

Star Educate



Toast to

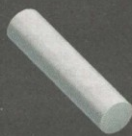
The Star Education Fund celebrates 20 years of commitment to helping deserving students.

Star Educate



the lucky stars!

Hundreds have achieved their dreams of tertiary education with scholarships awarded by the fund. > 2 & 11



Giving the

There is no denying the impact that education has on an individual and these Star Education Fund recipients could not agree more as they share how the study awards have changed their lives for the better.

By **KANG SOON CHEN**
educate@thestar.com.my

A UNIVERSITY education is the gateway to a better life. For many students, their dreams of attending university are made possible by scholarships earned through their good grades.

Since young, Chow Li Yun has helped out at her parents' economy rice stall and knew that the only way to leave the backbreaking job was to further her education.

"My late father always told me that education was the only way for me to have a better future. His words motivated me to study hard," said the 23-year-old.

Being an only child, Li Yun was aware that she had a heavy responsibility of being her parents' only hope.

"Sometimes, it can be a little scary knowing that you have no one to share the responsibility of taking care of your parents in their old age," she said.

As she had high expectations of herself, Li Yun was momentarily shattered after receiving her Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) results in 2008.

Although she did well by obtaining 7As, Li Yun had aimed for As in all her subjects so that she would have a better chance of securing a scholarship.

"My days after the SPM were filled with uncertainties. I knew that my parents would not be able to support my studies in a private college so I told myself that I had to find my way out," she said.

Thanks to her habit of reading

the newspaper diligently every day to improve her English, Li Yun found out about the Star Education Fund scholarship.

With her parents' blessings, she sent in her application. "I made a promise to myself that I would do my best in college if I received the scholarship."

As it turned out, lady luck smiled on her and Li Yun was over the moon when the Star Education Fund manager called her with the good news.

And Li Yun made good on her promise. Every morning, she would be at Stamford College as early as 6am and only left late in the evening.

"My parents only had time to send me to college during those hours as they were busy with work. I usually spent the morning reading and preparing for my classes," said Li Yun.

Her hard work paid off when she graduated at the top of her class with first-class honours in International Business. Last year, she completed her Master of Business Administration with a scholarship from the University of Ballarat, Australia.

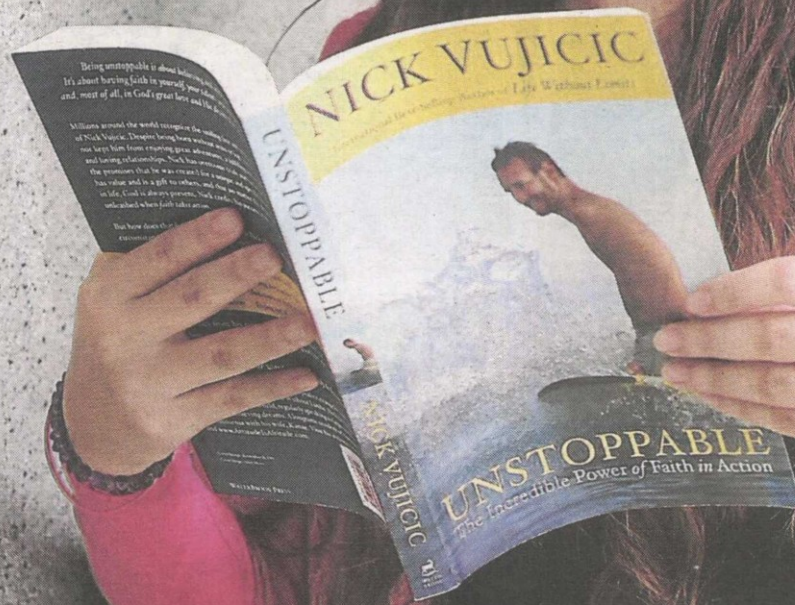
"I shudder to think how I would have turned out if I had not completed college. I would probably be working as a sales-girl," said the valedictorian of her batch who is now looking for a job in consultancy.

"My only regret was that my father could not attend the convocation ceremony as he passed away last year because of a heart condition," she said.

best gift



Reaping the rewards:
Li Yun's diligence and hard work in college saw her graduating at the top of her class with first-class honours.



