

Publication: The Straits Times, p B02
Date: 27 September 2017
Headline: Scholarships for three undaunted by disabilities



(From left) Ms Kristina Liu, Mr Lee Ci En and Mr Joshua Tseng received this year's Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Scholarship for Persons with Disabilities. All three are enrolled in local universities, with Ms Liu doing a course in linguistics, Mr Lee studying political science, and Mr Tseng in information systems. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

Scholarships for three undaunted by disabilities

Annual award for students who excel academically will help cover trio's university education

Sue-Ann Tan

In primary school, Kristina Liu struggled with a visual disability that caused her to be bullied by some of her classmates.

At 17, her condition worsened when a speeding van knocked her over. The accident injured the frontal lobe of her brain, giving her a host of memory, communication and vision-related problems.

Yet, she has come back fighting. She dropped out of school after the accident, but persevered and returned to education after seven years of therapy and recovery.

Now 30, Ms Liu is among the three recipients of this year's Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) Foundation Scholarship for Persons with Disabilities. The other two are Mr

Joshua Tseng, 20, who is visually disabled, and Mr Lee Ci En, 21, who has short-limbed dwarfism.

Minister for Social and Family Development Desmond Lee presented the awards at the SPD centre near Tiong Bahru yesterday.

SPD is a charity organisation that supports people with disabilities.

Mr Lee said: "Through these scholarships, more students with disabilities and with the potential to achieve more are given a chance to do so and, in turn, contribute to society in ways that they are able to."

The bond-free scholarship is awarded annually to students with disabilities who excel academically. Sponsored by APB Foundation and managed by SPD, it awards \$12,000 annually to cover the recipient's university education.

Since the scholarship's launch in 2004, it has benefited about 40 students.

For Ms Liu, the scholarship is the culmination of years of pain and tears, before she learnt to accept who she was.

She enrolled in Ngee Ann Poly-

OPENING UP POSSIBILITIES

Through these scholarships, more students with disabilities and with the potential to achieve more are given a chance to do so and, in turn, contribute to society in ways that they are able to.



MR DESMOND LEE, Minister for Social and Family Development.

technic to study child psychology in 2011. This August, she started her course in linguistics at Nanyang Technological University.

"After the accident, I finally learnt that it is okay to be different. My experiences made me a better and more mature person."

Mr Lee, who is a third-year political science student at Singapore Management University (SMU), agrees. "People stare at me in public because of my stature, and it made me realise that I shouldn't do the same to others who are different from the norm."

As for Mr Tseng, his visual disability means he has to use a white cane, something that made him feel ashamed initially as he thought it was an admission of defeat.

Said the first-year SMU information systems student: "Now I realise it's just a fact of life. If I want to do things and leave the house, I have to use it. The biggest challenge is really myself. I have to come to terms with who I am."

suetan@sph.com.sg



WATCH THE VIDEO

Ms Kristina Liu on the importance of "accepting myself".
<http://str.sg/49UQ>

Source: The Straits Times @ Singapore Press Holdings Limited. Permission required for reproduction