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Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

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**SPEECH BY RADM TEO CHEE HEAN, MINISTER FOR EDUCATION
AND SECOND MINISTER FOR DEFENCE AT THE OFFICIAL
LAUNCH OF NORTHEAST FAMILY SUPPORT NETWORK ON
SUNDAY, 16 JANUARY 2000 AT THE PAVILION CINEPLEX HALL 3,
TAMPINES CENTRAL @ 2.15 PM**

Good afternoon

National Archives of Singapore

Mr Charles Chong
Chairman, Northeast Community Development Council

Mr Philip Tan
Chairman, Bethesda Community Services Society

Mr Mathew Yap
Chairman, National Mentoring Network

Ladies and Gentlemen,

STRONG FAMILIES: OUR FOUNDATION AND OUR FUTURE

It is a pleasure to be here on this Sunday afternoon to launch the Northeast Family Support Network (FSN). This is a programme that is in line with Northeast Community Development Council's (CDC) efforts to build strong families ties through active participation by the community at large. But what catches my eye is the fact that this programme brings together a wide-ranging mix of organisations, which includes statutory boards, voluntary welfare organisations (VWO) and multi-national corporations (MNC). This just goes to show that the spirit of *gotong-royong* is still very much alive and kicking in Singapore.

2. The main purpose of the Northeast FSN is to provide proactive parenting tips and solutions, thus giving parents a better understanding of their children's hopes, aspirations and future well being. This programme is thus more than just trying to give parents a clearer picture of their children's education and future – it in fact teaches and reinforces positive traits in family life.

3. There have been a lot of examples of the deterioration of family values as written in the media. Cases of street gangs, teenage pregnancies and youth dropouts are frequently highlighted in the press. We cannot simply ignore this problem and pretend it doesn't exist, as it would only cause it to grow out of control. We need to find a way to address these problems and the best way to do so is through the family environment. There is only so much that a teacher or school can do. The country's education system basically complements the values taught in one's family. Therefore, the most crucial factor is the family,

which are the building blocks of society. It is within the family confines that potential problems can be nipped in the bud.

4. It is therefore very heartening to see various organisations and families coming together to address these issues. Families who have greater wealth of experience in tackling these issues will be given opportunities to pass along their tips to the newer participants. In this way, we try to encourage Singaporeans to come forward and share their knowledge with their neighbours in the community. Active Citizenship is one of the pillars of the Singapore 21 (S21) vision, and that can be achieved through this. This new millennium will present a host of challenges for our children, parents and the family unit. It is essential not to lose sight of the importance that a positive family environment can provide. In fact, ‘Strong Families: Our Foundation and our Future’ is another of our S21 ideals.

5. So far more than 500 families have indicated an interest in this programme. This is indeed a very good start. I hope to see more families join this programme and give it a try. They have everything to gain from participating in the Northeast FSN.

6. Finally, I would like to send my appreciation to all the organisers. They have managed to come up with a very worthwhile and innovative project that has a lot of potential for participation. Hopefully, we will get more VWOs and MNCs joining hands with our community based organisations in implementing other such beneficial programmes and together we can build a better Singapore in the 21st century.

Thank you.

National Archives of Singapore