

Mum and daughter with a passion for early childhood education

Yeo Shu Hui

When Ms Jenine Koh was in primary school, she attended the student care centre that her mother ran alongside a pre-school. As a child, she saw first-hand how her mother helmed the pre-school and the student care centre as the head of both.

“It was the start of everything,” she said. She went on to pursue a Diploma in Early Childhood Education with Leadership from Ngee Ann Polytechnic and enrolled in the Bachelor of Early Childhood Education with Entrepreneurship at the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) in 2017.

Yesterday, the beaming 23-year-old watched her mother, Ms Jaslyn Teo, 52, receive her Master of Early Childhood Education degree at an SUSS graduation ceremony. Ms Koh is expected to obtain her degree at the university’s next convocation ceremony in October.

Ms Teo found her passion at the age of 38, when she decided to make a mid-career switch from being an interior designer to an early childhood educator.

She said: “I really love children, and having two kids in the family makes me wonder sometimes about how to be a good parent in managing and regulating their emotions.”

In 2011, she enrolled in the Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Leadership at the Seed Institute. She joined SUSS in 2013 and obtained her bachelor’s degree in early childhood education with management in 2017.

For Ms Teo, lifelong learning means staying relevant and connected. “In order to stay relevant, you need to learn beyond the classroom. This applies not only to children, but to adults as well,” she said.

Ms Teo, who was a centre head in a pre-school until February this year, is now keeping her options open, and looks forward to mentoring more teachers in the early childhood education sector in her next position.

She added: “Just seeing the children in the centre and hearing their parents recognise your efforts in nurturing their children – there are no words to describe how I feel, and this is what motivates me to continue.”

Following the outbreak of Covid-19 last year, SUSS postponed the graduation ceremony for its class of 2020 to this year. The ceremony is now being held in batches till May 6.

At yesterday’s ceremony, SUSS president Cheong Hee Kiat noted that the pandemic has disrupted lives, work and relationships for everyone, but he was heartened to see members of the university community supporting one another through this difficult period.

President Halimah Yacob presented certificates to participants of the SUSS Executive Manage-



Ms Jenine Koh with her mother, Ms Jaslyn Teo, who received her Master of Early Childhood Education degree from Singapore University of Social Sciences yesterday. Ms Koh is expected to obtain her Bachelor of Early Childhood Education with Entrepreneurship, also pursued at SUSS, later this year. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

ment Programme.

Ms Indranee Rajah, Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office and Second Minister for Finance and National Development, who was also present, said: “Each of you should think of yourselves as part of our mission to create the Singapore of tomorrow.”

There are 2,432 graduands from the class of 2020 and among them are the first batch of 11 graduates from the SUSS School of Law.

These students were from the Juris Doctor programme, which fo-

cuses on family and criminal law.

Professor Cheong said he hoped the graduands can approach issues and serve society holistically, to not only be more compassionate but also to become more resilient as problems and tough times arise.

“Most problems do not remain unsolvable, and look smaller when you have a positive spirit, and surmountable if tackled one step at a time. And especially, if some others come alongside to help,” he said.

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FULFILLING ROLE

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MS JASLYN TEO, on her love for early childhood education.