

MEDIA RELEASE

EMPOWERMENT THROUGH OCCUPATION: SECRET RECIPE LAUNCHES OUTLET ON IMH'S 4TH OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY DAY

Today marks the Institute of Mental Health's (IMH's) 4th Occupational Therapy (OT) Day, and more exciting challenges that lie ahead for IMH and Secret Recipe. The Secret Recipe outlet launch today is graced by IMH's Guest-of-Honour, Mr Gerard Ee the Chairman of The National Kidney Foundation and IMH's CEO, Mr Leong Yew Meng.

This two year alliance between IMH and Secret Recipe was built in 2007 and has today culminated with the launch of Secret Recipe's outlet on the grounds of IMH's garden food-court. IMH and Secret Recipe's working programmes were first crafted to create job opportunities for IMH's patients two years ago and have since grown to involve front-line vocational training for patients.

Occupational Therapy Day is celebrated nationwide in Singapore. At IMH, OT Day is celebrated at the beginning of each year at IMH on a scale that speaks volumes of the work and accomplishments of IMH's OTs. There are various OTs programmes that we have at IMH such as garden therapy, yoga, clay making, basket weaving and painting. Today's highlight will be vocational training at Secret Recipe.

The work programmes at Secret Recipe have evolved during the last two years to include skills which encourage the development and ingenuity of social entrepreneurship. IMH patients are selected based on their vocational competency and interests. These individuals are then placed at Secret Recipe outlets to undergo food and beverage (F & B) training. Suitable patients will have gainful employment as service crew members or kitchen assistants with Secret Recipe upon completion of the programme.

Last year, 2008 was a year of intrinsic realisation for IMH – the need for more specialised F & B skills and the development of expertise required to run an outlet. Ms Sim Sin Sin, Managing Director of Secret Recipe herself an active social entrepreneur, with her colleagues, Mr Lee Han Fong, Director and Ms Josephine Tan, Business Development Manager all saw potential in this unique partnership and agreed to work collaboratively with IMH to set-up an outlet at IMH's main lobby. This will allow the patients to undergo rehabilitation and acquire the skills as front-line staff in F & B. This gesture is remarkable and highlights the spirit of social entrepreneurship among Secret Recipe's senior management.

This step is vital for patients to build communicative skills, thinking and relating to colleagues and customers and at the same time learn operational skills needed to keep the outlet running.

With a work programme that lasts approximately 3 months, the patients' work progress is carefully charted and any difficulties the patients may have are noted by the supervisors at Secret Recipe and communicated to the OTs. Thus, on-the-job demands can be modified to fit the individuals' progress and learning capacity. Patients are taught coping strategies to remember and problem solve so that the work will be less daunting for them. They also undergo supportive therapy and individual counselling to learn methods of managing stress and ways of inculcating good work habits.

IMH and Secret Recipe's relationship is one of a collaborative social enterprise, seeking to empower a person through occupation. Through having a job, one recognises the significance of having responsibility. Self-esteem and one's self identity both come from the acknowledgement of having the responsibility of being able to hold a job, and function as a working member of society. In essence, this rehab programme is essential to recreate the lives of our patients and in days to come, to be a part of society again, fully functioning or with little assistance from family members.

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