

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

# **REHABILITATED PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS TO REPRESENT SINGAPORE AT INTERNATIONAL ABILYMPICS**

- *Event aims to strengthen Singapore's aspirations to be a city of possibilities*
- *It hopes to creates awareness that Disabled is not Unable*

**Singapore Nov 07** - For the first time, individuals with psychiatric conditions who have been rehabilitated will be representing Singapore at the 7<sup>th</sup> International Abilympics, to be held in Shizuoka, Japan from Nov 13-18<sup>th</sup> 07. The Institute of Mental Health's (IMH) recovering patients will make up the largest number of candidates sent for this event. With the crown prince of Japan as the Guest of Honor, the IMH delegates hope to show that having a mental condition is not an obstacle to leading productive lives and carrying out professional work requiring IT skills. On a national level, Singapore's participation in the event aims to strengthen its aspirations to be a city of possibilities through showcasing the vocational capability of the disabled who have a part to play in our inclusive society.

The International Abilympics is a 4-yearly international skills competition that provides an international platform for people with disabilities to pit their skills against one another across more than 20 countries including Japan, USA and Austria. These vocational skills include areas like website design, CAD architecture, data processing, pottery and photography.

“We hope to debunk the myth that those with mental conditions are not able to live productive life. We want to defy stereotypes so that potential employers are aware of vocational abilities of this segment of the workforce,” said Mr Leong Yew Meng, CEO, IMH.

For IMH, occupational therapy programmes are based on the strong belief that empowering the patient with a job means not only improving their financial condition but more importantly retaining their dignity, self-esteem, independence & personal growth while maximizing their potential. In addition, Dr Eu Pui Wai, Director of Rehabilitation Psychiatry said, “Reintegrating patients back to society is a crucial aim of our programme. We restore patients’ ability to function. Work is a kind of therapy that helps to improve the overall physical and mental health and also reduces the occurrences of relapse of the illness.”

### **Rehabilitation of Those with Mental Disorders**

The occupational therapists and medical social workers work closely to assist recovering patients in job placement. 70% of 60 000 persons with mental illness in Singapore are unemployed. Every year, IMH sees at least 300 patients who wish to work.

At least 80% of IMH patients who undergo Inpatient Therapy Programme showed improvement in general functioning as measured by MEDYN (validated international community living skills assessment tool). Approximately 70% of patients undergoing Outpatient Vocational Training show an improvement in Work Behaviour Inventory (WBI) scores. Each year 199 are successfully placed in jobs

For more information on IMH’s rehabilitated patients who are representing Singapore, please see Annex A.

### **Community Partnership in Sustainable Ways**

As part of Hewlett-Packard's (HP) community investment initiatives, the company has supported IMH's training for the Abilympics through the donation of 25 desktop PCs and five printers. There are also plans for HP's microenterprise curriculum to be incorporated into IMH's rehabilitation programme. "HP is committed to making technology accessible to all people including the underserved. Through this contribution and equipping the patients with micro-enterprise skills, we hope to make a difference and contribute to the psychiatric rehabilitation of IMH's patients," said Ms Tan Yen Yen, Managing Director, HP Singapore. The microenterprise skills include finance, management, marketing and operations skills, technology management as well as communications.

### **About 7<sup>th</sup> International Abilympics**

For more information on 7<sup>th</sup> International Abilympics please go to - <http://www.skillsfestival2007.or.jp/abilympics/en/>

### **About IMH**

The Institute of Mental Health/Woodbridge Hospital (IMH/WH) aspires to be the leading mental health centre in Asia. It is the first mental health institution in Asia to receive Joint Commission International (JCI) Accreditation in 2005. The JCI award represents a worldwide consensus on quality patient care and reflects the state-of-the-art healthcare practices.

Housing the largest acute tertiary psychiatric hospital in Singapore, IMH/WH is equipped with modern facilities-2000 beds in 51 wards for inpatients and three Specialist Outpatient Clinics for outpatients.

IMH/WH offers a multi-faceted and comprehensive range of psychiatric, rehabilitative and counselling services designed to meet the needs of three groups of people, namely, (i) children & adolescents, (ii) adults and (iii) the elderly. Its multi-disciplinary approach to patient care is supported by the departments of Nursing, Clinical Psychology, Occupational Therapy, and Medical Social Work.

