

## **What a blessing**

By RACHEL HERGETT Chronicle Staff Writer

The Dalai Lama was in San Francisco last week to honor 49 “Unsung Heroes of Compassion.”

Pete MacFadyen, executive director and founder of the Big Sky Youth Empowerment Project, was among them.

At first, MacFadyen said, he was astonished.

“‘I’m not worthy. I’m an imposter’ I thought. But now I’m humbled. Obviously honored, but humbled,” MacFadyen said.

“We were selected as representatives of people all across the world who are doing good works,” MacFadyen said. “I really feel like I was accepting this on behalf of all the people involved in Big Sky Youth Empowerment Project.”

Roughly 650 people attended the event hosted by Wisdom in Action at the Ritz-Carlton. Honorees included 25 women and 24 men from 13 countries. They ranged in age from 12 to 77.

Dick Grace, Wisdom in Action chair explained the contributions of the heroes in a release for the event.

"These individuals have been selected as representatives of the tens of thousands of people worldwide who quietly serve the disenfranchised and work to improve our communities through their personal efforts," he said. "We don't see them or hear about them in the daily news, but they exemplify a humanism and heroism to which we must each aspire."

The exiled 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, gave a half-hour dharma teaching on being kind and compassionate and translating that into action, according to MacFadyen.

“He said the action is not a stagnant thing,” MacFadyen said. “You need to get off your tail and do it. He was quite funny and even blunt with his message about that.”

Even though MacFadyen only had about three seconds of face time with His Holiness, he said he felt more able to continue his mission.

“I’m reenergized to continue my passion, which is working with the kids in our community trying to make a difference in the world,” MacFadyen said. “There’s more to be done every single day and I’m going to continue doing my small part.”

For more information on MacFadyen and the Big Sky Youth Empowerment Project, visit [www.byep.org](http://www.byep.org).