



At yesterday's event are (back row from left) Ms Indraneel Rajah, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office; Mrs Lee Sok Fun, mother of scholarship recipient Lionel Lee (not present at the ceremony); Mr Caleb Tay; Mr Justin Kueh; APB Singapore managing director Andy Hewson, as well as (front row from left) Ms Chia Yong Yong, president of voluntary welfare organisation SPD, and Miss Brenda Khoo. ST PHOTO: SYAZA NISRINA

Four special needs students bag scholarship

Outstanding undergrads beat challenges to win bond-free APB Foundation Scholarship

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Twenty-year-old Brenda Khoo suffers from cerebral palsy, a neurological disorder affecting her

mobility and hearing.

She wears a hearing aid and uses a wheelchair but these factors have not stopped her from being an all-round student.

She scored 10 As for her O levels, 5 As for her A levels and is now studying law at the Singapore Management University (SMU). She is also an active volunteer and acts as a mentor for youth at risk, among her many other pursuits.

Yesterday, she was one of four undergraduates to be awarded the Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) Founda-

tion Scholarship for Persons with Disabilities that recognises outstanding students with special needs.

The other three recipients were Mr Caleb Tay, 21, who is visually impaired; Mr Lionel Lee, 22, who suffers from Asperger's Syndrome, a form of autism; and Mr Justin Kueh, 20, who has profound hearing loss.

They were chosen from a pool of 29 applicants this year.

The bond-free scholarship helps to fund their tuition fees at a recognised local university.

Ms Indraneel Rajah, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office who was guest of honour at the event, said: "To excel in the academics while having to grapple with mobility and sensory challenges is a tremendous challenge. Our APB Foundation Scholars have triumphed over personal challenges to be an inspiration for us all."

Miss Khoo does not let her disability define her.

Besides excelling in her studies, she has a deep love for the French language which she took as a third language in secondary school.

One of her dreams is to start a pro bono legal clinic to help people with disabilities.

She said: "I strongly believe that disabled people here need to know about their legal rights and I hope to be an advocate championing the rights of the disabled community."

Mr Lee, who is studying mathematical sciences at Nanyang Technological University, has a natural flair for maths and is a fitness enthusiast.

He could have been exempted from serving national service due to the severity of his Asperger's Syndrome but he wanted to do his part for Singapore.

Mr Kueh, who uses a hearing aid, is able to play the piano and double bass very proficiently and has even performed with various orchestras. He is currently studying politics, law and economics at SMU.

Mr Tay, who is studying business management at SMU, suffers from an eye condition called Cone Dystrophy and he can see only people or things that are very close to him.

In primary school, he said, he was bullied by other pupils who would sometimes snatch his visual aids. Others would avoid talking to him.

"I don't think they were malicious, I think they were just playing, but it definitely made studying a lot harder," he recalled.

It was the unwavering support of his teachers and his mother that helped him make it to tertiary education.

He scored 11 points for his O levels and scored 3As and 3Bs in his A levels.

He said: "I have very nice teachers who gave me extra coaching and I want to pay it forward by teaching the next generation of students with disabilities."

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