

Although it is held annually, the Star Education Fund Presentation of Awards Ceremony has not lost any significance as it continues to realise dreams.

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It may not have been the Oscar's but the recent Star Education Fund Presentation of Awards Ceremony was not short of glitz and glamour.

Dressed to kill with some family members in tow, the scholars who received their awards on Sept 30 waited anxiously outside the grand ballroom of Eastin Hotel in Petaling Jaya.

Who could blame them? It was their moment after all and when the doors opened, the proceedings did not disappoint.

Entertainment was provided courtesy of UCSI University – a long-standing partner-in-education since day one – which supplied an eight-piece ensemble comprising students from its faculty of music.

And when it was time for the awards presentation, the students hogged the spotlight.

Hearing impaired student, Gan Yee Loong, 22, defied the odds and overcame learning difficulties to secure a scholarship to study a diploma in Digital Art and Design at KDU College in Penang.

"I'm thankful to The Star and KDU for giving me this opportunity," he said, using sign language. "I believe in hard work and if disabled students don't give up, we will get the chance to further our studies."

"If we try hard enough, nothing can stop us from fulfilling our dreams."

It was a dream come true for the aspiring designer who acquired a flair for drawing cartoon characters after watching Disney movies when he was growing up.

By receiving the scholarship, Yee Loong also showed that some things still tie the family as his younger brother, Yee Chun, 21, was a fellow scholarship recipient in 2006 and 2007.

And the best part is that they will be able to stick together as Yee Chun, who acted as his sign language interpreter, is currently completing his degree in Electrical and Electronic Engineering at the same institution.

"My brother may face difficulties communicating with his lecturers and I will be able to help him clarify things with his lecturers from time to time," he said.

Equally elated was Sarawakian, Rowena Michelle Tweedie, 21, who received a three-year scholarship to pursue a degree in International Hospitality Management at Sunway University College.

As this is her first time in the peninsula, Rowena is still adapting to life in Kuala Lumpur and is looking forward to studying at Sunway's College of Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Management.

"Tourism is developing rapidly in Sarawak and I see how it is creating more job opportunities for the locals."

Agrotourism is flourishing too and I hope that my studies will equip me with the skills to further develop the industry."



The recipients are all smiles as they pose with Ng (seventh from right, second row), Ngiam (next to her), and officials from the various institutions, after the ceremony.

Empowering minds



The budding hotel manager intends to return to her hometown of Kuching after her studies and hopes that she will be an influence to fellow Bidayuh youth, the same way her father and uncles were an inspiration to her.

Two of Rowena's uncles are chefs working in Britain and France respectively and their success spurred her to pursue tourism-related studies. Meanwhile, her father never stopped encouraging her from day one.

"While there are some who succeed, many Bidayuh aren't really concerned about improving their lifestyle," she added.

"I'm fortunate to receive a scholarship and I hope to give back to my community in the future."

Eye on the future

And Michelle wasn't the only one as fellow award recipients William Chai Kai Roon, 23, and Jasminejit Kaur, 18, have grand ambitions of their own.

Receiving a one-year scholarship courtesy of the Rose Foundation to read an MBA at the London School of Commerce, Chai was elated as it was always his dream to study overseas. "I'm very thankful that The Star has given me this opportunity and I look forward to a good cultural experience," he said.

"I'm a big Liverpool fan and I'll definitely catch them in action when they come live on London."

Moving away from football, Jasminejit, who received a scholarship to study a degree in Psychology at HELP International College of Technology harbours ambitions of working for the United Nations one day.

The second child of four siblings, Jasminejit has an affinity for children rights and became an advocate under the Convention of the Rights for the Child (CRC) when she was 12.

"The CRC is a joint project under



Jasminejit hopes to continue with child advocacy work.

the Malaysia Department of Social Welfare and Unicef, and I organised and facilitated advocacy based on project camps for children, giving talks on their rights," she said.

"As a child, I felt sad that nothing much was being done to protect children, so when the opportunity arose for me to do something, I jumped on the bandwagon immediately."

Majoring in child and adolescence studies, Jasminejit intends to continue her advocacy work.

The four were among the 150 students who received their scholarships, thanks to the Star Education Fund and its partners in education.

The Star group editorial/education adviser Datuk Ng Poh Tin congratulated the award winners and said that the prospects for higher education were brighter now that the economy was recovering.

"The Star Education Fund has awarded a total of 2,437 scholarships worth RM59.8million since its inception in 1994 and I dare say that The Star was the first newspaper in Malaysia to put so much emphasis in education," she said in her speech.

Among those present at the ceremony was Star Publications (M) Bhd group managing director and CEO Batin Linda Ngiam and senior management officials of contributing institutions.

As usual, interest in the scholarships was high and contributors had a hard time selecting the deserving candidates from their long shortlist. Leading the pack in terms of monetary value was the University of



Yee Loong believes in working hard to get what he wants.

Nottingham who pledged five scholarships worth a whopping RM800,000.

The university's CEO, Prof Ian Pasby said that he was pleased the quality of the scholarship recipients and that Nottingham was keen in maintaining their collaboration with The Star.

"The recipients demonstrate a good work ethic and they're very studious," he said.

"However, university life doesn't solely revolve around academia and we are keen for them to develop as unique individuals."

"We want to expose them to the various on-campus activities."

Meanwhile, Management and Science University (MSU) vice-president Rosli Yusof and Taylor's University College vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Hassan Said said that partnering with the Star Education Fund was part of their university's CSR (corporate social responsibility) initiatives and it was good to be associated with a reliable partner for many years.

More about the fund

The fund is divided into two tiers, with the first tier consisting of contributions made by Star Publications.

Four students, this year received scholarships worth RM40,000 under Tier 1, to study a certificate of printing at the Montfort Boys Town.

Scholarships under Tier 2 are from local and foreign institutions of higher learning.

This year, 38 institutions contrib-

uted to the fund by offering scholarships worth RM3.3mln.

Among the contributors are ALFA International College, Binary University College, Brickfields Asia College, Equator Academy of Art and Design, Penang, FTMS College, Han Chiang College, Penang, HELP International College of Technology, HELP University College, IACT College, INTI University College, INTI College Subang Jaya, INTI International College Penang, KDU College, Penang, KDU College, Penang, Kolej Distrik-Stamford, Penang, Kolej Tunku Abdul Rahman, Kuala Lumpur Infrastructure University College, Life College and Limkokwing University College of Creative Technology.

The others are Management and Science University, Methodist College, Metropolitan College, Olympia College, PJ College of Art and Design, PTEL Group of Colleges, Raffles Design Institute, Rose Education Foundation, Saito College, SEGI University College, SEGI College Subang Jaya, SEGI College Penang, Sentral Technology College, Penang, Stamford College, Sunway University College, Taylor's University College, The One Academy of Communication Design, The University of Nottingham Malaysia Campus, Unity College International, UCSI University and Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman.

For full list of Star Education Fund Scholarship 2009 recipients and contributors, please see E13 and E14.