Dare to be different: Fatin Areena wants to work in the oil and gas sector which many women do not venture into.



Chasing dreams

IF YOU believe in your dreams then the glass ceiling does not exist.

Fatin Areena Azlan was among the growing number of female Star Education Fund scholarship recipients who aspired to be successful businesswomen.

"I want to work in the oil and gas sector which few women venture into," said the UCSI

University student who is studying Business Management in Oil and Gas.

She believed that her impassioned argument on the future of women in this sector convinced the interview panel to give her the scholarship in 2011.

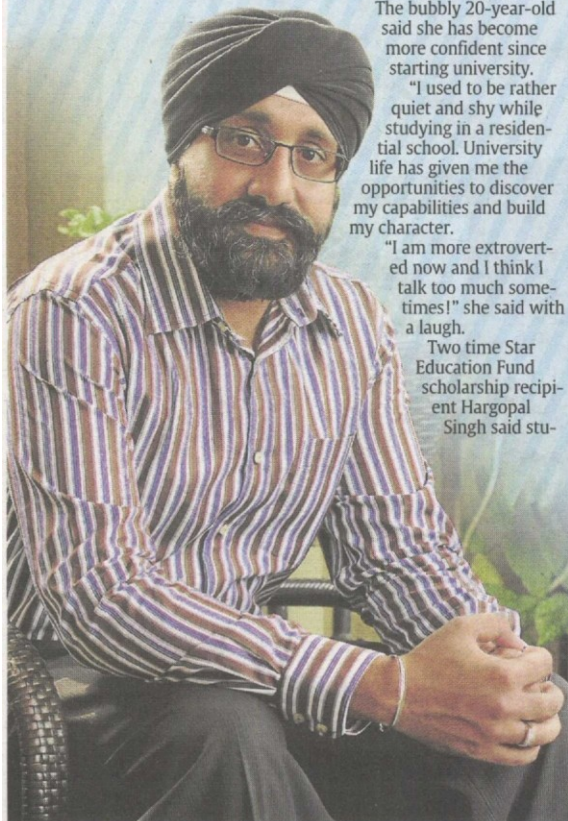
"I was very nervous but I decided to just be myself and give it my best shot during the interview," said Fatin Areena.

The bubbly 20-year-old said she has become more confident since starting university.

"I used to be rather quiet and shy while studying in a residential school. University life has given me the opportunities to discover my capabilities and build my character.

"I am more extroverted now and I think I talk too much sometimes!" she said with a laugh.

Two time Star Education Fund scholarship recipient Hargopal Singh said stu-



Get the Star Mobile App from The App Store or Google Play

dents applying for scholarships should demonstrate a strong interest in the field they are applying for.

He said his father gave him the best piece of advice when he was applying for the scholarship.

"My father guided me on how to fill out the application forms correctly and he told me to be confident about my purpose in my field of study," said Hargopal, 33.

He first received the scholarship in 1998 to pursue a diploma and higher diploma in IT in then Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology (APIIT) before subsequently receiving another scholarship to complete his degree in the same institution in 2001.

"Students should have a clear sense of direction and must be able to explain why they want to be in the field as interviewers want to see the determination in the applicants," said Hargopal.

Asked on what drove him to join the IT world, he said: "APIIT came to my school to give a career talk, IT was pretty new at that time when I completed secondary school. I realised that no matter what specialisation I did, IT would be the way forward."

And the way forward is certainly bright as Hargopal currently works as an automation consultant with a multinational IT company. Who says dreams don't come true?

Double joy: Hargopal received the scholarship in 1998 for a diploma and higher diploma to do and completed his degree at the same institution with a second scholarship in 2001.

DIONG Hoe Sing, 30, had a hard life growing up in Kuantan, Pahang.

While many boys his age were still asleep in bed, young Hoe Sing was already up at ungodly hours to follow his parents to the rubber estate.

The dark rubber estate that was swarming with mosquitoes was no place for a six-year-old. With his height barely reaching the cups that were hanging from the rubber trees, the little boy walked from tree to tree to collect the latex.

"As the eldest son in the family, I had to sacrifice so that my younger siblings would have an easier life," said Hoe Sing.

