

**Speech by Mr. Stephen Loh
President, YMCA of Singapore
at the YMCA Annual General Meeting
held at YMCA of Singapore, Tan Chin Tuan Function Rooms I & II on
Tuesday, 11 May 2010**

Opening

Good evening to all.

Thank you for taking time off your busy schedules to attend the YMCA Annual General Meeting.

As we reflect on the year gone past, we recognise that 2009 was indeed a challenging year for organisations worldwide. When many started to emerge from the global economic recession, the H1N1 virus struck.

But by the grace of God, the global recession and spread of the H1N1 virus did not affect YMCA badly. Financially, we thank God that we did well in 2009. We achieved a surplus of \$1.7 million against a total revenue of \$13.8 million, allowing us to sustain all our existing programmes and even adding depth to some of them to touch more lives. We are thankful that with our social enterprises, such as YMCA International House and Education Services, we are able to generate resources to be a blessing to others.

The key verse in the 2009 Annual Report is 1 Timothy 6:18, "Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share." Let us always remember that God is the center of our ministry. In everything that we do, we aim to spread the wonderful love of God for the community by putting our faith into action.

Highlights

Please allow me to share with you on some highlights and achievements in 2009.

Serving the community

Through YMCA-Tan Chin Tuan Community Service Programmes, we mobilised 1,915 volunteers to serve in 17 structured and sustained platforms, contributing 78,736 hours to reach out to 1,970 beneficiaries from 22 partnering voluntary welfare organisations.

A total of 328 activities were conducted over the year to enrich the lives of these beneficiaries. These include the Y Camp Challenge that was increased in frequency from bi-annually to quarterly and expansion of the Y Arts Challenge programme to include Y D-Gen. We also organised the inaugural YMCA Day @ the Opera to treat 700 needy elderly to a Cantonese Opera performance and promote intergenerational bonding between the 350 youth volunteers and elderly beneficiaries.

From May 2009, two YMCA volunteers have been organising a complimentary English programme to help international students integrate better into our society by improving their conversational English skills.

Through YMCA Project Bridge, we worked with many out-of-school youth and youth-at-risk through 50 schools in the North and Northwest of Singapore. Last year alone, YMCA Project Bridge counselors had put in 500 hours of counseling and intervention work to guide these youth back onto the correct path.

Serving the underprivileged beyond our shores

We also ventured beyond our borders to serve the less privileged overseas. YMCA International Service Programmes saw a 31% increase in volunteer participation compared to the year before. 697 YMCA volunteers made 36 trips to Cambodia, China, Thailand and Vietnam to touch the lives of 4,550 children and youth.

In Cambodia, our volunteers taught English and computer skills to the local youth and refurbished the educational facilities. They also completed the basework for extending the 'Grace Road' in Siem Reap by another 1 km. In China, our volunteers set up computer laboratories at a school and taught English to the children. In Thailand, our volunteers installed bio-gas tanks for schools and taught English and arts to the children. In Vietnam, our volunteers concretised the courtyard of schools and classrooms to provide the children with a better learning environment.

We also worked with our international counterparts to support relief work in disaster-hit countries in the region. In particular, YMCA secured \$1 million from Red Cross to embark on a YMCA Rebuilding Communities Programme in Du Jiang Yan, Chengdu. In collaboration with Shanghai YMCA, the funds will be used to build a youth learning centre where YMCA volunteer groups would teach English and life skills to help rebuild the lives of the youth who have been devastated by the Sichuan earthquake. We are looking forward to the launch of this centre and we will keep all of you updated.

Rallying resources for voluntary welfare organisations

For a seventh successive year, YMCA and Citibank co-organised the Citibank-YMCA Youth For Causes. I am pleased to share that the programme concluded with a record \$672,000 raised for 53 voluntary welfare organisations. 15,000 volunteers were mobilised and the projects undertaken by the 100 youth teams reached out to 1.3 million members of the public. Since its inception, the programme has raised \$3.2 million for 319 voluntary welfare organisations, mobilising 70,400 volunteers.

Volunteer development

We launched a new online volunteer management system that allows us to enhance our communication with our volunteers and facilitates volunteers to sign up for our events easily.

We also continued to train our volunteers through capability development courses. Last year, 53 participants from 22 voluntary welfare organisations signed up for the YMCA-NUS Business School Volunteer Service Management Programme.

Overall, we saw an increase in our volunteer strength from 4,022 to 4,370. Of this number, 3,500 or 80% of them had each served 15 hours and above in the year.

I truly hope to see more of our members embracing active membership and stepping forward to serve in our various community service programmes alongside our volunteers and staff or in the Committees. The YMCA belongs to you and I encourage you to take up roles serving at the YMCA, multiplying the talents that God has given you. Let us strive together to achieve a day where every member is a volunteer and every volunteer, a member.

Corporate volunteerism

YMCA continued to promote Corporate Social Responsibility in the private sector and we joined hands with three new corporate partners to serve the less privileged through our community service programmes. They include Credit Suisse, Bridgestone Tyre Sales Singapore Pte Ltd and Temasek

Holdings. Our existing partners include Citibank, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Superior Multipackaging Pte Ltd and DHL.

Youth development

As a youth organisation, we invest in developing youth to build capacity for YMCA and the social service sector. Our Uni-Y network expanded with the formation of Uni-Y @ NTU in 2009. We now have a strong presence in the three universities, namely NUS, NTU and SMU. Hi-Y, a service club for Junior College and Polytechnic students, was also formed in 2009. To date, these four youth clubs have a membership of 300 students.

Membership

Our membership figures grew by over 25% to 4,077. The majority of our new members are Ordinary Annual members and Associate members who registered for our Lifestyle Programmes.

