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PERSONS WITH DIFFERENT ABILITIES EMPOWERED TO TAKE ON BIGGER ROLES AT COMMUNITY CHEST HEARTSTRINGS WALK 2017

Persons with different abilities stepping up as volunteers to serve in various roles, including facilitating inclusive activities for the first time

SINGAPORE 9 SEPTEMBER 2017 – This year's Community Chest Heartstrings Walk will see close to 8,000 participants, including members of the public, social service organisations and corporate partners coming together to provide opportunities for meaningful interaction among persons with different abilities. It also aims to show how every person can be empowered to self-advocate, be self-reliant and give back to the community.

Co-organised with Marina Bay Sands, Community Chest Heartstrings Walk 2017 will feature the annual special **Race to the Sky Vertical Marathon** that will see corporate partners and beneficiaries scaling 57 storeys of the hotel tower at Marina Bay Sands, a **4-km Fun Walk** along the Waterfront Trail at Marina Bay that will be flagged off by **Guest-of-Honour, Minister for Social and Family Development Mr Tan Chuan-Jin**, and a **Family Carnival** at the Marina Bay Sands Event Plaza.

This year, **an increased number of beneficiaries**, including persons with disabilities, seniors and youth-at-risk **will step up at the event to volunteer in various roles**, such as teaching other participants how to play inclusive games and facilitate interaction. One of them is 33-year-old Lokman Nur Hakim Bin Ithnin, from SPD Day Activity Centre (DAC), who has cerebral palsy. Lokman is excited about volunteering as a facilitator at the inclusive game station for the first time. Others will volunteer in distributing goodie bags and motivating participants at the finish line for the Fun Walk.

Another beneficiary who has contributed to this year's Community Chest Heartstrings Walk is 14-year-old Pathlight School student, Jonathan Cai, who designed the Vertical Marathon Race T-shirt this year. A multi-talented artist with the School's Artist Development Programme (ADP), Jonathan's biggest wish is to fuse his art with his passion in computer software development, to create a software that can help to improve the quality of life for persons with different abilities.

Besides empowering persons with different abilities to take on more roles, this year's Heartstrings Walk will also feature empowered beneficiaries-turned-advocates. 25-year-old Wilson Peh, who was a former at-risk youth, will be leading other at-risk youth from Youth Guidance Outreach Services (YGOS) to participate in the Vertical Marathon. As a teenager, Wilson was arrested twice, for drug abuse, gang involvement and assault. Today, Wilson is a changed man. He is paying it forward as a youth worker with YGOS and aspires to be a social worker.

Chairman of Community Chest, Mr Phillip Tan, said, "At the heart of our community outreach and fundraising efforts is enabling a better quality of life for our beneficiaries. This year, we are involving our beneficiaries to take on more roles at the event. They are no longer just at the receiving end, but are empowered to co-create solutions and self-advocate. It has been a privilege for us to partner like-minded organisations to foster a more caring and inclusive society. Each of us can give back to our community and make Singapore a better place to live in."

Besides facilitating interaction and understanding between members of the public and persons with different abilities through inclusive activities, **athletes with different abilities will also join in to exchange sporting tips with event participants**. Prolific marathoners (managed by ONEathlete), Evan Chee (4th in Singapore Marathon 2016) and Ben Moreau (Commonwealth Games participant, based in Singapore) as well as Md Shariff Abdullah, a para-athlete with a prosthetic leg, will be taking part in the Fun Walk. They will walk alongside 15-year-old Shawn Goh, a special needs student from MINDS Towner Gardens School who participated in the 100m dash at the Special Olympics this year. Diagnosed with congenital intellectual disability, Shawn has managed to overcome the challenges he faced and pursue his passion for sports. These athletes demonstrate how sports and social interactions can be inclusive.

