



Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat (centre) with Singapore Youth Award recipients (from left) mental health advocate Cho Ming Xiu, Bringing Love to Every Single Soul founder Francesca Phoebe Wah, marine biologist Neo Mei Lin, lawyer Sujatha Selvakumar and Unseen Art Initiatives founder Alecia Neo. The other two winners, world-renowned conductor Wong Kah Chun and silat world champion Sheik Farhan Sheik Alau'ddin, were not present. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

Seven outstanding young people honoured with S'pore Youth Award

Yip Wai Yee

Coming from an underprivileged background, Ms Francesca Phoebe Wah found it tough in school – sometimes, she did not even have the money to buy the stationery needed to complete her homework.

Now, the 27-year-old is not only a master's degree holder in social work and a primary school teacher, but also the founder of Bringing Love to Every Single Soul (Bless), a non-profit organisation which works with families who live in rental flats.

Among other things, the organisation, which she set up in 2014, holds reading programmes to help children with their English, and hosts an online platform for members of the public to purchase gifts, such as stationery and school bags, for those in need.

Ms Wah was recognised for her work with a Singapore Youth Award, the nation's highest accolade for youth, yesterday.

Established in 1975, the award honours exceptional young people who have not only excelled in their fields of pursuit, but also demonstrated a strong passion to make a difference in the community.

The other six winners of the prestigious award this year are Dr Neo

INVESTING TIME TO HELP OTHERS

Imagine if you have \$86,400 in your bank account, I'm sure you would want it to appreciate. Similarly, each of us has 86,400 seconds a day, so if you want that value to appreciate, you have to invest time to lift others up.



MS FRANCESCA PHOEBE WAH

Mei Lin, 33, marine biologist; Ms Alecia Neo, 33, founder of inclusive art platform Unseen Art Initiatives; Ms Sujatha Selvakumar, 34, a lawyer who helps vulnerable families access the legal justice system; Mr Wong Kah Chun, 33, world-renowned conductor; Mr Cho Ming Xiu, 32, mental health advocate; and Mr Sheik Farhan Sheik Alau'ddin, 22, silat world champion.

CALL TO YOUTH

I encourage all young people to be pioneers of your age. Step forward to build our future Singapore together, one which you can be proud of, and one which future generations can continue to build on.



**DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
HENG SWEKEAT**

The awards were handed out by Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat in a ceremony at the Istana which was also attended by Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu, Senior Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth Sim Ann, and Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Culture, Community and Youth Baey Yam Keng.

Ms Wah, whose father is a school

bus driver and mother a housewife, said in her acceptance speech that she got to where she is today thanks to the support of family and friends, as well as financial aid from the Government to fund her education.

She hopes more young people will also find time in their lives to serve the community.

She said: "Imagine if you have \$86,400 in your bank account, I'm sure you would want it to appreciate. Similarly, each of us has 86,400 seconds a day, so if you want that value to appreciate, you have to invest time to lift others up."

In congratulating the recipients, Mr Heng said he is confident in Singapore's future because they, like many young Singaporeans, "have the right values and drive to learn and explore, to excel and achieve, and to care and serve".

He also provided updates about the SG Youth Action Plan, which has engaged more than 40,000 young people since May to help articulate a vision for the Republic in 2025.

He said young Singaporeans identified five shared values that they feel should define the country in the future: inclusiveness, fairness, care, sustainability and progress.

Going forward, he will also be speaking with young people for the upcoming Budget, he added.

"I encourage all young people to be pioneers of your age. Step forward to build our future Singapore together, one which you can be proud of, and one which future generations can continue to build on," he said.

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