

**SPEECH BY MRS. GRACE CHONG-TAN,
PRESIDENT, SPIRIT OF ENTERPRISE (SOE)
SOE AWARDS 2016
THURSDAY, 10 NOVEMBER 2016, 8.00PM
MANDARIN ORCHARD SINGAPORE, GRAND MANDARIN BALLROOM**

Our Guest of Honour, Dr. Koh Poh Koon, Minister of State, Ministry of National Development & Ministry of Trade and Industry

Ms. Ann Miller

SOE Past Presidents

Honourees, Sponsors, Donors, Partners

My Fellow Board of Governors

Distinguished Guests

A very good evening to you.

Thank you for taking time off your busy schedule to be here today to attend the SOE Awards Dinner 2016.

Entrepreneurial Journey

No entrepreneurial journey is without its failures. There will be ups and downs, setbacks; but it is the passion, dedication, hard work and experience that makes the entrepreneurial journey a success story.

With their ability to innovate, seize opportunities and make the best out of any challenges, entrepreneurs inject vitality and contribute significantly to our economy.

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SOE - IPC SEP SIP

In the past 14 years, SOE has remained steadfast in our journey of giving back to the society, in our mission of advancing and promoting entrepreneurship in Singapore and instilling the spirit of enterprise in our youths.

As a non profit organisation, and an approved Institution of a Public Character or IPC-registered charity, SOE's Board of Governors serve on a volunteer basis. These are all fervent enthusiasts who strongly believe in giving back to where we came from, and I thank them for the sacrifice of time and effort and commitment in continuing the work of our Charity.

At SOE, we see the value of dreams and aspirations. We believe that our youths should have the freedom to dream, the courage to create and eventually the potential to inspire. As such, SOE is strongly committed to community outreach programmes like the Student Entrepreneurship Programme (SEP) and Student Interviewer Programme (SIP).

For the Student Entrepreneurship Programme,

1. SOE partners **schools** and **youth centres** to promote entrepreneurship. We go into schools to teach students what it takes to be not only an entrepreneur, but a successful one.

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2. We provide a 'Entrepreneur Talk' platform where students learn from our established entrepreneurs of the SOE Alumni as they share their experiences and impart valuable lessons to the youths. Through this, our future generation will see entrepreneurs as successful models for creativity and inspiration; as individuals who had persevered against the odds to emerge as successful role models today.

SOE's other core programme – the Student Interviewer Programme offers tertiary students the opportunity to conduct one-to-one interview sessions with successful entrepreneurs. In this process, students learn about the challenges and setbacks faced by entrepreneurs, as well as the determination and perseverance needed to succeed. Through this programme, we hope to inspire our student interviewers to take a course in work atypical from their peers. We hope this mentorship will allow them to appreciate that being an entrepreneur is no longer a road less travelled and a challenge that most shy away from.

Singapore's Economic Success

It is often said Singapore's economic success is characterised by the pioneering spirit of our forefathers. More importantly, however, we must also recognise that it is this same unwavering spirit, embodied in the leaders of our

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SMEs, both past and present, that has allowed Singapore its sustained economic victory.

Entrepreneurship continues as one of the most important input in the economic development of a country, and the need to support and advance this is even more pressing with the current economic tide. Our local entrepreneurs are the key drivers of Singapore's financial growth and development. They are the lifeblood of our economy, generate jobs, introduce new products and services, and promote greater value-chain activities.

The promotion and advancement of entrepreneurship as the lifeblood of a country's economy was noted early by our Founder, the late Mr Russell Miller, whose vision and foresight saw the set up of the Spirit of Enterprise in 2003, a fore runner of the many government-led initiatives in advancing entrepreneurship today. Launched that same year, the Spirit of Enterprise (SOE) Awards has remained a signature initiative of SOE to recognize home-grown entrepreneurs who have distinguished themselves for their contributions to Singapore's economic landscape today.

The Spirit of Enterprise Award 2009 was my first business award. It was an integral milestone as it gave inspiration and strength and made me even more industrious in my entrepreneurial journey. In 2014, I was invited to serve on the SOE Board of Governors, and in 2015 and this year, as President of SOE.

