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SPEECH BY MISS INDRANEE RAJAH, GOVERNMENT PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN FOR HOME AFFAIRS AND LAW, AND MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR TANJONG PAGAR GROUP REPRESENTATION CONSTITUENCY AT THE PROJECT GREENGRASS “ANTI-DRUG YOUTH SEMINAR”, ON WEDNESDAY 24 MAY 2006 AT TOUCH COMMUNITY THEATRE AT 10.05 AM

Glenn Lim

Founder, Awakening Productions

Teo Tee Loon

Assistant Director, Lakeside Family Centre

Sam Kuna

Executive Director, Teen Challenge Singapore

It gives me great pleasure to be here with you today at the Project GreenGrass “Anti-Drug Youth Seminar”, and to see so many young people take their first step against drugs.

“Drugs and their Dangers”

2 Drugs pose a very dangerous threat to our schools today. There has been an increase in younger drug-abusers experimenting with Ketamine, Ecstasy and Ice over the years, and the outcome is always the same – young people full of potential totally destroyed by drug-addiction.

3 Many youths experiment with drugs because they feel that they cannot cope with their circumstances – pressure from school, problems at home, or breakdown in relationships. Others use drugs just for the kick it gives them.

4 But turning to drugs as a way out is only the beginning of a slippery slope downwards. They are extremely addictive and they cause physiological harm to drug-users. As users search for more and more euphoria, it increases the chances of an overdose, which is life-threatening. Drugs do not only affect the individual, they also affect family, friends and loved ones. They break down relationships and users lose the things they value and love.

5 What about school? Of course the drug-abuser starts losing interest in his subjects, school grades go down, and his chances of future employment are minimised without a proper education.

6 Once hooked, recovery is not that easy. The addictive power of drugs makes it difficult for abusers to recover. It takes tremendous discipline, effort and support for a user to recover.

7 And if you are caught with drugs, the drug laws in Singapore ensure that you are severely dealt with long-term imprisonment and a fine.

8 Will drugs really give you true 'happiness'? Is it worth it? I think they will give you more unhappiness instead. The few short moments of euphoria are not worth the emotional and mental agony and the price of freedom. Only one thing is certain for those who abuse drugs – destruction!

“Overcoming Difficult Circumstances without Drugs”

9 I understand your struggles in keeping up with Singapore’s fast pace of life. It is somewhat difficult being a youth in Singapore. Things move so fast and rapidly that it is often difficult to keep up.

10 Many youths are introduced to drugs through various first time encounters. Some of them are influenced by the media and music culture. Others give in to peer pressure – since everyone is doing it, they do not want to be left out and eventually succumb to this negative activity.

11 And there are yet others who have family problems at home – maybe even violence and abuse. And to ease the pain, they resort to drug-taking to escape these problems and numb themselves. Some go through a bad break-up in a relationship, or are struggling to cope with the pressures of school, expectations from parents and teachers.

12 During these difficult circumstances, drugs are not the answer. Mr Glenn Lim, will share his story that taking drugs is not the answer. He too, had many problems with his family and school as a student. He thought drugs could help him escape his problems, but they could not. Instead, he ended up in prison. That was many years ago. Today he is a youth counsellor and a public speaker.

13 Even if you have made a mistake, Glenn will share with you that it is possible to come out of difficult circumstances, to overcome setbacks, and become successful in life. He has learnt the art of harnessing what was once negative energy, and channelling it into something positive – by contributing

actively to positive living and youth and community outreaches. Glenn's work has been highlighted on many occasions, and he even won the Singapore Youth Award in 2005, the highest youth accolade in Singapore. Today, Glenn is a youth ambassador and role model for young Singaporeans as he fights the anti-drug cause.

“Youths to channel their talents into cause-worthy projects”

14 I would like to challenge you to do today – to pour your creative gifts and talents into positive platforms. You have so much potential within you, use it wisely and constructively!

15 If you can play music, play it passionately. If you can dance, dance like crazy. If you can sing, sing like the world is listening, if you can draw and design, start making a statement with it. Do it for the community around you – form bands, play in concerts, take part in competitions, go ‘wild’ in your imagination to innovate, invent and implement ideas. But do it ‘clean’! You can make a difference with your energy!

16 Let me also encourage you to channel your time and energy into meaningful projects that benefits the community. If you have an idea or project that can benefit the community, the National Youth Council has funding schemes like the Youth Development Fund and Young ChangeMakers that can help you realise your ideas by providing seed money to make things happen.

17 At the same time, if you need help, ask for help. If your family is going through financial trouble, ask for help. If you cannot cope with the pressure at school, ask for help. There are counsellors and teachers in your school who can help you. Organisations like Lakeside Family Centre and Teen Challenge are here to listen and help you.

18 Mr Glenn Lim's recovery process could not have happened without the support of those whom he approached for counsel and help, and who believed in him.

Conclusion

19 Be an Anti-Drug Ambassador today by saying 'No' to drugs. But you can be an even greater ambassador in contributing to a drug-free society by helping your friends say 'No' to drugs.

20 Lastly let me congratulate Mr Glenn Lim, Awakening Productions and Lakeside Family Centre, for putting this seminar together, and the Inter-Ministry Committee on Youth Crime and the National Youth Council for supporting this event. Together with the schools involved, you can help make Singapore a "green" and drug-free country. I wish you all a pleasant seminar.

21 Thank you.