Mr George Tanasijevich, President and Chief Executive Officer of Marina Bay Sands, said, "Every year, the Community Chest Heartstrings Walk finds new and enriching ways to empower beneficiaries and further augment Singapore's effort to build an inclusive society. This year is no exception. As co-organisers of the Walk, which is held in conjunction with Sands for Singapore Charity Festival, we hope to collectively engage the public in raising greater awareness for the underprivileged community."

Community Chest Heartstrings Walk 2017 is also held in alignment with the nation-wide "**See The True Me**" disability awareness campaign by NCSS, which is being rolled out in September. The campaign, aims to promote inclusivity, and encourage more interaction with persons with different abilities. The event is also held in support of **SG Cares**, a national movement to promote volunteerism.

Event Highlights

1. Inclusive games to facilitate interaction

- The Family Carnival will feature 2 inclusive activities - Air Hoops and Air Hockey. They will be facilitated by corporate volunteers and beneficiaries, including persons with disabilities and seniors.
- For the first time, the 4-km Fun Walk will also feature three inclusive activities along the scenic route around Marina Bay. These activities include Bucket Ball, Bounce & Catch and Marble Boccia.

2. Using technology to increase public awareness about interacting with persons with different abilities

- Fun walk participants can also learn more about interacting with persons with disabilities by playing an interactive **augmented-reality (AR) game**, which is loaded onto a Snaplar app that participants can download. As they walk along the scenic route, they will come across various challenge stations, and be quizzed on DO's and DON'Ts on interacting with persons with different abilities.

3. All donations, including the registration fee of \$10 for the fun walk, will be fully channelled towards charities supported by Community Chest.

Pls refer to Annex A for media programme

Pls refer to Annex B for the 4km Fun Walk map

Pls refer to Annex C for beneficiary profiles

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About Community Chest

For over 30 years, we have been engaging the community to support people in need through fund-raising and volunteering. We support about 80 social service organisations in Singapore, allowing them to focus on caring for the disadvantaged. As our fund-raising and operating costs are covered mainly by Tote Board Group, comprising Tote Board, Singapore Pools and Singapore Turf Club, 100% of your donation goes towards:

- Building strong and resilient families
- Caring for vulnerable seniors
- Empowering children with special needs and youth-at-risk
- Integrating adults with disabilities into society
- Supporting persons with mental health issues

Find out more at comchest.sg

About Singapore Cares (SG Cares)

SG Cares is a national movement to support the efforts of Singaporeans in building a more caring, compassionate and inclusive home for all. SG Cares aims to build capability across various sectors and organisations to create conditions and grow opportunities for volunteerism. SG Cares also aims to increase mindshare building by galvanising and inspiring Singaporeans to put values into action through active volunteerism, ground-up efforts and everyday acts of care.

Through SG Cares, we can realise a more caring and compassionate society. We may be a small nation, but we have a big heart. Learn more about the nationwide movement at www.sg/singaporecares. Sign up for volunteering opportunities at www.giving.sg.

Annex A

COMMUNITY CHEST HEARTSTRINGS WALK 2017 @ MARINA BAY Saturday, 9 September 2017 Event Plaza, Marina Bay Sands

Programme

- 6.30am Vertical Marathon Flag-off
- 8.05am Arrival of Guest of Honour, Minister Tan Chuan-Jin at Event Plaza
Opening Remarks by Minister Tan
- 8.10am Warm-up exercise
- 8.15am Fun Walk Flag-off by Minister Tan
Minister Tan to mingle with beneficiaries, national athletes, and para-athlete after flag-off
- 8.45am Commencement of Carnival at Event Plaza
- 9.00am Zumba cool-down exercise
Vertical Marathon Prize Presentation Ceremony
Presentation of Cheques and Tokens to Partners
Group Photo
- 9.35am Minister Tan to tour and participate in inclusive games at Carnival
Minister Tan takes his leave
- 10.20am Performance by Metta Circus Arts & SPARKS Group
- 10.30am Performance by NTU Deaf Club
- 11.30am End of Carnival activities

Annex B



Annex C - Beneficiary profiles

Wilson Peh (25 years old) Beneficiary-turned-Youth Worker Youth Guidance Outreach Services

As a child, Wilson had no one to look up to - his mother was stricken with illness and his father worked long hours as a taxi driver to support the family. Wilson often felt lost and resented his situation.

