

The Special Olympics bar has risen

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SHANGHAI will be a very hard Special Olympics act to follow - and that comes from the highest level.

Jim Grossman, co-chair of the 2009 Special Olympics World Winter Games in Boise, Idaho, made the observation.

Grossman and Special Olympics Chairman Timothy Shriver joined a panel discussion of the main Games organizers, philanthropists and advocates at Three on the Bund.

Yang Lan, noted Chinese television journalist and Sun Media Holdings' chair, was also there for the discussion themed "Enduring Love Special Olympics."

Grossman said the city's transformation since he came here 23 years ago has been fast and great.

"Shanghai has set the bar high," he said. "The opening ceremony was as good as, if not better than, any ordinary Olympics.

"What the city has done for the world and the Special Olympics movement is to elevate the size and quality of Olympics openings.

"In addition to people and other resources, it truly focused on hearts and emotions."

Grossman said he was impressed by the number of volunteers and every reaction he has had from them. The former world-class skier said the Host Town Program is a winner.

"The interaction with people and their culture makes the Special Olympics athletes' trip meaningful ... it makes them feel like the most important person in the world," he said.

"I am looking forward to coming to Sunshine Homes in Chinese cities such as Kunming and Lhasa.

Dominic Ng, chairman of East West Bank, said that besides doing bank business, he would like to give back to the community.

Recently he was awarded the Innovation Prize by the United Way, one of America's biggest charity organizations.

Focusing on helping the working poor and those who need better education, he donated one million yuan (US\$133,000) to the group.

"It is a good trend that more entrepreneurs have put emphasis on their social responsibilities, which means more people can get support in addition to the government's subsidy," Ng said.

Yang Lan started a ballet program last month in collaboration with the National Ballet of China to teach former juvenile prisoners ballet.

"There is a tie between artistic education and loving help, no matter in what form," she said.