

A woman who lived her life for others



Breast cancer survivor was always there for both family and friends

**Aw Cheng Wei
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Seven years ago, Madam Chan Yoke Chan found to her dismay that she had breast cancer.

But she battled it bravely and had been cancer-free since 2003.

That year, she also became one of the pioneer members of Paddlers In The Pink, a dragon-boat team started by the Breast Cancer Foundation in Singapore, a support group for breast-cancer survivors and supporters.

The team comprises mainly women who had beaten the ailment.

Madam Chan was a faithful rower who tried to make

Madam Chan, an active member of the Breast Cancer Foundation, got all dressed up at the International Breast Cancer Dragon Boat Regatta in Brisbane, Australia, last year.

it to every weekly training session. The cheerful woman would sometimes come armed with food she had prepared for her teammates.

Yesterday morning, the 61-year-old housewife lost her life – not to cancer but in an accident along Sims Avenue after a practice session.

She was crossing the road on the way to Kallang MRT station when she was hit by a taxi.

Speaking to The Sunday Times last night, her son, lawyer Colin Chan, 32, said: "We thought breast cancer was the worst thing that could happen to her."

His mother, he said, "was the centre of our lives and held the family together".

His parents had been married for 33 years and had a caring relationship. The couple also have a 26-year-old daughter.

Madam Chan's husband, retiree Chan Gee Kan, 65, broke down at the scene of the accident.

But when The Sunday Times visited the family at their Yishun home yesterday evening, he appeared more composed and was seen walking his dog.

The younger Mr Chan said that his mother had been actively involved in the Breast Cancer Foundation's activities and helped out there whenever she could.

He added: "Ever since she survived breast cancer, she

has lived the life that she had always wanted."

She was in her 50s when she took up dragon boating and showed her family that "anything is possible".

His mother also "lived her life for others – friends, family, or other breast cancer patients", said Mr Chan.

Mrs Catherine Ng, 70, who had counselled Madam Chan when she was diagnosed with breast cancer, told The Sunday Times yesterday: "When I first met her, she was a shy person who had become depressed after being diagnosed with breast cancer. She was constantly asking, 'Why me?'"

"But after a while, she came to terms with it and become receptive and positive. She participated in many of the activities that the foundation organised. That was the turning point for her."

Apart from helping to coordinate the Mandarin support group for the foundation, Madam Chan had also prepared food for its events for a couple of years.

Mrs Angelina Ong, 53, team manager of Paddlers In The Pink, said: "She was a marvellous cook and she was always cooking for us."

Mr Chan said that he had just accepted a posting in China and his mother was in the process of giving him her recipes.

"I wish that we had more time to make her even more proud of us," he added, his voice breaking.

Speaking of behalf of Paddlers In The Pink, Mrs Ong said: "All of us hope that Madam Chan's family can pull through this. She loved them so much."

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