

SINGAPORE YOUTH AWARDS 2007 **COMMUNITY AND YOUTH SERVICES**

MS MELISSA KWEE



“What if every person gave 1% more time and effort each day to care for someone around them? 1% of kindness to a stranger, 1% more care towards a family member, 1% of your income for a day. I am quite sure we would have a positive revolution and witness a transformed world”

Ms Melissa Kwee, Chairperson of Halogen Foundation Singapore, calls herself an “educator, activist and advocate”. As a young girl, Melissa always dreamt of promoting greater understanding between people and comfort those who were hurt.

The little girl grew up to be a strong advocate in her community, especially in the areas of youth development and leadership. After obtaining her Bachelor’s Degree in Social Anthropology at Harvard University, Melissa began pursuing her dream in earnest by taking up leadership positions in community organisations, and spearheading a series of youth leadership programmes.



One of Melissa’s earliest initiatives was Project Access, a leadership education programme for girls that sought to “broaden the realm of the possible”, which she founded in 1996. For five years, Melissa worked with local schools, community organisations and government institutions and created a network of Leadership Resource Partnerships across Singapore to serve as mentors and role models for youths.

From 2002 to 2006, as President of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), Melissa initiated groundbreaking projects such as the Stop Demand for Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Women and Children Campaign and Financial Education for Migrant Women Workers.

In 2006, Melissa founded another programme, “Beautiful People”, to reach out to teenage girls who lacked strong social and family support by offering life-skill programmes and the opportunity to be mentored by Big Sisters.

Melissa regularly speaks at youth events and has addressed many public gatherings such as the BP-CISCO Corporate Social Responsibility Forum in 2002, the Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations in 2001 and the State of the World Forum in 1997.

For her dedication to the youth community, Ms Melissa Aratani Kwee is conferred the Singapore Youth Award 2007.

