

## AWARE'S POWER COUPLE

# Quiet, devoted to religious activities

Alan Chin expressed his views on homosexuality in letters to ST Forum

■ BY TAN DAWN WEI

IF HIS wife is a livewire, he is the quiet one. Friends say Dr Alan Chin Yew Liang, 51, has never been known to be the life of the party.

In fact, he stopped going to parties in recent years, preferring to devote his time to religious activities, said a long-time friend.

Dr Chin made his presence felt at the Aware AGM on March 28 even though he could not vote.

Aware has long accepted men as associate members and he joined recently. His wife joined in January this year.

Old guard members at the AGM said that he was one of the many unfamiliar new faces who turned up and, during the elections, he helped to count votes.

Later, when they checked to find out who he was, all they could find was that he had penned six letters to The Straits Times between May and August 2007 speaking out against the homosexual lifestyle, and citing the higher incidence of HIV cases among homosexuals.

In one letter, he said that homosexuals could change their sexual orientation.

He and his wife, Josie, have been attending the Anglican Church Of Our Saviour at Margaret Drive since 2001.

They were married in the 1980s at the Anglican St Andrew's Cathedral, soon after he graduated from medical school at the National University of Singapore.

He and three classmates set up Lifeline Medical Group, which has since expanded to encompass nine general practitioner clinics and one aesthetic clinic.

Among the partners is well-known watch collector and horology expert Bernard Cheong, 51, who has known Dr Chin since they were first-year medical students.

"He's a nice guy, and he and Josie are a very loving couple. I would definitely want him as my doctor," Dr Cheong said with a hearty laugh.

When The Straits Times called him, Dr Chin declined to be interviewed, but asked to be contacted through his e-mail address.

He did not respond to questions nor subsequent messages.

But in an interview published in the Singapore Medical Association's newsletter in January 2007, he described himself and his interests.

He said his parents had the biggest influence on his early life, and his father told him when he was in primary school that God gave him intelligence and he would succeed if he worked hard, he said in the same interview.

He said that he spent Sunday mornings going to church and spending time with his family, his favourite book was the Bible, and his favourite song was Faith by Jason Upton, an American Christian singer-songwriter.

He also let on some nuggets about himself: his biggest indulgence was buying a BMW Cabriolet and he thought everyone should watch The Lord Of The Rings because it was the "best show and trilogy ever!"

The BMW Cabriolet has since given way to a Toyota MPV, a friend said.

In the same 2007 interview, when asked what he wanted to be remembered for, he said: a loving husband and father and a loyal friend.

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Dr Chin (left) is a partner in Lifeline Medical Group, which he set up with three medical school classmates. He joined Aware recently and attended the recent AGM.



Before joining DBS, Ms Lau spent 15 years at STB where, according to her CV, she was instrumental in developing events like the Singapore Food Festival, Great Singapore Sale and Singapore Fashion Festival. ST PHOTO: MUGILAN RAJASEGERAN

## Sociable, chatty and a lover of good food

WHEN Ms Josie Lau Meng Lee has her wonton mee, she likes the noodles cooked in fresh, boiling water. If it is not done right, she sends it back.

That is how finicky the 48-year-old DBS vice-president and new Aware chief is about her food, said those who know her.

None of her colleagues and ex-colleagues who spoke to The Straits Times had heard her speak about involvement in volunteer work.

But they were well-acquainted with her gourmet and jetsetting lifestyle, cultivated in part by her work organising glamorous fashion, food and lifestyle events, and accompanying her doctor-husband to medical conferences overseas.

In previous interviews with this paper, Ms Lau said that she and her husband, Dr Alan Chin, had not missed a single World Gourmet Summit since its inception in 1997.

"I live to eat, rather than eat to live," she said in a 2004 interview, adding that she attended seven Gourmet Summit events that year.

"I'm the type who would rather go hungry than have terrible food," she said then. "I send things back to the kitchen if they're not up to standard, even wonton noodles from hawkker stalls."

She was known to frequent upmarket eateries as well as hawkker centres.

Friends describe the well-groomed mother of

two teenagers as sociable and chatty. One long-time friend said she was a "complete opposite" of her more serious husband.

Before joining DBS, Ms Lau rose through the ranks at the Singapore Tourism Board (STB), where she spent 15 years, mostly marketing lifestyle events.

Her CV, released by Aware, said she was instrumental in developing high-profile events like the Singapore Food Festival, Great Singapore Sale and Singapore Fashion Festival.

A former colleague at the STB recalled another side of Ms Lau, saying she enjoyed listening to Christian music in her office.

She would also tell single colleagues that if they wanted to find a spouse, the best place to look was in church. And she would encourage them to attend.

As for areas she will be interested in in her new role, the Aware write-up said she was most concerned about work-life balance and the role of mothers as a stabilising factor in a family.

Ms Lau made brief comments to reporters after her appointment as president on Wednesday night, but has otherwise remained uncontactable.

She has not taken questions about herself or her plans for Aware, or DBS Bank's public criticism of her for flouting bank rules by joining the Aware exco without its approval and defying her bosses' advice against becoming president.

TAN DAWN WEI

## Some attend the same church

EVEN as the Aware saga continues to unfold, it appears that some of the newcomers in its leadership are familiar faces at the Anglican Church Of Our Saviour at Margaret Drive.

Aside from new Aware president Josie Lau and her husband Alan Chin, the others are believed to be Ms Charlotte Wong, Ms Irene Yee, Ms Jenica Chua, Ms Maureen Ong and Ms Sally Ang.

So far, the new Aware leaders have refused to answer questions about whether they knew each other before sweeping the elections three weeks ago.

According to a long-time friend, Dr Chin is related to former law dean Dr Thio Su Mien and her daughter, Nominated Member of Parliament Professor Thio Li-Ann.

When contacted, the NMP declined to answer any questions. Dr Chin did not respond to questions e-mailed to him.

But checks yesterday showed that Dr Thio Su Mien and her husband, Mr Thio Gim Hock, the chief executive officer of property investor Overseas Un-

ion Enterprise, attend the church and also hold regular faith-healing sessions at their home.

Senior pastor Derek Hong was not answering any questions about his church members or Aware yesterday.

Asked if any of the new Aware exco members attended his church, he replied: "No comment."

Housed in a renovated former cinema near Commonwealth, the church has a congregation of about 4,000.

It takes a strong stand against homosexuality and states so on its website.

"Homosexual practice is contrary to God's Word. So we stand against that and the active and aggressive promotion of such behaviour," it states.

It believes homosexuals can change, and has a programme to counsel and help those who want to give up "homosexual thoughts, tendencies and practices".

TAN DAWN WEI

Additional reporting by Jamie Ee

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