









## The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year 2025 Winner and Finalists


Award	Name	Citation
Winner	 <p data-bbox="336 616 544 689">Dr Chen Shiling Age: 45</p>	<p data-bbox="598 409 1417 483"><a href="#"><u>Doctor gives those with intellectual disabilities dignity through healthcare</u></a></p> <p data-bbox="598 526 1417 633">In 2014, Dr Chen founded a non-profit, Happee Hearts Movement, to advocate for good-quality healthcare for adults with IDs, and a clinic, IDHealth, to serve their complex needs.</p> <p data-bbox="598 680 1417 831">The IDHealth clinic is Singapore's first community-based, full-service dedicated healthcare service for people with IDs and has served about 500 people with IDs and more than 1,000 of their caregivers since it was set up.</p> <p data-bbox="598 878 1417 952">The clinic's scope is expanding and has started seeing residents with IDs living in adult disability homes.</p> <p data-bbox="598 999 1417 1106">The upcoming expansion of IDHealth's services is a culmination of years of work by Dr Chen, who began volunteering with people with IDs as a teenager at MINDS.</p> <p data-bbox="598 1153 1417 1227">She was 17 then, and continued to volunteer while attending medical school at the National University of Singapore.</p> <p data-bbox="598 1274 1417 1335">In 2013, she gave up a promising career as a medical specialist to find a better way to serve people with IDs.</p>
Finalist 1	 <p data-bbox="336 1585 539 1659">Ganesh Kumar Age: 42</p>	<p data-bbox="598 1370 1417 1444"><a href="#"><u>He built Woodlands Botanical Garden to help others seek comfort</u></a></p> <p data-bbox="598 1487 1417 1675">In June 2020, Mr Ganesh Kumar planted a pink hibiscus plant near his home to help him overcome his grief of losing his mother. What began as a small gesture of healing later transformed into a thriving garden in Woodlands that is now one of the largest community gardens here.</p> <p data-bbox="598 1722 1417 1942">The 42-year-old – who had depression – hopes that others can, too, find solace and joy in the garden he so painstakingly built. Woodlands Botanical Garden (WBG) spans 4,000 sq m and is home to more than 350 plant species and 300 animal species, including multiple vulnerable species in Singapore, he said.</p> <p data-bbox="598 1989 1417 2018">To focus on WBG, Mr Ganesh quit his job as a graduate</p>

		<p>research officer. He took a pay cut to become a tuition centre teacher teaching chemistry and gave up his PhD candidacy in material science engineering at Nanyang Technological University. He also sold his dream car to fund the installation of a pond in the garden.</p>
<p>Finalist 2</p>	 <p>Steven Goh Age: 48</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Leaving a well-paying job to unburden hoarders</u></a></p> <p>A chance encounter with a hoarder changed Mr Goh's life in ways he could not imagine. After agreeing to help an elderly stranger with her home, he was stunned by the piles of metal junk she had accumulated while she was a <i>karung guni</i> woman, collecting scrap to sell. When his own friends declined to help, he found four strangers on Facebook to clean her home. Impacted by that incident, he set up Helping Joy in 2012 and has since decluttered more than 300 homes.</p> <p>Though he had to leave his well-paying job in 2016 to commit to this cause fully, Mr Goh says he has no regrets. He does not just supervise clean-ups but gets his hands dirty. Be it washing toilets, battling an infestation of cockroaches, removing faeces and bottled urine from a home, or even hauling bulky items to the ground floor, this is work he says he cannot stop doing.</p>
<p>Finalist 3</p>	 <p>Darryl Lee Age: 20</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Young community first responder has helped over 70 since he was 16</u></a></p> <p>Darryl Lee was inspired by his parents, who always display acts of kindness, to help those in need. Since signing up to be a community first responder when he was 16, he has responded to 77 calls for assistance, including 65 cardiac arrest cases.</p> <p>Mr Lee gives himself three to four minutes to rush down to the scene when the alert sounds. He still gets an adrenaline rush every time, as he has learnt to expect the unexpected. For instance, there have been times when the patient is having a seizure, or is already dead, even though the alert classifies it as a cardiac arrest case.</p> <p>Mr Lee has a first aid kit around with him at all times so that he is always ready to respond to a case. He hopes to inspire more people, especially the young, to become community first responders, as cardiac arrests can happen at any time.</p>


