

COMMEMORATING THE YELLOW RIBBON PROJECT'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY



YEARS OF CHAMPIONING SECOND CHANCES



**WE ARE EACH OTHER'S
SECOND CHANCES**

YELLOW RIBBON: OUR JOURNEY OF SECOND CHANCES

PART 3

We Are Each Other's Second Chances

**The talents of inmates and
ex-offenders – from art to poetry,
music to culinary skills.**

Unlocking Second Chances, Showcasing Talents

Under the Yellow Ribbon Project, various events are held to showcase the talents of inmates and ex-offenders.

Yellow Ribbon Prison Run



The Yellow Ribbon Prison Run is a flagship event that symbolises the community's support for second chances and reintegration of ex-offenders back into society. Since 2009, the run has garnered strong support from the community through their participation and donations in support of reintegration programmes for ex-offenders and their families. The run also features an end-point carnival, which includes stage performances by talented inmates and ex-offenders, and an exhibition consisting of interactive activities that showcase the reintegration journeys of ex-offenders.



Scan the QR code to catch highlights of the Yellow Ribbon Prison Run 2023.

Yellow Ribbon Community Arts Festival (formerly known as the Yellow Ribbon Art and Poetry Competition)



The Yellow Ribbon Community Arts Festival provides an opportunity for inmates and ex-offenders to showcase their artistic talents and express their thoughts, reflections, and journeys through creative means. Art and poetry are powerful tools for them to convey their emotions, experiences, and hopes for the future. This festival often reveals profound insights and personal transformations, touching the hearts of the public and fostering deeper understanding and empathy towards those who are working towards a second chance in life.



Scan the QR code to catch highlights of the Yellow Ribbon Community Arts Festival 2022.

Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competition



The Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competition provides inmates with opportunities to develop and showcase their culinary skills. Cooking can be a therapeutic activity and mastering it can open doors for them to pursue a career in the Food and Beverage industry upon their release. This competition not only helps to boost their confidence, but also demonstrates to the public and potential employers the dedication, talent, and potential of these individuals.



Scan the QR code to catch highlights of the Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competition 2023.

Yellow Ribbon Songwriting Competition



The Yellow Ribbon Songwriting Competition empowers inmates and ex-offenders to channel their thoughts and emotions into music, offering them a voice through their songs. Music has the unique ability to heal, connect, and inspire. Through the competition, the participants get to write and compose original music, often reflecting on their past, dreams, and aspirations for a better future.



Scan the QR code to catch the full Yellow Ribbon Songwriting Competition 2021.

Throughout the years, each of these events and competitions played a critical role in the Yellow Ribbon Project's mission to unlock the second prison — the societal barriers faced by ex-offenders after their release as they seek acceptance and a fresh start. By bringing their talents to the forefront, these events helped to break down prejudices and build bridges between ex-offenders and the community.

Beyond the diverse talents displayed across the different events, the artwork, recipes, poems, and song lyrics demonstrated the inmates' and ex-offenders' repentance, hope, resilience, and longing for a better future. Just as they received second chances from their loved ones and society, some of them have also gone on to become givers of second chances and hope to others.

In this publication, you will find some of the works by inmates and ex-offenders who had participated in the various Yellow Ribbon events and competitions over the years, showcasing their emotions and expression across the themes of

HOPE, RESILIENCE and **FAMILY**

You will also find stories of those who had received second chances and are now paying it forward by helping others in their reintegration journeys.

HOPE

The Yellow Ribbon Project is fundamentally anchored in the concept of hope and second chances for ex-offenders seeking reintegration into society. It embodies the belief in transformation and redemption, advocating for community acceptance and support.

Brand New Day

Verse 1

Grey cloud in the sky
Reflecting how I feel inside
Nothing ever feels alright
In a room full of regrets
Drowning in a pain I can't forget
And no one ever seems to care

Pre-Chorus

I will keep on fighting for my life
The struggle's real there's nowhere
left to hide
I will face my battles full of pride

Chorus

Now that I've seen my guiding light
I'm coming home to set things right
I've found my way
Won't turn back again
Here's to a brighter brand new day

Verse 2

This journey my friend
Is a long road that will never end
Recovery with no pretense
This future ahead
Has opened up the door for me
Taking it step by step... Oh...

