



Mr Randy Tan and Ms Zyn Toh tied the knot yesterday on the grounds of SMU and donated the cash gifts from guests to charity. Having both worked their way through university, they wanted to help others in need. ST PHOTO: STEPHANIE YEOW

# Wedding hongbao goes to charity

**Couple, recalling their difficult years, give \$3,000 to School Pocket Money Fund**

■ BY YEO SAM JO

THEY knew hardship growing up.

So when it came time to be married, Mr Randy Tan Chuu Si and Ms Zyn Toh Xiao Ping decided they would count their blessings.

While most newlyweds use their hongbao money to cover the cost of the wedding, Mr Tan and Ms Toh donated theirs – which amounted to \$3,000, after a top-up from the couple to make it a “nice number” – to The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund.

“We thought it was a good opportunity to give back to society,” said Ms Toh, 24, a corporate treasurer at Temasek Holdings.

The couple, both alumni of the Singapore Management University, tied the knot yesterday in a simple solemnisation and tea ceremony on the grounds of their alma mater, where they met five years ago.

As the eldest of six children, Ms Toh knew how difficult it was for her father, an electrical technician, to raise them. She had worked as a teaching assistant

in university to pay her own living expenses.

Her groom, on the other hand, led a comfortable life till his teens, getting \$1,000 in allowance every month. But all that changed when his father, a businessman, went bankrupt in 1997. Then in junior college, Mr Tan found himself working after school to make ends meet. The elder of two children served tables at a disco at night, held on-campus jobs and even sold bak kua in university.

When he began work in 2005, he started giving to charity, following the example of his mother, an active donor. Every year, Mr Tan, 30, a sales support manager at Visa, contributes about \$300 each to the Singapore Buddhist Free Clinic, the Red Cross and The Straits Times Pocket Money Fund.

So for the couple, it was a matter of which charity to donate to, rather than whether to.

When they read last month that the fund was upping its target to raise \$5.7 million for needy school children this year, they decided to try and make a difference.

“Education has always been one of our priorities when it comes to charity,” said Mr Tan. “It may not be in the tens of thousands but we know it will still help.”

Mr Tan’s own studies at SMU were sponsored by the Ngee Ann Kongsu foundation, and he has never forgotten how hard his school years were.

“It was not easy for us in university and junior college, much less for kids in primary and secondary school,” he said of the fund’s beneficiaries.

Added Ms Toh: “Unlike us, they might not have the means to earn their own money.”

About 70 guests turned up for the wedding, where there was a donation box for their red packets. Most were not told at first where the money would go. “My boss thought that I was joking,” said Mr Tan. “But most said it was a good idea.”

The hongbao amounted to \$2,476, and the couple added the rest. The total cost of the ceremony, including flowers, food and a string quartet, added up to about \$4,000. But the newlyweds are not too worried about covering the cost.

“Of course it would have been nice to recoup some money from the hongbao,” said Mr Tan. “But we are only getting married once, so we thought, why not just give?”

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