



Collecting their awards at the Conrad Hotel in Admiralty last night are (from left) Chan Ching-kooi (on behalf of Ko Cheung-chuen), May Yam, Professor Ronald Li, Ivan Yiu (on behalf of iBakery), Chan Kwong-hing, Foo Yue-wai, Ricky Yu and Tong Siu-yin. Photo: Dickson Lee

Awards for eight who make our city proud

Chief executive leads tributes to 'inspiring' winners in Post's competition

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Eight ordinary people who lead extraordinary lives have been named winners in this year's Spirit of Hong Kong Awards, an event organised by the *South China Morning Post* to recognise the city's unsung heroes.

The eight were picked from a shortlist of 22 Hongkongers who fight against the odds and set an example for others.

The nine-member judging panel was chaired by Professor

Frederick Ma Si-hang, a former secretary for commerce and economic development.

Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, a guest at last night's awards ceremony, said the nominees showed what Hong Kong could strive for and achieve.

"You make us proud to call Hong Kong home," he told them. "I hope you carry on your good work and most importantly, I hope you can inspire others, especially young people – the future leaders of society."

Among the winners was insurance salesman Foo Yuen-wai,

who achieved his dream of learning to sail despite a childhood case of polio that left him needing to use a wheelchair. He pursued his goal by teaming up with a charity that provides boats and training for disabled people, competing for Hong Kong just a year after taking up the sport, and now looking to qualify for next year's Rio Paralympics.

"The award is a recognition of the efforts I have made in sailing. I hope I will be able to encourage other people like me to live their lives to the fullest," Foo said.

Other winners include May

Yam Siu-fong, who has been through two divorces and thyroid cancer but stayed positive and has worked for the Samaritan Befrienders hotline since 1997; Ko Cheung-chuen, a dedicated teacher for more than 40 years; and Tong Siu-yin, who lost most of her sight as a baby but has preserved *naamyam* songs – the "music of the south" – for years.

Professor Ronald Li Tang-wai was a winner for his work to create bio-artificial hearts. Another winner was iBakery, which employs 60 staff, half of them adults with special needs. Ricky Yu Wai-yip, chief executive of Light Be, a social enterprise housing programme, also won an award.

Police officer Chan Kwong-hing, who has donated blood 256 times and bone marrow twice, won the People's Choice Award in an online poll.

Dr David Pang Ding-jung, SCMP Group chairman and a judging panel member, said: "We often hear people say it is not easy to stumble upon good people. Apparently this is not true here in Hong Kong. Indeed, some of our proudest moments come when we publish stories of unsung heroes that touch the hearts of our readers, and in turn inspire them to share those stories."

Ma said the awards, now in their third year, demonstrated a healthy and thriving Hong Kong.