

## MEDIA RELEASE

### TOUCH Giving Art 2019

**SINGAPORE, 7 June 2019** – On the outside, Shoban Pillai, 43, might seem reserved and quiet. But hand him a paintbrush and paper, and his deft brushstrokes may tell a different story.

For people with special needs like Shoban, integrating them into society can be a challenge as they often face difficulties in expressing themselves. People in the community may also struggle to understand their needs. However, it is through creative means, such as art, that people with special needs can be enabled to communicate expressively with others.

Shoban is one of the artists with special needs whose work is featured at *TOUCH Giving Art* which was launched at The Arts House today.

A charity art exhibition by TOUCH Community Services, *TOUCH Giving Art* showcases the art works of TOUCH's beneficiaries with special needs along-side those of professional artists. Previously known as *Art Gives Back*, the art exhibition hopes to foster a more inclusive arts community in Singapore by showing that art can bring together a giving community and reveal the creative abilities of people with special needs.

Graced by Guest-of-Honour, Mr Edwin Tong, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Law & Ministry of Health, the charity event aims to raise \$250,000 in support of TOUCH's programmes in helping people with special needs gain independence through daily living, personal, social, and pre-employment skills training.

In support of the event, local actor and author, Mr Edmund Chen, as well as 13 renowned and locally-acclaimed artists, including Mr Milenko Prvački, the Cultural Medallion Award for Visual Arts recipient, have donated 30 of their art pieces. These art pieces comprise paintings and drawings.

Apart from art pieces by the professional artists, *TOUCH Giving Art* also showcases over 40 paintings by 14 trainees with intellectual disabilities from the TOUCH Centre for Independent Living's (TCIL) SpecialCrafts programme.

Having been diagnosed with intellectual disability, Shoban started attending TCIL (Ubi) in 2003 where he underwent training to learn basic life skills such as self-care and cooking. It was only in 2014 that he was selected to be part of an artist programme under TOUCH SpecialCrafts after his life skills coach noticed that he enjoyed drawing and showed a keen interest in art.

"Shoban has built up his self-confidence over the years. Through art, he is now able to draw, with or without picture references," says Senior Arts Facilitator at TCIL, Ms Loh Sau Kuen, who has been teaching Shoban art for the past five years.

Says Mr James Tan, Chief Executive Officer of TOUCH Community Services, “The heartbeat of TOUCH is to activate the potential of those in need, build their independence, connect people for mutual support, and deliver impact by developing sustainable solutions in society. TOUCH Giving Art is one such platform that allows us to share our clients’ learning journey and collectively celebrate their creative abilities and tenacity in overcoming learning difficulties.”

TOUCH Giving Art will be open to the public on 8 and 9 June at The Arts House, Gallery 1. Admission is free.

All artworks on display at the event are available for purchase and proceeds will go towards supporting the programmes of TOUCH in helping people with special needs gain independence through daily living, personal, social, and pre-employment skills training.

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**ABOUT TOUCH COMMUNITY SERVICES**

Since 1992, TOUCH Community Services has served people of all ages, races and religions to see sustainable change and transformation in their lives. It believes in the worth and potential of every child, youth at-risk, family in need, senior and person with special or healthcare needs to grow, participate and contribute in the community. The heartbeat of TOUCH is to **activate potential, build independence, connect people** for mutual support, and **deliver impact** by developing sustainable solutions in society. For more information on TOUCH, please visit [www.touch.org.sg](http://www.touch.org.sg)

**ABOUT TOUCH GIVING ART 2019**

TOUCH Giving Art is a charity event that showcases the artwork of TOUCH Community Service's special-needs clients from TOUCH SpecialCrafts along-side those of professional artists. The event aims to foster a more inclusive arts community in Singapore by showing that art can bring together a giving community. The event also features the creative abilities of people with special needs and their tenacity in overcoming learning difficulties.

**ABOUT TOUCH CENTRE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING**

TOUCH Community Services (TOUCH) has been serving persons with special needs, primarily adults with intellectual disabilities and the deaf since 1990, with the setting up of TOUCH Training Centre for the Disabled and TOUCH Silent Club in 1993. TOUCH Centre for Independent Living (TCIL) is a day activity centre which offers competence-based training programmes for adults with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities aiming to provide them with functional knowledge and skills that will equip them to live independently in the community. The client-focused training programmes teach daily living (personal and social), as well as pre-employment skills to the trainees using a Mediated Learning Experience approach. To improve their quality of life, we conduct enrichment programmes such as visual arts, sports and recreational activities. Besides providing training in independent skills, TCIL also runs a TOUCH SpecialCrafts programme which seeks to develop and showcase their talents and skills in the visual arts and offer employment for those who are gifted in this area.