
Ex-national sailor's resilience does SUSS proud

He is among 70 students given awards, scholarships for making a social impact

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While most of Mr Terence Koh's classmates at the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) were worrying about exams and assignment deadlines in 2021, he was struggling to cope with the death of his newborn son.

His son, who was born 13 weeks premature, suffered complications and died a week after birth, leaving Mr Koh, 35, and his wife distraught. "It was the lowest point of my life," said the second-year Bachelor of Sports and Physical Education student.

With school deadlines approaching, the former national sailor pushed on and managed to submit his assignments with the support of family, friends and the school.

"Life must go on, family must be supported, and two assignments had to be completed."

On Friday, Mr Koh was among 70 students who received awards and scholarships from SUSS. They were given to those who have shown resilience and made a social impact on the community during their course of study.

Mr Koh, who also coaches the national sailing team, said that before his son's death, his experience with resilience had mostly been centred around sporting challenges. But the people around him have shed new light on his idea of resilience and helped him through the tough period, he added.

When Mr Koh and his wife, an English language teacher at a private centre, are busy with work, their parents help care for their

daughter, who turns four in January. Friends and colleagues lent a listening ear, and even their daughter's pre-school teachers made sure she was not asked questions about her sibling.

"Little did (they) know that their actions had a profound impression on me and my concept of resilience," said Mr Koh. "Now, resilience to me is not just my capacity to overcome hardships, but it encompasses the collective power of the community that can rally around us."

SUSS president Cheong Hee Kiat said the awards are not the usual ones given to students for academic excellence, but are given to recognise their strength amid personal hardships. He said: "Receiving these goodwill gestures during their time of need will encourage our students to contribute back to the community with gratitude."

Speaking to the students at the award ceremony, he said: "We not only want you to do well in your



Mr Terence Koh was devastated when his son died, but with school deadlines looming, the former national sailor pushed on to submit his assignments with the support of family, friends and the school.
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studies, we also hope you will develop a deep gratitude for what opportunity, trust and support you are given, and pay it forward by serving those around you and, someday, return as our donor."

A team of 22 students were also among those lauded on Friday. Their project, which gets children to provide companionship to seniors, tackles social isolation

among the elderly while helping children develop social skills.

The More We Get Together project was started in 2019 and organises monthly celebrations to bring together seniors from the Care Corner Active Ageing Centre and children from the New Life Childcare Centre. They do craft together and play games to socialise and bond.

The SUSS students received the Provost 3H Fund – Community Impact Award for their efforts in making a social impact in the community.

Care Corner Senior Services assistant manager Edward Tang, who oversees the senior activity centre in Woodlands where the project is run, said: "The young add vibrancy to the events, and our seniors enjoy the engagements with them."

When the Covid-19 pandemic hit Singapore, the activities shifted online. Mr Tang said: "It was not easy, but when we had our first online session, it was a heartwarming scene.

"The seniors saw familiar faces over the video-calling apps as students and children alike waved to them from the screen. It also spurred our seniors to adopt technology and smart devices more readily, a timely move in the pandemic to combat social isolation".

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