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PRESS RELEASE

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**Tsao Foundation launches first regional
volunteer befriending training manual for social
agencies caring for older persons in ASEAN
as part of Republic of Korea (ROK)–ASEAN project**

SINGAPORE – 20 March 2006 – SOCIAL agencies caring for older people in Singapore and the region can now, for the *first* time, tap on a common resource - a standard training manual - for the training of volunteer befrienders. The “Trainer Manual for Training Volunteers Befriending Older Persons” will be launched today by the Tsao Foundation together with HelpAge Korea, a non-profit organization working with the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs to implement a regional community-based care programme for the elderly in ASEAN.

The cost of developing the Trainers’ Manual came from the ROK- ASEAN Cooperation Fund. The fund was set up under the ROK-ASEAN bilateral partnership to cement cooperation in trade, information technology, health, human resource development and tourism

The Tsao Foundation was chosen by HelpAge Korea to spearhead the development of a training manual for volunteers befriending older persons as part of Singapore’s contribution to the ROK-ASEAN bilateral collaboration.

Speaking at the launch will be Guest of Honour Mr Ong Keng Yong, ASEAN Secretary General, Mr Jo Dae Shik, Deputy Chief of Mission, Minister, Consul General of the Embassy of Republic of Korea, and Mr Cho Ki Dong, Honorary President of HelpAge Korea. Other specially-invited guests are Dr Balaji

Sadasivan, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health and Co-Chairman of the Committee on Ageing issues and ambassadors from other ASEAN countries.

Singapore has one of the world's fastest ageing populations, with the percentage of older persons aged 65 years or older, projected to increase threefold from the current 300,000 to 900,000 in 2030 (source: Committee on Ageing Issues Report on the Ageing Population). The number of households comprising only elderly persons has risen by more than 9%, from just 10,400 households (1990) to 25,700 in 2000, according to the Singapore Population Census in 2000. Social isolation of older people - particularly, the low income single elderly or elderly couples who live alone – is an issue of deep concern for social agencies caring for the elderly.

Caring for older people requires a specific set of skills and knowledge. Properly-trained volunteers provide invaluable help, such as basic housekeeping, personal care and health monitoring. Besides physical well-being, befriending by volunteers will help to bring the elderly out of social isolation.

Even though there exists a national volunteer befriending programme in Singapore, there is no common resource for volunteer training programmes. Volunteer training in many local aged care agencies, is often in-house or agency-specific.

With this standard Trainers' Manual (which comes with a Participants' Manual), trainers can now teach a consistent set of skills and knowledge to volunteers. First to test the manual's effectiveness is the Foundation's Hua Mei Training Centre (HMTC) which has been conducting training on eldercare and ageing issues for health and social service professionals for the past 13 years.

Trainers or would-be-trainers from six community-based agencies with volunteer befriending programmes participated in the pilot test of the training manual, and found it to be a useful and comprehensive training guide. One of them is Mr Tay Khoon Eng, a volunteer trainer with Lions Befrienders Service Association. Said Mr Tay, 52: "Charitable organisations can use the standard

Volunteer Befrienders' training manual as a reference and adapt it to suit their training needs. It provides a useful framework of what a volunteer needs to know about befriending.”

- Ends -

Free CD versions of the Trainers' and Participants' Manuals will be given out to local aged care agencies at the launch.

For programme details of the launch, see Annexe 1.

For media enquiries and interviews, please contact xxxxxxx

For Interview and Photo Opportunities

A senior volunteer befriender who has used the manual to train new volunteers for a social service agency.

Interview Tsao Foundation / HelpAge Korea on the issue of social isolation of older people in Singapore and the region - and how trained volunteers play a role in responding to the problem. HelpAge Korea will speak about the Korean experience. The Tsao Foundation will give the Singapore perspective.

Interview Tsao Foundation and Mr Ong Keng Yong, ASEAN Secretary General on ASEAN's efforts in developing community-based care programmes for the elderly.

About the Tsao Foundation

The Tsao Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to enhancing the quality of life of older people in Singapore through pioneering innovative quality aged care services at the community level, addressing population ageing issues at the policy level, and being a catalyst for constructive change. For more information, go to <http://www.tsaofoundation.org>