

Singapore Association for Mental Health Celebrates 55 Years of Nurturing Minds and Uplifting Lives with the Launch of SAMH Space2Connect

SINGAPORE, 6 SEPTEMBER 2023 –The Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) celebrated its 55th anniversary today with the launch of SAMH Space2Connect, its newest integrated mental wellness centre. President Halimah Yacob, Patron of SAMH, was the Guest of Honour. Accompanying her was Adj Assoc Prof Lee Cheng, President of SAMH. Dr Janil Puthucheary, Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Health and Chair of the Interagency Taskforce on Mental Health and Well-being, and Ms Denise Phua, Mayor of Central Singapore District and Member of Parliament for Jalan Besar GRC (Kampong Glam) also graced the event.

SAMH has been actively championing mental wellness for all and provide support for persons with mental illness since 1968. With various studies in Singapore and globally reporting a rise in the number of people dealing with mental health issues every year, which was further exacerbated during COVID-19, this has emphasized continuous efforts to support the mental health needs of the community. SAMH Space2Connect supports this cause with its integrated one-stop services for mental wellness, the first of such facility for SAMH.

SAMH Space2Connect is a newly established integrated wellness centre by SAMH. Residing at the new centre are two key services of SAMH - SAMH Creative Hub and SAMH Mobile Support Team COMIT, which provide mental health services to individuals, families, and communities aged 10 years old and above. These include creative programmes such as art, music, writing and dance, case management, counselling and therapy, and community education to provide holistic wellness that leads to well-being, recovery and empowerment.

The new centre is also a centralised and integrated location for other SAMH services from its separate nine locations to utilise for their outreach and rehabilitative work for individuals including youths, adults and seniors. This is integral to raising awareness of mental health issues and their related support. It further serves as a collaborative space for like-minded partners to deliver meaningful engagements that strengthen community mental health and resilience.

Adj Assoc Prof Lee Cheng, President of SAMH said, “The work on addressing and improving the mental resilience of our community is a continuous mission of SAMH. We are heartened that we are able to continue this pursuit with the establishment of our latest centre, SAMH Space2Connect, at Maude Road, Jalan Besar, which provides mental wellness services to not just our clients in recovery, but to the general public as well. The new space enables SAMH

to bring together its services under one centre and create greater seamless synergy in our service delivery towards care for mental health.”

“In addition, with the locality of the new centre nestled in the residential enclave of HDB flats at Maude Road, this will also enhance accessibility of our services to residents in this area as well as the larger community,” added Adj Assoc Prof Lee Cheng.

President Halimah Yacob, Patron of SAMH, said, “Social service agencies play an important role in supporting those with mental health conditions in our community. With their proximity to homes, those who need help will be able to do so in a familiar setting, encouraging help-seeking behaviours and reducing stigma associated with mental health conditions. I am glad that SAMH Space2Connect’s one-stop access and service integration will enable more effective support to the community.”

To mark SAMH’s significant milestones, the launch of SAMH Space2Connect was accompanied with an art exhibition on schizophrenia – *Between Worlds* to educate the audiences of the lived experiences of persons with schizophrenia. According to the Institute of Mental Health (IMH), 1 in 43 people had a diagnosis of schizophrenia or other psychotic disorder at some point in their lives, with schizophrenia being the most common, and yet it is rarely talked about. Through the artworks of 19 persons aged 16 to 75 recovering from schizophrenia, they portray the dual realities experienced by them and their challenges in balancing the two realities. The exhibition aims to enhance greater knowledge of the condition and encourage understanding and empathy for their journeys as they reconcile the two worlds they live in.

Between Worlds Art Exhibition

Annexed Profiles of 19 Clients

1.Saphira

Saphira, 28, was diagnosed with schizophrenia in 2011. Art is important for her as it makes her feel happy, calm and forms a means of livelihood. Her symptoms emerged at 16, characterized by confusion, delusions, and auditory hallucinations. To cope with her symptoms, she created stories and imagined conversations with others. Despite her illness, Saphira remains hopeful, believing in the power of resilience. Her artworks reflect themes of hope for recovery, catharsis through expression, and the desire to form social connections.