Pre-Chorus

I will keep on fighting for my life
The struggle's real there's nowhere
left to hide
I will face my battles full of pride

Chorus 1

Now that I've seen my guiding light
I'm coming home to set things right
I've found my way
Won't turn back again
Here's to a brighter brand new day

Chorus 2

I look up and see the great beyond
And my past is now long gone
I've found my way
Won't turn back again
Here's to a brighter brand new day
It's gonna be a brighter brand
new day



Scan the QR code to
listen to the song.

Flight of Liberty



“

Imagining birds in mid-flight and meditating on the sense of freedom they must experience as they soar to great heights - this was how an inmate artist wished to express his own Flight of Liberty, a journey that he hoped to one day embark on with his loved ones.

”

Water Cress and Pineapple Stir-fried Chicken with Chilli Sauce



"Since I was young, I have been very interested in cooking. During weekends or festive occasions, I would cook up a delicious feast for my loved ones and friends. For a dish to turn out well, one has to involve his five senses and put in effort wholeheartedly. To sum it up, my cooking may not be of a chef's standard but I believe that I can cook well. I am not afraid of competition as I have confidence in myself."

“

This inmate believed in his ability to cook, indicating a positive self-image. His recognition of his culinary limitations showed that he saw room for improvement. His belief in his efforts reflected a focus on the process rather than just the outcome.

”

RESILIENCE

Reintegration is a journey filled with obstacles, from overcoming personal hurdles to facing societal stigma. The resilience of inmates and ex-offenders is integral to their efforts to rebuild their lives, often requiring them to overcome significant barriers to employment, social acceptance, and self-worth. By organising events and competitions in art, culinary arts and songwriting, the Yellow Ribbon Project empowers them to develop new skills and express themselves. This empowerment fosters resilience, enabling them to see beyond their past and work towards a constructive future.

The Deeper End

Deep into the nooks
and crannies, the books
of meaning and wonder,
the splendour.

There is no equation
to such golden proportions,
no need to ponder
just wander.

Stumble and fall,
bumps into walls
youths do not miss
the euphoria and the bliss.
I must insist,

Dance until your feet are weary,
roar your hearts as if you're furry
to the frontiers of your mind
and battle the north wind.
But I must remind,
how the sun can make you blind.

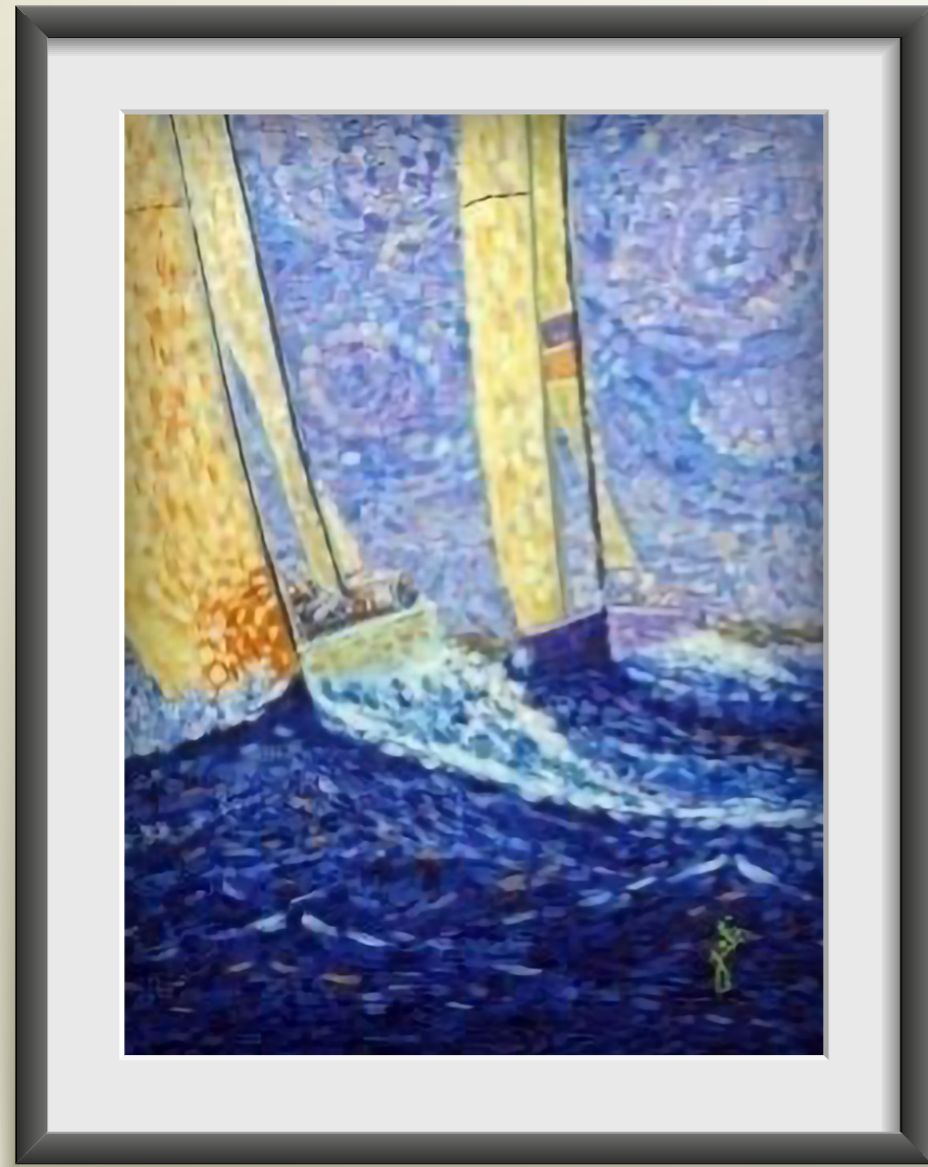
And the darkness, oh it will come,
shards of loneliness
and crushing emptiness.
You must remain calm.

