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SPEECH BY MRS YU-FOO YEE SHOON, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY SECRETARY, MCD, AT LAUNCH OF TOUCH-NORTHWEST AIRLINES PROJECT DISCOVERY, THURSDAY, 24 JUNE, 3.00 PM, TOUCH CHILD CARE & FAMILY CENTRE AT

BLK 333 CLEMENTI AVENUE 2 #01-86 S(120333)

Good afternoon

Mr Eugene Seow, Executive Director, TOUCH Community Services (TCS)

Mr Yeoh Hock Thye, General Manager, Northwest Airlines

(Singapore and Malaysia)

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am pleased to join you in the launch of the TOUCH-Northwest Airlines (NWA) Project Discovery. I am honored to mark the beginning of this innovative project that will bring new experiences to children from less well-to-do families.

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2. TOUCH Community Services has been serving the community through its various community-based programmes for many years. Likewise, Northwest Airlines is one of the largest and most established airlines in the world, and has been serving people in the Asia-Pacific for more than 50 years. I am very delighted to witness this collaboration between a non-profit voluntary welfare organisation, and a world-reknown corporation to serve community.

3. Project Discovery brings together the expertise of TOUCH Community Services in working with children and the resources Northwest Airlines has in connecting people around the world. I understand that the first series of the programme involves an all-expenses-paid trip to Tokyo, Japan for a group of 8 children.

4. As the Chinese saying goes, "Du (2) Wan (4) Juan (4) Shu (1), Bu (4) Ru (2) Xing (2) Wan (4) Li (3) Lu (4)" - Reading ten thousand books cannot be compared to

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traveling ten thousand miles. This project will give children a valuable opportunity to visit a different land, experience diverse cultures, and gain first hand insight into the diversity and richness of the world in which we live. Without this project, many of the participating children may not even have the chance to ride a plane or visit other countries. Already, I can sense the thrill and anticipation this project will bring to the many children who will benefit from it.

5. Making sure all children have equal opportunities to develop and learn regardless of their family backgrounds has always been a concern and challenge close to my heart. I believe that everyone – individuals, family, community, corporate organisations and Government can and should play a role in helping them.

6. There are many worthwhile activities and programmes run by a large number of non-profit welfare organisations for children as well as other groups. The VWOs are doing a great job in providing support services for our families and for those with special needs. VWOs are however often constrained in how much they can do by limited resources. With more manpower and funds, our VWOs would be able to widen and improve their services further.

7. This is where I believe the private sector can come in. Commercial corporations have the resources to support social programme by VWOs. They could provide monetary contributions, or contributions in kind, help in publicity, or encourage staff to be volunteers.

8. Indeed, in a sense, corporations benefit from the good work put in by our VWOs. Through their social programmes, VWOs help build a healthier and more resilient people and a stronger and more stable society. The private sector benefits from the healthier and more productive workforce, and from the conducive and stable business environment. I believe that businesses have a duty to be socially responsible. It is a symbiotic relationship. Successful businesses should seek out ways contribute to the community which has allowed them to prosper.

9. Similarly, VWOs must also play their part. VWOs should go forth and seek out corporate sponsors, rather than wait for benefactors to knock on their doors. In our current economic climate, this may be difficult, but not impossible, as demonstrated by this project.

10. VWOs must develop a good working relationship with corporate sponsors. They must better communicate their needs and programmes to the corporate sponsors so that these sponsors have a better understanding of the efforts of the VWOs. This understanding will translate into more support from corporate organisations.

11. Together, the private sector and public sector can bring forth more "Many Helping Hands" in the provision of social services. This is exactly what active citizenry, one aspect of the Singapore 21 vision, is all about.

12. The joint effort by TOUCH and Northwest is indeed an excellent example of

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how the people's sector and private sector can come together. I hope more organisations will follow in their footsteps to forge such exciting relationships.

13. On this note, I would like to congratulate TOUCH Community Services and NorthWest Airlines on the launch of the TOUCH-NorthWest Airlines (NWA) Project Discovery. I wish them every success for the project, and look forward to other new projects that may follow.

14. Thank you.

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