

## **SINGAPORE YOUTH AWARDS 2007** **ENTREPRENEURSHIP**

### **MR IVAN LEE CHUNG HWA**



*“Many people think that entrepreneurship is about making lots of money, but the best part of entrepreneurship is to be able to create something that genuinely touches the lives of people.”*

The founder of a popular Thai food restaurant chain, Mr Ivan Lee epitomises the young entrepreneur: driven, resilient, ambitious.

At the age of 23, Ivan set up a mortgage broking and financial services firm with his friends while still an undergraduate. That venture was followed by a food and beverage firm set up in 2000. Although his F&B business closed after two years, it did not extinguish his entrepreneurial fire. Instead, he emerged from the experience to establish the first ThaiExpress restaurant in 2002.

Today, ThaiExpress appeals to the growing number of consumers who look not just for good Thai food but also authentic Thai ambience and service. It has proven to be a successful formula for establishing a distinctive brand in a fiercely-competitive industry.



In 2004, ThaiExpress achieved ‘Thailand’s Brand Award’ (a symbol of authentic Thai food) which is given by the Thai Government to top brands. This achievement was followed by the

conferment of the Singapore Promising Brand Award in 2005. Under Ivan's leadership, the company has expanded rapidly from just one restaurant in Holland Village to a chain of 19 local and 16 international outlets with a



total annual turnover of \$30 million. With outlets in Indonesia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Australia and China, the locally successful company is gearing towards achieving global recognition.

Ivan's belief in giving back to the community is demonstrated by his decision to employ senior workers, ex-convicts and providing employment opportunities to people with disabilities.

For his entrepreneurial spirit and contributions towards the community, Mr Ivan Lee is conferred the Singapore Youth Award 2007.