For in solitude there is a friend,
confident and ready to hold your
hand. Recognise and acknowledge
for he is not one to disparage.

Seek your centre. Grip it!
Pace as you see fit.
Climb to the pinnacle. Climb!
Into the radiance of the sublime,

Majestic as you unfold,
chords so sweet, lights so bold
emanating from within.
Life shall now begin.

Breaking Waves



“

Life is a choppy open sea which no man can face alone. Through the belief of strength in unity, we can overcome any obstacle that will come our way.

”

Nothing else matters, as long as I have you



“

In a painting dedicated to her brother, this inmate reimagined the obstacles in her life to be akin to whirlpools. Throughout her journey, her brother had been her source of companionship and motivation, and she expressed her gratitude through this artwork.

”

சிந்தனை செய் மனமே

(Think, My Mind)

சிலநேரம் சிந்தித்து சிந்தனை செய் மனமே
சீர்கெட்டுபோய் சின்னாப் பின்னாமான் உன் வாழ்க்கை நிலமை
ஒரு நொடி நேரம் ஏன் செய்தேன் இந்த மடமை
இன்று சிறையில் அடைப்பட்டு இருப்பதோ என் கடமை
பலமுறை சிந்திக்காமல் தவறு செய்தது என் பேதமை
இனி ஒரு போதும் தவறு செய்யாதிருப்பேன் என எடுப்பேன் மனதிண்மை
பலகாலம் சிறையில் இருந்து கற்றேன் சில நந்திறமை
இன்று அதில் ஒன்று தான் நான் பேசும் வாய்மை
இங்கு பல இனத்துடன் அன்பு காட்டும் தண்மை
அது அனைவருக்கும் மனதாற் வளர வேண்டும் பான்மை
இங்கே காவல் அதிகாரிகளிடம் இல்லை ஒரு கோடுமை
இனிமேல் நான் சிறைக்கு வரமாட்டேன் என்பது உண்மை
முன்னாள் கைதிகளுக்கு மஞ்சள்நாடா செய்யும் உதவி மேன்மை
இனி அனைவரும் அதற்கு கரம் கொடுப்பதே நம் உரிமை
இனிமேல் நாட்டிற்கு நற்குடிமகன் என்று பேர் எடுப்பது நமக்கு பெருமை
அது தான் நமது சிந்தனையின் மகிமை

“

This poem described the journey from making mistakes to learning from them, and then committing to a better future. It also highlighted the role of the Yellow Ribbon Project in helping ex-offenders reintegrate back into society.

