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**Speech by Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, Minister in Prime Minister's Office,  
Second Minister for Finance and Transport at the Launch of  
Central District "Celebrate Wellness", 16 May 2010**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I am delighted to be here this morning to support Central District Community leaders as they champion health for their female residents as part of Project ***Celebrate Wellness***. As they say, good health is better than money in the bank. Good health allows one to enjoy life - work, travel, take up hobbies, enjoy time spent with family and friends. With good health, one also enjoys more money - money that would otherwise be spent on hospital bills, medication etc.

2. Project ***Celebrate Wellness*** aims to rally women of different age groups, ethnic groups and backgrounds to make well-being the top priority in their lives. Often women unwittingly neglect their own health due to competing demands from work and family. In fact, without good health, we women will find it hard to work or to care for our families.

## Reaching Out District by District

3. Last October, I launched ***Celebrate Wellness*** as a two year national programme with our community partners to organise health roadshows and activities for our women. A total of 10 roadshows have been planned over the next 2 years, in different parts of the island so as to make it more accessible and convenient for our women to take part. To date, 2 roadshows have been completed in the North-East and South-East districts.

4. Our community leaders and partners have been very supportive of ***Celebrate Wellness***. Their efforts in reaching out to the women living in the community have been instrumental to the success of the initiative by the elected women Members of Parliament. I am especially happy to be here today with our Central District partners. Central is the largest district in Singapore and we would like to reach out to the women living here, many of whom are older and come from less fortunate backgrounds. A programme like ***Celebrate Wellness*** which brings community health to the doorstep of residents is especially important.

## Coverage of Other Health Issues

5. The initial priority for ***Celebrate Wellness*** was breast cancer screening as almost 30% of all cancers found in Singapore women are breast related. We have sent out letters inviting women aged 50 to 69 who have not been for mammograms in the last 3 years to be screened for breast cancer at a further subsidised rate of \$25 – half the usual subsidized rate of \$50. As at April 2010, close to 2,000 of the invited women have taken up the offer and have done their mammograms.

6. We are now moving on to expand the focus of ***Celebrate Wellness*** to include other health conditions common among women. Cervical cancer, for example, is the 6<sup>th</sup> most common cancer in Singapore women. A total of around 1,000 new cases are diagnosed in the period 2003-2007 and about 85 women die from this cancer each year. Cervical cancer can be treated effectively, if detected early through regular Pap smear screening. Hence, I would want to advise women to take this opportunity to go for a Pap smear, if you have not had one yet, as this is the Cervical Cancer Awareness Month.

7. We all fear falling ill. People often adopt a fatalistic mindset, a “if it comes, it comes” attitude to our health. But there is much that we women can do to help ourselves. For a start, we should make regular screening for breast and cervical cancers a priority.

8. The other area of rising concern is smoking. Smoking causes lung cancer. I am especially concerned about the rising prevalence of smoking among women in Singapore. We have seen an increase over the years, from 3.5% in 2004 to 3.7% in 2007. In particular, the prevalence of daily smoking among women is the highest in the 18-29 year age group. This has increased from 6.6% in 2004 to 9.1% in 2007. Some commonly cited reasons for smoking include relaxation, coping with stress and social influence. If you are a smoker, I would like to urge you to quit – there is support and help for you at the HPB booth, the quit smoking workshops and counselling services. If you are not a smoker, please don't start.

9. Ladies, sisters, daughters, mothers and grandmothers, this message is for you. Women are often the health leaders in their families. There is much that we can do to not only take care of our own health but also promote and improve our family's health. We women play a critical role especially in our children's and grandchildren's healthy development and growth. Our children and grandchildren look up to us and will follow our example.

10. Apart from the family, the community plays a key role in promoting health and reaching out to women residents. Our women MPs, community leaders, activists and volunteers have stepped forward and are leading the outreach efforts.

11. Once again, let me thank our community partners Singapore Cancer Society, Health Promotion Board, Great Eastern Life, KKH, Tsao and Khoo Foundations, Singapore Turf Club and the Totalisator Board who have provided ardent support to this project.

Thank you.