

Andre Mak named citizen of the year

His great-grandfather laboured in the back-breaking, dangerous work of forging a national railroad.

Although he didn't arrive here himself until he was 24, Mak has made up for lost time with some major community-building of his own.

His tireless efforts on behalf of the Mississauga Chinese business community and the larger community of Mississauga, where he's lived and volunteered for 31 years, have earned him recognition as Mississauga's 24th Citizen of the Year.

"I'm flattered," Mak said yesterday after hearing that he had won the honour after being nominated by Mississauga West MP Steve Mahoney.

"The Chinese people here have been putting their heart and soul back into the community for the past few years," said Mak. "They're giving back to the city with a lot of fundraising to make us all united together. We can work together and we can make a difference in the city of Mississauga."

Mak was only 3 when his mother died and his father returned to China to devote his life to building the nation.

Mak and his brother were

raised by a great aunt in the Portuguese island colony of Macao. After graduating from high school and teaching for a while, they joined most of their family, who were living in Canada. Mak quickly earned a business degree at Ryerson and got his accountant's papers once he settled here.

He now owns a series of Kwik Copy printing centres in Mississauga and a manufacturing company in Kitchener that makes video display monitors.

Several fundraising projects with Credit Valley Hospital prompted Mak and Dr. Joseph Wong to form the Mississauga Board of Chinese Professional and Businesses five years ago. That energized the local Chinese community to undertake a host of projects, usually with Mak at the helm.

He's co-chair of the capital campaign for the Yee Hong Centre of Geriatric Care that has raised \$25 million towards the long-term care centre on Mavis Rd.

Mak took the recent SARS crisis as a personal challenge, helping to organize events in Toronto and Mississauga to combat the "irrational fear" of the disease and help businesses struggling with its economic effects.

"I guess I was born with the blood," said Mak when asked about his relentless voluntarism. "If you want to make something better, you've got to make some changes."

William Lui, a local business leader and realtor, feels Mak's recognition is well-deserved. "You see him everywhere," said Lui. "Andre is someone who has really dedicated himself, his whole family and his whole time to the community, and not just to the Chinese community."

Mak's will be recognized in a reception at Mississauga City Hall May 22.

Andre Mak has helped to raise \$25 million for the Yee Hong Centre of Geriatric Care.



Paul Boig
Mak, Andre

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