



# A salute to our Three Honorees

## KIRTIDA MEKANI • 54

There is a disconnect between people and the environmental cause. Many believe that individual efforts do not make a difference. My environmental efforts stem from my deep love for nature and a desire to give back to a country that has been a wonderful home to me. 'Replenish' is an essential fourth 'R' for me – gratitude for what we have received and paying it forward. The Plant-a-Tree programme which I initiated with National Parks Board has helped over 25,000 people connect with nature and plant approximately 14,000 trees in Singapore since 2007. This reaffirms my belief that small individual efforts can make a big difference to the world. I believe today's youth will be tomorrow's change-makers. Having faith and investing in the young and developing their skills is essential. This also inspired me to create opportunities for youth in the fields of arts and education. I established various scholarships, and helped educational institutions with fundraising and strategic capacity-building. Working with amazing people, helping youth succeed and seeing Singapore's greenery flourish are what keeps me going everyday.

## QIN YUNQUAN • 24

After meeting several victims of sexual assault, I realized that many suffer in silence for years. It is heart breaking to see the inner pain through their eyes as they relate the stories.

This was an injustice I could not turn my back to. I decided to dedicate my life to the empowerment of women and children.

As a small frame Asian woman, I explored a range of martial arts but found them too complex. I came across Kapap/ Modern Street Combatives and was convinced this was the right system for me. In our school, we help women by empowering them with the physical skills to fight back and provide emotional support to help them combat their inner demons. We teach them principles of resilience to help them bounce back to life.

My major challenge was to overcome gender typing on what a woman should do or behave in our society. I was initially discouraged but through the encouragements of people who believed in me, I persevered. The training was hard. It was not uncommon to suffer injuries in the process. However, I never gave up. Seeing all the lives we positively impacted over the years is one of my greatest rewards.



## LILY GOH • 34

I started *ExtraOrdinary Horizons* – a social enterprise in 2011 to show what Deaf people are capable of.

Through courses, performances and public education, the Deaf have gained confidence in their abilities to reach out to more people. Teaching them music is tough and takes a lot of patience and perseverance on our end. We constantly motivate one another to persevere.

Besides this, we also shared with them issues concerning employment. For example, when Deaf people send their resumes to companies, we encourage them to be honest and show what they can contribute to the company. In short, to show their capabilities rather than focus on their shortcomings.

The biggest challenge I face is language barrier. Communication technology plays an important role. Instant messaging, emails and SMS help remove the barrier in our communications. There are times when I had to rely on sign language interpreters in group meetings to help me get across the message. It is crucial that we continue to learn and improve our literacy.

I hope to extend the outreach of *ExtraOrdinary Horizons* through our inaugural nationwide event - Deaf Arts Festival, where we showcase artistic talents and skills to the public.

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