

Scholarships for students – after graduation

Serangoon Secondary alumni fund pays the way for JC, poly courses

BY LEOW SI WAN

A NEIGHBOURHOOD secondary school is going the extra mile to support its graduates as they move on to higher levels of education.

Serangoon Secondary School launched a scholarship last month – not for its cur-

rent students, but for its alumni who have entered a junior college (JC) or a polytechnic.

The money for the scholarship comes from the school's alumni; the kitty has \$20,000 pledged, enough to fund the scholarship for the next three years.

School principal Yeo Kuerk Heng said the school's old boys and girls plan to raise \$30,000 more by 2012.

He said that, for starters, one scholarship each will go to a JC and a polytechnic student, but by 2012, the school aims to give four scholarships.

The first two recipients of the scholar-



The first two recipients of the scholarships are Wong Rui Xiang (right) and Tan May Chin.

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ship are Tan May Chin, 17, now in Nan-yang JC, and Wong Rui Xiang, 18, who is studying chemical engineering at Singapore Polytechnic.

They will get \$2,000 and \$4,500 respectively; the scholarship provides \$1,000 a year for a two-year JC education, and \$1,500 a year for a three-year

polytechnic stint.

The two were selected based on their results, good conduct and participation in school activities.

May Chin scored nine points from her grades in English and five other subjects relevant to her current course of study, while Rui Xiang scored 10 points for the six subjects.

Mr Yeo said that, besides giving alumni financial assistance, the scholarships are aimed at inspiring students to excel and bond the alumni across different cohorts to their alma mater.

He added that the economic downturn of the past two years made the setting up of the scholarship even more urgent.

"We do not want students who have done well missing out on an opportunity to further their studies because they are struggling financially," he said.

Although the scholarship is awarded on merit, family background will be considered if two candidates are on a par in other areas.

Of the neighbourhood school's 1,360 current students, 15 per cent are on financial aid. Of last year's batch of 223 students, 66 per cent made it to polytechnics and 12.6 per cent to JCs.

The alumni association in the 81-year-old school has 80 members, to whom setting up scholarships is not new.

The school has two existing scholarships for Secondary 2 and 3 students set up by a former student.

Said alumnus David Loh, now chairman of the school's advisory committee: "Serangoon Secondary is a neighbourhood school with humble beginnings and we are not a rich school. But our alumni and the advisory committee members are committed to raising more money to sponsor more students to advance their studies."

Bagging the new scholarship was a surprise to Rui Xiang, whose family did the maths when he entered the polytechnic and concluded that he would either have to work to support his studies or apply for financial aid.

He said of his taxi-driver dad and homemaker mum: "My parents are even happier than I am about the scholarship."

The scholarship goes a long way towards covering his yearly tuition fee of \$2,000.

For May Chin, bagging the scholarship is more about being recognised for her achievements.

Student Sam Ho, 16, who will sit for his O levels this year, said: "I am even more motivated to do well for the upcoming O levels. I hope to get the scholarship and enter a junior college."

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