”

Belitan Illusi

(Entanglement of Illusion)

Di ruang perjalanan ini terjat aku oleh
Belitan illusi
Yang terkulai tanganku yang terdiam doaku
Membuat ku kalah dalam pilihan nuraini
Kekadang... tercelik aku pada sedar yang panjang,
Dalam kegelishan perjuangan,
Kecamuk diri dalam himpunan kekusutan,
Lantas aku merasai kehilangan itu.
Lalu aku ingin kembali mengutip sisa-sisa harapan,
Dan beredar dengan diri seputih salju,
Dalam redha cintaku padanya.
Bilakah lagi harus ku ulangi perjalanan-perjalan yang lewat,
Sedang diriku bagaikan awan, bergerak terombang-ambing,
Dimamah usia waktu...
Akulah kini.... Yang sedang mencari bekal diri
Sesekali aku kalah dalam selekoh kehidupan, yang penuh
madu serta racunnya.
Namun... Segala kepincangan itu akan tetap bersemadi di hati,
Untuk aku jadikan pedoman di masa depan.
Sesungguhnya, kegagalan hari ini,
Bukanlah penghalang di esok hari.

“

This poem explored the themes of struggle, self-reflection, hope and resilience in the face of life's challenges.

”

New Dreams

Verse 1

I'm trying hard, just to be there
Both of my feet are leading nowhere
I'm counting the days
I'm finding my ways
Telling myself
Hey man you can

Pre-Chorus

I'm gonna be brave
To ride the waves
Whatever may come
Abandon my fear
With all of my heart, I'll make a start
I believe, I can achieve

Chorus

Just like an eagle soaring high
Nothing can come in my way as I fly
Over the hills through the sky
All the freedom that lies in my heart

I'm gonna be strong, believe in myself
All on my own, I'm depending on no one else
Gotta move on with hope in my hand
With a new me, with new dreams I can

Verse 2

I lived my life, the way that I chose
At peace with all that I had to lose
I've counted the days
I'm mending my ways
Telling myself
Hey man you can

Pre-Chorus

I'm gonna be brave
To ride the waves
Whatever may come
Abandon my fear
With all of my heart, I'll make a start
I believe I can achieve...

Chorus

Just like an eagle soaring high
Nothing can come in my way as I fly
Over the hills through the sky
All the freedom that lies in my heart

I'm gonna be strong, believe in myself
All on my own, I'm depending on no one else
Gotta move on with hope in my hand
With a new me, with new dreams
A new me, with new dreams I can



Scan the QR code to
listen to the song.

Chicken Briyani with Curry Chicken Dum and Yoghurt Achar



"When I was young, I used to assist my mother in running a hawker stall. We would sell all sorts of Malay cuisines such as Mee Rebus and Mee Soto. I also used to cook for staff meals when I was deployed at A5 Kitchen. Hence, through this competition, I hope to challenge and improve my culinary skills."

