

**Joint News Release**

**APSN and ASTONS Seal the Deal to form Halal-certified Enterprise**



**Singapore, 4 October 2018** - Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN), a social service organisation, has teamed up with local diner ASTONS Express in a one-year contract to rebrand its Café Sheltered Enterprise. Renamed **APSN Café for All & ASTONS Express**, this establishment will continue to provide learning opportunities to trainees at the APSN Centre for Adults (CFA) just like the former.

Similar to other APSN CFA Enterprise Programmes, all proceeds are channelled back into training programmes, and also provide nine trainees in the APSN Café for All with an allowance under the programme.

After completing the three months training, successful trainees would be offered full-time employment at the full-fledged restaurant ASTONS Specialties. If more time is needed for them to hit their learning milestones, they will be offered employment after they have been assessed to be competent in their tasks.

The APSN Café for All is currently working with Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) to obtain halal certification. This is good news for Muslim friends who will be able to take their pick from the range of ASTONS Express and APSN Café for All menu.

From preparing and serving local fusion food for the past 1.5 years, trainees have to adapt to preparing a new range of dishes. In order to ensure consistent food quality and standards, as well as train APSN trainees to cook the new dishes, Mr David Tan, ASTONS Express Restaurant Manager of nine years, was seconded to assist with training preparations, inventory and quality control.

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Donations to this Association are allowable as a deductions under Section 37(3) of the Income Tax Act

Mr Tan conducts training for Instructors at APSN Café for All, who in turn impart skills to the trainees. APSN CFA trainee Lim Yi Xiang, 27, used to prepare in-house specials like prawn pesto pasta and peri peri chicken daily. He has to relearn the ropes, and currently undergoes training to prepare hot and cold side dishes on the updated menu.

Yi Xiang has expressed his wish to learn more culinary skills in the kitchen, to which Mr Tan has recognised and he will be introducing more skills to gradually increase Yi Xiang's scope and repertoire of dishes. Some trainees have also impressed him with their dedication in showing up for work early without fail, even if they might be feeling unwell. He said, "I even had to start making it a point to check if they are sick at the start of the day."

Upon the Café's soft launch, the crew has already experienced brisker business. On the average, the Café has received a 40% increase in orders per day.

This increase in footfall has stirred up much enthusiasm among the trainees and encouraged them to work harder. 31-year-old Siti Fatimah said, "I like to greet the customers because I can make more friends! More customers also means better training for me."

Siti undergoes training during the first half of the day at APSN Café for All, and works part-time in the latter half at a local fast food joint cleaning tables and trays. She is currently learning to prepare coffee and the Café has provided that learning platform which a typical workplace would not be able to offer.

Such collaborations with the community is a step in the right direction for ASTONS. Founder and CEO of ASTONS, Mr Aston Soon said, "Writing a cheque has the tendency to make us less involved, and more distanced from the cause. Whereas collaborating requires sincerity, genuine care and for us to live up to our social responsibilities. As such this enterprise becomes much more meaningful to us."

ASTONS has been an employer partner of APSN CFA for over a year, and currently employs one trainee. Germaine Teo, 30, has worked at ASTONS Specialities in City Square Mall since July 2017, serving guests and bussing tables.

Apart from the restaurant manager whom she reports to, Germaine is also supported by an APSN Job Coach who closely monitors her learning. Over time, she has gained confidence and improved in carrying out her duties.

APSN Chief Executive Officer, Dr Christopher Tay said, "This collaboration shows our focus and commitment to empowering our trainees to become future employees. Going forward, we will look towards higher levels of training and certification to further grow the capabilities and employability of our trainees."

APSN's collaboration with ASTONS is supported by SG Enable. Other contributors toward the APSN Café for All & ASTONS Express include equipment manufacturers Artisan, and pipe producer City Gas.

Aside from the café, APSN CFA develops trainees in the following enterprise programmes of Bakery, Building & Facilities Management, Catering, Contract Work and Design & Retail.



*APSN CFA trainee, Lim Yi Xiang, dishes up sides for the lunch crowd under the supervision of APSN Instructor Ms Nur Suriani Binte Lamri.*



*Mr David Tan, Restaurant Manager from ASTONS Express guides APSN CFA trainee Ooi Leong Pin at the grill.*

In collaboration with



*APSN CFA trainee Angie Hoe serves guests with enthusiasm.*

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### **About Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN)**

Established in 1976, Association for Persons with Special Needs (APSN) is a social service organisation providing special education for persons with mild intellectual disability (IQ 50-70). Today, APSN operates four Special Education (SPED) Schools (APSN Chaoyang School, APSN Katong School, APSN Tanglin School and APSN Delta Senior School) for students aged 7 to 21, an APSN Student Care Centre for children aged 7 to 18 and an APSN Centre for Adults for persons aged 17 and older, benefiting over 1,200 beneficiaries each year.

The APSN Schools and Centre adopt a holistic approach in its curriculum, comprising academic, vocational and social skills which are important for open employment and lifelong learning. APSN seeks to enable persons with special needs to be active contributors of the society and is committed to inspire and build capabilities of its partners and community to lead and advocate an inclusive society.

To date, APSN's growing database has more than 5,000 alumni members. The Association is constantly expanding its network to reach out to and understand the needs of its members to better support them.

For more information on APSN, please visit [www.apsn.org.sg](http://www.apsn.org.sg).

### **About ASTONS**

**Aston Soon** had a simple wish – to bring quality Western cuisine to the masses at affordable prices. With an idea and the support of family and friends, he left his job as a restaurant chef to strike out on his own in 2005. **ASTONS SPECIALITIES** had its humble beginnings in a coffeeshop along East Coast Road. Before long, it gathered a loyal following (and a fair share of media interest) for its tasty fare, reasonable prices, and sincere service. Listening to customers' feedback, **ASTONS SPECIALITIES** shifted a few doors down and into its own shop-front, so that customers could dine in a more spacious and comfortable environment. Considering customers' needs and responding to their suggestions and feedback proved to be an important factor for success. Within a few years, the **ASTONS** brand established itself as a household name, synonymous with quality and affordability. Ask Aston for his recipe to success and the answer is surprisingly down-to-earth: *'For me, it's about providing quality and value-for-money food, service that makes you feel like you're with friends, and an experience that you'll remember for life.'*

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