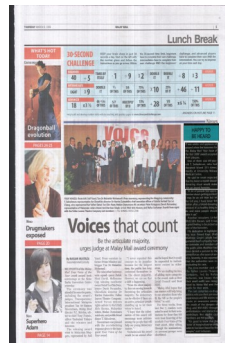


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## HAPPY TO BE HEARD

IT was smiles and applause all around when the honorees for the *Malay Mail* 'Your Voice of the Year 2008' award accepted their plaques.

One of them was 69-year-old T. Sahadevan, who had donated blood 311 times, mostly at University Malaya Medical Centre.

He said he never expected that his twice-a-month blood-donating ritual would make him an award honoree.

"A lot of people feel apprehensive about getting pricked. I may be an old man but let me tell you, I have never felt better after a blood-donating session! It's a healthy thing to do and more people should take it up."

Another recipient, Lt-Kol (Rtd) Idris Hassan, said it was a great feeling to be picked as one of the honorees.

His dedication in highlighting best friend Kapt (Rtd) Mukhtiar Singh's plight had garnered much sympathy from ex-comrades and members of the public alike. Mukhtiar had been denied a pension by the armed forces after years of service. Recently, it was reported that the authorities were re-evaluating his case.

The nine-member cast of the Fallen Leaves Theatre Company, led by Rufus Sarkunan, was happy that their small outfit was recognised by *Malay Mail* and the public for their work.

The cast comprises ex-drug addicts who use their personal experiences and life stories to create an awareness among the youth of the dangers of drug and HIV/AIDS through performances and interactive workshops. Not all the cast members are HIV-positive.

"It's good to know that the 'voice' of marginalised ex-drug addicts has been heard by the people," said Sarkunan.