2.Tan Choon Heng

Tan Choon Heng, a 60-year-old living with schizophrenia since the 1990s, embraces his identity as an artist and he uses art to express himself. Artmaking was helpful for him, reducing symptoms and decreasing hand tremors caused by medication, resulting in fewer doctor visits. The process also improved his focus, allowing him to live out his desires and wishes through art. His series of artworks draw inspiration from daily life, reflecting his longing for a partner and a close-knit family.

3.TKLA

TKLA, 16, seeks support from SAMH for 1.5 years, recovering from schizoaffective disorder for two years. Despite her challenges, she considers herself cheerful and loves reading books and cats. Her symptoms include telepathic communication, delusions, and hearing voices. Artmaking became a valuable outlet for TKLA. It helped her cope with side-effects from medication, provided calmness, and allowed her to confine her thoughts. Expressing emotions creatively, she designed images like a snake unicorn cat. Her art series delves into her delusions, family, and emotions. TKLA's message to others is that there's hope and survival even in dark times.

4.MSR

At 48, M.S.R was diagnosed with schizophrenia since 2015. A quiet person, he often found it challenging to verbally express his thoughts. However, the process of creating art provides him a valuable outlet for self-expression. His artworks narrate his journey, showing experiences and thoughts he struggles to express using words.

5.TSH

At 75 years old, T.S.H. is recovering from schizophrenia since 2008. The artmaking process serves as a means for him to share his thoughts and ideas. Through his series of artworks, viewers gain insight on how he perceives his mind and interprets the world around him.

6.BBJ

Diagnosed with schizophrenia, BBJ is a quiet and reserved person, finding it challenging to express himself verbally. He values independence and attempts to resolve issues on his own. His series of artworks incorporate patterns, color palettes, and significant core memories. With his art, he communicates his experiences and emotions, offering an insight into his view.

7.Wai Kit

A 29-year-old, living with schizophrenia for the past decade, enjoys playing computer games and expressing his creativity through artworks. His art offers a glimpse into his futuristic world. Through artmaking, he is sharing the lives of people in a world that spans both the past and future of Earth. His visualizations portray the everyday activities and experiences of the people.

8.Joy

Joy has been with SAMH since 1997. Artmaking keeps her occupied, brings happiness, and clears her mind. She depends on art to focus and overcome negative thoughts and other symptoms. Joy believes in confidence and resilience to conquer challenges, viewing tough times as a passing phase. Her series of artworks feature animals, flowers, still life drawings, memories of her kampung life, longing for friendships, a partner, and her love for nature.

9.ZMS

A 45-year-old, who has lived with schizophrenia since 2015. Artmaking serves as a medium for Z.M.S. to express her desires and memories of happier times. Her series of artworks delves into cherished memories with her family and her longing to reconnect with them.

10.Revilo

Revilo, 23, diagnosed with schizophrenia in secondary school, enjoys artmaking. Despite hearing voices and anxiety since 14 years old, he remains hopeful and passionate about life. His artworks, inspired by nature, experiment with cool and warm tones, textures, and mess-making to add depth. Creating art makes him feel peaceful.

11.MIBB

MIBB, diagnosed with schizophrenia, finds joy in colouring and considers it a source of pleasure and catharsis. In his artmaking practice, he incorporates colouring and explores various mediums, particularly colour pencils and creating textures.

12.Steven

Steven, 54, has been with SAMH for 6 years, and was diagnosed with bipolar disorder at 18 as well as schizophrenia during his army days. To express himself and cope, he engages in Karaoke, reads psychology books, and practices Chinese calligraphy. He strives to be seen beyond the label of a mental patient, emphasizing empathy over sympathy. Steven believes in four essential elements for a good life: social support, medication, coping skills, and a healthy lifestyle. He asserts that people with mental illness can lead fulfilling lives. Steven's artworks, primarily Chinese calligraphy, showcase his journey with schizophrenia, depicting his past, diagnosis, and aspirations. A self-portrait offers insight into his perception of himself a while living with schizophrenia.

13.YKK

YKK is a positive and loving individual who takes pleasure in helping others. His perceptions of the world are vividly portrayed in his paintings, and he finds joy in the artmaking process, using it as a medium to transform his visions and thoughts into reality. Through his artworks, YKK showcases his strength and resilience in overcoming challenges. His paintings reflect his determination and ability to turn his struggles into expressions of courage and hope.

