

Ex-housewife among three who received SIM award for resilience

Elisha Tushara

With a divorce looming in 2019, Ms Celeste Ling Yueh Er was worried that she would lose custody of her three children as she had been unemployed for more than four years.

She became a housewife in 2014, just before her third child was born.

When her marriage began to break down in 2019, Ms Ling – who had a diploma from Temasek Polytechnic then – had just started work as a waitress at a restaurant, earning \$10 an hour.

After almost six months at the restaurant, she was transferred to a new cafe in the NUHS Tower Block at National University Hospital.

She interacted with the various healthcare professionals she served at the cafe and, inspired by these conversations, she decided to leave the food and beverage industry and make a leap into healthcare at the age of 37.

Today, Ms Ling, 41, is studying for a master of business administration (MBA) offered by the University of Birmingham through the Singapore Institute of Management (SIM) and will graduate later in 2023.

She is also one of three recipients of the SIM Chairman's Award for Resilience.

“At my age, I wanted more stability in life. And I thought, ‘How far can I go as a waitress?’” she told The Straits Times.

“I have always believed that education can change your life. Even if you start late, never stop learning.”

After leaving her waitressing job, she became a service team leader at the outpatient clinic in Alexandra Hospital in May 2020.

In this administrative position, Ms Ling gained confidence in her potential and started seriously considering getting an MBA.

However, she did not meet the criteria for sponsorship by Alexandra Hospital, which included two years of employment there. She had completed just one year of service.

Furthermore, without a degree, she needed two testimonials from her superiors to support her application for admission into the MBA programme.

Because of Ms Ling's commendable work ethic and potential, the hospital's chief executive, Associate Professor Jason Phua, and the senior nurse manager wrote convincing testimonials for her.

These testimonials helped her secure a place in the MBA programme, which started in July 2021. Ms Ling's mother helped her pay the fees for the programme.

The SIM award celebrates the achievements of students who



When Ms Celeste Ling's marriage began to break down in 2019, she had just started work as a waitress. The recipient of the SIM Chairman's Award for Resilience is now studying for an MBA. ST PHOTOS: MARK CHEONG



Fellow award recipient Terence Tian took a long route through ITE, but earned a degree in the end.

have overcome personal setbacks and adversities while showing exceptional performance in their academic pursuits and work.

Recipients are awarded \$3,000 each, funded by Ms Euleen Goh, chairman of the governing council of SIM and SIM Group.

Another recipient of the award is Mr Terence Tian, 29, who took a longer route than most in his journey towards a degree.

His father's sudden death just before he collected his GCE O-level results in 2011 impacted his family deeply.

He failed his science and mathe-

matics examination papers, and was determined to retake the exams to increase his post-secondary study options.

Despite his best efforts, he did not secure a place in the polytechnic course of his choice.

He then enrolled in the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College Central in 2013, where he pursued a Higher Nitec in business administration.

Although he was initially reserved and disappointed about his two failed O-level attempts, Mr Tian decided to honour his late father by making the best of his time

in ITE.

“I was driven by the commitment to fulfil the promises I made to my late father,” he told ST.

He did well enough to go on to Temasek Polytechnic, where he graduated with a diploma in business administration and management in 2018.

He then opted to enrol in a part-time degree programme at SIM while working. This was to help relieve his mother's financial burden as she was the family's sole breadwinner.

Though balancing a full-time job and studies meant sacrificing a lot

of time, Mr Tian persevered and graduated with a bachelor of business (management) offered by Australia's RMIT University through SIM in 2022.

He now works as a senior human resources and administrative executive and plans to further his studies.

The third recipient of the SIM award is Ms Nur Dyana Tambunan, 25, who completed the bachelor of applied science (aviation) (top-up) programme offered by RMIT University through SIM in 2022.

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