

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **Enabling a “Mixed Ability” Mindset: See the True Me Campaign gets people past superficial acceptance of persons with disabilities**

*11 social service organisations invite Singaporeans to 20 mixed ability experiences  
as part of the campaign*

**SINGAPORE 7 September 2017** – In a 2017 study by the **National Council of Social Service (NCSS)**, participants described being *Inclusive* towards people with disabilities as “being tolerant” towards, “accepting” of, and “helping them when needed”.

Compared to the deeper, more meaningful exchanges that Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) need for self-reliant and empowered living, findings from the study starkly highlighted the contrast between two worlds that exist at every work, school and community place.

To bridge this invisible and unspoken divide between the world of PwDs and those without, See the True Me 2017 will facilitate interaction between Singaporeans of “mixed abilities”, with the intention to get people to go beyond the bias of stereotypes and see the unique attributes of another person.

### **See the True Me: “We’re Not That Different After All!”**

This is the second of a five-year movement by the National Council of Social Service – in partnership with the Tote Board – to promote inclusion of PwDs in Singapore.

The Attitude Study conducted in 2015 with 1,400 members of the public showed that interacting more frequently with PwDs will help to improve attitudes towards them. It was also found that persons with intellectual disabilities and autism were viewed less favourably as compared to those with physical and sensory impairments, stemming from a lack of knowledge and understanding of these less visible disabilities.

**See the True Me 2017** focuses on increasing people’s understanding of disability types, and facilitating interactions with PwDs through tips and activities. Campaign highlights from September to November include:

- a. A big publicity blitz featuring **Gareth, Syah and Charlene** – the three ambassadors who eschew stereotypes of the disabled, despite muscular dystrophy, intellectual disadvantage and being deaf. Their stories – of contribution at work, to society and social integration – along with those of their friends, colleagues, and family will feature on digital, broadcast, social and outdoor channels. (See Annex A for more details and link to videos.)
- b. The **Community Chest Heartstrings Walk 2017** (9 September at Marina Bay Sands): The annual outward declaration and show of support of an “Inclusive” nation for mixed abilities. This event is a big favourite among parents, corporate volunteers, team builders, social service circles and Singaporeans keen on a social, light-exercise activity.
- c. **See The True Me. Let’s Chat!** (30 September at Dhoby Ghaut Xchange): Facilitated by the Human Library of Singapore, people are invited to have chats with PwDs to find common ground. Inclusion ambassadors from the Disabled People’s Association (DPA) will also be participating in this activation.
- d. **“Introduce, Interact and Involve”** (throughout September): Up to **20 mixed ability experiences** featuring a range of sporting, hobby-related, makerspace-type and exposure activities, from terrarium-making to dragon-boating, Halloween parties and sign-language lessons. (See Annex B for calendar of events)

**Mr Sim Gim Guan, Chief Executive Officer, NCSS** said, “Inclusion is seeing persons with disabilities as persons first, and not defined by their disability. We need to move beyond pity, and tolerance to truly including persons of different abilities in our lives.

“Increasingly, we are seeing more reports of initiatives by different groups supporting disability inclusion. We are encouraged by this positive trend. We hope to see more ground

up efforts by schools, community and corporations to provide platforms for the public to interact and engage with persons with disabilities, to experience for themselves what it means to be inclusive.”

**Mr Fong Yong Kian, Chief Executive, Tote Board** said, “I am heartened with the success of “See the True Me” campaign in 2016, which paved the way for people with disabilities to be embraced and accepted into our community. Riding on this success, there are many more exciting campaign initiatives in 2017, which will benefit people with disabilities.”

The ‘See The True Me’ campaign initiatives are very much in line with the **Social Service Sector Strategic Thrusts (4ST)** launched by NCSS in July 2017. The roadmap highlights the different pathways to achieve the vision of empowering every person to live with dignity in a caring and inclusive society.

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**About National Council of Social Service (NCSS)**

NCSS is the umbrella body for over 450-member social service organisations in Singapore. Its mission is to provide leadership and direction in enhancing the capabilities and capacity of our members, advocating for social service needs and strengthening strategic partnerships, for an effective social service ecosystem. Community Chest and Social Service Institute (SSI) are part of NCSS.

**About Tote Board**

Established in 1988, Tote Board is a broad-based grantmaker, strives to identify synergies and needs across multiple sectors, and tailor our grantmaking to create greater impact. Tote Board supports

broad and diverse worthy projects in the sectors of Arts, Community Development, Education, Health, Social Service and Sports.

