



From left: George Ferguson, Nora Gu Yi Wu, Ho Kiam Kong, Klaus Jaeger, Michael Laske, Benito Matos Lopez and Andreas Matthe receive the Magnolia Award in Shanghai yesterday. A total of 38 foreigners won the award this year for their outstanding contributions to the city's economic, social and cultural advancement. — Wang Rongjiang

City honors a bunch of truly special foreigners

Fei Lai

A TOTAL of 38 foreigners were yesterday presented with the Magnolia Award for outstanding contributions to the city.

Li Mingjun, director-general of the Shanghai Foreign Affairs Office, presented a framed certificate and a medal to each prize winner.

Coming from countries including the United States, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Britain, Canada, Chile, France, Germany, India, Japan, Singapore and Venezuela, the winners were from many walks of life—entrepreneurs, senior managers, technological experts and professors.

They all have one thing in common: They have played positive roles in promoting

Shanghai's international relations in the fields of economy, science, technology and cultural communication.

Charles R. McElwee, a professor from the Law School of Shanghai Jiao Tong University, made an acceptance speech on behalf of all the winners at the presentation ceremony.

"In many ways Shanghai is like my students: Young, growing in strength and self-confidence, and with a bright future ahead of it," he said.

"We are fortunate to live here when the city grows each day in stature and reputation as it advances resolutely toward its goal of becoming one of the major financial centers of the world.

"We are excited that our adopted home will

welcome the world in less than 600 days to Expo 2010."

The Magnolia Award, named after the city's official flower, was created by the municipal government in 1989 to show appreciation to foreigners who live in Shanghai and contribute significantly to the city's economic performance, international relations, business environment, management standards and community development.

A total of 641 expatriates have received the award.

Pierre E. Cohade, president for Asia Pacific at Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co, said the award recognized his firm's community efforts in China.

Cohade, who has worked in seven countries, said he was impressed by the city government's transparency,

quick response and willingness to communicate with multinational companies. He moved Goodyear's regional headquarters for Asia Pacific to Shanghai in 2005.

Dieter Seemann, deputy managing director and commercial executive of Shanghai Volkswagen Automotive Co Ltd, echoed the sentiments of other award winners.

"I'm very proud that I could make some contribution to the economic development of the lovely city," he said. "It is a great honor for me to be awarded with the Magnolia Award."

Seemann, 51, has held his position at Shanghai Volkswagen since February 2005. Through his efforts, the company has developed into one of China's top three car makers.