Singapore, 3 July 2004

NTU students ignite spirit of volunteerism among Singaporeans

Students from the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) Welfare Services Club (WSC) have come up with novel ways to help Singaporeans better empathize with the disabled and raise funds for the Handicaps Welfare Association (HWA) and the Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN).

Over 90 NTU WSC students have spent over eight months organising Project Ignite!, a carnival cum exhibition to foster greater empathy for the disabled. This event, which also features a concert held over the two days, will be held on 3 and 4 July 2004 at the HDB Hub in Toa Payoh.

A highlight of Project Ignite! is the “House of Vivencia”, with Vivencia being Spanish for Experience. This is a 3.3m by 3.3m room, constructed by the NTU students themselves, in which members of the public may try maneuvering either in a wheelchair or blindfolded while they try to complete a set of “chores”.

The idea for such an activity struck NTU WSC leaders when they visited HWA’s day rehabilitation centre where the physically disabled learn to cope with daily activities.

In fact, this theme of appreciating how the disabled among us manage with daily activities will run throughout the carnival activities such as its games and the concert, which will feature wheelchair dancing and a special performance by more than 180 APSN students. Members of the public can learn more about the disabled through the exhibition and the display of handicrafts by the beneficiaries, for whom funds will also be raised through the event.

Says Mr Peter Tan, second-year student of NTU’s Nanyang Business School (Accountancy) and Chairperson of Project Ignite!, “We hope that Project Ignite! will encourage understanding and compassion in the public when they experience firsthand what it is like to be disabled and realize how our beliefs and prejudices towards the disabled are sometimes quite misplaced.”
Mr Kelvin Lim, Executive Officer at HWA, is much heartened by the efforts put in by the NTU WSC Project Ignite! committee. Says Mr Lim, "NTU WSC has been very supportive of HWA activities and we are thankful for the support they have rendered over the past two years through Project Ignite!. I have found these youths to be sincere, enthusiastic and most passionate in raising awareness of our association and even funds for our needs."

Even now, plans for Project Ignite! 2005 are already underway. Says Mr Tan, "We hope to focus on integrating the handicapped and non-handicapped next year, perhaps by organizing tours through which volunteers and members of the public can befriend handicapped individuals."

**About Nanyang Technological University**

The Nanyang Technological University (NTU) is a top-tier university, ranked among the best science and technological universities in Asia. It has a business school that is consistently ranked among the top ten in Asia.

Established in 1991, the university has since been positioning itself to be a global university of excellence and is committed to its mission in *Educating Leaders and Advancing Knowledge for Singapore and Beyond*. NTU has an undergraduate and graduate enrolment of about 25,000 and an international faculty of over 1,500. It offers a broad-based curriculum, which focuses on the development of global views, entrepreneurship and adaptability, through the following schools:

1. College of Engineering, which consists of five schools:
   - Civil and Environmental Engineering
   - Computer Engineering
   - Electrical and Electronic Engineering
   - Materials Engineering
   - Mechanical and Production Engineering
2. Nanyang Business School
3. School of Biological Sciences
4. School of Communication and Information
5. School of Humanities and Social Sciences
6. School of Art, Design and Media *(to be established by 2005)*
7. School of Physical Sciences *(to be established by 2005)*

For more information, visit [http://www.ntu.edu.sg](http://www.ntu.edu.sg).

**About the Handicaps Welfare Association**

HWA is committed to enhancing the quality of life of people with physical disabilities and integrating them into mainstream society.
Founded in 1969 by a group of 23 persons to promote self-help and provide mutual support among the disabled in Singapore, HWA is non-government funded, run by people with disabilities, for people with disabilities.

HWA provides a range of programmes and services for its members and the community from welfare assistance to education classes, a door-to-door dedicated transport service, financial assistance and food rations to the needy, driving lessons for the disabled and a befriender service. It also runs a Rehabilitation cum Independent Living Centre and loans out mobility aids free-of-charge.

Over the last 31 years, HWA has progressed beyond the traditional areas of social and recreational activities. It has expanded and developed its range of services and taken on various innovative projects to meet the increasing and changing needs of its members.

**About the Association for Persons with Special Needs**

Formed in 1976, APSN (formerly the Association for Educationally Subnormal Children) is a voluntary welfare organization catering to persons with mild mental retardation. It is supported by the National Council of Social Service (Community Chest), the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community Development and Sports.

The Association aims to provide education, training and support to persons with mild mental retardation to enable them to lead full and independent lives.

The Association runs five special schools for children from the age of 6 to 18. Three of these are primary schools, namely Chao Yang School, Jervois School and Katong School. They provide programmes for children from ages 6 to 12. Tanglin School caters to children between the ages of 13 and 15 years. At the age of 16, they are transferred to APSN Delta Senior School where they remain until 18 years. They are then placed in open employment or transferred to the APSN Centre For Adults.

At APSN, programmes and services are constantly evaluated. New or improved programmes are introduced whenever necessary in order to better prepare the children and adults to realise their fullest potential.