

Welcome comments by Ms Kwee Wei-Lin, President of the Singapore Hotel Association, at the 27th SHA/SKM Service Gold National Kindness Award cum Gracious Guest Recognition

Orchard Hotel Singapore, Orchard Grand Ballroom, Level 3, on 5 November 2021

Mr Alvin Tan
Minister of State
MTI and
MCCY

Ms Junie Foo
Chairperson, SKM

Dr William Wan
General Secretary, SKM

Award Winners

Guests

At the start of 2020, we would never have imagined the changes Covid has forced on the very core of humanity – social connection. The biggest impact Covid has had on us is the inability to connect physically with our colleagues, guests, family, friends, and other people the way we used to. Everything now is ‘contactless’ or virtual.

So I’m happy that today we are able to meet in person for the SHA/SKM Service Gold National Kindness Award. Applause just falls flat on zoom, the energy I feel in this room, cannot be felt online. Covid has taught us that we need human connection and physical experiences to thrive. We can live, eat and work in isolation, but we cannot thrive.

At the end of the day, it is just in our human nature to connect.

In a recent online poll, the Straits Times found that all the Covid restrictions and regulations have come at a cost to many. Mental health has declined since the Covid-19 pandemic began, with 76 per cent of the respondents here feeling sad or depressed, and 65 per cent feeling lonely. **For humans to thrive, we need social connection.**

Hospitality is the business of social connection. The pulse of the hospitality industry is our employees – you are truly our gems who bring smiles to our guests and their colleagues. Especially in times like these, of disconnection, anxiety and sickness, human connection and kindness are most treasured.

For our 130 winners from 73 hotels – you have done just that. Your empathy and kindness speak volumes to your guests, in particular, for those on stay-home-notice. Kudos and congratulations!

Our passion in creating social connection and compassion for what our guests are going through - THAT can never be replaced by a robot or computer. And this is the reason why I am confident of the Travel industry's long-term survival. It is our unique role to reintroduce to a generation trained by Covid to fear, back to the wonders of travel and new experiences. And return they will.

Building a culture of kindness at the workplace is therefore a powerful approach to uplift our employees in terms of happiness and well-being, which in turn can better help them to co-create wonderful experiences with their guests. In addition, I would like to thank our guests for inspiring our employees to continue to champion kindness in their service delivery.

On this note, I would like to acknowledge SKM, our longstanding partner, for their unwavering support to promote kindness in the hotel industry. Together we can play our part and be a change catalyst for an even more gracious tomorrow.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to MOS Tan for taking time off his busy schedule to grace our event. Your presence here today truly means a lot for our industry.

To all attendees, I wish you a fruitful session ahead.

Last but not least, congratulations once again to all our winners and gracious guests!

Thank you.