

More donations received during 2016 festive season

Giving.sg raised \$5.5m in the first 3 weeks of December, up from \$5.1m the previous year

Priscilla Goy

Despite the gloomy economic outlook, Singaporeans remain generous when asked to give during the festive season.

Some charities here reported receiving similar, if not higher, levels of donations over the festive season last year, compared with the same period in 2015. Looking ahead into this year, they plan to get creative to get people to open their wallets.

Singapore's largest online donation portal Giving.sg raised about \$5.5 million in the first three weeks of December – typically the top month for giving – up from \$5.1 million in the same period the year before. The website, run by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC), serves more than 450 charities, some of which run their own donation drives via the same website. NVPC's annual philanthropic campaign Giving Week, held from Nov 29 to Dec 5 last year, raised about \$763,000 through the portal – \$11,000 more than in the previous edition.

NVPC chief executive Melissa Kwee told The Sunday Times: "Giving Week is a time when Singapore gets to celebrate the spirit of giving. We



are truly blessed and have much to give thanks for in our lives."

The most successful fund-raising campaign during last year's Giving Week was by Caritas Singapore, the umbrella body for Catholic charities, which raised more than \$50,000.

Meanwhile, charities are looking into more varied ways of getting donations this year.

A Community Chest spokesman said: "We will look at more innovative ways of outreach and fund-raising, such as leveraging more digital and social platforms, as well as to show... where the donations have been used to help those in need."

Community Chest, the fund-raising arm of the National Council of Social Service, supports about 80

charities here.

HCA Hospice Care chief executive Angeline Wee said: "While we recognise that it could be challenging given the economic outlook, we will continue to push the envelope in crafting creative and engaging events to appeal to our donors' niche interests."

Fund-raising events this year may include a golf tournament and another "large-scale event involving public participation", she said.

Ms Kwee said Singaporeans can also be innovative in the way they give and not allow their charitable side to be threatened by the sluggish economy. She cited examples of companies giving in novel ways – such as SingPost, which sponsored the postage of 400,000 "thank

you" cards, and private-hire car service Uber, which roped in drivers to collect toys and books for donation to the Singapore Red Cross.

Charities said receiving help – monetary or otherwise – is vital.

Said Caritas Singapore's executive director Bernadette Lau: "We rely a lot on volunteers as we try to keep our operational cost low without having to hire so many people."

Part-time tutor April Chan, 61, donated about \$350 to various charities last year. "I'm not earning a lot but at least I'm still earning. I grew up in a poor family so I know what it's like to suffer. Giving is important and even small amounts can make a difference," she said.

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NVPC, whose annual philanthropic campaign raised about \$763,000 through Giving.sg last month, previously organised a Valentine's Day event for residents of St John's Home for Elderly Persons in February last year. ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

THE SPIRIT OF GIVING

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