



The themed train on the North East Line encourages families, friends, neighbours and members of the community to support people with mental health issues. To get commuters to reflect on mental health, questions are posed asking them how they would react to certain scenarios. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

## Campaign on track to raise mental health awareness

**Revathi Valluvar**

A campaign to fight the social stigma surrounding mental health issues took to the tracks yesterday morning at HarbourFront station.

A specially themed train, encouraging families, friends, neighbours and members of the community to support people with mental health conditions, set off on the North East Line, with passengers greeted by a performance of Bruno Mars' Count On Me by local singer Joseph Soh.

Mr Desmond Choo, Mayor of North East District, launched the train and said he hopes it will start conversations and raise awareness of mental health. He said: "Mental

health tends to be under-reported and understated. It is like any other illness and, with help, it is manageable and should not be stigmatised."

The brainchild of Touch Community Services, and in partnership with Nanyang Polytechnic (NYP), the themed train is scheduled to run 18 hours daily for four weeks.

The campaign intends to reach out to some 840,000 commuters, according to Moove Media, SBS Transit's advertising arm. SBS Transit operates the North East Line.

Last year's campaign also featured a themed train. But unlike last year's, which featured solely informative panels, the train displays this year include stories from people with mental health issues.

The train's six cabins feature in-

formation on three conditions: anxiety disorder, depression and schizophrenia. To get people thinking and reflecting on the issue of mental health, questions like "What would you do if she were your sister?" are posed.

Window panels carry a story for each of the three conditions. One features a woman who wanted to be known only as Ms N, who has depression and shares how lonely she felt when people told her she brought the condition on herself.

Ms N, who contemplated suicide at her lowest point, told The Straits Times the campaign is important as it encourages people not to brush aside mental health, and instead have open conversations about it.

"Before I was even diagnosed, I had already dealt with depression for two years, but I was so scared to talk about it or seek help.

"I hope this changes things for others like me," said Ms N, who is now on medication.

Students from NYP's School of Health Sciences worked with Touch to design the train. The students shortlisted the three conditions due to a perceived lack of public awareness about them.

As part of the campaign, Touch will also hold a mental health awareness night run called the Light of Hope Run on Sept 30 at Gardens by the Bay. For more details on how to take part, visit [www.lightofhope.sg](http://www.lightofhope.sg)

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