Tote Board adopts a collaborative approach in working with stakeholders to identify gaps and curate programmes to address social challenges in Singapore. In the Social Service sector, Tote Board works closely with MSF, SG Enable, NCSS and the many social service organisations and non-profit organisations. These wide networks allow us to identify cross-sectorial gaps, and initiate and convene collaborative discussions with stakeholders and partners, to take collective action.

Tote Board's goal is to uplift the community by *Giving Hope* to vulnerable groups and *Improving Lives* of all in Singapore. We want to inspire positive change and contribute towards building an inclusive, resilient and vibrant community, while fostering a caring and compassionate nation.

#### **About Tote Board–Enabling Lives Initiative Fund**

The \$30 Million Tote Board-Enabling Lives Initiative aims to improve the quality of lives and well-being of persons with disabilities and their caregivers. The Initiative, over a period of five years, was launched in October 2014. It is a partnership between Tote Board, SG Enable and NCSS.

The Initiative adopts a fresh approach to bringing together the community of Social Service Organisations (SSorgs), social enterprises and other organisations to work together to co-create and shape solutions that address the challenges faced by persons with disabilities and their caregivers over the course of their lives. The Initiative will provide grants to seeding of new ideas, pilot programmes, and scaling up of evidence-based programmes and cross-sectoral collaborations. It also seeks to share good practices and provides a platform for learning across the social service sector.

Tote Board has appointed SG Enable to administer the grants on disability-related projects in cross-cutting areas such as Data and Technology, Caregiver and Natural Support as well as Transition Management, through grant calls. Tote Board has separately appointed NCSS to carry out public education activities to foster greater public awareness and wider acceptance of persons with disabilities.

## APPENDIX A

### DETAILS ON THE INTEGRATED COMMUNICATIONS CAMPAIGN

An integrated communications campaign across digital, broadcast, outdoor and print media platforms will be launched as part of the **See The True Me** campaign, featuring three ambassadors sharing about their lives, hobbies and interests with the public.

The campaign advertisements highlight that:

- They can participate in social activities. An avid fan of Chelsea Football Club, 17-year old Gareth, who has muscular dystrophy, invites us to catch a game of football with him. He is a student in Sengkang Secondary School.
- They can contribute to the workforce. Syah, who has an intellectual disability, is trained in food safety and works as a kitchen porter at the Shangri-la's Rasa Sentosa Hotel & Spa. He has been with the Hotel for 14 years, and his supervisor describes him as independent, reliable and helpful.
- They can contribute back to society. Mother of three, Charlene is deaf, and a Community Outreach Executive with TOUCH Community Services. She started volunteering at 17, and has been working with volunteers, both hearing and deaf ever since.

Part of the integrated communications campaign are in-train stickers on the Mass Rapid Transport (MRT) trains on the East-West Line, North-South Line and the Circle Line. There will also be advertisements in six major train stations: Ang Mo Kio, Bedok, Bishan, Boon Lay, Buona Vista and Dhoby Ghaut MRT station.

There will be a public activation, **See the True Me. Let's Chat!** at Dhoby Ghaut Xchange on 30 September which invites members of the public to have a conversation with a person with disability. The aim here is to establish common ground and break down barriers through the sharing of common interests and our everyday lives.

A series of videos about the ambassadors, their stories and their involvement in the campaign will also be shared online via [www.seethetrueme.sg](http://www.seethetrueme.sg)

## APPENDIX B

### DETAILS ON THE CALENDAR OF INCLUSIVE EVENTS

“Introduce, Interact and Involve” is a series of up to 20 interactive and experiential activities that are planned and implemented by 11 different social service organisations as platforms for the public to interact with persons with disabilities.

These activities will each have at least two out of three elements:

1. Getting to Know Me: Learn interaction tips and knowledge on disability types and spectrums
2. My Space (Tour): See how persons with disabilities learn to be independent
3. Our Shared Experience: Doing things together and learning from one another

