

Beautiful from the inside out

NGO's first charity gala bash to help underprivileged children

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A BEVY of beauties brought a touch of glamour to the "An Evening Of Hope" charity gala dinner organised by Living Hope, an NGO dedicated to bringing hope to the poorest of the poor children in this nation.

Many others – generous donors and sponsors, committed volunteers and performing artistes – were also present at the glitzy event which marked the organisation's seventh anniversary held at a hotel in Petaling Jaya, Selangor, recently.

"Living Hope is about partnership. We all have time, talent or treasure. Those from age 12 to the 20s give their time and energy (in volunteering). Those in their 20s to 40s contribute their talents, and those in their 40s and above give their wealth," said founder and chairman, Dr Peggy C Wong, acknowledging the people who have linked up with Living Hope to achieve its goal.

Children have always been close to her heart, especially underprivileged ones below 12 as they are naive, innocent and the most vulnerable.

They are the first to drop out of school and forced to work to earn extra income for their impoverished families; and so the vicious cycle of poverty continues.

Living Hope seeks to empower such children through its "Educate a Child" programme. This is complemented by the "One Egg – One Child" meals, "Channel of Hope" distribution programme, "Festivities on Wheels", Special Events, and projects such as the Toy and Book Library, and Education Resource Centre.

"Together, we have touched 39,510 young lives through our programmes since we started in July 2007," said a thankful Wong.

During the charity gala, a few outstanding performers contributed their talents to making the dinner truly memorable, in addition to the children from The Kids Agency who sang, danced and acted in the opening item.

Looking suave in his red-and-black ensemble and with his hair slicked back, HT Long – also known as Mr Golden Voice Asia and "the best Elvis Presley of Malaysia" – crooned his way into the audi-

ence's hearts. It was a walk down memory lane for many of them as the award-winning recording artiste and composer belted out hits such as *Love Me Tender*, *Angel* and *Blue Suede Shoes*.

Dressed in an eye-catching silver sequinned gown, Dr Joanne Yeoh gave a rousing performance on her violin. Currently a lecturer in music at Universiti Putra Malaysia, Yeoh is also a multi-award winner, and has played alongside Hong Kong and Taiwanese superstars on their tours around the world.

Our local three tenors known as T4C – comprising Tom Tan, Victor Chua and Josh Lee – also mesmerised the audience with their velvety vocals that reminded one of The Three Tenors and Il Divo. Their semi-lyrical and operatic vocals were powerful and moving, and a fitting closing act.

Making heads turn that night were the beauty queens – including Miss Universe Malaysia 2014 Sabrina Beneett, Miss World Malaysia 2013 Melinder Bhullar and Miss Tourism International 2012 Gabriella Robinson – and celebrity models who sashayed down the catwalk in couturier Carven Ong's creations.

Most of the gorgeous evening gowns, from his Spring/Summer collection, came in pastel hues. For the finale, the models strode out in stunning red gowns.

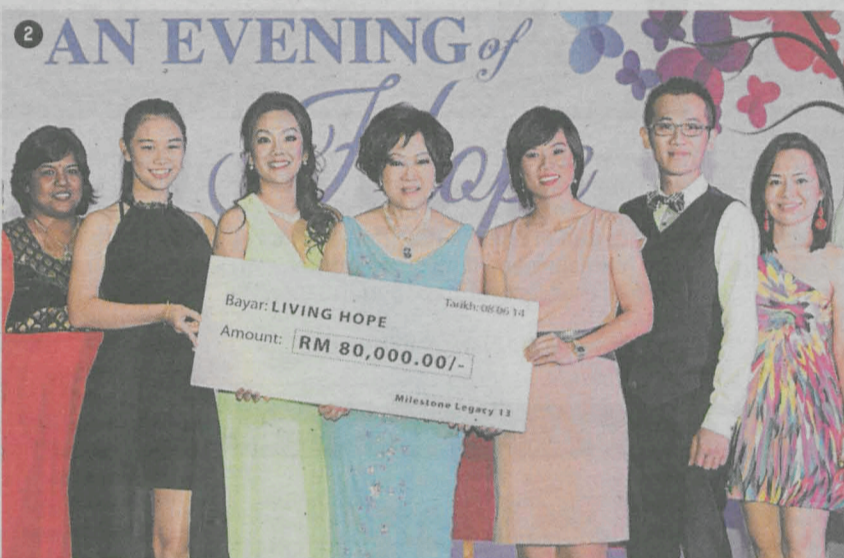
To make the evening even more exciting, auctions were conducted. Two pieces of artwork entitled *Feeding Hope* and *The Rainbow Of Hope*, done by children, and Tommy Chen's painting of a golden arowana went under the hammer.

The highest bidders paid RM1,000 and RM2,000 respectively for the first two art pieces, and RM10,000 for Chen's masterpiece.

A group of students and young professionals aged 18 to 38, who call themselves Milestone Legacy 13, contributed RM80,000 to Living Hope.

With the funds raised at the gala dinner, the organisation can continue to help needy and marginalised children, as well as invest in a van, so that more essential items can be delivered to those who live in remote areas.

Nothing is impossible if everyone bands together. "Come and share this journey with us so that the children know there are people out there who care for them. Together, we can make a difference and give them hope for a better tomorrow," said Wong.



1 Beauty queens and celebrity models in beautiful evening gowns flanking fashion designer Carven Ong at 'An Evening Of Hope' Charity Gala Dinner at Sunway Resort Hotel, Petaling Jaya.

2 Wong (centre), with a group of young people who call themselves Milestone Legacy 13.

3 Wong, with a group of schoolchildren, making an entrance at 'An Evening Of Hope' Charity Gala Dinner.

4 The three tenors known as T4C (comprising Victor Chua, Tom Tan and Josh Lee) thrilling the audience.

5 Wong surrounded by members of the organising committee and children from various children's homes during the cake-cutting ceremony.

6 Multi-award winner Dr Joanne Yeoh mesmerising the audience with her brilliant performance.

– Photos by ART CHEN

