NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOL STUDENTS OUTPERFORM PEERS
IN NEW POLY’S UNCONVENTIONAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

SINGAPORE – 15 May 2004 – Neighbourhood school students prove that they can outshine their fiercest competition academically as well as in CCA, at Republic Polytechnic’s inaugural Student Awards Ceremony. Of the 90 award winners to be lauded at the ceremony today at the Institute of Public Administration, Buona Vista branch, 95% are former neighbourhood school students.

In recognition of their hard work and efforts, five of The Republic’s industry partners are sponsoring book prizes for outstanding students of each school as well as for excellent contributions to co-curricular activities (CCAs). A total of S$9,800 of book prizes will be given out at the ceremony with Ms Indranee Rajah, MP of Tanjong Pagar GRC, as the Guest-of-honour for this event.

Not only will the top students of each diploma programme be recognized. Amongst the list of awards to be given out include: Most Outstanding Team Presentation, Best Reflection Journal Entry, Sportsman & Sportswoman of the Year award as well as Sports Team of the Year. This puts a premium on not just pure academic performance but also recognises the other aspects of a balanced education ie. teamwork, sporting excellence as well as daily performance in school.

These pioneer students have displayed true grit and determination in their pursuit of their studies as well as CCAs.

Deputy Registrar of The Republic, Mr Sean Tay notes that the first batch of students have done admirably in rising to the challenge in adjusting to the Problem-Based Learning approach (PBL). “We have seen students who found PBL very challenging in the beginning, but through consistent discipline and hard work, they have adjusted well to it and have outperformed themselves. PBL allows students to exercise creativity in the way they want to learn and once students have discovered that, this fuels their thirst and hunger for knowledge,” commented Mr Tay.

In its first year of existence, Republic Polytechnic has seen its students participate in poly-wide events such as the Poly Forum as well as at national level competitions such as the Worldskills Singapore 2004. Despite being only first year students, The Republic has done itself proud in attaining finalist positions and in impressing judges with their oratorical skills and public speaking.

Attached in Annex I is the list of the main prize winners as well as their backgrounds and how they came to achieve their goals in life.
ANNEX I

ACADEMIC AWARDS

ARIFF B ABDUL AZIZ

NEIGHBOURHOOD STUDENTTurns TOP WINNER

School of Applied Science - Best Student (1st)
Centre for Innovation & Enterprise People Management Youth Award Winner
Centre for Innovation & Enterprise Best Overall Student
Lien Foundation Scholar

The old cliché ‘overcoming all odds’ underpins the plight of Republic Polytechnic student, Ariff bin Abdul Aziz, a true survivor of life’s cruel realities.

Motivated by his family’s challenging economic situation, this former neighbourhood school student has surprised everyone, including himself, with his stellar academic performance, emerging as Top Student of his school and winning other awards (listed above) along the way.

His father braves long nights as a security guard against ailing health, while his housewife mother scrimps and saves whatever she can - all to buy Ariff a future in university. The long hours of his father’s job makes family-time an unaffordable luxury.

Fully aware of the sacrifices his family makes for him, Ariff pours his heart into becoming a person they can be proud of. His goal is to get as much experience as possible at the poly. Hence his passionate pursuit of co-curricular activities like the inter-poly debates, poly forum, the speaking club, the writing club, and the Student Ambassadors group.

He does not neglect to help his own peers as well. Ariff founded and championed for a Visual Basics Support group called Computing Help Clinic which conducts sessions every Saturday to help students who are weak in computing applications. He has been teaching every weekend since it began last year.

Eventually, Ariff hopes to pursue biological sciences at NUS/NTU or even, with the help of scholarships, read biomedical sciences in an overseas university. His secret dream is to return to Republic Polytechnic as a Facilitator.

In his free time, this former Kranji Secondary School student enjoys surfing the Internet and chatting online.
TEOH QI WEI

NEW LEARNING APPROACH HELPS HIM SUCCEED

School of Information & Communications Technology – Best Overall Student (1st)
Diploma in IT - 2nd Prize / Top Student

Dissatisfied with the ‘old school’ way of learning, Teoh Qi Wei sought a brand new perspective and found it in Republic Polytechnic when he graduated from Anglican High School in 2003.

After a year in Republic Polytechnic, Qi Wei learnt that the sheer joy of pursuing knowledge is the real key to success, instead of merely slaving for good grades. He went beyond the curriculum to learn about IT on his own, and surpassed even his own expectations in schoolwork.

The only child of a housewife and mechanic, his parents came to Singapore from Malaysia in their late teens with very little education. This filial son feels ‘guilty’ seeing his parents struggle, and realizes the only way to repay them is by getting good grades.

He discovered the poly’s emphasis on self-directed learning and working in a team suited him perfectly. It is the sense of empowerment that spurs him on to do more, beyond the recommended reading.

Qi Wei is a student leader in the Adventure Learning Club. Drawing from his experience in the Boys’ Brigade, he has helped to plan camps in places such as Pulau Ubin, and upcoming trips to Mt Ophir and Jerangkang in Pahang.

In his spare time, this young man indulges in a unique hobby: aqua-scaping.

CARLICITAS VALERYAN TAN

THINKING OUT OF THE BOX

School of Engineering - Best Overall Student (1st)
Diploma in Electronics Engineering - 1st Prize / Top Student

Carlicitas is an Indonesian student who came to Republic Polytechnic after taking his GCE ‘O’ Levels in Singapore as a private candidate. He is Vice President of the poly’s drama group, Create.Republic, and an active Student Union leader who contributes in many ways, such as during the poly’s open house. Besides this, he is also involved in basketball, the Freshmen Orientation Programme and other student and academic activities. He is also a Student Ambassador.