Date	Inclusive Activities	Organisation	Venue	Time
8 Sep	<u>Connecting with Persons with Disabilities</u> Disability awareness talk, tour and a painting or handicrafts session with SPD clients	SPD	SPD Ability Centre	2pm to 5.30pm
9 Sep	<u>Community Chest Heartstrings Walk 2017</u>	NCSS	Marina Bay Sands	6:30am to 11:30am
9 Sep	<u>Cracked Pots, Harmony and Inclusion</u> Disability and muscular dystrophy awareness talk, clay moulding and art activity	Muscular Dystrophy Association of Singapore (MDAS)	MDAS, Junction 8 office tower	10am to 1pm
16 Sep	<u>(I'M)POSSIBLE</u> Disability awareness talk and simulation activities	Iyad Perdaus Child Development	Iyad Perdaus Child Development (Jurong East)	10am to 1pm
28 Sep	<u>Connecting with Persons with Disabilities</u> Disability awareness talk, tour and a painting or handicrafts session with SPD clients	SPD	SPD Ability Centre	2pm to 5.30pm

<b>Date</b>	<b>Inclusive Activities</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Venue</b>	<b>Time</b>
30 Sep	<u>See The True Me. Let's Chat!</u> Invites members of the public to have a conversation with a person with disability	NCSS	Dhoby Xchange, B1 of Dhoby Ghaut MRT	3pm to 5pm
7 Oct	<u>Deaf Awareness &amp; Fun with Singapore Sign Language</u> Deaf awareness talk and basic sign language class	Singapore Association for the Deaf	Singapore Association for the Deaf	2 to 5pm
14 Oct	<u>Deaf Awareness &amp; Fun with Singapore Sign Language</u> Deaf awareness talk and basic sign language class	Singapore Association for the Deaf	Singapore Association for the Deaf	2 to 5pm
14 Oct	<u>Caregiver Respite Programme</u> Sport, dance/Zumba or arts and crafts with AWWA clients	AWWA	AWWA, 9 Lorong Napiri	8.30am to 12.30pm
20 Oct	<u>SUN-DAC Circles Programme in ITE</u> Intellectual disability awareness talk and showcase of community integration programme	SUN-DAC	ITE College West, Blk 3 Level 2	1 to 3pm
21 Oct	<u>Caregiver Respite Programme</u> Sport, dance/Zumba or arts and crafts with AWWA clients	AWWA	AWWA, 9 Lorong Napiri	8.30am to 12.30pm
21 Oct	<u>Sports or Shop!</u> Interactive talk and how to be a sighted guide to someone with visual impairment, followed by dragon-boating activity	Guide Dogs Association of the Blind	Passion Wave @ Marina Bay or Kallang Wave Sports Centre	2:30pm to 6:30pm
21 Oct	<u>Fernvale Gardens School Open House</u> Disability awareness talk, tour of Fernvale Gardens School and engage in learning vocational skills	MINDS	Fernvale Gardens School	10am to 12pm
25 Oct	<u>Me Too! Club</u> Disability awareness talk and Halloween party, which includes dress-up, baking and sing-a-longs with MINDS clients	MINDS	Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) 11 Jalan Ubi KCC Hub Block	10am to 12.30pm

Date	Inclusive Activities	Organisation	Venue	Time
			3 #01-21	
27 Oct	<u>Terrarium Workshop by Idea Employment Development Centre</u> Disability awareness talk, tour of sheltered workshop and terrarium workshop with MINDS clients as trainers	MINDS	Idea Employment Development Centre 29 Rosyth Road Singapore 546190	1.30pm to 4pm
18 Nov	<u>A Day with Us</u> Bake, cook and do a variety of upcycling, retail and logistics work with persons with special needs to gain a better understanding of their abilities as well as the challenges they face.	APSN	APSN Centre for Adults 11 Jalan Ubi Blk 4 #01-31 Kembangan-Chai Chee Community Hub, Singapore 409074	9am to 3pm
27 Nov	<u>All IN &amp; RollIN: Inclusive In-line Skating</u> Sharing by social worker, followed by rollerblading in the park	Rainbow Centre	Margaret Drive School & Yishun Park School	9am to 12pm

More information about the activities and details of how to register can be found on the See The True Me website, [www.seethetrume.sg/involve/](http://www.seethetrume.sg/involve/)



# APPENDIX C

## CAMPAIGN AMBASSADOR PROFILES

### 1. Passionate Volunteer, Advocate and Teacher

**Charlene Wong, 36 years old**

**Disability:** Deaf

As part of her work as a staff member of TOUCH Community Services, Charlene spends her time and endless energy organising various volunteer initiatives to raise awareness and advocate for inclusivity within the Deaf community. Between work and family, Charlene works closely with the Deaf community, running baking and cooking for Deaf seniors to equip them with lifelong learning skills, works with Meals-On-Wheels in order to give back to society, and also runs tuition and enrichment programmes for deaf children. That's quite the impressive résumé if we may say so!

