

## OEP achieves remarkable results over past 20 years (with photos)

The Opportunities for the Elderly Project (OEP) implemented by the Social Welfare Department (SWD) has achieved remarkable results since its launch 20 years ago, with over 5 000 district programmes subsidised and more than 3.3 million participants benefiting, the Permanent Secretary for Labour and Welfare, Ms Chang King-yiu, said today (November 8). She said she was happy to see that elderly people were able to lead a fruitful life by unleashing their potential to contribute to society.

Speaking at the 2018 OEP Award Presentation Ceremony, Ms Chang said that the Government attaches great importance to welfare services, adding that the estimated recurrent expenditure on social welfare in the current financial year amounts to \$79.8 billion, second only to education. To cope with the ageing population, the SWD's estimated spending on elderly services has risen to around \$8.9 billion, an increase of around 20 per cent when compared with the revised estimate for the previous financial year.

Noting that this year marks the 60th anniversary of the establishment of the SWD, Ms Chang said the department has adopted "60 Years We Care, In Harmony We Share" as the theme of its celebrations and will continue to work jointly with the general public and different sectors in building a caring and inclusive society.

Also officiating at the ceremony, the Chairman of the Elderly Commission, Dr Lam Ching-choi, said that programmes under the OEP are beneficial to the physical and psychological health of elderly people. He also expressed his appreciation of the project for encouraging more elderly people to live an active life and further contribute to society.

Today's event was organised by the SWD's Working Group on the OEP. Awards were presented to commend organisations and elderly participants for their outstanding performance in two-year projects (2016-18) and one-year projects (2017-18). The event also aimed at enhancing inter-generational harmony, promoting respect and care for elderly people and encouraging senior citizens to live a fruitful life.

Also officiating at the ceremony were the Director of Social Welfare, Ms Carol Yip, and the Chairman of the OEP Advisory Committee, Professor Diana Lee.

To tie in with the 20th anniversary of the implementation of the OEP and 60th anniversary of the establishment of the SWD, today's event turned into a birthday party featuring a tea reception and a variety of performances. More than 1 000 participants from various districts were invited to join the event to share the happiness of the awardees.

