



## **FIRST MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS SINGAPORE LEARNING SERIES 2018 AIMS TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING, BUILD A SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITY**

*Five regional events organised by 33 partners from the mental health and social sectors, community organisations and corporations to mark World Mental Health Day in October*

Ms Linda Chua, 41, was diagnosed with bipolar disorder in 2013. She knew she had to seek help after noticing a drastic change in her behaviour and experiencing extreme mood swings when undergoing a rough patch in life. Linda was able to recognise the signs and symptoms for what they were, having attended a course on mental health in 2008. With treatment and therapy, Linda's condition improved and is better managed. She is on regular follow-up with her doctor and also attends counselling sessions at a community mental health organisation. The support from Linda's mother and friends has helped her tremendously. "My family and friends were understanding. Their acceptance motivated me in my recovery and to continue realising my full potential," she shared.

2. Linda's experience illustrates the importance of a supportive community for persons with mental health conditions and their families. According to a 2017 National Council of Social Service (NCSS) study on attitudes towards people with mental health conditions in Singapore, eight in 10 respondents agreed that being part of a community is the best therapy for people with such conditions. However seven in 10 respondents acknowledged that people with such conditions faced discrimination. The findings suggest that continuing outreach to foster better understanding on this topic is important to build a more supportive community.

### ***“Be Understanding • Be Supportive”***

3. With this in mind, the Mental Health Awareness Singapore Learning Series 2018 takes on “Be Understanding • Be Supportive” as its theme. It is organised by 33 community partners, led by the Agency for Integrated Care (AIC), Institute of Mental Health, NCSS and MINDSET Care Limited.

4. This is the first time the mental health community partners are co-organising a series of outreach events in five different regions in Singapore - central, south, north, east and west. The events run from 14 to 31 October 2018 and focus on mental health related topics relevant to different groups such as the youth, working adults, families and seniors.

5. Through fun and experiential activities, participants will pick up coping skills for stress management, develop a deeper awareness of the importance of self-care and building resilience. The Learning Series hopes to encourage the public to understand more about common mental health issues, correct misconceptions and increase empathy for those with mental health conditions and their families. This is important to shape a caring and inclusive community where persons with mental health challenges can feel safe to step forward to seek early treatment.

6. The launch of the “MindStories” Exhibition at Ang Mo Kio Central Stage today kicked off the Mental Health Awareness Singapore Learning Series 2018. The exhibition by AMKFSC Community Services and partners features the personal experiences and anecdotes from 18 inspiring individuals. They include persons in recovery, caregivers, advocates and mental health professionals. The launch was graced by Dr Koh Poh Koon, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, Member of Parliament for Ang Mo Kio Group Representative Constituency (GRC) and Grassroots Adviser for Ang Mo Kio GRC Grassroots Organisations.

7. Following the “MindStories” Exhibition, the next four regional events are:
- *“How are you?” Roadshows* focusing on seniors and touching on depression (South regional event: 15, 17 and 19 October).
  - *Family Mental Wellness Carnival* touching on building up strong families physically and mentally (North regional event: 20 October).
  - *“Healthy Mind, Better Life” Workshop and Seminar* that will equip working adults with strategies to better handle life’s stresses (East regional event: 25 October).
  - *“Stay Woke” Youth Fest* promoting mental resilience among youths (West regional event: 31 October).

8. Dr Tan Weng Mooi, Chief of AIC’s Community Mental Health Division, is encouraged by the strong support received from various partners this year. She said, “The number of partners on board this year has more than doubled since 2016. It reflects a growing ground interest in this topic as well as support for persons living with mental health conditions. Our partners are also stepping forward to lead five regional events to commemorate this year’s World Mental Health Day. With their support, outreach and care for persons with mental health needs in the community can be strengthened. All of us can do more to build a supportive and inclusive community in which they can live well, work and pursue their interests. AIC will continue to work with our partners to build up services and resources to support them.”

9. As for Linda, her recovery has enabled her to work currently as a part-time tutor and freelance accountant. She is grateful for the support she had received and is paying it forward by volunteering at AMKFSC Community Services. Linda is passionate about using her personal experience to motivate and help others in their recovery journey. Her story is one of the 18 featured in the “MindStories” Exhibition.

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## **Media Contact and Enquiries**

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## **About Mental Health Awareness Singapore**

This initiative was started in 2016 by the Agency for Integrated Care, Institute of Mental Health, Health Promotion Board and the National Council of Social Service to bring together like-minded community partners to raise awareness on mental health in Singapore. Since 2016, the partners co-organise an anchor event to commemorate the annual World Mental Health Day in October. Past World Mental Health Day commemoration events included a walk along Orchard Road in 2016 and a concert at Botanic Gardens in 2017. For more info, please refer to [www.facebook.com/MentalHealthAwarenessSG](http://www.facebook.com/MentalHealthAwarenessSG).

## **About Agency for Integrated Care**

The Agency for Integrated Care (AIC) aims to create a vibrant care community for people to live well and age gracefully. AIC coordinates and supports efforts in integrating care to achieve the best care outcomes for our clients. We reach out to caregivers and seniors with information on staying active and ageing well, and connect people to services they need. We support stakeholders in their efforts to raise the quality of care, and also work with health and social care partners to increase services for the ageing population. Our work in the community brings care services and information closer to those in need. For more about us, please visit [www.aic.sg](http://www.aic.sg).