In secondary school, he met some friends who were gang members and with them, he felt like he belonged. Wilson began to join in their gang activities. They hung out and smoked. To Wilson, it was a form of escape from his family problems.

Wilson was eventually caught for gang involvement and was charged for assault with deadly weapon when he was only 14 years old. He was sentenced to 2 years' probation. Wilson's father was devastated but did not have time to care for him as he had to continue working to pay for his wife's medical bills. During his probation, Wilson reoffended and was charged the second time, for drug abuse, assault and sentenced to the Singapore Boys' Hotel for 2 years.

After his discharge from the Hostel, Wilson was approached by staff from Youth Guidance Outreach Services (YGOS) and roped into their aftercare programme. He was mentored by a YGOS staff and slowly began to turn his life around.

Unfortunately, Wilson's mother passed away at around the same time. She suffered a stroke when she fainted after witnessing Wilson being handcuffed and led away from their home.

"I always felt that I failed her as a son and that I was always a burden to my family with my detrimental behaviour. When she was hospitalised, she told me to turn from my wrong ways, but I was not there for her when she passed away. I truly regret that I was a step too late."

Wilson's mother's death marked a turning point in his life. He left the gang and was determined to start life anew. Wilson is now a youth worker with YGOS, giving back to the organisation that has helped him the most. This is Wilson's second time participating in the Vertical Marathon (VM) at Community Chest Heartstrings Walk, and he has been mentoring and motivating other at-risk youth to take part in the VM.

He is keen to pursue a degree in Social Work and become a social worker to "pay it forward and impact more lives ahead."

Goh Guo Ren Shawn (15 years old)
Beneficiary/Special Olympian
MINDS Towner Gardens School

Diagnosed with congenital intellectual disability, Shawn struggled to express himself or control his emotions. He would hit himself in frustration when he was young child. With the quality education at MINDS Towner Gardens School, Shawn's ability to communicate and control his emotions improved tremendously. Today, Shawn is energetic and infectious joy. He has learnt to express himself, read and spell simple words, and even taken on leadership roles in school as a prefect. He aspires to join the vocational programme to prepare him for work when he is older.

Shawn participated in the 100m dash at the Special Olympics in May 2017. He also represented his school, and came in fifth.

Jonathan Cai (14 years old)
Beneficiary
Pathlight School's Artist Development Programme (ADP)

ADP was set up in 2011 to uncover students with artistic talent, and help them develop their skills so that they can use their artistic talents to have a dignified source of income in future.

Jonathan was talent-spotted by his teachers during leisure skills lessons when they noticed his keen sense of aesthetics and meticulous attention to detail. He joined ADP in 2015. From capturing the minute typographic branding on a pencil, to monumental towers of glass and steel, he specialises in still life and architectural line-art. Having experimented with different mediums, he has been exposed to various techniques such as crosshatching, shading and perspective drawing. He harnesses the power of repetition to express himself through his art too. For example, his detailed drawing of countless smart phones repeated and composed in a heap was actually a cheeky message to his mum, "May I have a new mobile phone, please?"

Under the mentorship of his art coaches, Jonathan has completed commissioned works for Community Chest and Thermos. His art pieces have been exhibited at The Visual Arts Centre, LandArts @ PAssionArts Festival 2017, and the ongoing "Art for Autism: All Things Singapore" public exhibition at The Fullerton Hotel Singapore. Besides expanding his repertoire with more styles and mediums, Jonathan hopes to strengthen his portfolio with more elaborate artworks of architecture and Singapore icons.

His biggest wish is to fuse his artistic talent with his passion in computer software development, to create a software that can help improve the quality of life for other people with different abilities.