

38 local brands receive Singapore Prestige Brand Award

WED, MAY 04, 2022 - 10:30 PM | UPDATED WED, MAY 04, 2022 - 10:58 PM

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(From left) Ong Chu Poh, executive chairman of ECON Healthcare overall winner of Heritage Brands; Andy Kueh, chief operating officer (COO) of elemen, overall winner of Promising Brands; and Peh Yi Han, COO of Mulberry Learning's parent company Global Eduhub, overall winner of Established Brands.

ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

THIRTY-EIGHT home-grown brands – including 31 first-time winners – were honoured at the 20th Singapore Prestige Brand Award (SPBA) awards ceremony on Wednesday (May 4) night, with Second Minister for Trade and Industry Tan See Leng commending their "fighting spirit and gumption" amid the pandemic.

These winners are setting the pace for innovation and transformation, and have dug deep to strengthen their core capabilities as well as to evolve their service and product offerings, said Dr Tan, who was guest-of-honour.

"The past two-and-a-half years have been particularly challenging for businesses," he noted. "This challenging backdrop makes the hard work of our local enterprises over the last 2 years, to press on, pivot and transform, all the more remarkable."

Jointly organised by the Association of Small & Medium Enterprises (ASME) and *Lianhe Zaobao*, the SPBA recognises homegrown brands for their effective and forward-looking branding endeavours.

There are three main award categories – Promising Brands, Established Brands, and Heritage Brands – as well as a Special Merit award. Among the winners in each category are recipients of 4 special awards: the overall winner, Most Popular, Transformation and Social Contribution awards.

The overall winner in the Promising Brands category was elemen, a vegetarian restaurant chain with 5 outlets in Singapore.

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"Our menu is always very creative, we want to make vegetarian dishes interesting and vibrant," elemen's chief operating officer (COO) Andy Kueh told *The Business Times*, adding that the restaurant plans to expand within Singapore as well as overseas to markets such as China, Malaysia, and Australia.

Other winners in the category included gas distribution company Union Gas Holdings, as the Most Popular; Japanese food brand KEI, for Transformation; and artisanal fragrance label Scent by SIX, for Social Contribution award.

In the Established Brands category, preschool education service provider Mulberry Learning emerged the overall winner. Health supplement provider Holistic Way was Most Popular; electronics, lighting and household wholesale supplier Soundteoh Electronic won for Social Contribution; while both digital signages service provider LED Signs and restaurant group White Restaurant received the Transformation award.

During the pandemic, Mulberry Learning invested in building up its digital capabilities, including a specialised Parent App that allows for parent-teacher communication, updates on students' progress and home-based learning resources.

With 15 outlets in Singapore, the learning service provider for children aged 2 to 6 has also expanded into China, and has a global network of affiliated schools in Australia and Panama.

"We actually believe in instilling future ready habits and dispositions in young children – so going beyond the basic knowledge and skills to also think about what kind of attitudes they need, what kind of habits, for them to succeed in the future world 20 years from now," said Peh Yi Han, COO of Mulberry Learning's parent company Global Eduhub.

In the Heritage Brands category, eldercare operator ECON Healthcare was the overall winner, while liquified petroleum gas gas provider Union Energy won Most Popular. Piped town gas provider City Energy won the Transformation award and mattress company Four Star won for Social Contribution.

The Special Merit award went to the Singapore Association for Mental Health, a non-government and non-profit organisation that was established in December 1968.

Lianhe Zaobao editor Goh Sin Teck noted that brand building is key in the continual growth of enterprises, and for them to remain competitive on a local and global scale.

"As global economies reopen, we believe that local brands should take advantage of the momentum to push their brands further and attain greater milestones," said president of ASME, Kurt Wee.

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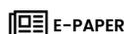
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