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Helping Families of Offenders Reach Their Potential

Home Team News speaks to Sasha, a mother who has taken on the responsibility of giving her children a better life, with the help of the community partners such as the Industrial & Services Co-operative Society Limited (ISCOS).

By Jaiesh Sachi



A family's that's taking responsibility for change: Sasha (second from left) with Aqil (left), Aqillah (right) and her youngest daughter. PHOTO: Amni Amran

As her family's sole breadwinner, it hasn't always been easy for Sasha (not her real name) to care for her children while her husband is serving his prison sentence.

As many families of current and ex-offenders can attest to, it takes both a personal commitment to change and the support of the community to make good on the promise of a better life. That's why the support of the Industrial & Services Co-operative Society Ltd (ISCOS) has been a blessing for Sasha's family.

As one of the founding members of the [Community Action for the Rehabilitation of Ex-Offenders \(CARE\) Network](#), ISCOS takes an active role in engaging with the community to help ex-offenders and their families lead meaningful and productive lives. ISCOS is committed to building stronger family units by offering beneficiaries academic assistance as well as everyday items such as clothes and food vouchers.

Education is one of the pathways through which ISCOS has made a difference to families. The organisation has helped Sasha's son Aqil, 16, and her daughter Aqillah, 15, with sponsored tuition classes. And the teens have made good use of these lessons. "The tuition helped me improve my grades, and I managed to do well for my exams," said Aqil.

Aqil and Aqillah's hard-won achievements were recognised this year when they received the ISCOS Bursary Award for the sixth time. The bursary is awarded to children of current and ex-offenders from low-income families who show outstanding academic performance.

Most of the bursary will be used to buy schoolbooks, stationery and other items that Aqil and Aqillah need for school. Sasha will also give a portion to her children to spend on clothes, shoes or the occasional movie.

"I'm grateful that the bursary lets my kids have a few small luxuries that I cannot provide them with," said Sasha. "It acknowledges the good work that they've put in, and really encourages them to try harder."

For Sasha, ISCOS' greatest gift to her family is the way it has helped her children mature. "I'm proud that my older kids have become more confident in their abilities," she shared, "and thankful that they've stepped up to care for their youngest sister and help with household chores."

It's all about taking small steps as one family, in order to arrive at a better future, together. "I always tell my children that they must focus on their studies, for their own good," explained Sasha. "I teach them never to take ISCOS' help for granted, and to always count their blessings."

More about the ISCOS Bursary Award

The ISCOS Bursary Award is a major part of the [Yellow Ribbon Fund-ISCOS Fairy Godparent Programme](#), which seeks to support the educational requirements of children of current and ex-offenders from low-income families.



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