



Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore

800 Margaret Drive

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

For immediate release

### **MINDS Launches Direct-to-Community Healthy Home-Grown Produce Farmed by Persons with Special Needs**

- *Since 2016, close to 20 MINDS beneficiaries have been engaged in a new project, “MINDS Farm”, to farm pesticide-free vegetables*
- *Through clever improvisation of its work process, beneficiaries can be involved in every stage of the farming process from beginning to end*
- *Launched at the MINDS Farmers’ Market, the event aims to promote family bonding and create greater inclusion in the community*
- *Members of the public can subscribe to notifications to stay updated on upcoming harvests*

**20 July 2019** - The Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore (MINDS) launches direct-to-community fresh vegetables specially farmed by persons with intellectual disability today at its caregiver event – MINDS Farmers’ Market. This is the first for MINDS where pesticide-free vegetables such as Xiao Bai Cai, Chye Sim, Kang Kong, Bayam and Pea Sprout are grown, harvested by persons with intellectual disability and made available for the community. Residents are able to choose the vegetables of their choice, and harvest them on the spot guided by the MINDS’ beneficiaries.

Held at the MINDS Idea Employment Development Centre, the MINDS Farmers’ Market brings residents and caregivers across MINDS’ schools, centres and services to bond with each other over various games and activities, thus encouraging greater inclusion within the community through increased visibility. The event, organised by MINDS, also showcases the entrepreneurial abilities of caregivers who turn adversity into entrepreneurial opportunities, featuring exquisite handicraft items made by a group of caregivers.

#### **“Let’s Share” Caregivers’ Support Initiative**

A new caregivers’ support initiative of MINDS, “Let’s Share” was spearheaded to bring caregivers together on a regular basis to share and learn handicraft skills from each other. This caregivers’

support initiative enables them to connect with other fellow caregivers and strengthens their social support network while providing an opportunity to indulge in other recreational activities. Since its commencement, the caregivers have learnt to sew, knit and make various handicraft items such as tissue box covers, brooches, pouches and tote bags.

### **MINDS Farm Project**

Since 2016, MINDS piloted a new engagement project, “MINDS Farm”, where beneficiaries have been working to grow and harvest a wide variety of vegetables such as Xiao Bai Cai, Pea Sprouts, and Kai Lan. Working with experts from Agri-Food & Veterinary of Singapore, MINDS beneficiaries have been entirely engaged in the end-to-end farming process – sowing, thinning, transplanting, and harvesting, which enabled them to foster essential life and vocational skills. This engagement project has also allowed them to experiment with a variety of vegetable crops such as Kang Kong, Bayam, Basil and Wasabi, and understand the properties and crop cycles for different vegetables.

Despite the intrinsic farming process, adult beneficiaries are able to be involved in every stage of the farming through clever improvisations introduced to simplify the work process. For instance, beneficiaries are tasked to insert an ice-cream stick in each compartment of the sowing tray, and take the stick out once the seeds are sown. This ensures every compartment on the sowing tray is seeded before placing it in the greenhouse for germination.

Thus far, beneficiaries who are engaged in the project have been so seasoned with the process that they could perform the required duties without such improvisations. Supervising staff have also observed marked improvements in their mental and physical health.

Through every crop cycle, MINDS could yield about 30 – 40 kg of vegetables. This is equivalent to three days’ worth of meal portions for 300 beneficiaries at the centre. Currently, the number of clients engaged in this project stands at 14.

Deputy CEO of MINDS, Ms Koh Gee May said, “We are encouraged that our beneficiaries have taken very well to this project and are enjoying the work. It is heart-warming to see their self-confidence and sense of responsibility grow. We hope that through this project, MINDS can develop deeper engagement with the residents and our wider community, to foster greater understanding and support for persons with intellectual disability and their families.

MINDS is in the midst of adding another greenhouse and is slated for completion by the fourth quarter of 2019. With this new addition, the number of beneficiaries engaged in this project and crop yield could potentially double. MINDS is grateful for the possibilities of engaging the residents and the community around the centre to support sustainable employment for persons with

intellectual disability. Further to that, MINDS hopes that this initiative can provide more vocational training and employment opportunities for its beneficiaries.

Members of the public can subscribe to notifications to stay updated on upcoming harvests by emailing [mfarm.iedc@minds.org.sg](mailto:mfarm.iedc@minds.org.sg) or call [9641 8689](tel:96418689). MINDS will also be distributing flyers in the neighbourhood to inform residents on future harvests.



*Caregivers and residents got to select their own freshly harvested pesticide-free vegetables sold at the Farmers' Market.*



*Members of the public happily harvesting the vegetables!*



*MINDS' Caregivers and residents from Rosyth neighbourhood attended the Farmers' Market organised by MINDS.*



*MINDS' staff and client, Mr Ang Kian Chuan (right) are part of the MINDS Farm's team, who dedicate their time and love in caring for the vegetables grown in the greenhouse.*



## **About MINDS**

The Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore was founded in May 1962 by a group of philanthropists who saw the need to provide equal opportunities for children with intellectual disabilities to receive education and later, to be integrated as contributing and responsible citizens in Singapore.

MINDS is one of Singapore's oldest and largest social service organizations, and has 17 facilities comprising 4 Special Education Schools, 3 Employment Development Centres, 8 Training and Development Centres, 1 Multi-purpose Residential Services catering to the needs of persons with moderate to severe intellectual disability in Singapore, and 1 Caregivers Support Services Centre. MINDS also delivers Home-Based Care Services, administers the Appropriate Adult Scheme for Persons with Mental Disabilities, and runs a befriender programme called Me Too! Club. Since then, MINDS has grown to be one of the largest social service organisations in Singapore, serving some 2,600 students, clients and their families from the age of six to their ripe old age.

To know more, visit <http://www.minds.org.sg/>

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