“

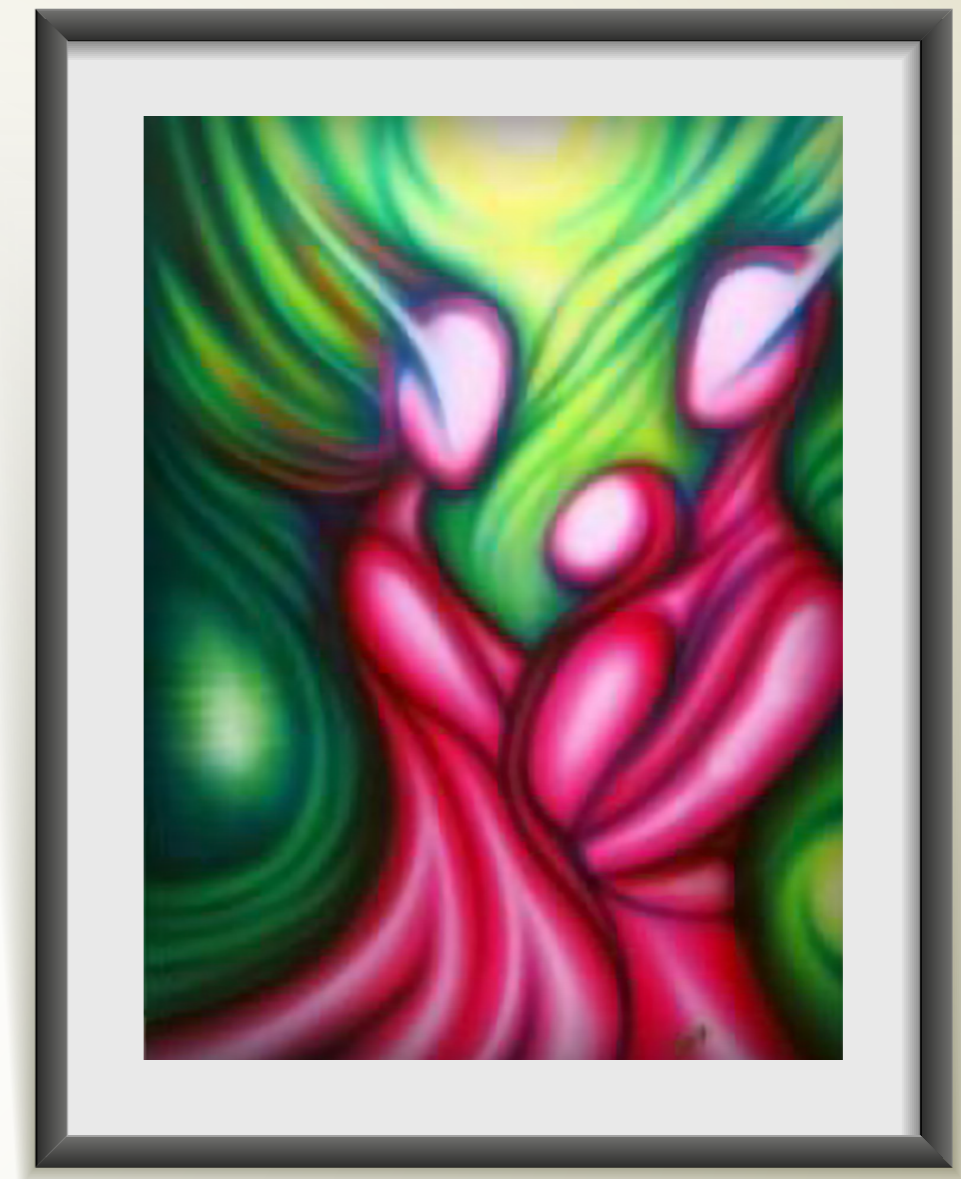
Having picked up culinary skills from a young age, this inmate had a head start in the F&B industry. Incarceration did not halt his opportunity to hone his skills. Instead, this inmate demonstrated the spirit of self-improvement through practice and took the opportunities given to him by participating in the Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competition.

”

FAMILY

The positive impact of a supportive family environment on the reintegration process cannot be overstated. Family support can significantly reduce the likelihood of recidivism, enhance mental well-being, and improve the chances of securing employment and achieving a stable life. Family is not just a support system; it's a crucial element in the rehabilitation process. It offers emotional grounding, acceptance, and a sense of belonging that can significantly influence an ex-offender's journey towards a positive future.

In Memory of



“

Depicted in striking pink and green and featuring the figures of a mother and father with a child cradled in their arms, this painting epitomized the innocence and joy of a young family. In this artwork, the inmate reflected on the negatives of his past and wished to dedicate this painting to his parents in gratitude for their continued positive guidance.

”

My Baby Girl

Verse 1

It's been a while
Since the last time I saw you
Now you've grown up
There's resemblance of me in you

Verse 2

The way you smile
You just took my breath away
One look at your face
Makes me stronger each day

Bridge

Because of you, I make a vow
Not going back, to my old ways.
If you understand me by now,
Listen to what I've to say

Chorus

You're my baby girl
How I long to be with you
I wanna be by your side
And do the things Daddies do

Cos you're my baby girl
And I always dream of you
Never wanna leave you again
It's the last thing I'd do

I've done you wrong
I wanna make it up to you
By singing you this song
I dedicate my love for you



Scan the QR code to
listen to the song.

领悟

(Realisation)

在宁静的夜里，我被无情的舍弃
残酷的事实已无形中把我推向了寂寞边界
在浩瀚宇宙中，我如一颗渺小的沙砾
在我彷徨无助时，你献出最真诚的心
你对我无微不至的呵护，我却视而不见
你屡次三翻的叮咛，换来我的一意孤行
你陪我走过了坎坷与波折，造就了我生命的精彩
对这不知悔改的心，你始终不愿放弃
岁月苍桑，我终于有了懊悔的心
在这漫长的人生路上，感谢你与我结伴同行
你在我的生命里创造了吹追璀璨夺目的光辉
请你允许我这醒悟的心，在此对你说声
对不起。。。我爱你

“

In a quiet moment of reflection, this inmate wrote about how he had responded to his loved one's care with rebellion. As he looked back, he felt a sense of thankfulness for his loved one's perseverance in caring for him, and was apologetic for his past actions.

