

PRESS RELEASE

**“DYING WELL” UNVEILED – THE DYING SPEAK ON LIFE BEFORE DEATH DOCUMENTARY**

**Inaugural Chinese documentary, “Living Well, Leaving Well”  
豁然无累，走向终点 kicks off Lien Foundation’s campaign to spark  
die-logues and address end-of-life issues**

Singapore 11 March 2009

1. This year’s ***Life Before Death*** campaign, spearheaded by the Lien Foundation, will kick off at **10.30pm on March 14** with the **Channel 8** telecast of Chinese documentary **“Living well, Leaving well”** hosted by local celebrity, Dongfang Billy. In it, Billy talks to the dying, their loved ones, caregivers, and even the man-in-the-street about what it means to have a “good death”.
2. First launched in 2006, this year’s campaign hopes to reach out to more people, especially the heartlanders. Explaining the campaign’s aims, Lien Foundation’s CEO Lee Poh Wah said: “Death is society’s last great taboo. Many of us don’t like to talk about it even though it’s a subject so central to human existence. The reality is: we will all die some day. At some point, we may have to witness the death of a loved one, whether it’s a friend or a family member.”
3. Mr Lee added, “When we’re called upon to make decisions for ourselves or our loved one who is dying - do we know what to do, what to say, what questions to ask and where to get help? We want to help Singaporeans re-write the way they

deal with life's final chapter, by encouraging open discussion, or 'die-logue', about end-of-life issues."

4. Commenting on the documentary, Mr Lee said: "It's not just about death and dying. It's about the celebration of life, love and family values. It raises some important questions for us to think about: What really matters to us at the end of our lives? How can we improve the quality of our lives when modern medicine can no longer add days to our lives? Can we learn a thing or two about living life well from people who are dying?"
5. Sharing their uplifting and life-affirming stories in the documentary are individuals and families who have confronted the spectre of death. Members of public also contributed to the documentary, responding to calls for participation last year. Featured prominently in the documentary are:
  - a. Lung cancer patient Susan Pang, who was devastated when she found out about her "death sentence" but now 13 years later, is teaching other cancer patients how to cope
  - b. Madam Choo May Lang, a breast cancer patient at 64 who felt that she was too young to die but was unafraid to prepare her family for her eventual demise.
  - c. Liver cirrhosis survivor Daniel Chng, who was at first totally unprepared for death, is now working on a book about life and death, as a legacy for his loved ones.
  - d. Loving husband and father Ng Wai Mun overcame Chinese traditional reticence to reveal what was on his heart.

### **More about the *Life Before Death* Campaign**

#### ***Greater die-logues***

6. Running for the second time, the *Life Before Death* campaign this year seeks to create die-logues and encourage people to talk about end-of-life matters with their loved ones. "Die-logues" in the pipeline for March and April will be in the

form of radio talk shows, Q&A columns and feature on readers' responses about death and dying. Readers and listeners would be invited to write in or call in with their stories or questions on end-of-life care in major newspapers and over the airwaves. In addition, the results of a first-ever street poll on attitudes on death in Singapore and an English documentary are planned for release in April.

### ***Legacy Album initiative***

7. In October 2008, the public was invited to nominate loved ones who are terminally or seriously ill to receive a *Legacy Album* of photographs and loving thoughts in celebration of his/her life. Four nominees were selected to receive their personal Legacy Album fully sponsored by the Foundation. Starting from March and April, their Legacy Albums will be open for online viewing by the public at [www.lifebeforedeath.sg](http://www.lifebeforedeath.sg).

### ***Advertising***

8. Beginning in mid-March, a series of press and radio ads will fill the media space in a bid to heighten awareness of end-of-life issues. The press ads are produced by creative giant, Ogilvy & Mather Advertising.

### ***Campaign Key Partners***

9. Lien Foundation's key partners for the *Life Before Death* campaign include The Assisi Hospice, Singapore Cancer Society, St Joseph's Home, The Centre for Seniors and the Lien Centre for Palliative Care.

### ***Ngee Ann Polytechnic***

10. Central to this year's campaign are alumni, students and lecturers from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's (NP) School of Film and Media Studies. The students captured close to 40 stories about death and dying by interviewing people from all walks of life. These are featured as written stories, audio and video clips on [www.lifebeforedeath.sg](http://www.lifebeforedeath.sg). In addition, Ngee Ann students also conducted street polls for an indication of death attitudes in Singapore. The analysis and results will be released in early April.