Besides providing psychiatric services, IMH/WH also undertakes to coordinate and oversee research and training of clinicians in psychiatry.

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## PROFILES OF PARTICIPANTS

### **1. Profile of William\* – Competitor for Architecture Category**

William graduated from National University of Singapore, with a degree in civil engineering. He is one of the Abilympics candidates who registered for the CAD –Architecture category. He has the knowledge to use AutoCad.

William had the first onset of his mental illness about two years ago. He experienced psychotic symptoms such as being suspicious of the environment. He gets agitated easily, suffers from insomnia, and persecutorial thoughts. His father brought him to the polyclinic for treatment and he was subsequently referred to IMH. He was diagnosed to have Paranoia Schizophrenia. He has been taking his medication regularly and his symptoms are now well controlled.

William started to work in his present job as a Structural Drafter about seven months ago. He found this job from the newspaper and went for the interview on his own. He frequently needs to use AutoCad in his work and this will serve as training for him to perfect his skill. William did not reveal his mental illness to his colleagues but his boss is understanding and he feels that he has a supportive working environment.

Personally, William hopes that by taking part in this competition, it can prove the competency of his skills. He hopes to send out this message to the public: People with mental illnesses do have talents and skills, despite of their mental conditions.

### **2. Profile of James\* – Competitor for Advance Data Processing Category**

James has a degree in Computer Science and is employed as a staff in Hougang Care Centre. He created the database for them. He was diagnosed four years ago with schizophrenia.

Employed at Hougang Care Centre, he created a database of between 100 and 200 clients' names which helps HCC Finance dept to keep track of the

clients' data and prepare invoices. These data include personal details and conditions.

The data is built using ACCESS which he taught himself in the 80s. His previous employer bought the system and he taught himself, often referring to books and the Internet. His job then required him to churn out reports and stats for sales, etc.

Besides ACCESS, he also knows Microsoft office, HTML, visual basic as well as C programming. The latter two are programming languages.

At the Abilympics, James will be given 3 hours to build a system and key in the database test it. To test the system, he has to create a scenario. He intends to create an inventory list for a fictitious sports shop selling shoes and rackets. He has to create an imaginative inventory for the competition.

James has been in HCC for about 4 years now and he likes to play tennis with his friends during his free time.

### **3. Profile of K.T.\* – Competitor for Photography Category**

KT first developed his interest in photography few years ago when he visited some photo exhibitions. As the saying goes, "A picture speaks a thousand words", KT was fascinated that he can capture wonderful moments through a snapshot. His skills are self-taught and he often refers to books on photography. He borrowed a camera from friends and through trial and error, learnt more about operating a camera. He has some photographer friends from whom he picked up invaluable tips and exchanged views about photo taking.

KT is now working as a free-lance video editor with a video photography and editing company. He has been working there for about two years and is paid on per piece assignment basis. His friends recommended the present job to him.

In 2000, Kelvin started to develop heightened anxiety during his pre-BMT time and was referred to Alexandra Hospital for psychiatric treatment. He also diagnosed to have Manic Depression then. Subsequently, KT was discharged from his National Service due to his mental illness. It was not until about two years before that he started to have auditory hallucination and voluntarily came to IMH for treatment accompanied by his brother. He was given the final diagnosis of SchizoAffective Disorder. With medications, his symptoms have since subsided.

KT studied till Secondary 3 and dropped out from school. He is currently retaking his "O" level and hopes that he can enroll into NAFA or LaSalle in future to gain more knowledge in computer graphics, designs or video editing.

KT is a modest young man who works hard to improve his photography skill. He is both excited and nervous to be a participant because he has never joined a contest before. He hopes that this event can help boost his confidence level so that he will be more ready to face future challenges in his road to recovery.

Being short listed for the Abilympics has opened many doors for KT. For a start, he has been engaged to be the official photographer for the Medical Social Workers' Day in January 2008. There are even interests from a design company to engage him as a photographer upon his return from Japan.

*\* All names changed to protect clients' identity*