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KEYNOTE PAPER BY DR WILLIAM WAN, GENERAL SECRETARY, SINGAPORE  
KINDNESS MOVEMENT, AT THE SERVICE GOLD AWARDS ON FRIDAY, 5 NOVEMBER  
2021, 2 PM AT ORCHARD HOTEL SINGAPORE

Mr Alvin Tan, Minister of State, MTI and MCCY  
Ms Kwee Wei-Lin, President, SHA  
Ms Junie Foo, Chairperson of Singapore Kindness Movement,  
Leaders of the Hotel Industry,  
Award Winners and Distinguished guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Good afternoon and thank you for gathering with us today at the 27th National Kindness Award - Service Gold Award Ceremony.
2. Today I will be sharing with you my vision of a kind and hospitable Singapore and what more we can do to reach the ideal state of kindness and hospitality.
3. Before we get into it, allow me to share a brief introduction of the Service Gold Award Ceremony and our journey throughout the 27 years.
4. The National Kindness Award—Service Gold is jointly organised by the Singapore Kindness Movement and Singapore Hotel Association.
5. The purpose of this ceremony is to recognise service staff in the hotel industry who have displayed exemplary service and gracious behaviour in their course of work.
6. This award inspires recipients to continue to shine and influence their colleagues in contributing to a more pleasant and gracious society.
7. This year marks our 27th year organising the National Kindness Award-Service Gold Ceremony.
8. And our 9th year highlighting the element of gracious hotel guests.
9. Through the years, I am happy to say that we have seen a constant and steady growth in our Service Gold Awardees. This reflects a lot on how we have evolved as a kind and gracious society.

**What is kindness?**

10. Now, let's take a deep dive into what first sparked this ceremony -- Kindness. We often use this word in our daily conversations but do we really know the weight it carries and the meaning behind this simple word?

11. What does it mean to be a kind person?

12. Kindness or being kind simply means being other-centered. When you perform deeds for people other than yourself, it shows you're being other-centered.

### **Kindness in the Pandemic**

13. These particular stories that I'm about to share truly embody the meaning of being other-centered by going the extra mile to help someone in need during the pandemic.

14. We have Mohamed Faizal Hamzah, whose quick thinking helped save the life of a passer-by.

- a. He is an assistant security manager at Hotel G Singapore.
- b. In February 2020, Faizal was on duty when his security team was alerted that a passer-by had collapsed on the street just outside the hotel.
- c. Initially, he thought that the passer-by had fainted, but soon realised that he was not breathing.
- d. Without hesitation, Faizal grabbed the hotel's Automated External Defibrillator (AED) and ran to the person's side. He performed cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) on the passer-by until the ambulance arrived.
- e. Although trained in CPR and in the use of the AED, it was the first time that Faizal used it in a real-life setting.
- f. His swift act, borne out of an automatic desire to help someone else, made all the difference in a life-and-death situation.

15. Another one I would like to highlight is Jason Chan, who at the peak of the Covid-19 pandemic in Singapore last year, went to volunteer at the Community Care Facility (CCF) at the Singapore Expo.

- a. The assistant operations manager at Hard Rock Hotel Singapore helped to manage a team of volunteers to register patients and established standard operating procedures and daily workflow processes at the CCF.
- b. He also provided non-medical care for the residents that had tested positive for Covid-19 during their recovery and post-recovery phase.
- c. Since Hard Rock Hotel Singapore was not taking in guests during the circuit breaker, Jason decided to make better use of his time by volunteering.
- d. Understanding that even though the patients were in isolation, they still needed the human connection, Jason often made an effort to safely communicate with them.
- e. Jason was one of the 120 staff working in the hotel industry who was awarded last year at the 26th National Kindness Awards – Service Gold 2020 ceremony.

16. At Singapore Kindness Movement, we conduct an annual survey to measure overall graciousness in Singapore. In 2020, we saw a stable increase in our graciousness index despite the pandemic.

17. During the pandemic, Singaporeans acknowledged that we needed to build a strong community and support one another to overcome and emerge stronger from this pandemic.

18. Overall satisfaction of neighbourliness in our communities remained high but revealed that the state of online graciousness requires great improvement.

19. Most anonymous users take the opportunity to demonstrate uncivilised behaviour and say unkind things because they cannot do so offline.

