

SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE AWARDS 2015

SPECIAL

Honouring leaders, inspiring youth

Spirit of Enterprise continues its mission of recognising entrepreneurs and encouraging youngsters to follow their business dreams

IAN DE COTTA

THE Spirit of Enterprise (SOE) has been recognising the contributions of entrepreneurs of Singapore's small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) for the past 13 years.

In January, the non-governmental organisation boosted entrepreneurship further for SMEs when it launched the SOE-Credit Suisse Entrepreneurs Forum.

The series, featuring experts on various topics, is tailored to offer entrepreneurs insights on how to face challenges and grow their enterprises.

The first seminar titled "Is Mergers and Acquisitions (M&A) the Next Step for Successful Entrepreneurs?" was followed by another one in August — "SMEs: Expanding Overseas".

"Spirit of Enterprise's collaboration with Credit Suisse AG in organising a series of Entrepreneurs Forums is an extension of our vision in promoting and advancing entrepreneurship in Singapore, and another milestone in our efforts to honour and inspire Singapore's entrepreneurs," says Mrs Grace Chong-Tan, SOE president and founder and managing director of Smile Inc Dental Surgeons.

According to Ms Alison Lim, deputy market group head (Singapore), Credit Suisse Private Banking Asia Pacific, the financial institution's partnership with SOE is part of its focus in helping to further nurture entrepreneurship in Singapore.

"It is to celebrate the spirit of inno-



vation, enterprise and entrepreneurship that has been central to the success of the country," says Ms Lim.

"As part of Credit Suisse's partnership with SOE, we collaborate to provide the SOE alumni with a series of talks, presentations and cosy 'Fireside Chats' on topics closest to the hearts of entrepreneurs."

Successful entrepreneurs

SOE was established in 2003 to advance entrepreneurship in Singapore, and recognise the men and women behind the achievements of homegrown SMEs.

On Monday, the SOE Awards honoured 35 entrepreneurs in businesses ranging from the supply of water dispensers and souvenirs to IT and freight forwarding. The guest of honour was Ms Low Yen Ling, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry.



Honourees of the Spirit of Enterprise Awards 2015 with the guest of honour, Ms Low Yen Ling, Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Trade and Industry (front row, 10th from left), and Mrs Grace Chong-Tan (front row, ninth from left). PHOTO: SOE

Mr Mohamed Ismail Gafoor, head of PropNex Realty, clinched the prestigious SOE-Nexia TS Entrepreneur of the Year Award.

The SOE-Nexia TS Entrepreneur of the Year Award is given to past honourees whose businesses have since seen significant progress.

Among the other winners are Mr Jeffrey Tan of AOX, Data Terminator's David Ong, Ms Mary Goh of Garden Home Crystal Palace, Intertrans Shipping's Kelvin Tan and Netcentric's Cheo Ming Shen.

This year, five students — Joelyn Chan, Vishnu Varathan, Ng Qing Hao, Yeo Bo Wen, Muhammed Shahrizuan — won the SOE-Charles & Keith Best Student Interviewer Award.

Besides recognising the achievements of top entrepreneurs and encouraging entrepreneurship to flourish, SOE's other mission is to inspire Singaporeans, especially the

young, to pursue this path.

It has been doing this through various initiatives.

The most ambitious is its Student Interviews Programme, where tertiary undergraduates meet successful entrepreneurs and document their stories.

While the aim is to spark an interest in business among the student interviewers, the stories on those nominated for an award are collated and reviewed by the SOE board of governors to pick the winners.

Discussion with winner

Another is the Student Entrepreneur Programme targeted at the grassroots, especially students in primary and secondary schools.

Through this programme, young Singaporeans are given an opportunity to participate in a discussion with an SOE award winner.

The hope is that through such close interaction, they will be motivated to follow their business dreams. This year, the focus is on those who are financially underprivileged.

Since its inception, the SOE Awards have honoured 421 entrepreneurs.

Some notable companies that have won include Achieve Group, Aibi, Bioskin, Charles & Keith, Cordlife, HungryGoWhere.com, Passion Hair Salon, Pest Busters, Propnex, Scanteak, Thai Express and Ya Kun.

"The SOE Awards are an enduring platform not just to commemorate Singapore's finest entrepreneurs for their outstanding vision, but also a stage to share their exemplary stories with us," says Mrs Chong-Tan.

"Into its 13th year, the Spirit of Enterprise Awards remain steadfast in the mission to honour our local business people and inspire our next generation of youths."

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MRS GRACE CHONG-TAN
president and founder, SOE
and managing director,
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