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Nine get President's Challenge awards

Groups gave jobs to needy, services to wider community

BY

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SERVING THE COMMUNITY

NTUC Foodfare received the commendation award in the Social Enterprise of the Year category. - FILE PHOTO

NINE social enterprises were honoured yesterday at the 2013 President's Challenge Social Enterprise Award for not only providing jobs to the needy and disadvantaged but also services to the wider community including foreign domestic workers and voluntary welfare groups.

Bliss Restaurant & Catering and Sata CommHealth, which provide free or subsidised healthcare for the needy and elderly, were awarded the Social Enterprise of the Year yesterday; while NTUC Foodfare received the commendation award in this category.

Betr Barista was named Social Enterprise Start-Up of the Year; while Empact Pte Ltd, which provides business support services to non-profit groups and social enterprises at subsidised rates, and The HUB Singapore, which provides co-working space and programmes to social entrepreneurs, received commendation awards.

Three others, Circus in Motion LLP, Conjoint Consulting (Singapore) Ltd and The Chain Reaction Project Ltd, received commendation awards in the Youth Social Enterprise of the Year category.

They were recipients of the only award conferred by the President's Office for Singapore's social enterprise sector.

"Social enterprises demonstrate entrepreneurship that is driven not only by passion for the business, but also compassion for the social causes we serve," said Low Yen Ling, parliamentary secretary for the Ministry of Social and Family Development.

In addition to those that provide jobs for the needy and vulnerable, Ms Low said there are also "enablers and capacity builders that support and enhance the impact of other social organisations. It shows more social entrepreneurs are trying out different innovative ideas for social good".

Bliss, which was founded in 2001 by Christine Low, an ex-investment banker, has four restaurants, runs wedding, catering and culinary workshop services and provides training and jobs for people with disabilities, low-income individuals, ex-offenders and those recovering from psychiatric illnesses.

"Despite the challenges associated with managing multiple vulnerable groups, Bliss has continually improved its business through the years by expansion, diversifying and continually seeking to make the social enterprise sustainable," said Chey Chor Wai, team leader for this award category. Sata Commhealth, which has four medical centres including the Community Health Centre in Jurong East and mobile General Practitioner Buses, brings subsidised medical services to the needy and disadvantaged.

Founded in 2011, Betr Barista has formed alliances with French cafe Saybons and with *SCAPE to set up shops as training ground for marginalised women and youth-at-risk. It also partners other specialty coffee industry players to place its beneficiaries on internships.