

Hong Kong Tatler: Madeleine Ross and Marianna Cerini, December 17, 2018

10 Philanthropy Prizes That Are Changing The World

Since the turn of the millennium, philanthropy prizes have soared dramatically in number, value and variety. Here we identify some of the key philanthropic prizes today, their objectives, their successes and the personalities behind them

1/10 Lui Che-woo Prize, Hong Kong

Who: [Lui Che-woo](#), chairman of Galaxy Entertainment Group

What: Established in 2015 by Hong Kong property tycoon and casino magnate Lui Che-woo with the aim of “advancing world civilisation” and “inspiring people to build a more harmonious world,” the Lui Che Woo Prize was first awarded in 2016. It goes to laureates in three categories—[sustainability](#); welfare betterment; and positive energy (or the promotion of a positive outlook in life)—with the theme for each changing annually.

Winners, usually announced in August with a prize-giving ceremony in October, receive a cash prize of HK\$20 million—much more than the roughly HK\$7 million that Nobel laureates receive—making this one of the world’s richest awards.

Past honourees have included former US president Jimmy Carter, awarded in 2016 as an individual “whose behaviour and achievement inspired, energised and gave hope to others;” Chinese politician Xie Zhenhua in 2017 for his work to combat climate change; and, this year, the [World Meteorological Organization](#), for “reduction of impact of natural disasters.”

Find out more at luiprize.org

2/10 Yidan Prize, Mainland China

Who: Charles Chen Yidan, co-founder of Tencent

What: Charles Chen Yidan has always had a soft spot for philanthropy. One of the five co-founders of China’s largest internet media company, Tencent Holdings, Chen helped to set up its in-house charity. In 2013 he retired to focus on philanthropy, founding the Chen Yidan Foundation; three years later, he launched the Yidan Prize.

With prize money totalling a whopping HK\$60 million, bestowed annually on two individuals or organisations whose work has made profound contributions to educational development, it is currently the world’s largest prize in educational research.

The Yidan Prize’s inaugural laureates, unveiled in 2017, were Carol Dweck, a leading researcher in the field of motivation; and sociologist Vicky Colbert, founder of Fundación Escuela Nueva, which promotes a new model for primary education. This year Larry Hedges, who studies the use of statistics in education policy, was named winner of the Yidan Prize for

Education Research, and Anant Agarwal, founder of online learning platform edX, took home the Yidan Prize for Education Development.

Find out more at yidanprize.org

3/10 Breakthrough Prize, USA

Who: [Yuri Milner](#), tech entrepreneur, venture capitalist and physicist, founder of investment firms Mail.Ru Group and DST Global

What: Established in 2012, the [Breakthrough Prize](#), backed by the Breakthrough Foundation, awards six prizes each year: four for the life sciences, one for physics and one for mathematics. Each award comes with a cash payment of US\$3 million, nearly three times the reward for a Nobel Prize.

Milner and his wife, [Julia](#), co-founded the award with Mark Zuckerberg and Priscilla Chan of Facebook, Google's Sergey Brin, and Anne Wojcicki, founder of genome-testing company 23andMe. The most recent addition is Tencent co-founder Pony Ma.

The ceremony—a lavish, televised event, complete with celebrities, tech entrepreneurs and star scientists, often called the Oscars of Science—takes place in December in Silicon Valley. Past recipients of the prize have included the late Stephen Hawking and seven Cern scientists whose leadership led to the discovery of the Higgs boson particle.

In 2015 the foundation created the [Breakthrough Junior Challenge](#) for teenagers, with the winner receiving a US\$250,000 university scholarship, US\$50,000 for the teacher who inspired them and a US\$100,000 upgrade for their school's science lab.

Find out more at breakthroughprize.org

4/10 Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity

Who: Ruben Vardanyan, entrepreneur and former CEO of Troika Dialog

What: Co-launched in 2016 by Russian magnate Ruben Vardanyan on behalf of the survivors of the Armenian Genocide and in gratitude to their saviours, the Aurora Prize is an annual international humanitarian award that recognises and expresses gratitude to “those courageous individuals or organisations that impact on preserving human life and advancing humanitarian causes.”

It is backed by Vardanyan's Aurora Humanitarian Initiative, an eight-year commitment (2015 to 2023, a century after the Armenian Genocide, which lasted from about 1915 to 1923) to promote global projects that strive to help those in need. It bestows a US\$100,000 grant on its winners, as well as the opportunity for them to continue the cycle of giving by nominating organisations that have inspired their work for a US\$1 million award.

The Aurora Prize's eminent selection committee includes Nobel laureates Óscar Arias, Shirin Ebadi and Leymah Gbowee; human rights activist Hina Jilani; Médecins Sans Frontières co-

founder and former French foreign minister Bernard Kouchner; former ambassadors, presidents and foreign ministers; and Academy Award-winning actor and humanitarian George Clooney. The ceremony takes place in Armenia in June.

Find out more at auroraprize.com

5/10 Tang Prize, Taiwan

Who: Samuel Yin, entrepreneur and chairman of the Ruentex Financial Group

What: One of Taiwan's wealthiest men, Samuel Yin launched the Tang Prize in 2012, although it was first conferred two years later. Conceived as an international award and modelled on the Nobels, it rewards outstanding contributions in sustainable development, biopharmaceutical science, sinology, and rule of law. It takes its name from China's Tang Dynasty (618-907), the Renaissance of Chinese civilisation.

Presented every two years, the award comprises a cash prize of NT\$40 million (HK\$10.13 million), and a research grant of NT\$10 million (HK\$2.53 million). This year's winners featured eight laureates—the most ever awarded.

