

By a retiree, for retirees

Web portal aims to link seniors to each other and to top corporations

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AN ONLINE goldmine of experience went “live” yesterday at www.singapore-goldenyears.com

The independently-owned web portal is 60-year-old retiree Mike Sebastian's attempt at linking retired professionals with corporations.

With the web portal — the first of its kind run by a retiree for retirees — he hopes to keep his peers active in their senior years.

Said Mr Sebastian, a third generation Singaporean: “As it is, there are many qualified retired senior citizens, but finding us is not easy.”

Now, senior citizens can register online for free and post their expertise under a

“Skills Depository” section. Prospective employers can also use the site to source for experienced manpower.

Mr Sebastian, who estimates spending four to six hours a day managing the website, said he sends emails to human resources departments in the top 500 Singapore companies and top 1,000 foreign companies operating in Singapore, as well as various chambers of commerce and business associations to raise awareness of the site and its members.

Other than the skills depository feature, Mr Sebastian has included other interactive features such as a message board — Golden Friends — and an online flea market for senior netizens to buy and sell things. A live chat feature will allow registered members to participate in online discussions.

Said Mr Sebastian: “The aim of these various features is to draw out seniors and



ONE-MAN EFFORT: The website, which also contains a message board and an online flea market, is the brainchild of retiree Mike Sebastian (right).



give them a new dimension to engage and participate in within the community, instead of idling away with television, and void deck and coffeeshop chatter.”

The website will also offer a series of articles that are specially selected, covering a range of issues from health, hobbies, food and music reviews — some of which Mr Sebastian will edit or write himself.

The former journalist and entrepreneur who retired at the age of 52 had to

hire someone to set up the website for him as he lacked the technical expertise.

Mr Sebastian has already spent “a couple of thousands” on this “project of passion” and is prepared to spend up to \$5,000 in its first year of existence.

“The website is primarily a social service to the senior citizens of Singapore. I’m at home most of the time with my wife and dog anyway,” said Mr Sebastian, who also plays golf and lives in a Yishun maisonette.

Campaign to focus on job needs of the disabled

EMPLOYMENT for the disabled will be on the forefront of a campaign by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

With the slogan “Disabled does not mean unable”, the campaign, which begins next Thursday, aims to highlight the ability and employability of disabled persons.

“The response for last year’s campaign was overwhelming. NCSS decided that it would be a good idea to organise it again,” said its corporate communications director Frances Lui.

NCSS hopes that more public attention will be generated over the challenges faced by disabled persons looking for a job.

There is no consolidated data on the number of disabled persons in Singapore or the number who work. But NCSS has said Bizlink Centre, a voluntary welfare organisation that specialises in job placement for the dis-

abled, has secured jobs for slightly over 700 people since 2003.

A study in February, commissioned by the Ministry of Community Development, Youth and Sports (MCYS), interviewed 74 employers who hired people with disabilities. Six in 10 did so because they saw them as equal members of society, while 87 per cent were satisfied with their employees’ performance.

NCSS conducted focus group sessions with 14 of these employers. Details from the MCYS and NCSS studies will be released at an appreciation lunch in mid-Nov for supportive employers. Five campaign ambassadors — nominated by employers for their exemplary character and work performance — were also unveiled, including visually-impaired *Project Superstar* winner Kelvin Tan Wei Lian, 23.

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