

New social van-ture reaches out to at-risk youth at their haunts

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Parents often tell their children to be wary of unknown vehicles that approach them, but a new electric van driven by social workers around Jurong may prove to be an exception.

The van, used in outreach efforts by non-profit group Youth Guidance Outreach Services (YGOS), travels to “hot spots” where at-risk youth tend to hang out.

The social workers invite young people in the area to hang out with them instead. The van is equipped with Wi-Fi, cushioned seating, a television monitor for playing games with a Nintendo Switch, and two extendable canopies on either side to provide shelter from the sun. The youngsters can also watch movies projected onto a cloth screen on the van’s exterior.

The initiative provides a way to bring YGOS’ services to young people in the precinct, some of whom it may not have access to, such as those who live farther away from its centres or those who are loitering, said its executive director Wilson Tan.

“By going to them, we hope to build strong mentoring relationships providing help and guidance they may need,” he added.

The initiative, which was soft-launched three months ago, has reached out to more than 120 young people in the Jurong area. There are plans to expand the project, which operates every Wednesday



In a new initiative by Youth Guidance Outreach Services, social workers drive an electric van to “hot spots” in Jurong and invite young people to hang out with them. The van is equipped with items such as Wi-Fi and a television monitor for playing games with a Nintendo Switch. The initiative provides a way to bring the non-profit group’s services to young people in the precinct. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

and Friday from 6pm to 10pm, to the Geylang area.

The initiative, called Mobile Outreach Support Team, was officially launched on Monday at YGOS’ Woodlands Centre.

It is funded by a \$750,000 donation by utilities company SP Group.

The donation has also helped in the refurbishment of two YGOS

youth centres, in Woodlands and Ang Mo Kio. The upgraded spaces are used for mentoring youth, as well as activities such as cooking, crafting, and music and dance. YGOS’ youth centres benefit close to 1,000 young people annually.

The funding has also helped with staffing at its Jurong centre.

SP Group sponsored 5,000 kilo-

watt-hours of charging credits for the electric van, which will enable it to operate for about a year.

Mr Tan said some emerging issues among at-risk youth that the team hopes to tackle involve those who might start committing petty crimes because of negative peer influence, and those who engage in intimate activities at secluded

HDB staircases. More youth are also picking up vaping as a substitute for smoking cigarettes, he said.

The outreach efforts have garnered a positive response, and the team has been able to reach out to diverse groups it previously could not, Mr Tan added.

C. Tharani, 16, who has been going to YGOS since 2021, said: “I

have gained a lot from YGOS, forging new friendships with the trusted staff and volunteers. They have helped me build a support system outside of school and that has given me the confidence to pursue both my personal and academic interests.”

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