

Honouring women leaders in society

Winners were awarded across industries, with the highest accolade going to Straits Trading's Chew Gek Khim.

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JESSIE LIM



Guest-of-Honour, Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry, Dr Koh Poh Koon, with the winners of the Women Entrepreneur Awards (WEA) 2019. PHOTO: WOMEN ENTREPRENEUR AWARDS

TWELVE women entrepreneurs were honoured at the Women Entrepreneur Awards (WEA) on July 9. The highest honour - the Supernova Award - went to Chew Gek Khim, executive chairman of both Tecity Group and the real estate and resources-based Straits Trading Company.

Awarded to only one woman entrepreneur each year, the Supernova category recognises well-respected women leaders who have contributed to the city-state and society.

Commenting on her win, Ms Chew said: "The difficulty that women have today is that we are often not in a network."

"Entrepreneurship in itself is very difficult, it can be very lonely. If you find people you can bond with or understand you, you can get help and that makes a difference."

Ms Chew's win is her latest in an impressive tally of accolades, which includes the Singapore Businessman of the Year 2014 and the Meritorious Service Medal at the National Day Awards in 2016.

The granddaughter of late banker and philanthropist Tan Chin Tuan also serves as deputy chairman of the foundation in Singapore, which bears his name.

In its third edition, the WEA ceremony was held at the Sands Expo and Convention Centre at Marina Bay Sands, with Senior Minister of State for Trade and Industry Koh Poh Koon as the guest-of-honour.

GIVING BACK

WEA winners were awarded across industries, including Elaine Teh, who heads beverage distribution company Octopus Global Holdings, and managing director of funeral parlour The Life Celebrant Ang Jolie Mei.

Winners from these categories were recommended by past winners or self-nominated, while the Supernova category is by nomination only from the WEA panel of judges.

Ms Teh was named overall winner in the Nova category, which recognises women who demonstrate outstanding leadership in growing their businesses for more than five years with at least S\$10 million in revenue.

To Ms Teh, winning the award is a form of encouragement to do more and serve society.

"I believe success is not about how much money we make, but the difference we make in people's lives," she said.

She added: "We should light a lamp for someone else because through that, it would also brighten up our path."

Co-founder of design firm Starry Homestead Yola Yu Jie snagged the top spot in the Pulsar category, which is awarded to women entrepreneurs who have been operating their businesses for at least three years, with these chalking up revenue of between S\$1 million and S\$10 million.

Ms Yu, who has plans to expand her business to Malaysia and China, is clearly not one whose vision is confined within four square walls.

"Think outside of the box and don't stop learning. Every new day brings new opportunities in a continual journey of learning and discovery," she said.

Chief executive of E Capital Limousine Lena Tang led the pack for the Stellar category, which is given to women entrepreneurs who have held the reins of their businesses for no more than three years.

For Ms Tang, the secret to success is endurance and perseverance.

"Challenges are common so it is important to stay motivated and determined. Don't let complacency set in, but look beyond and envision how to bring your business to a higher level," she said.

Beating out more than 50 nominees, this year's 12 women were named by a panel of judges which included MacPherson Member of Parliament Tin Pei Ling, who is also chief executive of Business China, SkillsFuture Singapore deputy chief executive Tan Wee Beng, and Crescendas Group chairman and chief executive Lawrence Leow. All winners gain life-long membership to the Women Entrepreneur Club which comes with a host of exclusive networking, mentoring and learning opportunities.

Women Entrepreneur Awards 2019 is owned by Women Entrepreneur Awards Pte Ltd, a Singapore-based company that spearheads and runs women programmes on business, entrepreneurship and networking. The event is produced by S. Auxano Pte Ltd, an integrated communications agency.

On how the WEA has grown from strength to strength, chairperson of the WEA Stephanie Cheo said: "We have reached out to more than 1,000 women entrepreneurs in the business community in just three years.

"Our vision is to connect, unite and grow this network of women entrepreneurs in Singapore, with the help and support of government agencies such as Enterprise Singapore, SkillsFuture Singapore and Infocomm Media Development Authority of Singapore."

This year, two of the 12 awardees also took home two special WEA commendation awards.

Ms Ang, who was also a winner in the Pulsar category, won the WEA 2019 Innovation Award in recognition of how The Life Celebrant has been "game-changing" for the traditional funeral services industry.

Elsie Liow, managing director of migration agency AIMS Immigration Specialist, clinched the WEA 2019 Best Growth Award for joining the ranks of the Nova winners this year after having achieved Pulsar winner status back in 2017.

Ms Liow is the first WEA winner to have two awards from different categories under her belt.