



Loving Hearts, Beautiful Minds



MEDIA RELEASE

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Honouring the Talents and Skills of Persons with Mental Health Issues on World Mental Health Day 2013

1. World Mental Health Day (WMHD) is commemorated on 10 October every year to raise awareness of mental health issues. This year, the Institute of Mental Health (IMH) and the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) are pleased to co-organise an event to celebrate and recognise the many talents and skills of persons recovering from mental health conditions.
2. About 500 participants comprising community agencies, their clients and caregivers are expected to attend this year's event held at the LASALLE College of the Arts on 12 October 2013. Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Ibrahim, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Health and Ministry of Transport will be the Guest of Honour.
3. "Persons with mental health issues often struggle to find social support, acceptance, employment and even accommodation on their road to recovery. Contrary to the common misconception that they require institutionalised care and are dependent on others to look after their needs, persons recovering from mental illnesses are capable of living independent, purposeful lives. Given adequate support and opportunities, they too can groom their talents and skills and fulfil their dreams and aspirations, just like anyone else," said A/Prof Daniel Fung, Chairman, Medical Board, IMH and President, SAMH.
4. Leo*, age 28 years old, is a good example. His family had thought he was high on drugs when he went through manic episodes and depressive mood swings. Unable to understand what was happening to him, it was the last straw for his family when he fought with his father. They finally called the police and Leo was brought to IMH where he was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Just 23 years old, his world came apart as his family refused to accept him and his condition. After about a year of treatment, his condition was brought under control and he was ready to be

discharged. Left with no place to turn to, Leo was referred to the Bukit Gombak Group Homes (BGGH), a residential rehabilitation facility managed by SAMH.

5. BGGH provided Leo with temporary accommodation after his discharge from the hospital. After months of counselling and support from the staff at BGGH, Leo finally started work as a security officer. He then met Clarissa*, another resident at BGGH who was recovering from depression. That was to be the turning point in his life.
6. As both Leo and Clarissa shared many things in common, their newfound friendship soon turned into romance and they were married in 2011. With the help of the BGGH staff, they moved into a rented flat and successfully applied for a Build-To-Order (BTO) flat. "As my wife and I have experienced being homeless, we can truly appreciate the stability of having a place to call our own," Leo shared.
7. Success stories such as Leo and Clarissa's emphasise the importance of building a network of support and care within the community. With adequate rehabilitation and social support, persons recovering from mental illness can integrate back to the community and live a normal life.
8. This year's WMHD event thus celebrates the recovery and achievements of persons recovering from mental illness. Themed "Towards Recovery: A Showcase of Talents", the creativity, courage and determination of these persons are demonstrated through the display of photographs, paintings, pottery, books and handicrafts produced by these talented people. Keynote speaker A/Prof Marcus Chiu, Department of Social Work, National University of Singapore, will share his expertise on "*Suicide Prevention in the Community*". A special workshop for caregivers "*How Can I Get Through to You? - Effective Communication Workshop for Caregivers*" by Ms Ong Choon Ming, Clinical Director, Rehabilitation/Residential, SAMH, will also be conducted.
9. "The objective of this event is to allow the public to have a better understanding of mental health and wellness. Most importantly, we want to dispel misconceptions about people with mental health issues and rally the understanding of the public to accord them with respect, acceptance and care in the community," said Ms Rajeswari K, Executive Director, SAMH.

* Pseudonyms used to protect clients' privacy and confidentiality.

10. This event is supported by the Health Promotion Board, with participation from the following partners:

- Bizlink Centre
- Caregivers' Alliance Limited
- Club Heal
- LASALLE College of the Arts
- LeJia Society
- Singapore Anglican Community Services
- Silver Ribbon, Singapore
- The Plant Story
- Office of the Public Guardian

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About the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), Singapore

The Institute of Mental Health (IMH) is the only tertiary psychiatric care institution in Singapore. Located on the sprawling 25-hectare campus of Buangkok Green Medical Park in the north-eastern part of Singapore, IMH offers a multidisciplinary and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and counseling services. The 2010-bedded hospital aims to meet the needs of three groups of patients – children and adolescents (age below 19 years), adults and the elderly. Besides providing clinical services, IMH also leads in mental health research and training the next generation of mental health professionals in Singapore.

For more information, please visit: www.imh.com.sg

About the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH)

Established in 1968, the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) is a voluntary welfare organisation with Institute of Public Character (IPC) status. SAMH provides support and after care for individuals and families with psychiatric, psychosocial and other social or relationship problems in community-based mental health programmes and services. SAMH's vision is to promote mental wellness for all; its mission is to help improve the lives of, and promote acceptance and respect for, persons with mental illness and improve the mental resilience of our community. SAMH won the Singapore Charity Council's inaugural Charity Governance Award 2012 for good governance and accountability.

For more information, please visit: www.samhealth.org.sg

About Bukit Gombak Group Homes (BGGH)

Established in August 1995, BGGH provides persons with stabilised psychiatric conditions the opportunity to experience community integration in the heartlands. As the majority of the Singapore population resides in public housing estates, the environment at BGGH represents an important normalisation process for BGGH residents. Through the provision of vocational and psychosocial rehabilitation services, residents are supported in their recovery and to achieve their personal goals.

For more information, please visit: <http://www.samhealth.org.sg/bukit-gombak-group-homes/>

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