

Key Messages:

- Youth participation rate in PC Volunteer Drive has improved
- In the coming months, President's Challenge will bring together partners in the reading and early childhood education space to encourage reading in younger children from the disadvantaged families, and hope youth volunteers will join in this effort.

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB
AT THE PULSE! SPORTS FIESTA 2019
IN SUPPORT OF PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGE 2019
ON SATURDAY, 20 JULY 2019 AT 5.10PM
AT *SCAPE PLAYSPACE**

Mr Desmond Tan
Chief Executive Director, People's Association

Distinguished Guests

- 1 A very good afternoon. I am glad to see so many youths gathered here with their families today for some healthy outdoor fun.
- 2 Since 2006, the People's Association (PA)'s PULSE! Sports Fiesta has provided a platform for youths to meaningfully engage others, through a common passion

for sports, to give back to the society together. I am glad that this year, for the first time, the Sports Fiesta is held in conjunction with the President's Challenge (PC) Volunteer Drive.

- 3 Sports is a good way to bring people together regardless of who we are and where we come from. As a team, victories are celebrated together and losses spur us to cheer for one another – such is the uplifting impact of sports, in encouraging community bonding. As PA has found in its PAssion Children's Football programme, many who have graduated from previous runs of the programme return to mentor the younger ones, as they had found their own experience enriching and beneficial. I am therefore happy that PA youth volunteers have invited PC beneficiaries from Kampung Senang Charity and Education Foundation, and Pertapis Childrens' Home, to participate in today's event. Through the friendly game of street soccer earlier this afternoon, I am sure that everyone

has forged some good, newfound friendships. And for the PC beneficiaries, I am certain that the experience has also been a memorable and inspiring one.

4 Beyond helping others, volunteering also allows one to discover his strengths, learn new skills, and build a greater sense of belonging to the community. Volunteerism encourages one to step out of his comfort zone, to start focusing on the needs of others, and to practise empathy. Through their care for others and their determination to ensure that no one is left behind, volunteers exemplify the SG Cares spirit.

5 Daron Hoon is one such passionate youth volunteer who overcame his personal struggles and himself benefited while giving back. Daron first started volunteering as a kayaking trainer with the People's Association Water Venture, now known as PAssion WaVe. It was then that he

discovered how coaching other youth helped him overcome his personal troubles and honed his leadership skills. Today, he serves as the Chairman for the Geylang West Community Club Youth Executive Committee (YEC) and leads his team through community service initiatives such as Smiles on Wheels, a cycling event which encourages volunteers and members of the public from various backgrounds, including the less privileged, to forge friendships while taking part in activities along a cycling route. Daron is volunteering here today, and is taking part in a friendly soccer match as a member of the YEC, with President's Challenge beneficiaries, Kampung Senang and Pertapis Childrens' Home. I invite everyone to give Daron a round of applause.

- 6 I am heartened to note that youths like Daron now make up over 80 per cent of all the volunteers who have stepped up in support of President's Challenge. Since the start of the year, over 5,000 youths have contributed their services

under the ambit of PC Volunteer Drive. This is very encouraging, because I understand that just a couple of years ago, the youth participation rate in volunteerism was not this high. Thanks to the recent collaborations PC has had with youth groups like Youth Corps Singapore, PA Youth Movement and Heartware Network, we have managed to double the youth volunteer participation rate in PC Volunteer Drive from what used to be around 40% in 2017. I hope that more will come on board.

- 7 By leveraging the energy of youth volunteers, I hope to harness the collective efforts of everyone to provide an ecosystem of support to the vulnerable groups in the community. One area of gap that I hope to address, is the availability of community initiatives to support early reading. Most of our current reading programmes are designed for children aged four and above. I believe more can be done for younger children, especially those from low-income families. Research has shown that early

exposure to speech and language through activities such as reading help lay the foundation for early literacy skills and better prepare our young children for future learning. In the coming months, President's Challenge will bring together partners in the reading and early childhood education space to see how we can address this gap together. I hope youth volunteers will join me in this effort.

- 8 In closing, let me express my gratitude to all the PA youth volunteers who have helped made today's event possible. We should continue to create more regular and sustained volunteering opportunities to engage our youths, to deepen their learning experience, as well as the impact that their help brings to those in need. President's Challenge will continue to support and enable this in every way possible. Let's continue to upkeep the SG Cares spirit, and create a stronger and more inclusive Singapore together.
Thank you.