

# With heart and wallet in mind

ONG DAI LIN

*dailin@mediacorp.com.sg*

WHILE addressing a manpower shortage for his travel agency, one man has also worked out a way to benefit the community.

Mr Samson Tan, 41, has set up Heart Travel at Teck Ghee Community Club to train and senior citizens, ex-offenders and those in the lower income group to become travel consultants.

Said Mr Tan: "A lot of underprivileged people can do the jobs in the travel agencies but the agencies here don't provide training."

Mr Sam How, the agency's general manager, added: "Being in a community centre helps to keep rental costs down. And we also want to reach out to the heartlanders."

The three-month-old agency has about 400 customers monthly, and focuses on Asian travel packages. Its three trainees are currently learning to handle short-haul packages to places such as Genting Highlands.

Mr Susheel Rai, 26, is one of them. He had difficulty finding a full-time job he needed to attend evening classes for his IT course. "The agency recruited me as a travel consultant-cum-IT executive so that I can learn a new trade ... best of all, I am given the flexibility to attend my classes."

Trainees will be recommended to other agencies after six months. Mr Tan plans to take in another three to five trainees by early next year.