

Gumption, not great grades, get students their scholarships



Photo: ST

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Ms Phan Zheng had planned on giving tuition while studying for her undergraduate degree in philosophy to help pay for her school fees.

But the 19-year-old now looks forward to tutoring needy students for free after getting the Howe Yoon Chong PSA scholarship, which will fund her education fully.

"Lucky, grateful, thrilled, excited, happy - I wouldn't have been able to afford my university fees without this scholarship," said the National University of Singapore-bound student, who has worked odd jobs since her father died when she was 12 to supplement income from her mother, a canteen worker. She has an older brother and a half-brother. Ms Phan was one of 16 students who received the award at a ceremony on Thursday.

Unlike other scholarships, which are usually bestowed on straight-A students, this scholarship opens up opportunities for students averaging Bs who come from low-income families, have faced adversity, and yet are contributing to the community.

Like Ms Phan, the other recipients have obtained solid results despite difficult family responsibilities that they had to balance with school work.

"We decided to have the Howe Yoon Chong foundation benefit those who are very bright kids from very poor families," said Mr Ong Boon Hwee, chairman of the scholarship committee. "They have the gumption to overcome when given the chance."

Given in memory of Mr Howe, who was PSA chairman from 1970 to 1979, the bond-free scholarship covers tuition and other compulsory fees in full, as well as book and living expenses, for studies at the Institute of Technical Education, polytechnics, and NUS, Nanyang Technological University, and Singapore Management University.



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The fund is paid into by PSA, Neptune Shipping Lines and Temasek Holdings. A total of 88 students have received scholarships since 2009.

"In spite of their difficult financial situations and challenging backgrounds, our scholars continue to find time to help those in need in society," said guest of honour Lim Boon Heng, board director of Temasek Holdings. "May they continue to help make a difference for their fellow Singaporeans now and in the future."

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