

Event: Goldbell-YRF-ISCOS Bursary Awards 2016

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Ms Azura with the vouchers and cash that her daughters received from the Industrial & Services Co-operative Society. TNP PHOTO: GAVIN FOO, TAKEN WITH CANON EOS M5

Bursaries for children of ex-offenders

● HARIZ BAHARUDIN

The third time she was arrested for taking heroin, it left a mark on her unlike any other — she was caught with her two-year-old daughter.

Ms Nurliana (not her real name), 41, remembers carrying her child to the police station 17 years ago.

She told The New Paper while blinking back tears: “I won’t forget how she was kicking and screaming when I was taken in.”

“After that, I knew that it would be the last time I would ever go to prison.”

Life is now very different for Ms Nurliana. Since her release in 2002, she has given up drugs, alcohol and smoking. She now works as a cleaner at a child care centre.

The mother of five shared her story with The New Paper at this year’s Industrial & Services Co-operative Society (ISCOS) bursary award ceremony, held last Friday.

Ms Nurliana’s 10-year-old daughter was there to receive a prize, which was a \$50 book voucher and \$150 cash.

Ms Nurliana was all smiles when asked what the prize meant for her daughter, who is in Primary 4.

“I am so happy that she got the prize. It is not just about the money, it is also about sending an encouraging message to motivate her,” she said.

Ms Nurliana’s children are her “reason for living” — it was because of her eldest daughter, now 19, that she turned over a new leaf.

She said: “Being separated from my daughter before I went to prison was a slap in the face, and it was then that I knew I had to be responsible.

“After I got out, I vowed to make a change. I am still making amends for my past, but my children are the best thing to happen to me.”

Ms Nurliana’s daughter shyly told TNP she would use the prize to buy new stationery.

“I am glad I won it and hope that I can make my family proud,” she said.

At ISCOS’ second award ceremony, 193 primary and secondary school students received bursaries, sponsored by the Goldbell Foundation.

Two other recipients were the daughters of 37-year-old housewife Azura (not her real name). They are aged nine and 15.

HORRIBLE

Ms Azura’s husband spent a month in prison for getting into a gang fight two years ago — what she described as the most “horrible” period of her life.

“I did not know what to do, and I was so afraid something would happen to him in there,” she said.

She was also worried about whether he would be able to find a job when he was released.

Ms Azura is a much happier person now. Her husband works as a technician, and he spends weekends studying part-time at the Institute of Technical Education West.

She hopes her daughters — one in Primary 3 and the other in Secondary 3 — will be inspired by their father and the awards they received.

“They were so excited to get the prize, it will make them work even harder just like their father,” she said. “We might not have a lot, but I know that they will be successful.”

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Ms Azura with the vouchers and cash that her daughters received from the Industrial & Services Co-operative Society. TNP PHOTO: GAVIN FOO, TAKEN WITH CANON EOS M5

Text:

By HARIZ BAHARUDIN

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At this year's ISCOS award ceremony, 193 primary, secondary and tertiary school students received bursaries sponsored by the Goldbell Foundation. ISCOS has been giving out bursaries since 2011 and this is the second year which Goldbell Foundation has sponsored the bursaries.

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