

# DRINK CHARITABLY

AS THE MACALLAN'S LEGACY COLLECTION HITS NEW HEIGHTS IN CHARITY AUCTIONS, PARENT COMPANY EDRINGTON REVEALS A HISTORY OF PHILANTHROPY.

*Text Joyce Yip*

IN 2015, Martin Reimann, Managing Director Asia Pacific for Edrington, had a sudden fervour to cycle from his home in Singapore to Kuala Lumpur – a 400km journey he knew was not going to be easy.

However, when he shared his vision with his colleagues around the region, a number of them showed interest and suggested to make it more than a personal ambition and give the project a charitable focus.

Coincidentally, it was the same year Singapore celebrated its 50th year of independence and the Government was matching donations to eligible charities dollar for dollar.

That year, Reimann and his team brought in close to SG\$120,000 (about US\$87,000) for Child at Street 11, an NGO that aims to help young children from low-income and dysfunctional families break out of the poverty cycle.

Last year, the team cycled from Taipei to Kaohsiung, powering through 500km to raise TW\$5,000,000 (about US\$165,000) for the Kaohsiung Autism Foundation, a grassroots charity founded by a mother who wanted to raise awareness for her autistic son.

Fast forward to November and the distance was again upped by another 100km in a four-day ride in Cambodia for M'Lop Tapang, which helps with vocational training and education among street children and families.

While Edrington may not be a household name, the brands it represents include iconic labels: The Macallan, The Famous Grouse, Brugal Rum, Cutty Sark, Highland Park, The Glenrothes and Snow Leopard Vodka.

Although these brands are renowned worldwide, Reimann says subtlety is key when it comes to its charity, which is why he said he avoided 'global international charities with enormous structures and that are very well funded'.

"We have a couple of filters, but in a nutshell, we ask ourselves whether the cause makes a difference and does it change lives. We



are bringing to the surface things that may not be so obvious to people who are not immediately faced with needs," Reimann said.

"We want to lead by example, to inspire. What we as city-goers see on a daily basis are industry, restaurants, flashy buildings, but when you take the blinkers off, you'll be surprised."

He also said Edrington isn't afraid of backing charities that deal with heavier, contentious issues like child prostitution and human trafficking.

"We aren't scared to look into issues that are – for lack of a better word – unsexy. We don't do political lens. We do need."

The group's devotion to charity was highlighted by the recent auction of The Macallan's Legacy Collection in Hong Kong. The net profit of the HK\$6.3 million auction price was donated to charities including Society for Community Organization, Foodlink Foundation, Crossroads Foundation, Watsi and One Sky Foundation.

However, doing good was a large part of Edrington's founding principals when the Robertson sisters set up a trust fund in the 1960s that has since donated more than £230 million (about US\$290 million) to charities focused on medical support, children, the elderly, the disabled, and local community welfare.

Today, some of the brands have charitable causes of their own, exemplified by The Macallan's record-breaking feats.

Snow Leopard contributes 15 per cent of profits to snow leopard conservation and the group still puts 100 per cent of its dividends into the Robertson Trust Fund, signing off cheques that average £20 million a year.

"We are a company that has lasted and will last for a long time," Reimann said. "Edrington is about legacy, so the decisions we make today will have an influence in 20 to 30 years. Of course, we're standing on the shoulders of the giants before us, so when it's our moment, we have to do the best we can."

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