

# Philanthropy heroes not necessarily the biggest givers

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FORMER Singapore Exchange chief executive Hsieh Fu Hua, entrepreneur Elim Chew, Lee Foundation chairman Lee Seng Gee and Lien Foundation chairman Laurence Lien are the four Singaporeans who made *Forbes Asia's* list of Asia-Pacific philanthropy "heroes" this year.

They rank among prominent do-gooders such as Fortescue Metals founder Andrew Forrest, Hollywood's Jackie Chan, Alibaba founder Jack Ma and professional basketball player Yao Ming on the magazine's third annual Heroes of Philanthropy list, unveiled yesterday.

*Forbes Asia* selects four high-profile altruists from each of 12 markets – Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and Singapore. "They aren't always the biggest givers. Instead we aim to highlight a varied group of generous people who deserve recognition," said associate editor John Koppisch.

In the past year, tycoons and more modest donors alike continued to open their cheque books for charitable causes – from disaster recovery and health to education and culture, *Forbes Asia* said. Most of the list's "heroes" gave away their own money and not their companies', or hold large stakes in companies through which they give, the magazine said.

Three of Singapore's four altruists were noted for their foundations' contributions.

Former SGX CEO Hsieh Fu Hua's Binjai Tree foundation is the youngest of the three, set up in 2008 with a donation of \$3.4 million. *Forbes Asia* said that he "keeps his charity quiet but is believed to have begun giving to health care causes and the arts in Singapore". Mr Fu has also started an organisation to raise the standard of charitable governance and professionalism here.

Laurence Lien took the reins at Lien Foundation from his stepmother Margaret Lien last year, and this year, takes her place on the philanthropy list. *Forbes Asia* credited him with helping "professionalise the operations, making it one of the most well-run and transparent foundations in Singapore". Mr Lien's grandfather, banker Lien Ying Chow, started the foundation back in 1980. In the past four years alone, Lien Foundation has distributed



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over \$35 million to education, elder-care and environmental causes.

Lee Seng Gee was recognised for being chairman of the Lee Foundation, which has given away \$250 million, mostly to education, the underprivileged and the arts, since Mr Lee's father Lee Kong Chian started it in 1952 on his rubber business fortune. Significant contributions in recent years include donations of \$35 million and \$20 million to the Singapore Management University and National University of Singapore respectively.

The other Singaporean on the list, Elim Chew, founder and president of streetwear retailer 77th Street, was honoured for her contributions to youth and community. A fifth of her business's profits go to her church and other charities, and 77th Street has "adopted" 25 children through World Vision's Feed the Hungry programme and sponsored cleft-palate surgery for needy kids. As an entrepreneur, Ms Chew helped set up the PaTH Market@VivoCity, an initiative of the Social Innovation Park, for physically impaired individuals to showcase art and sell handicrafts.