”

Hainanese Steamed Chicken Rice



"I have always enjoyed cooking for my family back at home. Thus, my intention is not to win the competition, but to win the hearts of my loved ones who have been there for me all along."

“

This inmate's longing for his family's continuous acceptance was his driving force to take part in the Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competition. The desire to reconnect with his family served as a powerful springboard, motivating him to want to change for the better.

”

Mr. Muhammad Ridhuan Bin Jailer

Visual Artist

Member of CANVAS Art Interest Group



Ridhuan's journey of self-expression and redemption through art began when he first took part in art competitions held in prison in 2009 and 2010 during his incarceration. Subsequently, his involvement in the Yellow Ribbon Community Arts Festival from 2014 to 2019 shaped him in significant ways.

The events presented Ridhuan with a formidable challenge that demanded more than just artistic skill; it required a

delicate balance of conceptualization, execution, and presentation. The intensity of this challenge, rather than overwhelming him, provided Ridhuan with the environment he needed to put his perseverance and skill to the test. As he grappled with canvases and colours, Ridhuan found himself cultivating more than just artistic technique. He gained the discipline needed as part of his journey in art-making. This soon began to permeate into other aspects of his life, nurturing his patience and understanding towards others, qualities that would later prove invaluable in his volunteering efforts.

Reflecting on his artistic journey, Ridhuan's eyes lit up with a mixture of humility and wonder. "The ability to create art," he mused, "is a gift from God, even if its appreciation is subjective." This perspective shift – seeing life through the lens of creativity – kindled in him a desire to give back. Once a receiver of second chances, Ridhuan became a giver of second chances by mentoring aspiring inmate artists from the Visual Arts Hub located in Changi Prison Complex, guiding them towards their own participation in the Yellow Ribbon Community Arts Festival in 2022 and 2024.



Ridhuan with one of his artworks titled "Correctional Intuition"

Yet, Ridhuan's transformation wasn't solely self-driven. He recalled a time when he believed his past would forever define him, an indelible mark colouring others' perceptions of him despite their best efforts not to do so. This belief, however, was challenged by Mr. David John George, a prison officer Ridhuan met during his time in prison.

David saw Ridhuan as not just an inmate, but a person with untapped potential. Recognizing Ridhuan's artistic spark, he urged him to pursue the positive things that he was most passionate about, which included art, and to strive for more meaningful achievements in life. These weren't just empty encouragements. David took steps to help Ridhuan, and his act of faith helped to open the doors for Ridhuan to a network of people who

have shaped his journey to where he stands today.

Now, as Ridhuan looks back on his journey, he is still fuelled by an overwhelming sense of gratitude to David and would like to say this to him: "Mr. David John George, if you're reading this, thank you for making a difference in my life."

Ridhuan's story stands as a testament to the power of art and second chances. It reminds us that sometimes, all it takes is one person to see beyond the surface and offer a second chance. This can ignite a transformative journey that reshapes a future once thought predetermined.

Mr. Mohammad Ridzwan Bin Abdol Latiff

Self-Employed

(Podcaster/Video & Sound Editor) Be Real! Let's Talk



In a world often defined by its challenges and obstacles, Ridzwan's journey stood out as a beacon of hope and transformation. An ex-offender, Ridzwan had rewritten his story through the power of music and unwavering support from his loved ones, proving that change was possible.

In 2021, Ridzwan took a leap of faith by participating in the Yellow Ribbon Songwriting Competition. The competition helped him hone his critical thinking skills and taught him how to adapt and persevere under pressure. Earning the title of 2nd Runner-Up was a testament to Ridzwan's resilience and determination. These lessons became the bedrock of his current success, allowing him to tackle challenges in his current job with newfound confidence.

Ridzwan's transformation was deeply intertwined with the steadfast support of his family. His wife, in particular, had been a pillar of strength, and also a

constant source of encouragement and his biggest cheerleader. Ridzwan was also grateful to his mentors Aaron and Chi Sheng at Intune Music for the valuable experiences and trust provided. The learning and growth he encountered there shaped him both personally and professionally, providing him with the tools to navigate life's complexities and embrace his potential fully.

