centre for Fathering and DADs for Life, who led the transition of DADs for Life from the Ministry of Social and Family Services (MSF) to CFF, was keenly aware of the synergy between CFF and the fathering movement.

He said, “With our focus on equipping and engaging fathers to be more active fathers in the family, it was natural for me to approach MSF and say, ‘Give this to us and we will be responsible for it.’”

About DADs for Life

DADs for Life seeks to inspire and mobilise fathers to become more involved with and a good influence to their children. Under the DADs for Life umbrella are initiatives such as DADs@School Forum, Back to School with DAD, Eat With Your Family Day and Celebrating Fathers – to encourage fathers to spend time with their families and create a culture that promotes active fathering.

Over the last decade, DADs for Life has grown to engage over 300,000 families each year. More than 5,000 fathers take part in parenting programmes like ICAN (Involvement, Consistency, Awareness, and Nurture) workshops each year. DADs for Life runs 150 programmes yearly – ranging from parenting seminars to adventure camps - which facilitates bonding for over 18,000 families.

Milestones

Shortly after DADs for Life began in 2009, Fathers@Schools was launched to encourage dads to play an active role in their child’s school life. Father groups have started in more than 50 partner schools to support the fathering journey, with workshops on topics like marriage and co-parenting, and father-child activities that encourage family bonding. This year’s DADs@School Forum ‘Fathering in the Next Decade’ gathered almost 200 school leaders, parent support group and father group leaders discussing fathering in schools.

The DADs for Life movement also saw the formation of a football team which seeks to share the fundamentals of fatherhood over a great game. Starting with 24 players in 2016, the team included MPs Teo Ser Luck and

Seah Kian Peng, as well as former national players R. Suriamurthi, Lim Tong Hai, Lee Man Hon, Zakaria Awang and goalkeeper Lionel Lewis. The team has since grown to more than 50 dads, joined by hobbyists, national and S-league players alike. The DADs for Life Football Club was adopted by the Hougang United Football Club in 2018 and both clubs are partnering to engage and strengthen families in the community.

DADs for Life has also deepened its roots in various ethnic communities. Since 2016, Bapa Sepanjang Hayat (DADs for Life in Malay) has encouraged active fathering among the Malay Muslim families. It has galvanised more than 50 active volunteers and many Malay Muslim organisations to come together to eradicate fatherlessness in the community. Appa Valnaal Uravu (DADs for Life in Tamil) was also kicked off earlier this year to better engage the local Indian community.

DADs for Life has reached out to underserved community groups such as parents of new-borns, ex-convicts, families in distress and youths at risk. Its programmes have benefited more than 900 underprivileged and 600 incarcerated fathers since 2017. A 70-strong Special DADs for Life contingent also participated in this year's Purple Parade for the first time. The community comprising of fathers and their children with special needs was formed this year to provide support and accountability.

The DADs for Life movement has gained traction not only locally but overseas as well, having been approached by 26 countries who are keen to understand how they can also kick start an active fathering movement locally.

Looking Ahead

Mr Wong added: "I hope to see two things happen in the next 10 years. Firstly, I hope that every father in Singapore will become a Dad for life, so that every child will have a father involved in his or her life. Secondly, I hope DADs for Life in Singapore will be a model for other nations so that children in the world will not grow up fatherless."

Having established its role in empowering fathers, DADs for Life has partnered with a group of mother volunteers to launch MUMs for Life on Mother's Day 2019 to celebrate a mum's identity as daughter, woman, wife and mother.

Mr Bryan Tan, CEO, Centre for Fathering and DADs for Life, said, "This complements the work of DADs for Life. When mums live out their unique identity in their diverse roles and dads are actively involved in the family, children are better nurtured and the whole family is stronger."

About Centre for Fathering

Centre for Fathering (CFF) is a non-profit organisation founded in 2000 to promote active and involved fathering and address issues caused by fatherlessness in Singapore. The organisation aims to turn the hearts of children towards their fathers by empowering more fathers to be better role models and an enduring inspiration to their children.

Since 2015, CFF has been the driving force behind Singapore's nation-wide fathering movement - DADs for Life which seeks to inspire and mobilise fathers to become more involved with and a good influence to their children.

Under the DADs for Life umbrella are initiatives such as DADs@School, Back to School with DAD, Eat With Your Family Day and Celebrating Fathers – to encourage fathers to spend time with their families and create a culture that promotes active fathering.

For more information about the Centre for Fathering and Dads for Life, please go to www.fathers.com.sg.

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