



## MEDIA RELEASE

24 APRIL 2017

### MORE TAKING PART IN SOCIAL INTERACTION OPPORTUNITIES AT SPARK CONNECTIONS 2017

*Campaign launched new events recommended by Social Development Network's Community Panel, a new citizen engagement initiative.*

1 Spark Connections 2017, a signature series of social networking events for singles supported by the Social Development Network (SDN), concluded its eighth run on 31 March 2017, which saw a turnout of 1,400, an increase of more than 25% from last year's edition.

2 This 6-week campaign incorporated fresh ideas drawn from Community Panel, a new citizen engagement initiative set up by the SDN Council and supported by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF). One step up from the previous runs was the introduction of socialising opportunities through interest- and activity-based initiatives. Mr Prakash Somosundram, Co-Chairperson of the SDN Council said, "The idea to include interest-based events, such as volunteering, traveling and sports-centric adventures came from participants in the first Community Panel discussion. This meaningful engagement with citizens allowed for more frank and deeper conversations."

3 From October to November last year, about 70 participants took part in four Community Panel discussions, brainstorming ideas to address the challenges of singlehood and how to facilitate a dating-friendly environment. Minister for Social and Family Development, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin as well as the SDN Council members also joined the lively discussion at the last session.

4 Participants gave positive feedback. "It was an interesting experience that exceeded my expectations. The discussions allowed all of us to be actively involved, share our views and explore various ideas. It was also fulfilling to personally present



our ideas to the SDN Council during the last session,” said Miss Sumitha Thevanindrian.

5 This year’s campaign saw the pilot of two volunteering events by accredited dating agency, CompleteMe. Dr Jackie Lee, Co-Chairperson of SDN Council, said, “The SDN Council carefully considered the ideas from the Community Panel and found it was timely to incorporate volunteerism into the bi-annual Spark Connections campaign. Such an initiative is meaningful to encourage amongst fellow Singaporeans and can provide opportunities for singles to meet others with similar interests at the same time.”

6 The volunteering events were both fully subscribed. Miss Andrea Leong, a lawyer who participated in one of the events shared, “I am constantly on a look out for volunteering platforms as I enjoy giving back to the society, and find it a fulfilling experience. It was pleasant to know that SDN has provided such platforms for us to meet other like-minded singles while doing our part for the community.”

7 The Community Panel also recommended equipping individuals with soft skills for their personal development. As a result, a wide range of self-development workshops such as creating a good first impression, communication skills, understanding body language, and personal grooming were also incorporated in Spark Connections 2017.

8 “We are encouraged by the warm reception to the Community Panel’s ideas and that more Singaporeans are gradually expanding their social circles and are open to new social interaction opportunities” said Mr Prakash Somosundram, Co-Chairperson of the SDN Council.

9 For more information on the Community Panel, refer to **Annex A**.

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### **About the Social Development Network (SDN)**

Social Development Network (SDN) seeks to create opportunities and platforms for singles to expand their social network and form meaningful relationships. For more information, visit [www.sdn.sg](http://www.sdn.sg) or [www.facebook.com/Duetsg](https://www.facebook.com/Duetsg).

### **About the SDN Council**

The SDN Council was formed in 2007 to provide advice on the accreditation standards and processes in the development of the dating industry, and is the final approving authority for all accreditation applications from the dating agencies.

The current SDN Council for 2016 to 2018 is made up of seven volunteers who are passionate about facilitating platforms for singles to form healthy and meaningful relationships. The Council is headed by Dr Jackie Lee, CEO of ClickTRUE and Mr Prakash Somosundram, Founder & CEO of Pealo.

#### **Co-chairpersons**

Dr Jackie Lee  
CEO, ClickTRUE

Mr Prakash Somosundram  
Founder & CEO, Pealo

#### **Council Members**

Ms Chang Kwei Fern  
Director, SPRING Singapore

Ms Cheryl Chong  
Co-founder, The Social Co

Mr Christopher Pragasam  
Director of Youth Engagement, National Youth Council

Mr Jeff Cheong  
President, Tribal Worldwide Asia

Mr Stanley Chia  
Co-founder, Cialfo



## ANNEX A

### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY PANEL

#### Background

- The Community Panel was a community engagement initiative by the Social Development Network (SDN) Council, supported by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF).
- The objective of the community panel was to garner a better understanding of the aspirations of singles, as well as their attitudes towards dating and marriage.

#### The Engagement Journey

- A group of 71 participants of varied profiles were engaged over four sessions of facilitated and deliberative discussion on dating and marriage in October to November 2016.
- To help the participants engage in fruitful and informed discussions, they were given reading materials to supplement their understanding of the dating landscape in Singapore. These included local surveys and relevant news articles on dating and marriage trends.
- Some experts including an academic, a marriage PREP trainer, and professionals in the dating industry shared their insights on the dating and social landscape with participants to give different perspectives and foster deeper discussions on key dating and marriage issues.
- The participants brainstormed ideas to address some of the challenges faced by singles, as well as ideas that can help facilitate a dating-friendly environment. Some ideas included volunteering platforms to sustain passion and interaction amongst participants, and having more self-development workshops to equip individuals with soft skills to form healthy relationships.