They included James Hansen, former director of the [NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies](http://www.nasa.gov/goddard), and Veerabhadran Ramanathan, director of the Center for Atmospheric Sciences at the University of California, San Diego, who jointly received the Tang Prize in Sustainable Development for their pioneering work on [climate change](http://www.nasa.gov/goddard) and its impact on the sustainability of the earth; and legal philosopher Joseph Raz, who was awarded the Tang Prize in Rule of Law.

Find out more at tang-prize.org

6/10 The Shaw Prize, Hong Kong

Who: Run Run Shaw, entertainment mogul, founder of Shaw Brothers Studio and TVB

What: The annual Shaw Prize was founded by the late Run Run Shaw in 2002 with the aim of “furthering societal progress, enhancing quality of life, and enriching humanity's spiritual civilisation,” and has been recognising brilliant minds in astronomy, life science and medicine, and mathematical sciences ever since. A cash prize of HK\$9.3 million awaits laureates.

The award, presented in September each year, has become extremely prestigious because of the calibre of both the judges and the past winners. It has also become a good forecaster of the Nobel: to date, 12 Shaw laureates have gone on to bag one.

Past winners have included a trio of physicists in 2016 who helped conceive and design the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory; a physicist whose discovery of cosmic gravitational waves in 2015 provided further evidence for the existence of black holes and collisions between them; and, last year, two scientists whose detection of biological engines could lead to breakthroughs in the treatment of cancer and neurodegenerative disorders.

Find out more at shawprize.org

7/10 The New Shape Prize, Sweden

Who: László Szombatfalvy, investor and financial analyst

What: The New Shape Prize is about tangible change: it awards US\$1.8 million in prize money for the best idea to create a new international decision-making system capable of tackling the world's most challenging issues, from extreme poverty to the spread of nuclear weapons to growing environmental damage.

Businessman László Szombatfalvy, who made his fortune in the stock market before retiring to focus on philanthropy, was inspired to set up the New Shape Prize by his own upbringing: in 1956 he fled from Hungary to Sweden as a refugee. In 2012 he established the [Global Challenges Foundation](#), the organisation behind the prize, to find new, innovative ways of tackling the most serious challenges faced by humanity.

Four years later the New Shape Prize was born. The biggest competition of its kind, the prize is awarded each November, with the foundation committed to supporting the winning ideas from proposal towards implementation, ensuring ideas come to life.

Find out more at globalchallenges.org

8/10 The One, Hong Kong

Who: [David Harilela](#), CEO of Harilela (George) and HPZ International; director of Harilela Hotels

What: Conceptualised and founded by businessman David Harilela in 2011 and 2012, [The One International Humanitarian Award](#) is an annual award that aims to “draw attention to the goodness of mankind that exists in the world.” The winning unsung heroes receive prizes of US\$100,000, while two runners-up are given US\$50,000. All past winners and finalists are also eligible to seek help from The One's Emergency Aid Fund, which can grant up to US\$100,000 in the event of a dire emergency.

The prize's sponsors have included Hong Kong philanthropic personalities such as [Padma Harilela](#), [Richard Elman](#), Peter Bennett, Balu Chainrai and [Purviz Shroff](#), and its ambassador is international movie star [Donnie Yen](#).

Previous winners include Valerie Browning for her work with Afar nomads in Ethiopia; Barbara Hofman for transforming the lives of children affected by war in Mozambique; and Enid Hendershot for caring for the impoverished in India. The One has three different iterations: The One Hong Kong, The One Philippines and The One International.

Find out more at theonerotary3450.org

9/10 Kavli Prize, Norway

Who: Fred Kavli, physicist, entrepreneur and founder of the Kavlico Corporation

What: The late Norwegian-born US philanthropist Fred Kavli set up the [Kavli Foundation](#) in 2000, giving more than US\$200 million to establish 17 research institutes at universities around the world in astrophysics, neuroscience, nanoscience and theoretical physics. He launched the award that bears his name in 2008, with recipients in three categories, astrophysics, nanoscience and neuroscience, sharing a US\$1 million prize.

Aiming to distinguish the Kavli Prize from the Nobels, the entrepreneur decreed that laureates be selected by committees of distinguished international scientists from different institutes, from the [Chinese Academy of Sciences](#) to the UK's [Royal Society](#) to Germany's [Max Planck Society](#), with committee chairs chosen by the Norwegian Academy of Science and Letters.

The prize aims to recognise scientists who have made seminal advances in their respective research areas. The ceremony takes place in Oslo in September every other year.

Find out more at kavlifoundation.org

10/10 Blavatnik Awards, USA

Who: Len Blavatnik, global industrialist and chairman of Access Industries

What: Ukrainian-born British-American industrialist Len Blavatnik is behind the [Blavatnik Family Foundation](#), a philanthropic organisation he founded in 1986 to support a broad range of cultural, educational, scientific and charitable causes.

In 2007 the foundation launched the Blavatnik Awards for Young Scientists in partnership with the [New York Academy of Sciences](#), aiming to recognise the most promising faculty-level scientific researchers aged 42 and younger working in the New York tri-state area with a cash prize of US\$250,000, the largest unrestricted scientific prize of its kind. In 2013 the award expanded to the entire US, and last year it was further extended to include the UK—where Blavatnik was knighted in 2017 for services to philanthropy—and Israel.

Recipients are announced in different stages, with the national US awards unveiled in June, the inaugural UK edition in January, the regional US competition in September and the Israeli edition in February.

Find out more at blavatnikfoundation.org

<https://hk.asiatatler.com/life/eyes-on-the-prize-10-philanthropy-prizes-that-are-changing-the-world>