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 Headline: His mum's tears moved him to change



"We believe that education is crucial for the children to realise their potential and move up the social ladder."

- Industrial and Services Co-operative Society's communications and external relations manager Looi Jo-Anne

His mum's tears moved him to change

Bursary recipient turned life around after being nabbed for shoplifting

CHEOW SUE-ANN

He started smoking and quickly moved on to drugs and alcohol, all before his 13th birthday.

At 15, he was sent to the Singapore Boys Home, and life for Farhan – he wanted to be known only by his first name for this story – had little meaning.

Today, his world has brightened considerably.

Farhan, 19, is among 315 recipients who have been awarded bursaries by the Industrial and Services Co-operative Society (Iscos). The bursaries are given to children of prison inmates and ex-offenders from low-income families.

He is also one of just 10 students this year who will receive the Outstanding Award, given to those who have achieved grades of 80 percent and higher.

He scored a Grade Point Average of 3.61 at the Institute of Technical Education, where he is pursuing a Technical Engineering Diploma.

This is his first year in ITE and Farhan, who is working part-time to support himself, is happy.

"It doesn't even feel like studying, I enjoy it," he told The New Paper.

Things were tougher when he was younger.

He was 11 when he saw his father being taken away for drug-related offences.

The family – mum, Farhan and his two younger siblings – had to move from their home to a one-room shelter, which they had to share with another family.

Being the eldest, Farhan felt alone and helpless.

In secondary school, he mixed with bad company, and

his world deteriorated into a fog of drugs, drinking and smoking, as he found this "an easy way to feel good and escape reality".

He was in Secondary 3 when he was caught shoplifting and found to be a drug abuser.

He was sentenced to two weeks in the Singapore Boys' Home, given probation and subjected to urine tests for 18 months.

That proved to be the turning point in his life.

"I remember the day in court when they passed the sentence, they just pulled me away and I could see my mother fighting the guards, trying to come towards me and trying so hard to help me," Farhan recalled.

"She was crying and so was I."

He was crying because he realised how much his mother loved him.



Farhan (above) is pursuing a technical engineering diploma at ITE and is working part-time to support himself. TNP PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN

"After that, I promised to never disappoint her again," he said. "I was so sorry and I promised I would change and show my mother."

Today, Farhan, who enjoys automotive technology and loves motorcycles and lorries, believes his mother is proud of him.

Farhan and the rest of the group will receive their bursary awards at a ceremony at Bishan Community Club today.

Iscos has been giving out the bursaries since 2011, and introduced the Outstanding Award and Good Progress Award this year.

Ms Looi Jo-Anne, manager of communications and external relations at Iscos, said: "We believe that education is crucial

for the children to realise their potential and move up the social ladder.

"The bursary award is a form of motivation to reward the students for their hard work, and we hope that they will continue to persevere and strive for excellence in their studies."

When asked what he intends to do with the \$800 that he will receive, Farhan, who dreams of a career in mechanical engineering, said he will use some of it for repairs to his motorcycle.

But he will save most of the money, because these days, he thinks ahead.

He said: "I need to start planning for the future."

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Text:

Young offender's turning point: Mum's tears moved him to change his life

Bursary recipient turned life around after being nabbed for shoplifting

By Cheow Sue-Ann

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