We also organised several workshops over the year for our members, covering topics from child development to personal health care. This year, we have already organised a hairdo workshop and a seminar on empowering your child to be successful in school and life. Next week, there will be a workshop on making designer chocolates.

We organised more Lifestyle Programmes for our members. Last year alone, we had over 1,400 members from pre-schoolers to retirees who joined our range of 14 dance programmes such as Salsa, Bollywood, Hip Hop and much more. More than 500 members also joined us in the various Outdoor & Adventure programmes including mountain-biking, trekking and skiing. We inaugurated the monthly YMCA Golf Fellowship and provided a platform for members to fellowship over golf.

Social Enterprises

As an organisation that desires to serve more people as we grow, we are constantly looking into ways of generating resources to support our drive in expanding our community service programmes.

When the opportunity arose towards the end of 2008, we acquired a new tertiary education business and launched the YMCA Tertiary Education arm in early 2009. We partnered University of Strathclyde Business School to deliver its MBA programme in Singapore and the Australian Maritime College for diploma to masters programmes in maritime and logistics. In all, 230 students enrolled in our tertiary programmes last year.

Although 2009 was a trying year, we thank God for blessing the International House as we closed the year with a relatively positive 80% occupancy. The building was also upgraded to better serve the members, volunteers and stakeholders. We employed the latest green LED technology to light up the building in the evenings, upgraded the rooftop pool area, 9th floor changing rooms and 4th floor terrace. Renovations to the 6th floor hostel rooms were also completed during the year.

Looking into 2010

This year, we are looking towards organising more programmes to expand our service to the community through three areas:

1. Intergenerational bonding initiatives
2. Building capability for the social service sector
3. Youth development

Firstly, addressing the issues of an aging population is a source of growing concern for our government today. But in line with the YMCA mission to enrich *all* members of the community, we will organise more intergenerational bonding programmes this year to promote active ageing for our seniors as well as to encourage bonding between youth and seniors.

For example, we have embarked on quarterly YMCA Opera Treats in 2010 to treat the needy elderly to Cantonese opera performances. Throughout the event, the elderly beneficiaries will be hosted and befriended by youth volunteers. The first YMCA Opera Treats was held on 20 March at YMCA. The next YMCA Opera Treats will be held this Saturday at the auditorium on level 1.

We are also organising intergenerational bonding-themed outdoor and adventure programmes such as BikeYworks mountain biking workshops and Y Treks to various scenic locations where both young and old can bond together in the great outdoors.

Secondly, recognising that volunteers and funding are two key resources required to sustain community service programmes, YMCA will continue to build capacity for the social service sector by providing more opportunities for community partnerships to be formed between corporations and voluntary welfare organisations.

To facilitate this, we will be organising 4 YMCA Proms @ the Park this year, one every quarter. This outdoor picnic and concert for beneficiaries provides the platform for corporations to embrace corporate social responsibility by committing staff volunteers to befriend the beneficiaries and make donations to defray the event costs. We had our first YMCA Proms @ the Park this year at West Coast Park on 27 March. The next YMCA Proms @ the Park will be held at Hong Lim Park on 26 June.

We will also partner more voluntary welfare organisations through the YMCA-Tan Chin Tuan Community Service Programmes so that we can touch the lives of even more beneficiaries.

And thirdly, as a youth organisation, YMCA will continue to invest in developing youth through our Youth Development Programmes. We aim to groom them into servant leaders who can rise to the occasion to lead the YMCA in the future.

Though we do not rely wholly on fundraising to sustain our programmes, there still remains the need to appeal for public funding as our programmes are constantly expanding. In July, we will be organising the 11th YMCA Charity Golf at the Tanah Merah Country Club. In August, we will be launching the YMCA Appeal Month in conjunction with the YMCA Flag Day to focus on raising funds for YMCA's community service programmes. As members of the YMCA, I sincerely hope that you can lend us your fullest support by volunteering in the various roles to support these events or donating to support our cause.

And finally, most of you would have noticed that we are currently in the midst of upgrading the lift lobby on the 3rd floor. Renovations are also being carried out to our hostel rooms on the 7th and 8th floor. Work is expected to be completed by first week of June 2010.

Closing and special thanks

In closing, I would like to thank all our members for believing and supporting the cause of YMCA. We would not have come so far without your involvements, feedback, donations and prayers.

I would like to thank all donors and sponsors for their generosity as well as our volunteers and staff for driving and facilitating our programmes.

I would also like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to all our Board members for their dedication and faithfulness towards the ministry of the YMCA. Even though all of them serve on a voluntary basis, our Board members have been instrumental in raising resources and providing governance and leadership to the Association.

On this note, I would like to announce that our Board member Mr David Lua has offered himself up for early retirement from the Board. In his absence, the Board has co-opted Ms Packiam Williams to serve the remaining of Mr Lua's term on the Board.

As we move forward, systematic plans are also in place to ensure renewal of the YMCA leadership. Opportunities for the next generation of leaders to step forward and take up leadership roles are provided. In the interests of Board renewal, four other Board members have offered not to stand for nomination to the YMCA Board this year. They are Mr David Wong, Dr Ivor Thevathanan, Mr Tay Puan Siong and Mr Lee Liat Cheng.

Though it saddens me to bid them a fond farewell after many years of serving the community together, I am heartened to learn that all of them have offered to continue serving the Y through our various committees. I wish them all the best in his future endeavors and pray that the Lord will continue to use them mightily in His service. We will be presenting tokens of appreciation to them in a short while.

I ask that you continue to keep us in your prayers, that the Lord will grant us His direction, wisdom and favour in the years ahead. Thank you.