



Movement for the Intellectually Disabled of Singapore

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## **NEWS RELEASE**

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# **OPENING OF A DISABILITY-FRIENDLY GARDEN AT MINDS WOODLANDS GARDENS SCHOOL**

**15 November 2019** – As part of efforts to mobilise grassroots and community partners to support and promote the inclusiveness of persons with disabilities in the community, MINDS officially opened the Friendship Garden @ Woodlands at MINDS Woodlands Gardens School (WGS) today.

The Garden, a first of its kind by the school with the community, provides a common space for students with intellectual disabilities, persons with disabilities and residents to come together to get to know one another and build lasting relationships. Through these interactions with the community, MINDS students have been able to hone their social skills and gain greater social confidence when interacting with others apart from their families and friends.

Located adjacent to the school near 664 Woodlands Ring Road and measuring about 125 square metres, the new disability-friendly community garden features a wheelchair ramp as well as a raised planter. Since late October, students, residents and members from Woodlands Galaxy Community Club have visited the school at least twice a week to plant and tend to their co-planted crops of ladyfinger, kang kong and long beans as part of their unique community interactions. To encourage more interaction with the community, MINDS WGS also intends to sell herbs harvested from the garden's first crop at Kampung Admiralty from January next year.

Principal of MINDS WGS, Mr Lawrence Chong, said: "From planting, to harvesting, to selling these herbs, we are pleased to have our students work hand-in-hand with residents on the Garden. We hope these interactions will translate into stronger community bonds and at the same time, boost our students' confidence and social skills. With its disability-friendly features, the Garden also aims to promote inclusivity for persons with disabilities in the community," said Mr Chong.

Apart from being a community garden, the Friendship Garden also provides a learning space for MINDS students to cultivate an interest in horticulture. For instance, senior students from MINDS WGS aged 15 to 18 are taught gardening skills, which they may benefit from should they choose to explore a role in a nursery or the horticulture industry upon graduation from the school.

Mr Amrin Amin, Senior Parliamentary Secretary of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Health, officially opened the Friendship Garden with Mr Chong and Mr Kelvin Koh, the Chief Executive Officer of MINDS, on Friday.

MINDS WGS has partnered with members from the Woodlands Galaxy Community Club to maintain the Garden. It will be open to MINDS students and residents from neighbouring blocks as well as members of the community club, from 15 November. Residents who are keen to grow herbs and plants at the garden may contact MINDS WGS at [wgs@minds.org.sg](mailto:wgs@minds.org.sg).

This is not the first time MINDS has attempted to promote inclusivity in the community through its facilities. Since 2010, a gate dubbed the 'Friendship Gate' has linked the MINDS Fernvale Gardens School (FGS) and Fernvale Primary School (FPS). It is the only gate linking a mainstream school and a special education school in Singapore and was built to promote greater interaction between mainstream primary school students and students with intellectual disabilities.

## **About MINDS**

MINDS 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 organisations, and has 17 facilities comprising 4 Special Education schools, 3 Employment Development Centres, 8 Training and Development Centres, and a multi-service residential facility which contains a home for adults and one for children, a hostel, a Caregivers Support Services Centre, a Special Student Care Centre, a Developmental Disabilities Medical Clinic and an Institute of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IIDDD).

MINDS also delivers Home-Based Care Services, administers the Appropriate Adult scheme, 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 2,400 students, clients and their families from the age of six to their ripe old age.

Please visit <http://www.minds.org.sg/> and WGS at <http://www.minds.org.sg/WGS/index.html>

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