

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Bridging the Learning Gap for People with Special Needs *Launch of day activity centre for adults with intellectual disabilities in the west***

**SINGAPORE, 3 July 2018** – TOUCH Centre for Independent Living (TCIL) today officially opened its second day activity centre to provide care and skills training for adults above 18 with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities (ID). The launch was witnessed by Minister of State for the Ministry of Social and Family Development, Mr Sam Tan, as well as corporate and community partners.

TCIL (Bukit Merah) was set up in response to a demand for day activity centres for persons with special needs in the western part of Singapore. TCIL (Bukit Merah) also serves deaf adults with ID, leveraging on TOUCH Silent Club's 25-year experience in serving the deaf community. The centre currently serves 20 clients, three of whom are deaf with ID. The centre has maximum capacity to serve 42 adults.

One of the centre's clients is 26-year-old Kwan Shi En. She was born with Treacher Collins syndrome and Nager syndrome. Her birth condition resulted in multiple defects in her body - hearing loss in both ears, a 'soft jaw' that causes difficulty biting, restricted airway and deformity in her hands. Despite undergoing two jaw operations, Shi En is still dependent on a feeding tube. She is also on a tracheotomy tube that assists her in breathing.

Despite her condition, Shi En is very sociable and loves to communicate with people. She gestures and uses simple sign language to communicate. Shi En also loves to write even though her hands cannot be straightened. When she graduated from her special education school in 2011, 19-year-old Shi En had no place to go. Even though TCIL's first day activity centre at Ubi wanted to take her in, it was challenging with her hearing condition; she also needed her father, her full-time caregiver, to help her tube-feed as she cannot do it by herself. As she lived in the west, Ubi was also too far for them. The Kwan family could not find any place that could provide the care Shi En needed for seven years until TCIL (Bukit Merah) took her in this year. During those seven years, Shi En and her father explored different parts of Singapore such as Clementi and Toa Payoh, and visited gadget shops and book stores, which appealed to Shi En and her hobbies of playing mobile games and reading.

Said Shi En's 70-year old father, Mr Kwan Boon, "For many years, it was difficult finding a place to care for her. We are very glad that Shi En is now learning new skills and making new friends. Shi En is very happy here."

At TCIL (Bukit Merah), clients are taught functional skills such as taking public transport, and community skills such as interacting with others, to prepare them to live independently. The trainees are also engaged in different enrichment activities to prevent regression of their mental state or their cognitive abilities. Clients who are higher functioning and assessed to be suitable for employment will also be equipped with pre-employment skills and provided with job placement.

Mr James Tan, Chief Executive Officer of TOUCH Community Services, said, "Over the last 25 years, we have been privileged to serve persons with special needs, in particular adults with intellectual disabilities and the deaf. With this second day activity centre, we have increased our day activity centre capacity by 70%. TOUCH believes that despite their physical limitations, persons with special needs can still fulfil their potential and live independently in the community."

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**ABOUT TOUCH CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

TOUCH Community Services (TOUCH) has been serving persons with special needs, primarily adults with intellectual disabilities and the deaf since 1990, with the setting up of TOUCH Training Centre for the Disabled and TOUCH Silent Club in 1993. TOUCH Centre for Independent Living (TCIL) is a day activity centre which offers competence-based training programmes for adults with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities aiming to provide them with functional knowledge and skills that will equip them to live independently in the community. The client-focused training programmes teach daily living (personal and social), as well as pre-employment skills to the trainees using a Mediated Learning Experience approach. To improve their quality of life, we conduct enrichment programmes such as visual arts, sports and recreational activities. Besides providing training in independent skills, TCIL also runs a TOUCH SpecialCrafts programme which seeks to develop and showcase their talents and skills in the visual arts and offer employment for those who are gifted in this area.