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MEDIA RELEASE

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INCLUSIVE EMPLOYERS ALONG ORCHARD ROAD JOIN COMMUNITY CHEST IN ANNUAL CHRISTMAS LIGHT UP

- *Community Chest supported programmes that enabled over 900 social service users to be gainfully employed in 2016, up from 660 in 2014*

SINGAPORE, 11 NOVEMBER 2017 – Inclusive employers along the Orchard Road belt and their employees with disabilities, joined Guest-of-Honour, President Halimah Yacob, and Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for Social and Family Development, to launch the festive lights at the Community Chest Christmas on *A Great Street* Light-up Ceremony, on 11 November 2017, at ION Orchard Singapore.

This year's Community Chest Christmas on *A Great Street* Light-up Ceremony raised close to \$1.4 million, which will go towards about 80 social service organisations supported by Community Chest, including those that provide vocational training and employment assistance for persons with disabilities, such as Autism Resource Centre, Metta School, APSN Delta Senior School, and MINDS.

In 2016, Community Chest supported 29 employment assistance programmes that enabled over 900 social service users to be gainfully employed, a 36% increase from 2014. One such programme is the Enabling Academy Initiative, where training providers such as the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts, SHATEC, and SEOCity Pet Ltd, are equipped to prepare persons with disabilities for the workforce.

President Halimah said, "With effective job re-design and accommodation, persons with disabilities can be empowered to contribute and be productive in the workplace. Community Chest has been supporting social service organisations that provide the necessary training to enhance the employment and employability of persons with disabilities in Singapore. Employers can also do their part to encourage inclusive hiring practices and embrace persons with disabilities. I hope that more employers will support the inclusive culture and help persons with disabilities to integrate better into the community."

Over the last few years, more vocational skills training options have opened up for students with special needs, easing their transition into the workforce. Pan Pacific Hotels Group has been supporting such programmes since 2014. 18-year-old Nur Alfian Hakim bin Halim from MINDS Fernvale Gardens School is one work-capable student who is benefitting from early preparation, and has just completed his three month Work Experience Program with PARKROYAL Serviced Suites.

Ms Wee Wei Ling, Executive Director (Asset & Lifestyle) of Pan Pacific Hotels Group said: “As one of Singapore’s largest homegrown hospitality companies, we are committed to enabling persons with disabilities by providing them with sustainable and meaningful employment opportunities. We recognise not only the value they can bring to the workplace, more importantly it builds the character and fulfilment of individuals, and provides important support to caregivers. Diversity at our workplace has also made work life more enriching and meaningful for our associates. We would strongly encourage like-minded companies to join us in promoting an inclusive work place.”

Another household name which has led with a heart is NTUC FairPrice Co-operative Ltd. With a strong social cause, NTUC FairPrice has partnered various schools and government agencies such as SG Enable, NorthLight School and the Autism Resource Centre, to create training and job placement opportunities for persons with disabilities. NTUC FairPrice currently employs about 50 persons with disabilities.

Mr Supian Bin Mohammad, a graduate from MINDS Singapore, joined NTUC FairPrice Finest at Scotts Square as a retail assistant last year. He is thankful for the opportunity to contribute: “Even though I’m not able to read well, I’m glad to be given a chance to complete my work at my own pace. I am glad that my boss has entrusted me with key duties such as checking which grocery products are out of stock and ordering them in. I know that they value me as a worker.”

The growing number of inclusive employers all over Singapore, including key names along the nation’s shopping belt such as Mandarin Orchard, Grand Park Orchard, Swensens and Uniqlo Singapore, bids well for the creation of a diverse and inclusive workforce as we build a caring and inclusive Singapore.

The evening was also a true demonstration and celebration of different abilities and inclusivity, with 19-year-old Muhd Aqram bin Mohd Yazed, a former student with autism from Eden School co-emceeding alongside Ms Wong Li Lin; and a performance by The Purple Symphony, Singapore’s largest inclusive orchestra put together by the Central Singapore Community Development Council. Community Chest Christmas on *A Great*

Street Light-up Ceremony is co-organised by Community Chest and Orchard Road Business Association, along with main sponsor, Hitachi Group of Companies.

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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

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Annex A

**Community Chest Christmas on *A Great Street* Light-up Ceremony
Saturday, 11 November 2017
ION², ION Orchard**

Programme

- 6.45 pm **Media registration** (all guests to be seated by 7.20pm)
- 7.15 pm **Arrival of Special Guest**
Mr Desmond Lee, Minister for Social and Family Development
- 7.30 pm **Arrival of Guest-of-Honour**
Mdm Halimah Yacob, President of the Republic of Singapore
- 7.35 pm **Welcome Speeches**
- Mr Ho Sing, Chairman of Christmas Light-up Sub-committee
 - H. E. Shinoda, Ambassador of Japan to Singapore
 - Mr Kojin Nakakita, Chairman, Hitachi Asia Ltd.
- 7.45 pm Performance by The Purple Symphony
- 7.55 pm Screening of video on inclusive employment and interview segment
with inclusive employers on stage
- 8.05 pm Performance by Mikey Robinson and Bertrand Lee
- 8.20 pm Cheque Presentation by partners to Community Chest
- 8.25 pm President Halimah launches Christmas lights at Light-Up ceremony
- 8.40 pm President Halimah Yacob to take her leave
- 8.45 pm Guests to board HiPPO Bus to view Christmas lights
- 9.30 pm End of programme

Annex B

Venue Map

