

Forgetting illness to snap lasting memories



Mr Esmond Goh, with his wife Joanne Lio and daughters Lucia, six, and Lois, 12, having their family photo taken with HCA Hospice Care volunteers, who doubled up as make-up artists, clowns and chaperones. ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

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Volunteers bring cheer to the terminally ill and their families



Melissa Lin (<mailto:mellinjm@sph.com.sg>)

For the first time since he was diagnosed with a terminal illness seven months ago, Mr Esmond Goh was able to go out and have fun with his family yesterday.

The family of four watched a dance performance, ate popcorn and had their family portrait shot by an amateur photographer at a fair organised by home hospice provider HCA Hospice Care.

"It's quite a special occasion for us, that we get to celebrate an early Father's Day," said Mr Goh, 50, a former taxi driver who has two daughters - Lucia, six, and Lois, 12.

It is Father's Day today.

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Clutching a framed portrait of his family, Mr Goh - who has stage 4 lung cancer and is wheelchair-bound - added that his illness made it difficult for him to step out of his home.

His wife Joanne Lio, a 49-year-old housewife, added: "We don't have a lot of family photos. The last one was taken three years ago at my younger daughter's birthday party."

PRECIOUS REMINDER

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MADAM JOANNE LIO, whose wheelchair-bound husband has lung cancer and finds it hard to leave the house.

NOSTALGIC

I think this event is very good. It makes me happy and makes me remember my past.

MS AUGUSTINE DHINGAHAYOE, on how the fair brought back memories of her former job as a wedding event planner.

MEMORIES TO CHERISH

We feel it's very important to help them take a family portrait... as most of them do not know whether it'll be the last family photo.

HCA CHIEF EXECUTIVE ANGELINE WEE, on the fair, where participants get a makeover before photos are taken.



More than 20 terminally ill patients and their families took part in the fair, aimed at helping them make the most of the time they have together.

Over 70 volunteers doubled up as drivers, chaperones, balloon sculptors, make-up artists and clowns to spread some cheer among the patients and their caregivers.

The highlight of the fair, held at HCA's headquarters in Novena, involved volunteers giving participants a makeover before an amateur photographer - who is also a volunteer - took their pictures.

HCA's chief executive Angeline Wee said the organisation does not aim to just provide end-of-life care for patients, but to also take care of their families and caregivers through such events. This is its third such fair in two years.

"We feel it's very important to help them take a family portrait... as most of them do not know whether it'll be the last family photo," she said.

Individual shots are also taken of the patients for their obituary, if needed.

The fair was also held in support of SG Cares, a national movement to promote volunteerism.

Ms Augustine Dhingahayoe, 38, who has stage 4 sarcoma (cancer of the connective tissue), said the fair brought back memories of her former job as a wedding event planner, where she would meet couples to discuss their wedding photography.

She added that it had been four years - prior to her diagnosis - since she had a proper photograph taken with her husband of 12 years, Mr Andreas Supriyatna, 44.

"I think this event is very good. It makes me happy and makes me remember my past," she said.
