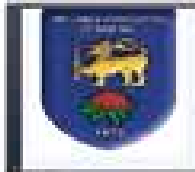




Sri Lankan Community Young Achiever Awards



The 20th Annual Sri Lankan-Australian Community YOUNG ACHIEVER AWARDS CEREMONY 2019

The annual Sri Lankan-Australian Community Young Achiever Awards ceremony 2019 organized by the Sri Lanka Association of NSW Inc. was held on 17th of February at Thornleigh Community Centre in the presence of a large gathering.

Whilst commemorating the outstanding achievements in academic and extracurricular activities of young Sri Lankan-Australians, the event was also packed with thought-provoking speeches as well as delightful dance and song items. The invited VIP guests, The Honorable Philip Ruddock, The Mayor Hornsby Shire Council, Mr Julian Leeser MP Federal Member for Berowra, Mr Lal Wickrematunga, Consul General of Sri Lanka, Sydney and Professor Dr. Siri Kanangra were in attendance.

The event commenced with a welcome speech by Mr. Kithsiri Senadeera who initiated this awards program in year 2000. He gave a brief history of the Young Achiever Awards program and its objectives, especially the idea of stimulating creativity, innovation and leadership among young Sri Lankan Australians. He thanked the Panel of Judges, Professor Nimal Chandrasena, Dr Don Wickrama and Dr Seneviratne Banda for their contribution. He also thanked Mr Russell Raymond and Mr Frank Soertsz, the long standing sponsors of the Young Achiever Awards.

The highlight of the day was Professor Dr. Siri Kanangra's inspirational speech that centred on living life according to his philosophy of the "Three G's - Goals, Gratitude and Giving." He urged young people not be tempted by materialism but to find a career path by passion and genuine interest. His motivating words certainly would have left a lasting impact on young achievers.

The chief guest, Mr. Lal Wickrematunga, Consul General of Sri Lanka, Sydney spoke about resilience. He inspired the young students - and indeed everyone else attending - to never give up hope in times of difficulty. Mr Julian Leeser MP, Federal Member for Berowra in his captivating speech encouraged the young Sri Lankans get into community and leadership professions.

Recognizing the outstanding achievements at the HSC 2018 and in other extracurricular activities such as Performing Arts, Community Services, Sports etc., the children were presented with a generous array of gold trophies, certificates and monetary vouchers to commend their efforts. A great sense of pride washed over the parents and guests, who realised that the future of Sri-Lankan Australians is in good hands.

Following the award ceremony was an incredibly heartfelt gesture. The students stood up to present a red rose to their parents as a sign of gratitude for their unconditional support. This unforgettable moment was accompanied by Miss Ishi Mahaduraga's - the winner of the Music award- magnificent rendition of the famous song "You Raise Me Up" - a tribute to the parents. This song beautifully complemented the day's keynote theme of never forgetting the inherently Sri Lankan value of Gratitude.

Afterwards, the guests were treated to another spine-tingling singing performance again by Ishi whose voice was harmonic and powerful. The Bharatanatyam dance item performed by Miss Sarangi Rupasinghe thrilled the audience with her mesmerizing movements, transforming the occasion to a day to remember.

Miss Michelle Senanayake, the winner of Literature and also HSC Award gave the vote of thanks on behalf the Young Achievers and their parents. Miss Gayara Welagama was the MC of the event.

Kithsiri Senadeera
Editor, Sri Lanka Association of NSW