

## **For immediate release**

### PRESS RELEASE

#### **CPAS Launches 'Brave Young Hearts'**

In conjunction with World Mental Health Day, celebrated worldwide on 10 October this year, Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore (CPAS) will be launching a book, "Brave Young Hearts", a collection of stories by five youth from CPAS School. The book launch is part of a series of events organised as part of World Mental Health Day celebrations in CPAS.

#### **About 'Brave Young Hearts'**

'Brave Young Hearts' is a collective document that was developed through a series of sessions using Narrative Therapy. Through these sessions, the students shared their social-emotional struggles with a psychologist in CPAS who then guide them with coping skills to build their resilience. The book highlights the often forgotten side of youth with cerebral palsy and multiple disabilities in CPAS - their mental well-being. Through the collection of these stories, these youths shared their thoughts and feelings that often do not make it into daily conversations. They provided insights into how they express gratitude, which might be different for a young adult with added needs.

Through the collection of the book, Ms Chng Jia Hui, associate psychologist and editor of the book, said, "This book is a safe platform for students to share their feelings and thoughts. Through this process, I hope that we begin to see these youths as a person first, then their different abilities. They may express or learn differently, but they are very much aware of the support they receive from people around their lives. I hope that this book also acts as a tool for these youth to advocate for their own needs, and empower others with their stories of resilience and gratitude. By allowing them to share, it allows us to understand how these youths can meaningfully contribute and helps us to learn that inclusion is also accepting their form of expression."

#### **Young People and Mental Health in A Changing World**

This year's World Mental Health Day focuses on investing in programmes to raise awareness among adolescents and young adults of ways to look after their mental health. According to the World Health Organization, half of all mental illness begins by the age of 14, but most cases go undetected or untreated. As such, investing in programmes for young adults need to be extended to their parents, teachers and peers so that they can know how to support their children, students and friends.

#### **World Mental Health Day in CPAS**

Led by the Psychology Department in CPAS, the celebration of World Mental Health Day in CPAS only began in 2014. The team saw a specific set of challenges that need to be overcome by children and adults with cerebral palsy and their caregivers. Head of Department for Psychology, Mr Parandaman.T said, "In children and adolescents with CP, there is a tendency for caregivers to overlook the importance of mental health, there may be an assumption that any form of symptoms being exhibited by their children is related to CP. Research indicates the causal link to mental health concerns is not only related to disability but is linked to several variables such as levels of stress management, coping skills and fatigue".

CPAS Executive Director, Ms Latha Kutty highlights the importance of caregivers, "Parents and caregivers are one of CPAS primary stakeholders. We understand the huge responsibility and the selflessness required in becoming the primary caregiver. Hence, we try to provide the necessary support through the Parent Support Group, Parents Connection, Hand-in-Hand Respite Care Day, workshops, as well as World Mental Health Day. Through these efforts, we hope to empower caregivers and show that being selfless also includes looking after themselves."

The celebration will also include talks touching on topics such as self-care and strategies that can be adapted to develop mental health in young adults with added needs.

#### **Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore**

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### **About Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore (CPAS)**

The Cerebral Palsy Alliance Singapore (CPAS) was established in 1957 to provide early intervention and special education for children and youths and rehabilitation services, day activity centre programmes, vocational training and gainful employment for adults with cerebral palsy in Singapore. At present, we look after more than 700 clients ranging in age from a few months to 55 years old.

### **About Cerebral Palsy**

Cerebral (brain) palsy (lack of muscle control) is an inclusive term used to describe a group of non-progressive disorders occurring in young children in which damage to the brain causes impairment of motor function. The degree of disability ranges from extreme tightness or looseness of the muscles of the body, improper head, shoulder or hip control to slight speech impairment. Cerebral palsy is not curable and is non-progressive. The condition can be caused before or during birth or some illness or injury to the children early in life.

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