

Culinary Training Centre gives a “rice bowl” to ex-offenders

WSQ-certified F&B course offered by newly-launched HCSA Academy equips vulnerable groups with professional skills for stable employment

SINGAPORE, 8 May 2018 – One signed up for the course while in prison, while another hopes to be a chef someday.

Dwight and Colin are amongst the inaugural batch of trainees at the newly-launched HCSA Academy Culinary Training Centre. Homeless after being released from prison, they had nowhere to go. HCSA Highpoint took them in. Now, they both have a common goal – to leave their past behind and make a better future for themselves and their families.

Officially declared open today by Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Member of Parliament, Jalan Besar GRC, HCSA Academy Culinary Training Centre is the latest programme by HCSA Community Services (HCSA), a champion for abused teenage girls, single parents and ex-offenders. HCSA empowers these vulnerable groups through its signature programmes – HCSA Highpoint, HCSA Dayspring Residential Treatment Centre, HCSA Dayspring SPIN (Single Parents INformed, INVolved and INcluded), and now, HCSA Academy Culinary Training Centre.

The Academy aims to empower and enable HCSA’s beneficiaries and other vulnerable individuals with the professional skills required to secure stable employment in the F&B sector, giving them a new lease of life and a level playing field to support themselves and their families.

As an Approved Training Organisation (ATO), HCSA Academy offers a robust six-week course based on the Food Services skills framework by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG). with job placements facilitated upon successful completion.

The culinary training programme ensures that trainees are guided and taught to perform in a real working kitchen. It follows a skill-training adult-pedagogy with hands-on learning of the craft in the Academy kitchen. Equipped with state-of-the-art equipment as part of HCSA's "Smart Village" digitalisation initiative, the Academy includes online courses and Augmented Reality (AR) in the e-learning process.

"The AR app was developed by StarHub and Singapore-based creative technology start-up Immersively", said Dr Chong Yoke Sin, Chief of Enterprise Business Group, StarHub. "Combining digital technology, connectivity and networking, we will continue to develop the AR app, allowing HSCA to boost learning creatively and effectively."

Graduating trainees will receive the highly coveted **WSQ Higher Certificate in Food Services (Culinary Arts)**. The Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) is a national credential system that trains, develops, assesses and certifies skills and competencies for the workforce.

"HCSA Community Services is privileged to be able to transform the lives of both men and women in need, helping them move out of a life of despair into one where they have a future and a hope," said Ms Dominique Choy, Executive Board Member & CEO, HCSA Community Services.

"The rice bowl is a metaphor for the basic elements that one needs to live," Ms Choy added. "By equipping our beneficiaries and other vulnerable individuals with nationally-certified qualifications in F&B, HCSA Academy hopes to give them a "rice-bowl" – the means to become employable and the ability to support themselves and their families."

“It is heartening to see that the trainees here are determined to start their lives afresh and make a living for themselves by acquiring industry-recognised and WSQ-certified F&B skills through the culinary training course offered by HCSA Academy,” said Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Member of Parliament, Jalan Besar GRC.

“With their passion for cooking, I am confident that they would be able to bring cheer to the people they cook for, and brighten their own lives in the process,” added Dr Yaacob.

Together with three other trainees, Dwight and Colin received their certificates from Dr Yaacob Ibrahim at the official launch, which was also attended by Ms Denise Phua, Member of Parliament, Jalan Besar GRC and Mayor, Central Singapore District.

Ms Choy also shared that Marina Mandarin Singapore and Aston’s have come on board as employers and will be taking on the five trainees. “We wish them all the best as they begin their journey towards a brighter future,” she said.

Colin, 55, is looking forward to starting life anew. “This course will change my life – it will help me discipline myself and stop me from mixing with bad company and going to prison again. It will help me pull away from my past, and build a better future for myself,” he said.

For Dwight, 33, being at HCSA Highpoint has helped him a lot emotionally, in terms of dealing with his fears, anxiety and depression. “Having counsellors to talk to at HCSA Highpoint and even talking to the Chefs here at the Academy makes me feel that life now has more opportunities,” he said.

“I’ve hurt and upset my mum a lot, I hope I can make it up to her someday,” he added. “I am determined to turn my life around and I believe HCSA Academy will prepare me for what lies ahead.”

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About HCSA Community Services



COMMUNITY SERVICES

HCSA Community Services, a charitable organisation with the Institute of Public Character (IPC) status and a member of the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), started in 1996 as a halfway house for recovering drug addicts and ex-offenders. Today, our work has expanded to include teenage girls who have experienced the trauma of repeated abuse and single parents with limited support.

As a family of dedicated staff, volunteer teams and corporate and community partners, we continue to serve some of the most vulnerable in society to give them a future and a hope.

Our mission to empower these vulnerable populations is achieved through our signature programmes:

HCSA HIGHPOINT – Helping ex-offenders rebuild lives

HCSA DAYSPRING Residential Treatment Centre – Giving hope to abused teenage girls

HCSA DAYSPRING SPIN – Empowering single parents

HCSA ACADEMY Culinary Training Centre – Preparing workplace ready professionals

HCSA DAYSPRING

HCSA Dayspring Residential Treatment Centre (DRTC) was set up in January 2011 to provide a safe and healing living environment for teenage girls who have been repeatedly abused. By applying effective clinical therapies in a small-group home environment, we hope to help them become healthy, productive individuals who can successfully reintegrate with their schools, families and society.

The first of its kind in Singapore, DRTC is approved and licensed by the Ministry of Social and Family Development.

Since October 2017, DRTC has embarked on the Therapeutic Group Home (TGH) model which includes Trauma System Therapy (TST), an evidence based and comprehensive phase based treatment programme for children and adolescents who have experienced trauma.

HCSA Dayspring SPIN (Single Parents INformed, INVolved and INcluded) started in April 2017 and is a new initiative in collaboration with the National Council of Social Service (NCSS), which aims to support caregiving and improve the quality of life for single parents or lone caregivers - who are unsupported or facing limited support emotionally, physically and practically.

SPIN provides access to resources through an ally network of volunteers and an interactive website, empowering single parents to make informed decisions and strengthen their social support network.

HCSA HIGHPOINT

HCSA Highpoint first started in 1995 as a halfway house to help drug addicts rebuild broken lives, and over the last two decades, it has expanded to provide a safe and substance-free home to help and support homeless male ex-offenders and those in recovery from addictions.

Today, the transitional residence focuses on offering homeless and newly-released prisoners from all races and religions a safe place to restart their lives – through a transitional living programme which empowers them to attain more permanent housing, gainful employment and financial independence, in order to live a productive life free of addictions and successfully reintegrate into society.



HCSA Academy Culinary Training Centre was officially launched in May 2018, offering a robust six-week course based on the Food Services skills framework by SkillsFuture Singapore (SSG).

The culinary training programme at the Approved Training Organisation (ATO) follows a skill-training adult-pedagogy with hands-on learning of the craft in the Academy kitchen. Trainees will receive the highly coveted **WSQ Higher Certificate in Food Services (Culinary Arts)**, with job placements facilitated upon successful completion of the course.

The Academy aims to empower and enable HCSA's beneficiaries and other vulnerable individuals with the professional skills required to secure stable employment in the F&B sector, giving them a new lease of life, and a level playing field to support themselves and their families.