When asked about the most exciting part of her job, Charlene mentions that she enjoys meeting people and provides basic counselling for married couples, and families. However, her real passion lies in making a difference in people's lives organising volunteering activities.

So how did she start on this path?

During her time as a polytechnic student, Charlene needed some assistance in her studies. Through her friend's referral, she was introduced to TOUCH Silent Club for tuition lessons. It was there that she discovered her passion on reaching out to people and began taking on projects as a Chairwoman, despite also taking on a full course load at school. While anyone else in her shoes would have been daunted by the challenge, Charlene embraced it and began volunteering extensively.

Outside of organising volunteer efforts, Charlene also enjoys spending time with her family, with her favourite activity being cooking. Her favourite cuisine is Eurasian – pork stew soup in particular. Her husband who is also Deaf, supports her in her various activities. Of the three children they have, one is Deaf. From going to the park and exercising, to swim lessons, this family embraces life to the fullest.

However, not everything has been a walk in the park. There are still common misconceptions that Charlene believes needs to be corrected. She mentions how sometimes people think that by speaking slowly, people who are deaf would be able to understand them. Other examples are that all Deaf are mute, or are unable to take phone calls. Charlene tends to use this opportunity to introduce the range of Deaf or hard-of-hearing

individuals she knows, and the various assistive devices and “lifehacks” they use in order to get around society’s barriers.

She believes that despite how far we have come in understanding disability, there is still some way to go, and she fully encourages anyone who is keen on breaking barriers to continually engage and interact with persons with disabilities so that we can all move forward as a more inclusive society.

## **2. Sportsman, Avid F-1 Fan, and Aspiring Paralympian**

### **Gareth Ho, 17 years old**

**Disability:** Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

Just like every other 17-year-old, Gareth enjoys watching the EPL, and is an avid enthusiast of the Formula One Grand Prix. However, there is one thing that sets Gareth apart from other 17-year-olds, and that is that Gareth has muscular dystrophy, a condition which has his muscles slowly weakening over time. As such, Gareth uses a wheelchair to get around, but besides that, Gareth is really just another typical 17-year-old.

A student in Sengkang Secondary School, Gareth uses a motorised wheelchair to get around. The school made accommodations for Gareth’s ease of movement, such as placing all of his classes on the first floor, and ensuring that the lifts are always in proper working condition. Gareth’s friends, Daryl and Bradley are usually seen hanging out with him during recess, playing games on the iPad and keeping him in good company.

Making friends was not easy, however, as not many understood his disability. When Gareth was in primary school, there were classmates, and even adults, who when Gareth was out and about in public would ask him why he was in a wheelchair, because he did not look like he needed to be in one.

At times, he has to manage playful classmates who would attempt to hop on the back and take a joy ride on his wheelchair. This is dangerous, and might damage his wheelchair, which will limit his mobility. However, when asked if he ever felt bullied by his classmates, Gareth shared that he did not think they are bullying him, and that they are just being playful.

Having weakened muscles has not slowed this teen down a single bit. Gareth enjoys playing Power Soccer every week at the Muscular Dystrophy Association (Singapore), and has been playing for a year as a striker. He dreams of being a national Boccia player in the future, and hopes to represent Singapore as a future Paralympian.

## **3. Stellar Employee, Reliable Team Player, and Jolly Individual**

### **Muhammad Syah Rezal, 33 years old**

**Disability:** Intellectual Disability

Syah gives his best at everything he does, including the many roles he has had at Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa, Singapore, never once letting his intellectual disability deter him from doing so. He has been an asset to the resort since 2003, when he first started out as a steward, before taking on the role as a gardener and now, a kitchen porter.

As an alumnus of Delta Senior School, a post-secondary school which provides vocational training for its students, Syah has attended onsite training in the resort in preparation for employment. The management at Shangri-La's Rasa Sentosa Resort & Spa also encourages staff to attend learning sessions at Delta Senior School, which enables them to understand more about intellectual disability and how to create a more inclusive and conducive working environment for their colleagues.

Jimmy, Syah's supervisor, has benefited from the training sessions, enabling him to understand and work better with Syah. When talking about Syah, Jimmy is quick to mention how independent and reliable he is, whose cheerful personality brings laughter to the team.

Syah is constantly learning and improving his knowledge and skills, and is trained and certified in food safety for his job as a kitchen porter. With his positive attitude and strong work ethic, the management has further career development plans for him and believes he will excel in his future responsibilities.