

ST Singaporean of Year is organ donor who gave baby new lease of life

When senior sales executive Sakthibalan Balathandatham saw a plea on social media for a liver donor for a one-year-old child, he contacted the girl's parents hours later and offered part of his liver.

Three hours before he made the call at 1am that morning, Mr Sakthibalan, 28, had scoured the Internet and read everything he could find about organ donation, the surgical procedure and expected period of recovery.

After several rounds of tests, he donated 23 per cent of his liver to baby Rheya two months later on Sept 30, 2020. The five-hour operation was done at the National University Centre for Organ Transplantation, which is located at the National University Hospital (NUH).

Rheya's transplant surgery was also done at NUH, which is the only hospital in the public sector in Singapore that performs liver transplants for children.

For his courageous, selfless and inspiring act, Mr Sakthibalan was named The Straits Times Singaporean of the Year 2021 yesterday.

He received the award from President Halimah Yacob, who was the guest of honour at the award ceremony at UBS University in Penang Road.

SEE THE BIG STORY • A4&5



ST PHOTO: ARIFFIN JAMAR

Award finalists show admirable strengths: President Halimah

Sybilina Muthy
The 11 Singaporeans of the Year finalists will be named on Tuesday, Feb 8, at the award ceremony at the Raffles Hotel. President Halimah Yacob said the finalists showed admirable strengths and courage in their respective fields.

CONFIDENCE FOR THE FUTURE
We must show greater compassion towards those who are getting their own safety on the line to protect the rest of us.

This year, in its seventh edition, the award honours individuals who have shown exceptional courage and leadership in their respective fields. President Halimah said the finalists showed admirable strengths and courage in their respective fields.

These finalists also stepped up in the spirit of the award with their donations. Mr. Abdul Malik Hameed, who has been named as the recipient of the award, said he was honoured to be named as the recipient of the award.

President Halimah said she was proud of the finalists and their contributions to society. She said the award was a recognition of their courage and leadership in their respective fields.

TRULY INSPIRING

ALL WORTHY OF RESPECT
The 11 Singaporeans of the Year finalists challenge us to think and act beyond our ordinary capabilities. They make us feel uncomfortable to continue living in our comfort zones, to succeed with ourselves, but to succeed even in our own expectations. In the current pandemic, when our everyday lives can appear rather gloomy and mundane, they lift our spirits and show that nothing can stand in the way of humanity. Only one finalist will be the ST Singaporean of the Year, but all are worthy of our respect.

‘I thought to myself: I’m young, I have time to recover’

ST Singaporean of the Year explains why he gave part of liver to toddler he had never met

Malakia Neeson
While he had not met the toddler he gave part of his liver to, Malakia Neeson was inspired by a young couple looking for a liver donor for their 4-year-old son. He decided to donate part of his liver to the child.



Clairon for award recipient

President Halimah Yacob presented the award to the recipients on Tuesday. She said the award was a recognition of their courage and leadership in their respective fields.

SELFLESS
I thought to myself, ‘I’m young, I have time to recover, so why not step up?’ I am thankful to everyone who volunteered to become Singaporean of the Year.

EMOTIONAL MOMENT
We were in tears when we saw him walking up the stage to receive the award. We are so glad that Sakshi came into our lives and is a part of it. I hope this creates a pathway for others to come forward for such a noble act.



President Halimah said she was proud of the finalists and their contributions to society. She said the award was a recognition of their courage and leadership in their respective fields.

RECIPIENT
I thought to myself, ‘I’m young, I have time to recover, so why not step up?’ I am thankful to everyone who volunteered to become Singaporean of the Year.

President Halimah said she was proud of the finalists and their contributions to society. She said the award was a recognition of their courage and leadership in their respective fields.

President Halimah said she was proud of the finalists and their contributions to society. She said the award was a recognition of their courage and leadership in their respective fields.

President Halimah said she was proud of the finalists and their contributions to society. She said the award was a recognition of their courage and leadership in their respective fields.