



The Ann Wee NUS Social Work Alumni Award is named after Mrs Ann Wee, 88, often described as the founding mother of social work in Singapore. It will be given to alumni with a spirit of sustained commitment and contribution to the profession and to the well-being of society. ST FILE PHOTO

NUS launches award for alumni in social work

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TO MARK the 55th anniversary of its faculty of arts and social sciences, the National University of Singapore (NUS) has launched an award to recognise alumni who have contributed to Singapore in the area of social work.

The Ann Wee NUS Social Work Alumni Award is named after the woman often described as the founding mother of social work in Singapore.

Faculty dean Brenda Yeoh said several alumni and friends of Mrs Wee mooted the idea for the award in appreciation of her tremendous contributions to social work in Singapore.

"The naming of the award also reflects the affection we all have for her as the longest-serving head of department," said Professor Yeoh.

She noted that Mrs Wee, as head of the social work department from 1967 to 1987, lobbied for it to have an honours course. It was introduced in 1985.

Today, the 88-year-old remains at the department as an associate professorial fellow.

Hailing from Britain, she fell in love with a Singaporean and moved to Singapore around 60 years ago to make it her home.

After four years as a teacher, she became a training officer at the then Social Welfare Department. She learnt Hokkien and Cantonese on the job so that she could communicate with the fam-

ilies she worked with.

At the then University of Malaya, the Department of Social Studies was established in 1956, and Mrs Wee joined in 1957.

Besides her work at the university, she volunteered on the juvenile court's advisory panel for close to 40 years.

She was a member of the Women's Charter Review Committee, the Singapore Children's Society Adoption Sub-committee and the Tribunal for the Maintenance of Parents.

In 2010, she was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal - given to those who have made significant and longstanding contributions to Singapore.

Prof Yeoh said the new award will be given to alumni who have a similar spirit of sustained commitment and contribution to the profession and to societal well-being.

She added that the faculty of arts and social sciences has come a long way since its humble beginnings as a group of subjects offered by Raffles College in 1929. "It is now one of the largest faculties at NUS. We offer 20 majors, 13 multidisciplinary minors, 13 languages and joint degrees with faculties and university partners overseas."

Over the years, its alumni have excelled in many areas, she said. They include Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, former president S R Nathan and Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy dean Kishore Mahbubani.

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