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MEDIA RELEASE

EMPOWERMENT PROGRAMME FOR GIRLS GRADUATION CEREMONY 2016

Tuesday, 8 November 2016 – The **Empowerment Programme for Girls (EPG)** held their annual **graduation ceremony earlier this evening**. The event held at *SCAPE was attended by more than 70 members of the EPG together with their parents and women professionals. This evening's programme was to celebrate and honour the 25 young girls who had completed their GCE 'N' and 'O' levels examinations last year. It also marks the culmination of activities for the EPG in 2016. In all, the EPG benefited a total of 171 young girls comprising of secondary 2, 3 and 4 students this year.



The EPG members were recognised at the EPG Graduation Ceremony with Mdm Rahayu Mahzam, MP for Jurong GRC and a few women professionals who have been a source of role model and inspiration for the girls.

Since it was first introduced in 2008, **EPG has reached out to more than 1,800 students**. EPG was introduced to motivate and inspire these young girls through their interactions with a team of women professionals as well as through participation in developmental activities. It is hoped that with this exposure and experiences, the girls will aspire to do well and thus be committed to complete at least the first 10 years of education and proceed to post-secondary institutions. For **Iffah Zulaikha Umar and Lidiya Arifah Rashidin**, the EPG had indeed pushed and motivated them towards reaching for their goal.

For **Iffah Zulaikha**, life in secondary school was filled with challenges. Unable to fit in well with her classmates, Iffah was regularly bullied at school. Lacking in confidence and suffering from low self-esteem, Iffah did not believe that she could achieve much. All that changed after she joined EPG. Through the interactions and developmental activities, her confidence grew as her social skills gradually improved and her circle of friends widen. With encouragement and motivation from fellow members, teachers and family, Iffah was able to pursue her goal of moving on to a post-secondary institution.



Iffah Zulaikha Umar in a scrapbooking activity depicting her journey in EPG and the hopes she has for the future, at the EPG Graduation Ceremony 2016.

Currently pursuing a Nitec in Business Services at the ITE College West, Iffah shared that ***“EPG is a programme where I discovered the strength in me. I was able to come out from my shell and learned that I am able to use my strength to the fullest potential.”*** She hopes to be a teacher one day. Iffah also shared that it was through the volunteering opportunities in EPG that she became aware of the challenges faced by those who are less fortunate than her. The experience helped her to be more appreciative of what she has. Not only was she supported by her friends in EPG, she attributed her achievements to her mother, **Mdm Siti Sukartini Sapwan**. She strongly believes that her mother is her pillar of strength. Mdm Siti Sukartini is very supportive of the EPG: ***“Since her involvement in EPG, Iffah is wiser, mature and a more confident person. I hope that she will continue to stay positive so that she can achieve her goals towards becoming a leader one day in the field that she wants to pursue in. I totally support her participation in EPG as it has developed her to be someone with goals.”***



Iffah Zulaikha sharing her journey and experience together with her mother, Mdm Siti Sukartini Sapwan (extreme left).

For **Lidiya Arifah**, EPG forces her to step out of her comfort zone. Through the various activities, Lidiya learnt the importance in pushing oneself, working hard and persevering in order to achieve one's goal.



Lidiya Arifah Rashidin (white headscarf) attentively participating in the sharing session by one of the EPG members at the EPG Graduation Ceremony 2016.

For the three years in EPG, Lidiya Arifah had participated in activities such as the trekking expedition to Mount Stong that tested her endurance and team-building skills, the bonding experience at camps, career awareness talks that included a career personality test as well as field trips to tertiary institutions. These field trips had opened her up to possible career opportunities and it was after such a visit that she realised an interest in the nursing field. Lidiya worked hard, excelled at the 'O' levels and is now pursuing her Diploma in Nursing at the Nanyang Polytechnic. Now, she is confident that she is able to achieve anything if she puts her mind to it, works hard and pursue her dreams.

She attributed her achievement thus far to EPG saying, ***“The programme makes me think positively and allows me to learn more things. It makes me feel that my dreams can come true.”***



Lidiya Arifah Rashidin (white headscarf) recognised for her active participation and graduating from the EPG programme. The graduation certificate was presented to her by Mdm Rahayu Mahzam (centre), MP for Jurong GRC who is also the Advisor to the EPG Advisory Committee formed early this year. Accompanying her is Mdm Zulaiha Yusuf (light pink headscarf), Chief Operating Officer of Yayasan MENDAKI.

As part of the event today, the girls had the opportunity to mingle and engage **women professionals from various fields** such as health sciences, law and fund and assets management. Among them were, **Ms Faridah Eryani Pairin, a principal legal counsel and Ms Zarina Yusof, deputy director overseeing the Health Ambassador Network Management Department of the Health Promotion Board.** Both are also part of the **EPG Advisory Committee** together with three others led by **Mdm Rahayu Mahzam, Member of Parliament for Jurong GRC.**

These successful women are a source of inspiration to these girls. In her commendation to the girls and their parents, Mdm Rahayu emphasised, (proposed quote) ***“It is important to develop inner resilience and determination so that our girls have the strength to stretch their limits further towards pursuing their goals. We also need to always be abreast of the changing landscape. Seize the opportunities available out there for us and be ready for the new economy.”*** Seeing the achievements of the girls, Mdm Rahayu also commended the parents, ***“To the parents, I am heartened by the support to your daughters and your relentless effort in ensuring strong family relationships. This continuous support is integral in motivating our girls to work towards their passion.”***