

Speech by Minister Grace Fu at the Family Life Champion Award Ceremony 2013

Fellow Advisers

Mr Ang Hak Seng, Chief Executive Director of the People's Association

Mr Leng Chin Fai, Director of Fei Yue Community Services and Fei Yue Family Service Centre

Mr Lim Soon Hock, Chairman of National Family Council

FLC Award Judges, CCC Chairmen and CCMC Chairmen

Family Life Champions, Family Life Connectors

Distinguished Partners and Guests

Good evening! Tonight, we gather to recognize the efforts of our Family Life Champions (FLCs) in encouraging family bonding.

This is the 8th FLC Award Ceremony and I would like to take this opportunity to commend each and every one of you for your continued commitment over the years.

The FLC Scheme has grown from strength to strength since 2005. You have engaged 63,000 participants in the past one year, bringing the total outreach for FLC events and activities across the 200,000 mark!

The network of people in the community working towards strengthening families has grown. The number of Family Life Connectors, who are volunteers supporting the Family Life Champions, has reached 600. Efforts to enhance the family lives of seniors have received good response, with a 50% increase in the number of Interest Groups involving grandparents over last year. You have created many platforms for the different generations to connect and strengthen family ties. This has helped to promote and preserve our pro-family mindset.

According to the recent "Statistics on Marriages and Divorces"¹, the number of marriages and the marriage rates for both men and women have improved for the second consecutive year. This is an encouraging sign, and is reflective of the efforts from all sectors in promoting marriage and parenthood.

These trends also reflect the strong marriage aspirations among Singaporeans. In our 2012 Marriage and Parenthood Study, more than 80% of single respondents indicated that they desired to get married. We, as a society, should create a supportive pro-family environment. The Government has implemented new and enhanced measures in the 2013 Marriage and

Parenthood Package. Beyond policies and grants, the desire to settle down with someone you love and start a new life together has to come from the belief that life can be enriched by having your own family; and that the positive and trusting family environment is something so precious that you want it to be extended from your parents to your child, from one generation to another. This positive mindset towards marriage and family creation needs to be cultivated by the family, the community and the society. A conducive social climate is crucial to support Singaporeans in achieving their family aspirations. Our FLCs have a key role to play in this regard.

Through the wide array of programmes you organise, such as a day for single photography enthusiasts at the Bird Park, renewal of marriage vows on air, land and sea, the annual Baby Singapore show and the three-generational family airplane making and flying series, you have created the right environment where families are celebrated and nurtured, a place where they can have a sense of belonging alongside other families.

I am pleased to share that the PA will be rolling out two new pilot programmes to support the FLCs.

The first programme will help you to become Enablers. For example, programmes such as fathering workshops will enable our FLCs to become great role models in building strong and stable family. Mr James Teo, who strongly believes in active fathering, has formed a Fathers Support Group among his residents, taking the lead to share his own fathering experiences at these workshops, to encourage fathers to be more involved in raising and caring for their children.

The second programme is targeted at FLC Solemnisers. Our FLC Solemnisers have conducted almost 15,000 solemnisations since 2005 when FLCs were first appointed as Licensed Solemnisers and many of you have maintained contact with the newly-weds you solemnise. They continue to seek your advice as they embark on their marriage journey. The new programme will help FLC Solemnisers be better equipped for this role - to be Supporters, someone trusted in the community who cultivates a caring environment for family formation, and is a source of support for married couples.

The programmes and events that you organise to reach out to more families and strengthen their bonds contribute importantly to making Singapore a great home for families. To continually support you with new knowledge and skills, PA is partnering Family Central, a service by Fei Yue Community Services, to provide professional resources in support of your programmes.

PA will be working with Fei Yue on piloting the programmes for FLCs. We look forward to the FLCs being an even stronger pillar of support for families in Singapore.

As we gear up for a greater momentum in the pro-family movement in Singapore, I would like to recognise your contribution, your hard work and dedication all these years in spreading the family and parenting message. I would like to congratulate our FLC Award Recipients for your achievements. Regardless of whether you win an award or not, we thank you for your contribution, once again. What we are creating here is a movement and a movement is not defined by a single, sporadic event. It involves all stakeholders – as friends, employers, colleagues, relatives, giving the same consistent message to our young adults. That there are more important things in life than work; that success is best shared with a loved one; that a family, a child brings meaning to life. We can play a part in promoting and advocating the importance of building strong families in our community. Thank you all and have a great evening.

1 released by the Department of Statistics