

Award for helping others do right thing

Shalini Mahtani is a Women of Influence winner for charity for social responsibility

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Raised in a traditional family where women were supposed to receive less education and marry young, Shalini Mahtani has chosen a different path.

She persuaded her family to let her go to university, where she qualified as an accountant. She then became a banker before setting up a non-profit organisation to advise firms on their corporate social responsibilities.

She stepped down as chief executive of the organisation but remained as an adviser to the board after the sudden death of her three-year-old son in 2009.

Mahtani is one of five winners of this year's Women of Influence Awards, organised by the American Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong (AmCham) and the South China Morning Post. Receiving the award for master in charity, arts or culture at the Four Seasons hotel in Central yesterday, Mahtani said that when she started the organisation in 2003 it was the first time she had been truly happy.

The other winners announced at yesterday's Women of Influence conference were Salina Yu Lai-si, chief executive and executive director of Water Oasis Group, for success in running her own business; Stephen Golden of Goldman Sachs for empowering women in the company; and Professor Agnes Tiwari Fung-ye, head of the University of Hong Kong's school of nursing and a researcher in interpersonal violence prevention and intervention. McDonald's was named best company for women for supporting the development of women in business.

"This conference ... [shows] who is doing the right thing, how they are doing it, and inspires the others to follow their footsteps," said Lee Georgs, co-chair of the AmCham Women of Influence committee.

Jennifer Van Dale, conference co-chair, said Tiwari's life showed how women's roles had changed in Hong Kong. "Just looking at her is the change personified," she said. "Growing up ... in the 50s ... she was meant to be kind of quiet and obedient, not going out there and being something, and doing what she has accomplished."



From left: Agnes Tiwari, Salina Yu, Randy La, Stephen Golden and Shalini Mahtani. Photo: Felix Wong

CHARITY



Fur trader Tim Everest expects next Saturday's Wing Ding event to raise at least as much as last year's HK\$1 million for those in need. Photo: Edmond So

SQUASH TOURNAMENT SURE TO BE A BIG HIT

Tireless organiser Tim Everest is confident people will dig deep for the annual Wing Ding fund-raiser

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Tim Everest is confident the annual Wing Ding squash tournament at the Hong Kong Football Club next Saturday will raise at least as much as it did last year despite the turmoil in the financial markets.

Everest is co-ordinator of the colourful fund-raiser for Operation Santa Claus and says he enjoys every aspect of the "very meaningful and never-ending job".

In fact he enjoys it so much that he's already started preparing for next year's tournament.

"It is not easy to double up each year without some new ideas. There are a lot of kind people out there but you have to spend time to find them. So when one [tournament] comes to an end, I am already starting the preparation on how to involve more people," the businessman said.

"It is a never-ending project. Out of all these efforts, you can bring relief to a child or someone in need, seeing the smiles on those faces when they know that you have done something out of the goodness of your heart, it's worth it."

"There are many kind-hearted and diligent people working to make the lives of those in need better. Their work is admirable. But without funding, they can't do their work. It is why the fund-raising appeal is so important," Everest said, explaining why it takes more than a year to organise the event.

Operation Santa Claus is an annual fund-raising appeal jointly organised by the South China Morning

Post and RTHK. It has supported more than 100 charities since it was set up in 1988. This year it will support 16 beneficiaries to help the needy in Hong Kong and on the mainland.

Wing Ding has been a major donor to Operation Santa Claus for seven years. Last year, the squash tournament raised more than HK\$1 million for the charity appeal.

"The stock market is going up and down. Raising money is quite a challenge. But I am confident it will be at least as good as last year's," Everest said.

As for previous tournaments it will run non-stop from 11am next Saturday, with 14 teams playing 13 three-to-four-minute games. The 140 participants will play within 10 skill levels, dashing to the next court at the end of each game.

Each player must wear a creative costume that shows off their team's designated colours.

The tournament and its related events will raise funds through entry fees, auctions, raffle sales and individual donations.

First prize in the raffle will be two return Cathay Pacific business-class tickets to Bali. There are more than 100 prizes including a Leica camera and Esprit vouchers.

Auction prizes - week-long stays in luxury resorts in Thailand, Indonesia and Japan - will be announced straight after the tournament.

The event will be broadcast live on Radio Three between 11am and 1pm.

The squash tournament is named after Yuen Kam-wing, a disabled man who worked at the Hong Kong squash centre in Admiralty during the 1980s and '90s. He died in 1998



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aged 33 because of complications with his illness.

