

Awards salute unsung heroes

By Francis Hweshe

A range of extraordinary South Africans, who have helped improve society through philanthropic works, have been honoured in Cape Town.

The Inyathelo Philanthropy Awards, presented in the city on Wednesday night, were run by the SA Institute of Advancement for the second year.

Braam Hanekom, chair of People Against Suffering, Suppression, Oppression and Poverty (Passop), which lobbies for rights for refugees, won the Youth Award.

Norton Tennille, founder of the Cape Town-based SA Education and Environmental Project (SAEP), took the Exceptional Philanthropy award.

Tennille, who runs programmes such as early childhood and career counselling, said philanthropy was not about being rich but about ordinary people making a difference in their communities.

Rhodes University vice-chancellor Dr Sal-eem Badat won the same award for contributing about R250 000 a year of his benefits and salary as vice-chancellor to the Jakes Gerwel Rhodes University Scholarship Fund.

Lynette Finlay, director of the non-profit organisation Nurturing Orphans of Aids for Humanity (Noah) in Gauteng, received the Women's Award. The organisation assists about 33 000 orphaned and vulnerable children.

A lifetime award went to Professor Rashid Bhikha, of the Ibn Sina Institute of Tibb, and a family award to the Bertie Lubner family, chosen for its "tradition of intergenerational giving".

Bhika, founder of Betabs Pharmaceuticals, received an award for committing himself to supporting and providing affordable health care in the country.

Grace Mohapi, founder of Usizo Thuso Community Centre, received the community award for fighting Aids.

The merit award went to Linda Givon for her financial support for the Children's Hospital Trust. Givon and her close friends are said to have given more than R800 000 to the hospital.

Shelagh Gastrow, executive director of Inyathelo, said international private and foundation funding had been cut back, making it more urgent for South Africans to make contributions.

"It is of utmost importance that we recognise and honour those individuals who, through commitment to really build South Africa, give back and encourage others to give," she said.

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