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50 expats who have made a big difference

By Yang Meiping | September 8, 2016, Thursday | PRINT EDITION

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Magnolia silver award recipients pictured in Shanghai yesterday. Fifty expats were honored for their contribution to the city's development. — Wang Rongjiang

FIFTY people from 19 countries were given the Magnolia Silver Award yesterday in recognition of their contribution to Shanghai's development.

Their contributions were made in the fields of business, finance, shipping, education, science, health and international exchange.

Among those recognized were senior managers of international companies, such as Costa Crociere S.p.A, Carrefour Group, Fuji Xerox (China) Ltd and Coca-Cola, as well as experts from various areas.

Pictures of this year's silver award recipients, as well as Magnolia Gold Award and Honorary citizenship winners who will be presented with their awards at the end of the month, will be displayed on digital screens across the city to let citizens know about their contributions, said Zhang Xiaosong, director-general of the city's foreign affairs office, when he presented the silver awards.

A total of 1,059 foreigners have received the Magnolia Silver Awards, named after Shanghai's official flower, since they were inaugurated by the city government in 1989.

"Since the reform and opening-up policy was introduced, many foreigners have come here and participated in development of the city," Zhang said. "Shanghai's prosperity also consists of the wisdom and sweat of award recipients."

The director-general told the award winners: "You are all the best of your industries, while Shanghai and Shanghai people are sincerely

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grateful to your contribution to the development in Shanghai and its international exchange with other countries.”

He also pointed out that China was now dedicated to promoting innovation-driven development and industrial upgrading and this had provided good opportunities for foreigners.

Zhang urged them to actively participate in the development of the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone, join in Shanghai’s efforts to build itself into an international cultural metropolis, and “support our policies, such as public innovation and startup campaign and One-Belt, One-Road strategy, as well as further promote international exchanges,” he said.

“On behalf of all the Magnolia Award winners, I would like to express our sincere thanks to Shanghai municipal government for acknowledging us in this way,” said Bettina Schoen, Regional Representative Asia for the Freudenberg Group, whose products include home and cleaning products, automobile parts, textiles, building materials, and telecommunications.

Having worked in Shanghai for 20 years, she was awarded for her active role in charity, environmental and educational activities, as well as for her economic contribution.

‘Changed tremendously’

Schoen said her interest in China began when she was at school. She was awarded a scholarship to study at Fudan University in 1987 for one year and returned to Shanghai to work in 1996.

She was impressed by the rapid development of the city, seeing high-rise buildings go up during her time here while commuting from her home in Xujing in the west part of the city to the Freudenberg office in Pudong.

“I can hardly imagine any other city in the world that has changed so tremendously,” she said. Government services had improved too, she said. “Twenty years ago it was sometimes quite difficult to register or operate a company, there were many restrictions.

“Over the years, the service attitude of administrative bodies and local authorities has changed a lot. Speed and a very good service mindset support our business expansion.”

Alongside economic success, it was also important to take on social responsibility, “to help and support the communities where we operate,” she added.

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