### **Room for improvement**

20. There is always room for improvement. We should all aspire to be kinder to all who share the spaces that we work, live and play in, regardless of age, gender and ethnicity.

21. We should stand up against the minority of selfish people online. Be brave and speak up when we see discrimination — don't be a bystander.

22. Let the voices of the majority of Singaporeans, who are kind, rise above those of the unkind minority.

### **Overcome As One**

23. Last year, Singapore Kindness Movement launched a song called "Overcome as One" to rally Singaporeans to be more understanding and kind to each other during the COVID-19 outbreak.

24. Overcome as One was about overcoming fear and anxiety by being a caring, cohesive and confident society. The song encouraged the public to appreciate our frontline workers while pledging support for the Overcome as One movement.

25. It was heartwarming to see the movement inspire Singaporeans to stand together and treat each other with kindness and empathy. I believe it moved Singaporeans to go the extra mile to be of mutual aid during the pandemic.

### **A vision, a dream**

26. I always envisioned a gracious and kind Singapore. What would an ideal state of a kind of hospitable Singapore look like?

27. My vision of a kind and hospitable Singapore is where kindness becomes part of our society's DNA and legacy.

28. When our foreign friends speak of Singapore, I would like the words 'kind' and 'hospitable' to be one of the top descriptions.

### **Singapore ranks #35 in the list of kind and hospitable countries**

30. So where do we stand in being a kind and hospitable country in the world?

31. According to InterNations.com, Singapore was ranked #35 on the list of warm and friendly countries in the world in 2020. It is not the worst, but we can be greater!

32. Let me share with you some of the advantages we Singaporeans enjoy and as well as our tourists.

33. We are a safe country - Tourists find it extremely amusing that Singaporeans are not afraid to leave their laptops to a complete stranger at coffee shops while they leave to go to the washroom.

34. Secondly, we have an impressively warm and welcoming airport. Our airport is ranked top #3 the best airport in the world as of 2020. Tourists immediately are welcomed the moment they step into Singapore.

35. And lastly, tourists expressed that they are comfortable visiting Singapore as English is our official language. Because we live in a nation where we are rich in culture and diversity, hence, English is our main language of communication.

36. If we're ranked #35 on the list, then who ranked the most hospitable country in 2019?

37. It is Thailand -- In 2019, Booking.com surveyed more than 21,000 travellers from 29 countries around the globe to discover which countries have warmth and hospitality in their DNA. Thailand comes first on the list and the remaining top #5 countries are, Indonesia, Mexico, Taiwan, India.

38. What does it take to for Singapore to have a place at top #5 of the list? These countries were consistent of the following;

- a. Exhibiting kindness and graciousness,
- b. Great hosting skills, making tourists feel welcome
- c. Being able to provide many opportunities for tourists to experience and immerse themselves in the local culture.
- d. Lastly, they possess many beautiful landmarks and architecture with historical meanings that add to the entire hospitality experience.

### **Working towards the vision**

39. We may not have as many natural and historic landscapes as compared to our competitors but we can compensate for that by being at the forefront of digitalised tourism experience.

### **Heartware over Hardware**

40. While we may have the hardware qualities listed, we can be greater to ensure we radiate the heart of hospitality towards our guests and tourists.

41. The heart of hospitality encompasses demonstrating exceptional acts of kindness in service excellence. The heartware is what will leave a lasting impression on our hotel industry.

42. While service excellence is imperative, they are insufficient to guarantee success anymore, especially if we want to ensure we are ahead of our competitors.
43. Customer experience will never be sufficient without kindness, especially in the new normal. The key to achieving our vision always starts with kindness.
44. When you demonstrate kindness in service excellence, it leaves a lasting impression on your guests who will in return become loyal customers.
45. Additionally, when you demonstrate kindness as a guest, you boost the morale of the team who are serving you. In return, you receive exceptional service.
46. No act of kindness is too small. All gestures make a difference in our society. When kindness is implemented in all areas and aspects of life, it will create a strong sense of community and will help our society flourish and succeed!
47. Congratulations to all our awardees today! I am grateful to our awardees and gracious guests for being our Kindness Ambassadors. Thank you for contributing to the vision of a kind and hospitable country.
48. Thank you and enjoy the rest of the ceremony!