

**DELIVERED SPEECH FOR MS LOW YEN LING
CHAIRMAN OF MAYORS' COMMITTEE AND
MAYOR OF SOUTH WEST DISTRICT
AT THE OPENING OF WECARE ARTS EXHIBITION
AND LAUNCH OF WECARE ARTS EXPERIENCES
ON TUESDAY, 23 MARCH 2021
AT THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF SINGAPORE**

A very good afternoon to Mr Edwin Tong, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth (MCCY) and Second Minister for Law

My fellow Mayors – Mayor Denise Phua, Mayor of Central Singapore District, Mayor Desmond Choo, Mayor of North East District, Mayor Alex Yam, Mayor of North West District and Mayor Fahmi Aliman, Mayor of South East District

Mrs Rosa Daniel, Chief Executive Officer, National Arts Council

Mr Lim Hock Yu, Chief Executive Director, People's Association

And all our Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen joining us here at the wonderful National Museum of Singapore as well as friends attending via Zoom.

Introduction

A very good afternoon to all of you. On behalf of the five Mayors, I'd like to extend a warm welcome to all our guests today - those physically with us here at the Museum as well as the guests over Zoom. I must tell Minister Edwin – he is my Minister in MCCY. I came at 2pm and did a sneak preview and was very touched by the art works. I think we were all very very heartened by what we are going to experience later. So, welcome to the Opening of the WeCare Arts Exhibition 2021 as well as the Roll-out of WeCare Arts Experiences held in conjunction with the People's Association 60 years of Community Building.

2 The mayors and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our partners - the National Arts Council (NAC), the People's Association (PA), all our Social Services Agencies (SSAs) all over Singapore as well as the four Self-Help Groups (SHGs) for their efforts in putting the exhibition together in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We are very grateful towards the National Heritage Board for their support in providing this lovely venue, the National Museum of Singapore as a venue for the arts exhibition over the next two months, from today til 3rd week of May.

WeCare Arts Fund and Exhibition

3 Now, allow me, like what Minister Edwin mentioned, I am going to talk a little bit about the Exhibition as well as the roll-out, but before that, allow me to do a quick recap. To fulfil the mission, the five CDCs have over the years, have been doing what we call the ABC functions. Why? Because A - aggregating resources, B - building capacity of their partners and residents, and C - connecting government agencies, for example NAC, corporates and community partners, in this case, the SSAs and the Self-Help Groups to build a caring and resilient community. So, back in 2014, I remember, Rosa, you would have remembered. Back in 2014, the five CDCs collaborated with the NAC to set up the WeCare Arts Fund (WCAF) in support of MCCY and NAC's efforts to promote an inclusive community through the arts. Like what Minister Edwin has mentioned, Arts are not for certain segment of people, it is for all Singaporeans, everyone in our society. So, the WeCare Arts Fund aims to broaden access of arts to the beneficiaries of the Social Service Agencies and at the same time, support our local artists in engaging the beneficiaries through diverse art forms. And the five Mayors have gone to the various SSAs to witness for themselves that these include the performing arts, visual arts, literary arts, as well as multi-disciplinary art forms. Later, you will see them at the Exhibition just outside this hall. And such efforts also give the beneficiaries very rich opportunities to make friends, as you can see from the video, pick up new skills and lead fulfilling lives. Outcomes like these are in line with our aim to build a stronger, more caring and inclusive community.

4 The WeCare Arts Fund has become even more relevant in the past 12 months, during the Covid-19 pandemic. All of us were chatting at our table, that in a way fortunately that we set this up seven years ago because the usage really spiked and I think we can all agree arts became our source of comfort, hope and inspiration during the past 12 months, in particular during the Circuit Breaker, because many people felt isolated and lonely due to the social distancing measures. We want to say a big Thank You to our Social Service Agencies because they have tapped on the fund to help their beneficiaries cope with stress and anxiety during this challenging period. We are happy to share with you that since 2014, the

WeCare Arts Fund has supported **210** Social Service Agencies, Self-Help Groups and reached out to close to **16,000** beneficiaries through more than **150** arts programmes. Every one of them require a lot of effort as you can see from the video to curate and to guide our beneficiaries. Can we put our hands together to thank our SSAs.

5 We want to echo what Minister Edwin has said earlier. The WeCare Arts Fund also helps uncover hidden artistic talents, like the 12-years old girl that he mentioned, and many others amongst our beneficiaries because, encouraged by their passion, the five CDCs started holding a WeCare Arts Exhibition once every two years to showcase and celebrate some of their achievements.

6 Apart from the physical exhibition to be launched by Minister Edwin Tong later today at the National Museum, we have also set up a virtual WeCare Arts Gallery @ CDC. As we all know, the new language is phygital, combination of the physical and digital is blended format moving forward. There will be a total of about 200 art pieces on display. The virtual WeCare Arts Gallery @ CDC will allow more people to see our beneficiaries' artworks. So dropby and do visit our cdc.gov.sg website after the Launch.

7 Minister Edwin cited an example of a young girl. Allow me to cite another example. An example of the kind of artworks on display is what we called the decoupage plate created by 82-year-old Mr Tan Tak Lew from Xin Yuan Activity and Wellness Centre under the Expressive Decoupage Art Program. Later you will see, through the butterflies on his Decoupage plate, Mr Tan wanted to salute, actually we got similar story but different interpretation. So that's the beauty of art. He wanted to salute the amazing teamwork and collaboration which he observed during the height of the COVID-19 outbreak in Singapore. Mr Tan shared with us that he did so because he was touched by how everyone selflessly came together and played their part to curb the virus spread and keep Singapore safe.

8 The five CDCs will arrange for beneficiaries and their immediate families and even friends whose artworks are on display at the WeCare Arts Exhibition, to view them at the National Museum over the next two months.

WeCare Arts Experiences

9 Earlier on, Minister Edwin Tong talked about the roll out of the WeCare Arts Experiences. The WeCare Arts Experiences initiative is a grant scheme that aims to promote social bonding for the beneficiaries of Social Service Agencies and our community partners and of course Singapore Scout Association. I must tell you, I am a former Girl Guide and I just had a good lunch meeting with the Girl Guide Singapore President yesterday. Now, the WeCare Arts Experiences provides the invaluable experience of visiting our national cultural institutions and enjoying a performance or show. Nothing beats being part of a Live performance, that it is not just watching it and it is also participating in the entire Live performance. Besides building the social bonds and can I say the emotional bank of beneficiaries, such occasions can boost their mental health and at the same time, support our arts and cultural institutions. So the five Mayors completely agree with what Minister Edwin Tong mentioned, this is win-win-win – not just for MCCY, NAC, for beneficiaries, but really community bonding, strengthening social cohesion and strengthening mental wellness as well.

10 The five CDCs are inviting all community partners and Social Service Agencies to please apply for the fund. We hope to see many beneficiaries attending and enjoying quality arts and culture experiences with their families and loved ones. We believe there is a pent up demand, especially after this COVID-19 pandemic. Rest assure we will do so with SMM (Safe Management Measures) and social distancing measures, putting their safety at heart of whatever we do.

11 Once again, the five Mayors would like to thank all our partners in making this possible and we want to wish you a very memorable afternoon at the exhibition here in National Museum.

Thank you.