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News Release

First wheelchair race modeled after TV reality show helps students learn challenges faced by the disabled

Brothers Andy and Eugene Peh are setting aside their engineering books on 3 September and taking their learning to the streets of Singapore. They are aiming to understand how wheelchair users get around and caregivers help, and will be experiencing firsthand the user-friendliness of physical environments for physically disabled people here.

They are one of close to 150 tertiary students involved in The Amazing Wheelchair Race held on 3 September. The Amazing Wheelchair Race is jointly organised by the Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD), and students from Nanyang Technological University’s (NTU) School of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering (MAE).

The Amazing Wheelchair Race sees 38 pairs of non-disabled students play the roles of wheelchair-user and caregiver, as they manoeuvre around the island in a race against time.

During the race, participants have to complete different tasks at five pit-stops. These tasks are everyday activities such as grocery shopping and borrowing books from a public library. In addition to these tasks, a scavenger hunt, a location-identification game and an assistive technology challenge are thrown in to spice up the race. NTU student volunteers are attached to each pair to ensure safety and fair play.

The Amazing Wheelchair Race is organised to enable participants to gain a better understanding of the challenges disabled people face and have to overcome.

Says Miss Lim Hui Zhen, project leader and third-year NTU student, “This project is a fun yet meaningful way to raise the awareness of the challenges faced by wheelchair-users as they go about their daily lives. We hope this project will encourage greater understanding of and integration with people with physical disabilities as they, like us, are members of our society.”
To 24-year-old Jan Lee, diagnosed with transverse myelitis (inflammation of the spinal cord), the event helps to bridge understanding between non-disabled people for people with physical disabilities. “Many people do not realise the difficulties that disabled people face the moment they step out of their houses. This event is meaningful in that they get to literally step into the shoes of disabled people and live a bit of their lives. In that way they get to understand us and know the challenges we face everyday,” said Mr Lee, an Accountancy student from NTU’s Nanyang Business School and an Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation-SPD Scholar.

To ensure a successful and smooth-running event, the organisers worked closely with various authorities and organisations like CapitaLand, SBS Transit Ltd, SMRT Corporation Ltd, National Library Board of Singapore and Giant Hypermarket.

“SBS Transit is a strong proponent of providing safe and affordable transport for all commuters - able or disabled. By using wheelchairs to get around our rail network, participants of the race will be able to better appreciate how the disabled get around and hopefully, be more accommodating of their needs,” said Ms Tammy Tan, SBS Transit Ltd’s Director, Corporate Communications.

About Society for the Physically Disabled
Society for the Physically Disabled (SPD) works in partnership with people with physical disabilities. Through programmes and services that encompass rehabilitation, day care, vocational and IT training, education, employment, assistive technology and social service support, SPD seeks to develop the potential of people with physical disabilities to the fullest, so that they can be self-reliant and independent, with the aim of making them a part of all, not apart from all.

For more information, please visit www.spd.org.sg

About Nanyang Technological University
Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is a research-intensive university with globally acknowledged strengths in science and engineering. The university has a beautiful garden campus and a distinguished lineage with roots that go back to 1955.

NTU’s 12 schools span diverse disciplines – from engineering and the sciences to art, design and media. The university has a strong engineering college focused on innovation, a business school with one of the top 100 MBA programmes in the world, an internationally-acclaimed National Institute of Education, one of the best communication and information schools in Asia, and a biological sciences school at the forefront of Singapore’s life sciences initiative. The Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies is a world authority on terrorism issues.

Ranked among the top 50 universities in the world, NTU has in place multi-country programmes and initiatives with established institutions worldwide. Some examples of key partners include MIT, Stanford University, Cornell University,
Caltech, University of Washington, Carnegie Mellon University; world-class universities in Asia such as Beijing University, Shanghai Jiaotong University, Waseda, IIT of India; and top European universities like Cambridge University, Imperial College, Ecole Polytechnique Federale de Lausanne, University of St. Gallen, University of Technology of Compiegne and the University of Technology of Troyes.

For more information, visit www.ntu.edu.sg

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