



**United Way
of Greater Toronto**

For Immediate Release

Music, magic and mind control mark 2005 United Way Blossom Ball

TORONTO, June 18, 2005 – Toronto’s Chinese community packed the Westin Harbour Castle in support of the 7th annual United Way Blossom Ball. Entertainment included magic and mind-control antics by The Incredible Boris, along with music by the Toronto Starlight Orchestra.

“It is an amazing sight to see Toronto’s Chinese community come out in full force to support United Way,” said Co-chair Frank Luk. “It was an unforgettable evening that exceeded our expectations.”

The event attracted close to 800 guests and organizers hope the gala will bring in more than \$350,000 to help United Way fund its network of 200 health and social service agencies, including 41 agencies specifically serving Toronto’s Chinese community.

“The spirit of giving was clear from the crowd’s energy and enthusiasm,” said Co-Chair Ken Tam. “It was definitely a night to remember.”

The Toronto Starlight Orchestra opened the night with the national anthem. Miyabi Landscape Design and Construction along with Millie’s Flowers created a contemporary garden display, which featured five silent auction galleries.

The silent auction featured more than 150 items, including jewellery, electric items and artwork. *The Incredible Boris*, a mind-blowing hypnotist had people awe-struck by his psychic abilities, and DJ Bernie had the audience dancing all night long to live music. A raffle draw featured trips, jewellery and electronics.

“The Blossom Ball is a wonderful example of the support United Way receives from Toronto’s Chinese community,” said Frances Lankin, President and CEO, United Way of Greater Toronto. “It was a truly magical evening.”

For the fifth year, United Way presented its annual youth awards – *Get in the Way Awards* – to four young people who have made a difference through community service. This year’s award winners were Bilaal Rajan, Mei Lun Shi, Eric Yam, and Yuan Zhou.

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Bilal Rajan, 8, in the fall of 2004, raised funds for Haiti after it was battered by severe hurricanes. When the South East Asian tsunami disaster hit last December, he urged all Canadian children to give, ultimately raising almost \$4 million including matching government funds. Because of his efforts, Bilal was invited to meet Prime Minister Paul Martin and has been named UNICEF Canada's National Child Representative. He is the founder of *Hands For Help*, an organization that aims to help children in need around the world.

Mei Lun Shi, 18, hosted the Multi-Cultural Show at her school for the last two year, promoting racial harmony, while raising funds for Amnesty International. In an effort to address social challenges in her neighbourhood, she coordinated a *Safety in the Community* conference. She also helped establish the *Harassment Awareness Month* at Georges Vanier to promote a violence and drug-free learning environment. For her efforts, Mei Lun was awarded the *Positive Community Impact Award* from the Ontario Secondary School Teacher's Federation.

Eric Yam, 12, is a tutor who participates on his school's Equity Council addressing issues like bullying. He also organized an organ and tissue donation information booth, coordinated bake sales raising thousands of dollars for South East Asian tsunami relief, and created a multicultural festival celebrating religious and ethnic diversity. He is a runner for Meals-On-Wheels and a piano accompanist for the St. Chris choir. Eric hopes to become an engineer and wants to join *Engineers Without Borders*.

Yuan Zhou, 18, is the chair of the Volunteer Student Council at Don Mills Collegiate Institute, promoting student participation in the community such as working with seniors, or helping out at the local food bank or soup kitchen. She has inspired her fellow classmates to sponsor a 10-year old Ugandan girl and is leading a fundraising drive to raise money to build a new dorm and basketball court for an AIDS orphanage in Kenya. Yuan also spends three to four hours a week as a mentor through *Youth Assisting Youth*.

Legend Chinese Restaurant is the Presenting Sponsor of this year's gala. "We are honoured to be the sponsors of the Blossom Ball for this, the second of five years," said Michael Lo, President of Legend Chinese Restaurant. "We believe it's important to support our community and the United Way Blossom Ball is certainly a worthy cause."

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Founding Chairs	Sharifa Khan, David Poon
Co-Chairs	Frank Luk, Ken Tam
Vice Chair	Stanley Leung
Past Chair	Esther Fung-Yeung
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