

TAKING HEART

Mapletree donates S\$3m to NUS for service-learning courses to uplift 60,000 beneficiaries

The contribution will sustain and expand programmes that focus on seniors and vulnerable families. **BY LINDSAY WONG**

TEMASEK-OWNED Mapletree Investments on Tuesday (Aug 26) announced that it has donated S\$3 million to the National University of Singapore (NUS) to enhance service-learning courses. These will involve 4,000 student volunteers a year and uplift 60,000 beneficiaries – including seniors and vulnerable families.

As part of their graduation requirements, NUS undergraduates can enrol in service-learning courses under the community and en-

gagement pillar of the university's general education curriculum. These courses run up to a year and encourage students to take initiative in community service, while learning about social challenges.

Mapletree's contribution will sustain and expand courses that focus on seniors and vulnerable families, such as those that deal with healthy ageing, community activities for these target groups and befriending them.

NUS president Tan Eng Chye

said: "By empowering our students to serve the community, we are nurturing among the next generation empathy and a deeper awareness of societal needs among the disadvantaged and underprivileged. At the same time, we create opportunities for our students to do their part and support Singapore's ageing population and lower-income families."

The courses also include on-the-ground work to engage seniors and vulnerable families, whereby stu-

dents can facilitate and design activities at active ageing centres and senior care centres, and conduct home visits to befriend beneficiaries.

The real estate investment company added: "Beyond volunteering, students also reflect, analyse and create solutions... Beneficiaries find companionship and renewed hope; community partners gain extra help on the ground; students cultivate lifelong values; and the ripple effect strengthens Singa-



Kwan Yi Rui (left), a third-year student from the NUS Faculty of Science, and Ng Zhi Ying (right), a third-year student from NUS Business School, recently completed a course where they befriended socially vulnerable seniors. PHOTO: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

pore's social fabric."

Since the pilot launch of the community and engagement pillar focused on seniors and vulnerable families in the academic year 2022-2023, more than 5,000 students have completed or are currently

enrolled in these courses.

Mapletree's donation is part of its US\$10 million commitment to Temasek Trust's Philanthropy Asia Alliance, an initiative that aims to drive positive impact across Asia by addressing environmental and social challenges.

The real estate player's partnership with NUS started in 2012 with the establishment of the Mapletree Bursary, which has a total endowment of S\$900,000 to date. It has granted financial support to more than 130 students so far.

"With this latest gift, Mapletree hopes to promote intergenerational bonding, a volunteering culture among youth, and opportunities to enhance age-in-place initiatives, one of the many efforts to address one of Singapore's most pressing societal challenges – a rapidly ageing population," the company said.

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