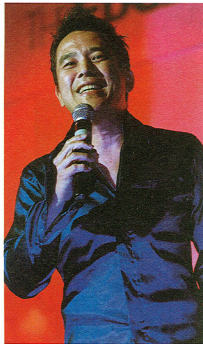


The grand set-up of the event at One World Hotel



Recipients from the various beneficiaries in a picture perfect moment with Ho (second from left), Datuk Kalimullah (fourth from left) and Goh (fourth from right)

An enchanting EVENING



The story of how Extraordinary Efforts for Excellence came to be is perhaps its most endearing pull factor — EMC² managing director Peter Goh had decided to forgo his company's annual golf tournament in lieu of a charitable social event, and got close friends Ho Kay Tat, the editor-in-chief of *The Edge*, Datuk Kalimullah Hassan and Lim Kian Onn from ECM Libra to join in the fun. After some thought, the idea of a fun-filled, family-style event emerged and four beneficiary charities were identified.

From then on, the ball just kept rolling until Friday, Dec 11, when almost 1,000 guests arrived at the One World Hotel to toast and celebrate the spirit of

giving that the year-end season brings. As Ho welcomed everyone into the packed ballroom, he paid special attention to Goh's business associates who might have been looking forward to the golf tournament. "Not only have you lost out on a round of golf and the wonderful prizes, but you also had to buy tables at this evening's dinner," Ho said to laughter from the audience. "But I am sure Peter will make up for it next year."

Extraordinary Efforts for Excellence turned out to be an unusual fundraising event that was entertaining, meaningful and immensely fun. The wide expanse of space that fronted One World Hotel's Grand Ballroom was filled with people

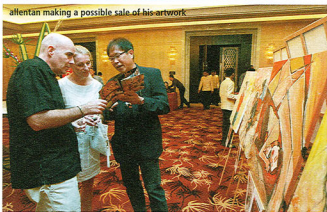
millling around in a wide variety of finery — older gentlemen in suits and batik shirts, socialites here and there with their coiffed hair and flowy dresses, the corporate chic look with ties, skirts and jackets, and plenty of children who needed nothing more than their wide smiles to fit right in.

Selected works by local artist allentan were on display, and it was heart warming to see him talk to several groups of children who were more than eager to ask about the vibrant colours and faces in his paintings. allentan had a short break when a magician's act held everyone spellbound for a half hour performance, but the children came running back soon after. The magician went in search of other "victims", and was seen trying his expert sleight of hand on several unsuspecting guests.

The family carnival vibe extended inside the ballroom, right from the very energetic emcee to the kind of songs that was being performed by the very talented Reena — who also belted out a few Mandarin and Hokkien classics. A pictorial tribute to Michael Jackson was a worthy delay to the eight-course Chinese dinner that was served, especially when MJ himself took to the stage — impersonator Rezo, who bore an uncanny resemblance to the King of Pop, right down to the curly wisps of hair and thin frame. And of course, his very impressive Moonwalk that really got the audience going.

When *Options* first spoke to Goh about the event in November, he had promised four hours of solid entertainment, and that he certainly delivered with a cornucopia of events that graced the stage — a dance medley, a beat box performance by 17-year-old Sean Lee and a special appearance by entertainer extraordinaire Datuk Leonard Tan. Known as the Man of

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allentan making a possible sale of his artwork



The multifaceted entertainment of the night included Tan (top), MJ impersonator Rezo, Reena's impressive vocals, beatboxer Lee and a dance medley





From left: Ngau BK, Dr Oh Ei Sun, Simon Chiew and Celine Koh



From left: Ooi Eng Wei, Winston Lau, Thomas Charles De Costa, Michael Soh, Navil Siripala and Vincent Seo



The magician who kept children of all ages spellbound



Alliance Cosmetics' Tan Thiam Hock and wife Judy Ng



From left: Hee Chin, Datin Maylyn allentan and Reggie Lee



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a Thousand Voices, Tan treated everyone to a tantalising display of both his singing talent as well as his wit and sense of humour.

Dessert was about to be served when there was a charity auction of allentan's two art pieces, which raised a total of RM20,500.

The four beneficiary charities — My Kasih, Pusat Penjagaan Kanak Kanak Cacat Taman Megah, StART Society and

the Alzheimer's Disease Foundation Malaysia — received a total of RM325,000, while a contribution totalling RM1.45 million was given to the Montfort Boys Town in Shah Alam and the Montfort Youth Centre in Melaka.

But the news that really got the cheers going was Ho's announcement of a special study loan fund with a RM1 million contribution from ECM Libra Foundation. ECM Libra, EMC² and The Edge will form a working group to select

eligible recipients of the study loan. Most unique about the programme is its focus — which includes lower achievers who may be equally, if not more, deserving of assistance.

"We feel that right now, most existing student aid programmes tend to focus on top performers and only in certain areas of studies like science, finance and engineering, thereby underserving those who do need assistance but are not top performers, and those who may be taking courses in the social sciences and liberal arts," he said.

The clock had struck 11pm by the time

the ballroom began to empty — clearly many parents had decided that the event was worth delaying their children's bed-times for. The positive energy that the event began with lasted until the last teacup was cleared from the last table. Then again, events that are held with altruistic reasons in mind often have that impact; the cost of buying tables at such functions is nothing compared to the feel-good factor that is generated and the hope they inspire. It was a wonderful end to a rather dreary year. Here's to good things and more extraordinary efforts for excellence in 2010. ■