Driven by a desire to make a meaningful impact, Ridzwan channelled his passion into his work and latest project, the podcast, 'BE REAL, LET'S TALK!'. The podcast offers a platform for like-minded individuals to discuss everyday struggles, challenges, as well as the realities of friendship and familial relationships. Ridzwan hopes to provide a safe space for people to feel understood and connected, turning his own experiences into a source of inspiration and solace for others. Ridzwan's story is a powerful reminder that we can be each other's second chances.

Aaron, Ridzwan's mentor, had a first impression of Ridzwan as friendly, outgoing, and responsible. Ridzwan's approachable nature and infectious humour created an atmosphere for creativity to thrive, filling rehearsals with positive energy.

Their journey together had been marked by significant milestones, including performances such as the annual Red Dot August at Esplanade and various 'HeARTs In The City' gigs. Ridzwan had also demonstrated his talent and dedication across multiple events, including the recent launch of 'Moving HeARTs In The City' at LASALLE.

What truly stood out to Aaron was Ridzwan's determination for personal growth. Ridzwan had sought to upgrade his music education by pursuing a music diploma, supported by the Yellow Ribbon Fund STAR (Skills Training Assistance to Restart) Bursary. Ridzwan and his wife

had also contributed back to the band by supporting his band members on their music journey. His commitment had taught Aaron that having faith and supporting the team would establish more trust and camaraderie among the band, showing that mentorship goes both ways. Aaron hopes that Ridzwan will be able to use his energy and podcast to guide more people to stick to the right path and change their lives for the better.

Their story demonstrates that second chances can lead to profound transformations and stands as a testament to the power of support and trust in shaping lives for the better.



Mr. Mohammad Ridzwan Bin Abdol Latiff (L) and his mentor, Mr. Aaron Matthew Lim (R)
Master Vocal Coach, Intune Music School Director, Singaporean Singer

Chef Royce Lee

Chef Mentor for Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competitions 2020, 2021 and 2022
Chef Judge in Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competition 2023

Chef Royce's journey from ex-offender to celebrated chef is a testament to the power of second chances and unwavering family support. His culinary career took flight when Chef Benny Sze



Teo recommended him to participate in the King of Culinary contest, where he impressed with his skills and passion.

His expertise in the kitchen was honed during his time in prison, where he served as Executive Chef for the Prison Luncheon Club, cooking for VVIPs including former President S.R. Nathan. This experience laid the foundation for his future success and his commitment to giving back to the community.

A turning point in his life came in 2017 when he was inspired by his mother's unwavering support and a poignant Chinese proverb: "树欲静而风不止, 子欲养而亲不持". This proverb, which means "The tree desires calm but the wind will not cease; the child desires to support the parents but the parents will not hold," resonated deeply with Chef Royce. It reflects the complexities of life and relationships, reminding him that while circumstances may be challenging, his desire to care for his parents and make amends remained strong. This realisation, along with his mother's letters and the cookbooks she provided during his incarceration, motivated him to turn his life around.

His culinary skills reached new heights when he won two knives in Season 1 of the King of Culinary on Channel 8 in 2019 with his signature dish: Rack of Lamb with Pistachio Herb Crust. This victory catapulted him into the culinary spotlight and opened new doors in his career. He recommended this dish not only for its delicious flavour but also for its symbolic meaning. The rack of lamb represented his journey from a cook to a distinguished chef. The pistachio crust, which required careful preparation by peeling off the excess brown parts, symbolised the attention to details and dedication required in culinary arts. Moreover, the Chinese name for pistachio, "开心果", literally means "happy fruit", reflecting his hope to

bring joy and happiness to others through his cooking.

Today, he is not only a successful chef but also a mentor and judge for the Yellow Ribbon Culinary Competition, inspiring and training others. His future plans include launching a Ready-to-Eat social enterprise in 2025, aimed at providing training and job opportunities for ex-offenders and others interested in embarking on careers in the F&B industry.

Chef Royce's story is one of resilience, redemption, and the transformative power of culinary arts, demonstrating that with support and determination, it's possible to overcome past mistakes and build a successful, meaningful career.

