

Media Release – For immediate use

The 2019 SWHF honourees

LIEW YUEN SIEN (1901-1975)

Outstanding educator

Liew Yuen Sien was just 26 when, in 1927, she gave up the adventurous life of a globe-trotting journalist to become principal of Nanyang Girls' School. She remained principal for nearly 40 years, playing a key role in shaping the values and lives of generations of Singapore women. Born in Jiangxi, China, she worked as a journalist in Cuba, San Francisco, Burma and France in her early 20s and was on her way back to China when she was offered the job of running Nanyang Girls' School. Under her, the school's enrolment grew from a few hundred to some two thousand, and girls had a complete education path, from kindergarten through to pre-university.

EVELYN NORRIS (1918-2014)

Outstanding educator

Evelyn Norris was a student, then a teacher and, from 1961 to 1976, the Principal of Raffles Girls' School. She was a dynamic and hands-on leader who insisted that all students took both science and humanities subjects. This all-round education continues to be a pillar of RGS. She also encouraged students to be active in co-curricular activities. In a prescient move, Evelyn started conducting assembly and various activities in Malay, Tamil and Mandarin. When the learning of a second 'mother-tongue' language became mandatory, RGS students were not fazed because they had already been exposed to the various national languages.

ZAHRAH ZA'BA (1920-1988)

Pioneer of Malay broadcasting

During the 1950s and 1960s, when radio was a major influence in the Malay community, Zahrah Za'ba ruled the airwaves. A multi-talented woman, Zahrah read the news, did live commentary on major local events, wrote scripts, played lead roles in radio plays, produced plays and many other shows - and ran the Malay broadcasting department. One radio play that Zahrah wrote, produced and acted in during the 1950s was the hugely popular 'Esah dan Keluarga-nya' (Esah and her family). People of all ethnic groups listened to the radio play. She followed it with another successful radio play, Keluarga Si-Chomel.

GLORY BARNABAS (1941)

The Accidental Athlete

Glory Barnabas's running career began unexpectedly in 1963 when she was a trainee teacher. She was asked to join the Teachers Training College's 4x100m team at the last minute when a runner fell ill, and her team won the race. The late athletics coach Tan Eng Yoon spotted her potential and took her under his wing. Glory thus became a member of Singapore's golden generation of track and field athletes that won numerous medals at the SEAP Games from 1965 to 1975. At the 1973 Games in Singapore, Glory won the 200m gold medal in an exciting photo-finish final.

THAM YEW CHIN (1950)

Award-winning author

Tham Yew Chin, who was awarded the Cultural Medallion in 2009, is the best-known Singapore writer in China. Writing as *You Jin*, the former journalist and teacher has authored 191 books. She took the Chinese literary world by storm in 1991 when a publisher released five of her travelogues in China. The books, about her trips through countries in South America, the Middle East and Europe, were enormously popular and long queues of fans greeted her at the meet-the-author sessions that were organised in major Chinese cities. In 2000, Chongqing University set up the You Jin Research Centre.

K JAYAMANI (1955)

Queen of long-distance running

In September 1973, when the SEA Games were held in Singapore, 17-year-old Kandasamy Jayamani skipped school and went to the National Stadium to watch Glory Barnabas compete and win gold in the sensational photo-finish 200m final. Jayamani set her heart on being like Glory and winning gold for Singapore. Ten years later, the SEA Games were again held in Singapore and Jayamani, by now well-established as a top-notch runner, achieved her dream and won the marathon. She became Singapore's only female marathon gold medallist, a title she still holds today.

FLORENCE CHUA SIEW LIAN (1966)

First female Deputy Commissioner of Police

After 29 years in the Police Force, Florence Chua made history in June 2018 when she was appointed Director of the Criminal Investigation Division, the first woman to hold the post. And in another first for women, she also became a Deputy Commissioner of Police, overseeing Investigations and Intelligence. Joining the Singapore Police Force in 1989, she was by 1997 a Deputy Superintendent and the first woman Head Investigator at the Central Police Division. In 2012, she became Deputy Director in the CID where she led operations to dismantle organised crime groups and unlicensed moneylending and scam syndicates.

GAN SIOW HUANG (1975)

First female Brigadier-General in the SAF

It was no surprise when Gan Siow Huang became, in July 2015, the first woman Brigadier-General in the Singapore Armed Forces. She had already chalked up many firsts in the SAF. In 1993, she was one of four women to receive the SAF Merit Scholarship. It was the first time the SAF offered the scholarship to women. Later she was the first female commander of the Air Surveillance and Control Group. In 2010, Siow Huang was the first female military officer to be sent to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Boston where she got a Master of Business Administration.