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In this journey, I have had the honour of being an SOE Awards Honouree and the privilege to serve on the very same Board that gave me our first Award. I have had the opportunity to study the difficult and successful journeys of my fellow Singaporean businessmen and women, and the joy of being able to work with my Board in bestowing the SOE Awards on these deserving entrepreneurs.

Tonight, SOE celebrates the success of 28 of Singapore's foremost business achievers as we recognize their story of courage, tenacity and innovation. The SOE Award is a testament of their victorious journey as an entrepreneur and the societal impact they have made. We trust that this Award will motivate you to take your brand and value propositions to a higher level. Please join me in giving a round of applause to our 28 outstanding Honourees for 2016.

For the first time this year, we are delighted to share that one of our honourees tonight will be selected to receive the inaugural SOE-PropNex Top Honouree of the Year award. This pinnacle award is given to the most successful home-grown entrepreneur amongst this year's Honourees.

Another highlight of this evening is the conferment of the SOE-Nexia TS Entrepreneur of the Year Award to Mr. Neo Kah Kiat, Founder, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of Neo Group Ltd. The SOE-Nexia TS Entrepreneur of the Year Award is bestowed on a past Honouree who has continued to show

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outstanding success and growth, not only as an entrepreneur but also in the arena of societal impact on our community. This Award seeks to recognise the recipient's entrepreneurial and learning journey and to uphold them as an inspiration for others to follow. Please join me in giving a round of applause to Mr. Neo.

For all the events that SOE carries out, SOE is blessed to be supported by the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth and the Commissioner of Charities with the conferment of our IPC status, and our partners, sponsors and donors who have helped fund our community outreach programmes.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to the following:

- Commissioner of Charities, Mr Low Puk Yeong, and his team at MCCY;
- Main Partner, Nexia TS Public Accounting Corporation - For supporting the SOE-Nexia TS Entrepreneur of the Year Award
- Education Partner, Charles & Keith (Singapore) - For their contribution to the SOE-Charles & Keith's Best Student Interviewer Award
- Strategic Partner, Credit Suisse AG - For their contribution to the SOE-Credit Suisse Entrepreneur Forums
- Strategic Sponsor, PropNex Pte Ltd - For supporting the SOE-PropNex Top Honouree of the Year Award
- Scholarship/Bursary Partner, Mr. Michael Sengol

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- SOE Official Partners: Aequitas Law LLP, Dian Xiao Er, EvorichHoldings, Goh Joo Hin, Lee Foundation, Marunda Utama Engineering and Smile Inc ® Dental Surgeons;
- and IE Singapore and SPRING Singapore, for lending support to the SOE Awards throughout the years.

Your support and contributions will go a long way in helping us to continue our programs inspiring and nurturing the next generation of change-makers.

I would also like to extend my personal appreciation to our Guest-of- Honour, Dr. Koh Poh Koon, Minister of State, Ministry of Trade and Industry, for gracing this year Awards Dinner. Dr Koh has had a long day and had just finished with his involvement at Parliament Sitting this evening. We appreciate and thank you for kindly making time to join us tonight.

My gratitude and appreciation also to our passionate Board of Governors, all volunteers, who with unwavering commitment, have helped execute SOE's many programmes. May I request our SOE Board of Governors to stand, and we give a round of applause to the Board for their good contributions.

Thank you for being a part of the Board and for supporting me for the past two years. I personally value your contributions and dedication to ensure that SOE stays true to its causes.

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I would also like to take this opportunity to give special commendation to SOE Awards Chairman, Mr. Sa'at Ismail from SiliconPlus Communications. Year after year, Sa'at has so selflessly given his time and resources and mobilised his team in helping SOE stage a world class Awards Ceremony and Dinner. A big round of applause for Sa'at and his dedicated team, please.

For all our honourees, despite the challenges, we trust that you will continue your entrepreneurial journey and scale greater heights. You are all winners of success, for coming so far, as Singapore's home-grown business achievers. Congratulations.

Tonight, let us celebrate. Thank you.