

PRESS RELEASE

First woman director heads Boys' Town after 59 years

February 15 2008 – Mrs Irene Loi is the first non-religious woman to head the Boys' Town organisation last May after 59 years of having a Gabrielite Brother at the helm. Irene is the ninth Director –General of Boys' Town since it was first founded.

“Boys' Town has always been associated with the Brothers. For the public to see a lay person as the head, it's already hard to accept,” she said. “On top of that, a woman.” However, there were also others who have shown support, she added.

Boys' Town was established in 1948 as a charitable institution dedicated to providing youths between the age of 11 and 18 with guidance, shelter, education, vocational training and practical living skills.

The organisation cares for boys who come primarily from large, troubled, single parent and financially needy families as well as those who find themselves in various states of difficulties.

Irene first joined Boys' Town in 1989 as a social worker after rejecting another higher paying counselling job.

For Irene, job satisfaction wasn't so much about the pay. Rather, it was more about being able to reach out directly to the youths. That was something Irene said she found she was able to do so in Boys' Town.

Irene, who has been married for 20 years, left Boys' Town in 2000 to spend more time with her children while they were growing up.

Despite resigning from Boys' Town, Irene remained active on its advisory board. And in 2007, she was invited back to Boys' Town to head the organisation.

Brother Emmanuel, advisor to Boys' Town and a former director-general of Boys' Town said that the dwindling number and age of the Brothers made it necessary to look for a non-religious head. “We felt that we had to look around for a person who would qualify in continuing our mission,” he said.

“Irene has proven herself to be a person highly educated to the cause of Boys' Town. She is also trained and qualified. As a Catholic, she has been involved in various church projects.

He added: “These factors put together qualify her to be the first lay executive of Boys' Town and made her stand out from many other applicants.”

Irene acknowledges that the director's role is not easy to fulfil. But she wants to serve the less fortunate and needy youths of Singapore.

“Coming back to Boys' Town and accepting this baton of love from the Brothers means that I have agreed to serve in whatever way I can so that this legacy of love and care in Singapore can continue,” she said.

Media contact:

Jennifer Lim (Ms), Director of Community Partnerships

Tel: 67691618 (ext 15) or 96710767 Email: jennifer@boystown.org.sg

Lorraine Koenitz (Ms), Community Partnerships Executive

Tel: 67691618 (ext 41) Email: lorraine@boystown.org.sg

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