The tournament was founded in 1998 by two of Wing's friends, Phil Head and Nick Rickett. "The whole

idea is about remembering the spirit of Wing, a severely handicapped man who smiled every day," Everest said.

"He was fiercely optimistic and he was such an example of hope. He always felt he was lucky to be alive. I'm sure he will be tremendously proud looking down from heaven and seeing what we are doing."

Everest said he enjoys being involved in the annual charity event. "OSC identifies a project and there is a ceiling fixed for it. After the money is delivered, there is an audit to find out whether it was spent on what it was delivered for," he said. "I know there are many beneficiaries that OSC is not reaching but, eventually, we will get there I am sure," he said.

For more information, visit www.wingding.hk or call 9104 6383.

COURTS

No immediate jail for couple who let infant steer car

Friends and relatives ask for leniency, but magistrate says couple will be punished for endangering child

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A couple in court for posting online a video showing their 18-month-old son steering a car faced immense pressure that had grown out of proportion, a magistrate said yesterday, but some punishment was necessary because their act could have had irreversible consequences.

Acting Principal Magistrate Rickie Chan Kam-cheong yesterday heard mitigation on behalf of Keith Yu Chok-wong, 32, who has pleaded guilty to dangerous driving, and wife Ng Lai-wa, 27, who admits aiding and abetting the offence.

"They are the ones to blame," Chan said of Yu and Ng, who was weeping.

"They are parents who should not expose their children to any sort of

danger," he said. "If the infant lost balance, would you control the car or save the baby? You would not know."

Chan adjourned sentencing for two weeks pending probation and community service reports, saying the couple did not deserve an immediate jail term.

On August 1, Ng filmed a one-minute, 50-second video showing the infant sitting on her husband's lap and steering a BMW in Cheung Sha Wan near the Hoi Lai public housing estate.

The video was posted on Facebook and soon went viral.

Police started an investigation, but Yu turned himself in at Aberdeen police station on August 4. He and his wife were arrested within three weeks, after police collected evidence.

They appeared in court yesterday for the second time. On their first appearance a week ago, the magistrate told them to hire a lawyer because the offences could put them in jail.

Yesterday, their lawyers presented six letters of mitigation from relatives, colleagues and friends. They said the pair - who have no criminal record - committed the offence because of ignorance.

The lawyers said that the road where the incident happened had little traffic and no pedestrians, and that the father was in control of the car's pedals even though his son was steering it. The defence also presented dozens of pages showing a barrage of criticism of the couple from internet users.

Chan criticised the online insults, adding: "This is the danger of modern society. You cannot control how your information is handled."

The video was first uploaded to the pair's Facebook page, but another person later posted it on YouTube, Kwun Tong Court heard yesterday.



Ng Lai-wa and her husband Keith Yu leave court. Photo: Felix Wong

If the infant lost balance, would you control the car or save the baby?

ACTING PRINCIPAL MAGISTRATE RICKIE CHAN

SOCIAL WORK

Teen drug abusers going undetected

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Drug abusers are going undetected for longer periods, making it harder for social workers to wean them off their habits.

According to the government's Central Registry of Drug Abuse, the median time last year for abusers to be discovered from their first drug abuse was 2.8 years, or about 34 months, compared with a 2008 figure of 1.9 years, or about 23 months.

The registry showed there were 3,132 people who only used drugs at their own or friends' homes in the

first half of this year, compared with 3,058 a year earlier.

Chan Wai-leung, a Caritas social work supervisor, said said popular spots for hidden drug abusers included their own and friends' homes and upstairs pubs, making it difficult for social workers to reach them.

Chan called the figures worrying and said: "A longer history of using drugs means greater difficulty in quitting drugs."

"Using ketamine has turned from a social gathering activity to self-entertainment. They do it to kill time at school or at work, too."

Social workers have turned to the internet to reach out to these abusers,

using keyword searches on forums to identify youngsters seeking help to quit.

In a raid on an upstairs pub in Prat Avenue in Tsim Sha Tsui late last month, police found 112 under-age teens and a small amount of drugs.

Li Wing-ye, of the Hong Kong Playground Association's Yau Tsim Mong district youth outreach social work team, said upstairs pubs were popular with under-age teens, as it was legal for them to visit as long as they did not buy alcohol.

A police officer said: "Family education is most important. It is impossible to place a police officer in every family."

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