When his father passed away in 2001, life became even harder as

Estate boy

his mother was the sole breadwinner for the family.

With six mouths to feed on a meagre rubber tapper's wage, Hoe Sing felt that he should not add to her burden by worrying her with money for his education.

So he applied for the Star Education Fund scholarship after his friend told him about it and the rest as they say is history.

After three years in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (Utar), Hoe Sing graduated with first-class honours and went on to become

makes good

a risk management senior associate with one of the "Big Four" accounting firms.

"I might still be trapped in the cycle of poverty if not for the scholarship I received to study in Utar," said Hoe Sing.

He was extremely grateful for the assistance extended to him by several parties.

Hoe Sing had arrived at the university with little more than the clothes on his back. Aware of his situation, the Student Affairs Department and the Star Education Fund management took Hoe Sing

shopping and got him new clothes and other essential items.

Additionally, arrangements were made to provide free accommodation for Hoe Sing during his first year. The university also sponsored his meals throughout his three years of study.

"With a good job, I was able to provide a better life for my family but unfortunately, my mother did not live long to enjoy it," said Hoe Sing.

His mother Ling Tiang Chong had stomach cancer and passed away at the age of 60 in 2011.

"I spent too much time away from home, studying and working. I wish I had spent more time with her," said Hoe Sing.

Nevertheless, he had little regrets and advised those who faced similar hardship to not despair.

"I chose to look at the challenges thrown at me positively by acting on them," said Hoe Sing.



Persistence: Hoe Sing did not let hardship deter him from achieving his goals.

Paying it forward

THEIR friendship began when both were introduced by friends as Star Education Fund scholars.

When Ong Wei Shun first came to then Sunway University College in 2008, the Kelantan born-and-bred girl was overwhelmed by the huge shopping malls and the fast-paced city lifestyle.

The Business Management student met Cheah You Yew, a fellow Star Education Fund scholarship recipient who was a Klang Valley native.

It was not a typical story of "boy meets girl" but Wei Shun and You Yew hit it off immediately.

"Coming from a small town like Kota Baru, it was initially very tough for me to adapt to life in the city. I was very lucky to have met a good friend like You Yew who took me under his wing during my first few months here," said Wei Shun, 25.

You Yew, on the other hand, thought that Wei Shun seemed quiet and shy when they first met.

"But as I got to know her better, I found out that she was someone who worked hard and played hard. She was also very disciplined in her studies."

Wei Shun, who now works as a key account manager with a distributor company, said the scholarship had put her on the right track to pursue her dream of becoming a businesswoman.

"I always thought that I would end up as a pharmacist or pursue a career in Science since I was in the Science stream.

"However, I realised that I actually preferred business but was afraid to voice it out to my parents as they cautioned me against giving up Science when my results were good," said Wei Shun.

After receiving her Sijil Tinggi Persekolahan Malaysia results, Wei Shun applied to several

local universities despite feeling uncertain that she would get a place in the business programme.

"As a Science student, it was very difficult for me to get a place to study Business as there was competition from so many Art stream students," said Wei Shun.

Fortunately, she found out that business programmes were offered under the Star Education Fund and decided to give it a shot.

"Getting the scholarship has helped me become more appreciative.

"I want to contribute to the society in any way that I can, not necessarily by volunteering but by mentoring new workers in my workplace from time to time," said Wei Shun.

The duo and several other scholars founded the Sunway Volunteer Society which organised regular volunteering activities in Zoo Negara and the Ronald McDonald House in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia Medical Centre.

You Yew said they were eager to give their time and skills to help make life better for others.

"At the Ronald McDonald House, we met children with terminal illnesses and chatted with the mothers," he said.

Though he has graduated, he is happy to see that new members of the volunteer society are carrying on with the activities.

"I can see from their Facebook page that the students are now teaching refugee children from Myanmar."

The 25-year-old said he was lucky to receive the scholarship even though he only sent in his application at the last minute.

"The scholarship helped to relieve my parents' burden as my twin brother was also studying in college at the same time," said You Yew.

A friend indeed: Wei Shun (left) is grateful for You Yew's assistance, especially when she first moved from her hometown to Selangor to pursue her studies.