<p>Finalist 4</p>	 <p>Lydia Susiyanti Sukarbi Age: 37</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Mother of six gives free breakfast to children in Ang Mo Kio</u></a></p> <p>Ms Lydia Susiyanti Sukarbi started giving free breakfast to underprivileged children in her Ang Mo Kio neighbourhood, even though she had six children and two part-time jobs. The former canteen vendor started the initiative, called Breakfast Buddy, in February after she saw how some students went hungry during recess so that their younger siblings would have money for food.</p> <p>Beyond providing meals, her aim is to give the children a safe space to gather and build social skills, and the opportunity for her to lend them a listening ear.</p> <p>Going above providing free breakfast, she also arranged for dance classes, which began in August, and football training, which started in October. These programmes are helmed by other residents from the neighbourhood.</p> <p>She believes that such enrichment activities will not only help prevent children from going astray, but also teach them values like responsibility and commitment.</p>
<p>Finalist 5</p>	 <p>Robert Sim Age: 38</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Meet the internet's janitor whose fingerprints are all over Wikipedia</u></a></p> <p>Mr Robert Sim was named Wikimedian of the Year in 2025, one of online encyclopaedia Wikipedia's highest honours. This was the result of spending 10 hours a week editing Wikipedia articles on a voluntary basis. He has made more than 79,000 edits to date and is one of 829 administrators of Wikipedia's English-language version. He updates the index of Singapore-related articles and organises community outreach events to encourage more to volunteer their time contributing to Wikipedia. Mr Sim also helped to organise Wikimania – the Wikipedia movement's annual conference – in Singapore in 2024.</p> <p>Wikipedia is an online encyclopaedia made possible by the often thankless work of volunteers like Mr Sim. Examples of his work include articles created about City Developments Limited, former Monetary Authority of Singapore managing director Ravi Menon, controversial Singapore-raised comedian Jocelyn Chia and many newly elected Members of Parliament.</p>

<p>Finalist 6</p>	 <p>Edmund Wee Age: 74</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Edmund Wee bets his personal wealth on championing Sing Lit</u></a></p> <p>Mr Edmund Wee spurned a more lucrative design career to start Epigram Books in 2011. Since then, he has been the most innovative and self-sacrificial champion of books, most recently converting Epigram Books to a non-profit organisation to encourage donations, and starting a one-stop online retail site with other local bookstores.</p> <p>This search for a workable model for local publishing recently culminated in a landmark deal, where publishers in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Myanmar agreed to publish future winners of the Epigram Books Fiction Prize. This was possible only because they recognised Epigram’s track record, giving Singapore and South-east Asian books a consistent common readership for the first time.</p> <p>The deal also required Mr Wee to think out of the box. His waiver of the fees for publishing rights for a higher share of royalty for books sold later upended traditional models. Fostering an active regional readership is integral to his ambition to put South-east Asian literature on the world map.</p>
<p>Finalist 7</p>	 <p>Peggy Yee Age: 62</p>	<p><a href="#"><u>Lawyer on mission to advocate for those with invisible disabilities</u></a></p> <p>For more than 20 years, veteran lawyer Ms Peggy Yee has been advocating for those with mental health conditions, intellectual disabilities and other invisible needs. Her efforts finally came to fruition in March 2025 at the inaugural Access to Justice symposium, where she was the chairwoman of the organising committee. It was there that the Ministry of Law announced its commitment to a multi-agency task force to support those with invisible disabilities.</p> <p>With the task force in place, Ms Yee now hopes to go beyond ensuring that people with invisible disabilities have access to justice, by keeping them out of the legal system and helping them address their needs.</p>

## The Straits Times Young Singaporean of the Year 2025

Award	Name	Citation
<b>Winner</b>	 <p>Amanda Yap Age: 17</p>	<p><b>Singaporean gymnast makes her mark on the world stage</b></p> <p>In October 2025, most of Amanda Yap's peers were focused solely on their O-Level examinations. The teenager, however, was juggling far more – taking the national exams while competing against the world's best at the Artistic Gymnastics World Championships in Jakarta.</p> <p>The challenge grew when Amanda qualified for the balance beam final, becoming the first Singaporean to achieve the feat at a world championship.</p> <p>A whirlwind of activity followed. She flew back and forth between Indonesia and Singapore, travelling between competition and exam halls to sit her papers and compete on the biggest stage of her fledgling sporting career.</p> <p>She eventually finished sixth in the championships and her remarkable story drew international attention, with publications such as The Athletic documenting her journey.</p> <p>The 17-year-old is proud that she has put Singapore on the world map, and shown that even a small nation can achieve big things.</p>

## The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year (International Impact) 2025

Award	Name	Citation
<b>Winner</b>	 <p>Robert Kee Age: 77</p>	<p><b>Entrepreneur devotes retirement to running charity for underprivileged in Cambodia and Nepal</b></p> <p>While many slow down as they grow older, entrepreneur Mr Robert Kee has spent his retirement serving underprivileged children and families overseas.</p> <p>Mr Kee began as a philanthropist and discovered that poor accountability and fraud were common in the charity sector. Determined to ensure every dollar was properly used, he founded Operation Hope Foundation (OHF) in 2001 and spent two years travelling monthly between Singapore and Cambodia to understand what was happening on the ground.</p> <p>OHF has spent over \$8 million in Cambodia and Nepal, supporting thousands through its children's home in Cambodia and building houses, wells and toilets for rural communities. In Nepal, it partners non-governmental organisations to run another children's home and poverty alleviation programmes.</p> <p>Mr Kee has sheltered abandoned children, supported disadvantaged students and personally built homes in Nepal. He serves full-time as OHF's unpaid executive chairman, hoping to inspire more Singaporeans to contribute overseas.</p>