

BRANDS *for* GOOD | 2023

Giving back to support the dreams of others

Having grown up poor, the group CEO of Ebenezer Holdings now wants to make the journey less arduous for aspiring entrepreneurs

On his 27th birthday, Singapore Management University (SMU) undergraduate and group chief executive officer of Ebenezer Holdings Lawrence Kim pledged \$17,500 in the company's name to fund a scholarship and a book prize for fellow students.

With the donation, the Kim's Entrepreneur Scholarship supported one student entrepreneur from SMU's Lee Kong Chian School of Business with a cash grant of \$3,000 and rewarded the top performing SMU business management student each year with \$500.

"I didn't have this support when I was a student entrepreneur myself. Although it's not a lot of money, the scholarship and book prize acknowledge the efforts of budding entrepreneurs and allow them some small celebration on their journeys," he explains.

In the same year, in 2009, Kim also launched a \$100,000 angel fund on behalf of the company to provide mentorship and help finance the start-ups of student entrepreneurs, with priority given to those from his alma maters SMU and Singapore Polytechnic.

His keen understanding of the "pain of being a student entrepreneur" contributed to his desire to give back to those who may have similar aspirations. Over the years, as

his businesses grew, so did his philanthropic efforts.

In 2009, he started the 'Fishing Rod' Apprenticeship Programme together with the North East Community Development Council (NECDC) to help equip young people with the necessary skills to get jobs within the oil and gas industry. Under the programme, each individual underwent a training scheme worth \$12,000 to become a qualified non-destructive testing inspector, a role that determines the safety of steel structures, vessels as well as petrochemical plants.

Kim is particularly proud of a Christmas initiative jointly organised by NECDC and Ebenezer, where he dressed up as Santa Claus and brought over 100 underprivileged kids to toy store Toys "R" Us to select their own Christmas present and enjoy a McDonald's meal.

He recalls: "My dad worked hard but there was little to go

around. When we were young, a meal at McDonald's was a rare treat, much less shopping for a new toy. So I wanted these children to experience what I never had as a child."

Making a difference

Kim's strong desire to give back was driven by his past personal



▶ Group CEO of Ebenezer Holdings Lawrence Kim (far right) brought over 100 underprivileged kids to toy store Toys "R" Us to celebrate Christmas in 2010. PHOTO: SPH MEDIA

▼ The Ebenezer team receiving the Leadership for Good award at the Brands for Good awards ceremony this year. PHOTO: EBENEZER HOLDINGS



challenges. The 41-year-old grew up in a two-room rental flat in Jurong, living with his parents and two siblings, and had been working since he was a teenager to pay for his living expenses.

At 14, he juggled multiple odd jobs that included being a waiter at banquet dinners and a cashier at a hardware store. Later, at 17, he started his first venture, selling business cards he designed using his home computer and printing flyers to help neighbourhood businesses promote what they do.

In 2007, the self-professed serial entrepreneur took over his father's flagging marine inspection company Ebenezer NDT Services and developed it into a multi-business group that focused on providing services beyond the marine and offshore, construction and petrochemical sectors.

A strong believer in renewable energy, Kim is also leading his company to do its part for the environment. In 2018, Ebenezer pivoted from being an oil and gas engineering business to specialising in solar energy systems, among other businesses in logistics, events infrastructure and fabrication.

The sustainability ethos is incorporated into every aspect of the business – from the solar panels that are installed on the rooftops of the company's own office building to the ongoing switch to electric vehicles from diesel vans.

Ebenezer Holdings, led by Kim, has been recognised as an Honouree under the Leadership for Good category as part of the Brands for Good awards, which aim to recognise businesses that not only make a difference but also commit as stewards

for a positive impact. The Leadership for Good category in particular, honours purpose-driven brands or individuals that have shown industry and ethical leadership to bring about social change in their sectors.

"Whether big multinational corporations or small and medium-sized enterprises, we should all give back in our own ways. It's not about the size of the contribution, but about fostering a sense of commitment towards the well-being of our community," he says.

"It's not about the size of the contribution, but about fostering a sense of commitment towards the well-being of our community."

LAWRENCE KIM, group chief executive officer, Ebenezer Holdings



BROUGHT TO YOU BY