11. The two documentaries created as part of the *Life Before Death* campaign are produced by Oak3 Films, an established local film production house founded by Ngee Ann alumni.

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**About Lien Foundation [www.lienfoundation.org](http://www.lienfoundation.org)**

The Lien Foundation was founded by Dr. Lien Ying Chow, an eminent business leader, banker and hotelier. His influence extended beyond the private sector and Singapore, as a community leader, diplomat and philanthropist.

Today the Lien Foundation continues Dr Lien Ying Chow's legacy of good work in helping the needy and deprived in our society. The Foundation drives institutional capacity building to address crucial community needs, and empowers individuals to reach their full potential. It is pioneering new ground for organized philanthropy in Singapore by convening strategic partnerships and catalyzing action on social and environmental challenges.

Besides championing excellence in eldercare, the Foundation also seeks to enhance educational opportunities for the disadvantaged and the development of nascent fields of studies; and promoting environmental sustainability in water and sanitation.

The Foundation has long championed the cause to improve care for the dying. In 2006, it launched the first scholarships and fellowships in palliative care for doctors and nurses. It also created the inaugural "*Life Before Death*" campaign to increase public awareness of hospice palliative care. In 2008, it started Asia's first centre for research and training in palliative care, *The Lien Centre for Palliative Care*.

ANNEX:

## **Living well. Leaving well.**

豁然无累, 走向终点

**\*\*A Synopsis\*\***

Does the thought of dying scare you? People are generally caught up with living well, but how about leaving well? How prepared are we to talk about death and to ensure that when we go, we do so without regrets?

In this thought-provoking documentary, local celebrity, Dongfang Billy, talks to the dying, their loved ones, caregivers, and even the man-in-the-street to find out what they think of death, what regrets they have, if any, and how prepared they are to face the inevitable.

Susan Pang, for instance, was diagnosed as suffering from Stage 3 lung cancer and was given just six months to live. At first, she found the "death sentence" hard to accept. But her strength of character and the unwavering support of her loving family have seen her through. It has been 13 years since the diagnosis, and not only has she survived the tough treatments, she is reaching out to other cancer sufferers, befriending them, teaching them skills and providing emotional support.

Her children, along with their kids, have rallied around her and are inspired by her courage and determination to live like any normal person - making the best of the days ahead, living each one meaningfully and without regret.

Death, on the other hand, is a familiar topic for Rose Lee, a caregiver at St Joseph's Home & Hospice. She considers being there for someone towards the end of his or her life, a privilege. However, from her experience, patients and their loved ones find it hard to say "I love you" to each other, and it is her hope that they will not refrain from expressing their feelings.

For Madam Choo May Lang, dying from breast cancer at aged 64 torments her, as she feels she is too young. As her daughter puts it, her mother worked hard to raise her children when she was younger, but instead of enjoying life in her golden years, she has been struck with this deadly disease. She wished she and her brother had spent more time with their mother in the past. Despite these regrets, Mdm Choo is prepared to face death. She has lived a full life, with grandchildren to love and the experience of travelling to many countries.

Then there's Daniel Chng, who had a wake up call when he suffered liver failure due to his hard-drinking and smoking lifestyle. Totally unprepared when he was faced with the prospect of death, he has since quit the bad habits and is working on a book about life and what it means – something he hopes to be able to pass on to his children.

Finally, there's Ng Wai Mun and his wife Wan Tok Hai. Their 34-year marriage first blossomed over cups of coffee, and he used to take his wife everywhere on his motorbike. But ever since he was struck by nose cancer, she has had to care for him. And if they were to go out at all, it was Mdm Wan who took him in his wheelchair. Despite his pain and difficulty in hearing, Mr Ng remained cheerful and in love with his wife till the very end. Having only wished that he had grandchildren to cuddle, and visited Beijing, he had said he was not afraid of death. Mr Ng passed away on March 5, 2009.

While one cannot choose how one is born, we can choose how we want to face death. From the various frank interviews, it is clear that living life to the fullest, spending it with loved ones, and ensuring that wishes on end-of-life matters are made clear, go a long way in minimising helplessness and confusion, and taking away some of that fear of death.

Is this, in essence, what it means to "die well"?