

Journey into the human psyche

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KUALA LUMPUR: It is always better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. But in this day and age, the candle lighters, those who choose to make a difference in the society, are a rare breed.

Thus, the NSTP-PwC Malaysian Humanitarian Award was introduced in 2004 to give recognition to those who have performed outstanding humanitarian acts, beyond the normal call of duty.

The nominees for the award are vetted by Mirella Soyer and Brian Lariche from The Liaison Combination Sdn Bhd (TLC), the company in charge



of verifying nominations, ensuring that only the nominees who have met all the criteria are eligible for judging by the panel of judges.

Being the people behind the scenes has proven to be a journey into the human psyche for



Mirella Soyer (left) and Brian Lariche from The Liaison Combination Sdn Bhd, the company in charge of verifying nominations.

both Soyer and Lariche.

"It is amazing what people can do to make a difference in society and the life of others. It is very inspiring, and the experience has helped to reaffirm our belief in human nature," said Lariche.

"This is the beauty of the award. It celebrates the positive side of life and brings out a different side to the newspaper. At times, reading the newspaper can be rather depressing, but when we read about acts of bravery, compas-

sion, selfless deeds, it makes us proud to be human," added Soyer.

Like many others, Lariche had also found it hard to imagine those who had sacrificed their time and money for the good of the society, without expecting anything in return.

He recalled meeting a nominee, a cook from Malacca who had, on his own accord, volunteered to hold cooking classes in a juvenile detention centre. "He taught the students how to cook, using his own money to buy the ingredients and the utensils needed.

"Although there was an initial fear about letting the students use sharp implements, it worked out beautifully. I was very touched by his sincerity and his selflessness," said Lariche.

"Ultimately, the award is about the people who have become role models in society, and can inspire others to emulate them," said Soyer.

"But in Malaysia, it is hard for us to get nominees for the award. Most of them shy away from the limelight. They're very modest, so they choose to stay behind the scene.

"Some even try to withdraw their nomination when we contact them," she said.

On the other hand, there are

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The Liaison Combination
Sdn Bhd

also those who crave the limelight, concocting various lies of courageous and selfless deeds.

"We had both sides of the coin. You wouldn't believe some of the stories we've heard. It's unreal," she said.

"These people don't know that we have a very good network with the Welfare Department and various non-governmental organisations.

"We do our cross-checking for all the nominees that we receive. When we present our findings to the judges, we make sure that the judges get

the complete story on the nominees," she adds.

Aside from the lack of nominations, TLC also has to deal with the problem of late submission of nomination forms.

"Malaysians like to wait until the last possible minute before sending in the forms. It makes it very hard for us to vet the applicants. So we hope that the people will start sending in the nominations earlier," said Lariche.

The NSTP-PwC Malaysian Humanitarian Award 2006 is divided into four categories — Young Humanitarian, Team Humanitarian, Lifetime Humanitarian Award and a new category recognising individuals or corporations that had made extraordinary contributions on a national scale.

NSTP and PwC are looking to honour Malaysians who have gone beyond the call of duty and performed outstanding acts of public service last year.

Nominations are open until July 16.

For information, visit www.nstp.com.my or www.pwc.com/my. The Liaison Combination Sdn Bhd can also be reached at 03-20934240 or fax 03-20924240 or visit their website at www.liaisoncombination.com.