

# More seeking ST Pocket Money help

Target of \$5.7 million falling short as record 11,642 kids apply for aid

■ BY ANG YIYING

THERE are more needy children being supported by The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund than ever before.

In the first nine months of this year, a record 11,642 students received financial assistance – the highest number since the fund was started in 2000.

The 11,642 total surpassed the previous high of 10,419 during the 2003 Sars year.

Despite reports of an improving economy, the numbers showed that many families were still reeling from the recession.

Social workers said many of those affected by the recession were low-skilled workers who found it harder to get jobs. Also, positive effects from an economic recovery would take longer to trickle down to them.

National Council of Social Service dep-

## How to donate to the fund

To donate, make your cheque out to "School Pocket Money Fund" and send it to:

**The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund**  
Singapore Press Holdings Limited  
1000 Toa Payoh North  
Singapore 318994

Please include your name, NRIC number, address and contact number on the back of the cheque. To donate online, go to [www.donation.org.sg](http://www.donation.org.sg) or e-mail [stfund@sph.com.sg](mailto:stfund@sph.com.sg)

uty CEO Tina Hung said: "When the economy goes south, the group that we help as a social service agency tends to feel it the most. Even as you lift the economy, the group takes longer to recover."

Even those with jobs were struggling with the high cost of living.

For Ms Anita Abdul Latiff, 43, she and her husband, a cleaner, must support

their two children, aged seven and 12, on a combined monthly income of about \$860.

The part-time stall assistant applied for the fund in July. She said that now, at least she does not have to worry about pocket money for her children.

The children now get \$1 more a day in pocket money, while the rest is used to

## OTHER WAYS TO DONATE:

■ **Noel hampers:** Full proceeds from the sale of the hampers priced at \$100 and \$200 will go to the fund. Hampers will go on sale from Dec 1 to 15.

■ **OWS:** Drivers can revitalise their cars with OWS engine oils, and part of all sales proceeds will go to the fund until Dec 31.

■ **COVA Pasticceria – Confetteria:** COVA Pasticceria at The Paragon Atrium will donate part of all sales proceeds from Nov 30 to Dec 27 to the fund.

■ **ChildAid:** Full proceeds from the sale of tickets will go to the ST School Pocket Money Fund and The Business Times Budding Artists Fund. Details on ticket sales will be out by early next month. Ticket prices are at \$15, \$20 and \$30.

top up their farecards.

Under the fund, primary school pupils get \$45 a month and secondary school students \$80. The money can be used to buy food at school and for bus fares.

The fund's organising chairman, Mr Peter Khoo, said it had been a very challenging year.

"We have been hit by a double wham-

my. The number of children needing help has risen tremendously. We thus need more money to support them, but fund-raising remains tough."

In January, the fund had projected that 11,000 students would require help this year. But by September, the total had surpassed 11,600.

Mr Khoo said the fund was anticipating that at least 12,500 students would need help this year. This meant it would require \$5.7 million, a target he deemed "very tough".

He said: "Last year, we raised about \$4 million. We would probably surpass that this year, but it will be a stretch to hit \$5.7 million."

He estimated the fund would be short of between \$1.5 million and \$2 million by year end.

He pointed out that while more than 80 fund-raising events had been held so far – 25 per cent more than last year – yields had dropped.

Mr Khoo said: "Events that used to raise \$30,000 now return about \$20,000. But we have a duty to try and ensure that we do not leave any child hungry."

"So we will press on and appeal to the public to support our cause."

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