14.LET

The 68-year-old individual has been recovering from schizophrenia since 2003. Being introverted, L.E.T. finds peace in the artmaking process, enabling him to express his inner thoughts and ideas while ignoring his symptoms and external distractions. His series of artworks narrates his journey, using various colours and symbols that hold significant meanings in his life.

15.Zhenlin

Zhenlin, 59, has joined activities in SAMH since 2004. Diagnosed at 20, her last relapse was in 2007. She has been stable with medication and her Buddhist activities. She only requires an annual check-up. She enjoys attending art workshops which help her to de-stress and find happiness. Her favourite quote is by Daisaku Ikeda: "If you lose today, win tomorrow. In this never-ending spirit of challenge is found the heart of a victor".

16.The Girl

“The Girl”, 25 years old, has been with SAMH for 10 years. Experiencing visual hallucinations of different characters, she uses art to express herself. She also articulates stories and emotions through colours and images that resonate with her. Art allows her to communicate and connect with her inner world.

17.MABM

The 56-year-old individual has lived with schizophrenia since 2014. Describing himself as quiet and contented, M.A.B.M. finds artmaking to be a medium for expressing emotions and aspirations. His art series centers around marks and symbols that represent things he likes or looks forward to. Through this creative process, he communicates his interests and dreams.

18.Selina

Selina, 42, likes the art-making process as she is able to create beautiful images and express herself. She creates images of animals, landscapes and people as she likes drawing them. Her series of artworks focus on portraits of celebrities.

19.SV

Diagnosed with schizophrenia, SV maintains a happy-go-lucky and cheerful attitude towards life. Artmaking has had a positive impact, boosted his confidence and enhanced his creativity. His series of artworks serve as a form of expression for his internal thoughts and reminiscing about past experiences.

About Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH)

Established in 1968, the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) is Singapore's first mental health social service agency that provides a comprehensive range of mental health services, which include rehabilitative, outreach and creative services, to the community. SAMH aims to reintegrate persons with mental health issues back into society through community-based mental health programmes and services that provide rehabilitative care for these individuals, and support for their families and caregivers. With a vision to promote mental wellness for all, SAMH is committed to improve the lives of, and promote acceptance and respect for, persons with mental health issues and improve the mental resilience of the community. In 2023, SAMH celebrates its 55th anniversary and pledges its commitment to step up efforts and address the growing challenge of mental health issues among the people, young and old.

For more information, please visit: www.samhealth.org.sg

About SAMH Space2Connect

SAMH Space2Connect is a newly established centre by the Singapore Association for Mental Health (SAMH) that provides integrated mental health services to individuals, families, and communities aged 10 years old and above. Our services include creative programmes, case management, counselling and therapy, and community education, all with the goal of promoting mental wellness through lifestyle changes that lead to well-being, recovery, and empowerment. SAMH Space2Connect also serves as a collaborative space for like-minded partners to deliver meaningful engagements that strengthen community mental health and resilience. We firmly believe that cultivating healthy connections is essential for achieving holistic well-being.

About SAMH Creative Hub

SAMH Creative Hub uses visual arts, writing, music and dance for participants of all ages as tools for prevention and intervention in mental health, on the cognitive, emotional and social levels. Our services, which include creative therapeutic interventions, individual art therapy and counselling with creative approaches, are open to the public to help individuals improve their quality of life, encourage general awareness of mental health and reduce stigma for persons in recovery of mental illness.

About SAMH Mobile Support Team COMIT (Central and West)

SAMH Mobile Support Team COMIT (Central and West) provides psychosocial therapeutic interventions for clients with mental health needs and support for their caregivers to maintain clients well in the community including home visits and out-of-centre intervention sessions. It is one of the community intervention teams (COMIT) funded by AIC (Agency for Integrated Care). SAMH Mobile Support Team COMIT adopts a holistic service approach in its case management to clients and caregivers, equipping them with information to make informed decisions for the management of their condition, and support social re-integration, resulting in an improvement in functioning and quality of life.