Carlicitas feels that the Problem Based Learning approach at Republic Polytechnic has taught him to think out of the box, and to approach a problem from all angles.

QIAN LINGYAN

INITIATIVE AND ATTITUDE CRITICAL TO SUCCESS

Most Improved Student
School of Information & Communications Technology - Best Overall Student (2nd)
For PRC student Qian Lingyan, the idea of traveling thousands of miles alone to a strange land to study was exciting. But her parents were deeply concerned. With a less than proficient command of the English language, Lingyan arrived in Republic Polytechnic, unfazed by all the obstacles she had to face.

She had no one to help her. But she had two things in her favour - oodles of initiative and a highly positive attitude. Lingyan decided to learn English by listening to the local radio stations and reading a wide range of books. In no time at all, she no longer had to struggle to understand her facilitators during class and was soon scoring better grades than her Singaporean classmates.

To pay her bills, Lingyan gives private tuition and works as a part-time waitress four times a week after school. If the strenuous long days have taken a toll on Lingyan, it certainly does not show.

Today, the avid fan of oil painting and classical music does extremely well in school and still manages time for CCA. She has interests in business and IT, and after graduation, she hopes to land a job here as a web designer.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARDS**

**LI YIJUN**

**HELPING SPECIAL FRIENDS**

Combining community service with pleasure – that is what soccer fanatic Li Yijun has decided to do, and to great success. This young man has been training the intellectually disabled to play soccer for the past two years.

He first found out about the Special Olympics committee's need for volunteer soccer coaches when he was in Secondary 4. Since then, every Saturday afternoon, YiJun has been faithfully helping to coach this team and organising them to play at matches.

After a year of interacting with his special friends, he has learnt how to communicate with them. He says, "They are easily distracted by noises, so during a briefing, I have to constantly remind them to pay attention."

Working with the group gives him a tremendous sense of satisfaction, and is a way for him to relax and de-stress. His father supports him fully. Last year, together with the team, Yijun attended Ireland's Special Olympic games. This was also Singapore's first ever national soccer team to make it to the Special Olympics. Though they did not win anything, Yijun feels proud of their achievement.

Yijun is a student at the School of Applied Science and is also a recipient of the Lien Foundation Bursary.

**LUKMAN HAKIM BIN MUHAMMAD**

**GIVING FROM THE HEART**

Charity, to Lukman, means uncompromising dedication and generosity of spirit. His deep empathy for the less fortunate springs from his humble background. His father passed away 10 years ago and his mum, who works as a secretary, single-handedly raised Lukman and his two sisters.

Lukman is passionate about volunteer work. When others need help, Lukman unquestioningly gives it, in whatever way he can, and never expects anything in return. To him, charity knows no racial or religious
boundaries.

The Welfare Secretary of the Student Executive Committee and founding member of the Service Learning Club, this young man teaches children every Sunday at Darul Arqam (Muslim Converts Association). His volunteerism is not limited to the Malay community. He has collaborated with other non-Muslim organizations in various charity projects.

Next month, he is going to Sumatra to build an orphanage - a joint project by MCDS, Al-Khir Mosque and Mercy Relief.

Lukman has had to make some sacrifices because of his passion. He may attend up to 4 meetings a day, after school, and spends quite a bit on taxi fare to make sure he arrives punctually for meetings. He once even took a taxi at 3am to help a friend in distress!

Lukman is a student at the School of Applied Science.

**SPORTS AWARDS**

**CHAN BAO SHEN**

**SPORTSMAN OF THE YEAR, MERITORIOUS AWARD (SILVER)**

“I won’t feel comfortable if I don’t perspire.” Chan Bao Shen is addicted to sports. When he was 10, he was already playing basketball fearlessly with older and bigger 16-year-olds. He played competitively at the tender age of 12 and won zone awards for his primary school. A bout of asthma set him back in Sec 1 but did not hold him back for long. He got back into the groove in Sec 2 and became part of both the soccer and basketball teams in Queensway Secondary School, going on to win zone championships.

On top of that, he was recruited into the Tanjong Pagar Football Club under-16 wing. Now, he captains Republic Polytechnic’s soccer team and still manages to be on top of his schoolwork.

He speaks fondly of his mentor and friend, his current soccer coach. Bao Shen is inspired by the coach’s professionalism and hopes to become a teacher-cum-soccer coach like him.

Bao Shen cites S-League player, Tan Kim Leng, as his role model and benchmark for soccer skills. When asked why he likes sports so much, he enthused, “It’s a great way to relieve my stress in work and BGR problems … better than moping at home!”

**MICHELLE CHANG KIA HUI**

**SPORTSWOMAN OF THE YEAR, MERITORIOUS AWARD (SILVER)**

Sporting sun-kissed hair and a luxurious bronze tan, Michelle is all smiles when she describes her love for basketball. As captain of Republic Polytechnic’s basketball team, she gushes that basketball is all about the ‘self-challenging’ element, which she claims is “the adrenaline rush from the pressure of overcoming every individual opponent” she faces off in each game.

Michelle’s dream is to be part of the Singapore National team. She would also like to impart her keen ball
sense to other young people by becoming a basketball coach or PE teacher.

During her earliest foray into basketball at Navalbase Primary School, Michelle had already found her source of inspiration in her then PE teacher and coach. To this day, she still returns to Navalbase Pri Sch to help him coach the younger players.

As current captain of the poly’s female basketball team, she admits juggling training sessions and schoolwork can be difficult but emphasizes that with a little grit, coping well is definitely possible. With whatever free time she has, Michelle also rockclimbs and swims.