

# Dedicated youth worker wins award

**Sumita Sreedharan**

Ms Lina Chong Lin Lin once challenged an argumentative youth to a contest on a computer game called Counter-Strike.

"I had one male student who often had a stern look and always wanted to pick a fight," recalled Ms Chong, chairman of the Pasir Ris Elias Community Club Youth Executive Committee. She and her team also work with at-risk youths.

"He'd challenge every action we took or any programme we organised," she added.

Instead of giving in to him, she took him on at Counter-Strike.

She told him that if she won, he had to talk to her.

"I won the game," she said, and the youth did just that.

For her never-say-die attitude, Ms Chong, 32, won the Excellent Youth Award.

It is presented to an individual who has made extraordinary contributions to the promotion of youth development.

She was among eight winners at the People's Association Youth Movement (PAYM) awards ceremony

at the Resorts World Convention Centre.

Ms Chong, an assistant manager at Nanyang Polytechnic, and her team pioneered a scheme to mentor at-risk youth identified by their schools, and youth under probation.

"Youth at risk are not bad kids. They are just kids who need to be understood, kids who need space for expression, kids who need someone to look up to," she said.

Ms Chong, who has done community work since she was in primary school, first joined her grass-

roots group in 2000.

The guest of honour at yesterday's event was Ms Grace Fu, Senior Minister of State for National Development and Education and also a member of the People's Association board of management.

The PAYM, led by youth, uses community service projects, adventure and arts and cultural activities to reach out to those aged 12 to 35.

"This award is a platform for me to reach out to even more young people. I see it as a call to them, telling them there are more ways to be involved," said Ms Chong.



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**Ms Lina Chong at the ceremony with her award, which she won for her extraordinary contribution to the promotion of youth development.**