Free YOG Village stay for 200 boys

These students are among 1,000 people to test Village’s readiness in a ‘stay and play programme’

By Amelia Tan

NEARLY half of the 500 places taken up by students for a two-day preview of the Youth Olympic Village have been filled by Victoria School (VS) and St Joseph’s Institution (SJI) boys, thanks to their schools’ alumni.

The Old Victorians’ Association (OVA) has forked out $15,000 to send 100 VS boys to the Village, located in Nanyang Technological University, next Friday and Saturday.

Similarly, 100 SJI boys will also be at the Village. Their stay will be sponsored by SJI old boy Ronnie Lum, 42, who is the chief executive of an insurance brokerage company.

The “stay and play programme”, which spans two days and one night, gives organisers a chance to test the Village’s readiness to host the world’s best young athletes during the August 14-26 inaugural Youth Olympic Games (YOG) in Singapore.

Participants will tuck into the same buffet spread that will be served during the Games, spend a night in the rooms where the athletes will stay, and attend cultural and educational activities such as workshops, exhibitions and a dialogue session with Deputy Village Mayor and former Olympian C. Kunalan.

They will also get to preview the YOG official opening ceremony.

A $150 early-bird fee was charged for those who signed up before June 30, and $188 for those who signed up after.

Youth Olympic Village director Sheryl Lim said participants are required to pay fees to defray the costs of meals and services at the Village.

About 1,000 people have signed up for the programme. Half of them are students, and most of the rest are YOG sponsors, partners, staff, and their families and friends. About 15 members of the public are also taking part.

The students, most of whom are athletes and leaders of sports co-curricular activities, are from 10 secondary schools and the universities.

Besides SJI and VS, other participating secondary schools include Jurong West Secondary, Boon Lay Secondary, Anglo-Chinese School (Independent) and Cedar Girls’ Secondary. The students either pay the fees themselves, or are sponsored through funds such as those from residents’ committees.

OVA president Vernon Teo, who is also the show producer of the YOG opening and closing ceremonies, said he learnt about the two-day stay earlier in the year and brought up the idea of sponsoring VS boys during a gathering with other OVA members.

“The association felt that it would be an eye-opening experience for the students. They will be able to experience how a large-scale international event is run. Not many people have such a chance,” said Mr Teo.

VS student Marcus Ng, 14, who is a cross country runner, said: “I’ve been looking forward to staying in the Village since my school told me a few weeks ago that I’d been selected. The experience will be special for me because I am an athlete. I feel inspired to work harder in my sport so that one day I can take part in international competitions and use such world-class facilities.”

Applications for the programme have closed.

ameltan@sph.com.sg

Additional reporting by Hoe Pei Shan