

5 teams get up to \$20k to help disabled

Winning tech ideas from month-long initiative run by MSF, SG Enable

By **AUDREY TAN**

FIVE teams will each get up to \$20,000 in grants to fund the development of technological innovations that will help improve the lives of people with disabilities.

These include a mobile phone application that helps people with autism and intellectual disability correctly pay for purchases.

Called D-Stress, the app uses images of notes and coins to help the user, who may have difficulty differentiating notes of different values, process payment.

For instance, after a cashier keys in the cost of a product – such as a bottle of water – into the application, a coloured image of a \$2 note will appear on screen. This will tell the user the accurate amount to pay.

The winning ideas, picked from 10 teams, were announced last night by Social and Family Devel-

opment Minister Chan Chun Sing.

Speaking to participants, he said: “With your diverse backgrounds, including marketing and engineering... you have brought a very rich tapestry of experience to the process.”

Held at *Scape, the event is the finale to a month-long initiative called Enabling Community Co-Lab, which aims to get groups to come up with new ideas that will make the lives of people who have disabilities easier.

The initiative kicked off last month with a two-day workshop on April 5 and 6, when students, social entrepreneurs and designers developed their ideas.

It was attended by more than 105 people, who formed a total of 25 teams.

Enabling Community CoLab is jointly organised by the Ministry of Social and Family Development (MSF) and SG Enable, an agency



Members of Group D-Stress, one of the five winning teams, are (from left) Ms Chew Hui Qin, Mr Michael John Talbot, Ms Sophia Tan and Mr Jason Wong. They developed a phone app to help those with autism and intellectual disability pay the right amount for their purchases. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

that provides services for people with disabilities.

The 10 teams that were short-listed were each given \$1,500 to prepare for the final round, which was held last night.

“Within the next few months, the five teams are expected to come back with more details and a proposal,” said Ms Ku Geok Boon, chief executive of SG Enable.

“The hope is that we can form and incubate new social enterprises.”

Each team gave a six-minute-long presentation, which included a demonstration, and took questions from the panel of five judges for four minutes.

The judges, including founder of 77th Street Elim Chew and director of disability division at MSF Wong Kuan Ying, studied

each project based on criteria such as impact and reach, visibility and scalability, innovativeness and overall team impression and presentation quality.

Analyst Sophia Tan, 30, from team D-Stress, said: “We are delighted by the endorsement given by the judges.”

The team will use \$5,500 of the grant money to pay for 15 mobile phones, including a data subscrip-

tion, for families who will benefit from the application.

Said Mr Ivan Tan, head of e-accessibility at the Society for the Physically Disabled: “The ideas shared are all very innovative, and I think they all have great promise.”

“Such events can help boost awareness of the needs of people with disabilities.”

✉ audreyt@sph.com.sg