



(From left) Mr Bryan Chong, 22, Mr Shalom Lim, 20, and Mr Josiah Ong, 22, received the Asia Pacific Breweries Foundation Scholarship for Persons with Disabilities yesterday at the SPD Ability Centre. It is the eleventh year the scholarship, which supports outstanding students who have physical and sensory disabilities, has been awarded.

ST PHOTO:
CHEW SENG KIM

Award for 3 students with disabilities

Seow Bei Yi

Diagnosed with profound hearing loss when he was very young, Mr Bryan Chong, now 22, struggled with bullies in his primary and secondary school days.

"I would often be subjected to derogatory remarks," said the psychology student at Nanyang Technological University.

This made him afraid to speak up in social situations: "I saw myself as a useless person; I saw myself as good-for-nothing."

But it also spurred him to work hard in his studies. Now, he is one of three recipients of the Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) Foundation Scholarship for Persons with Disabilities.

APB Foundation partners voluntary welfare organisation SPD, which supports people with disabilities, to give the scholarship.

Mr Chong, Mr Shalom Lim, 20, and Mr Josiah Ong, 22, received the award from Parliamentary Secretary Low Yen Ling at the SPD Ability Centre yesterday.

This is the 11th year of the scholarship, meant for outstanding students with physical and sensory disabilities, as well as speech impairment.

Recipients get an annual allowance of \$12,000 to cover their course fees at any of six recognised local universities.

Mr Ong has had Tourette's Syndrome since he was five. It causes him to have facial grimaces, excessive blinking and gasping.

"People often stared and they would taunt and mimic me. I get a little paranoid when people whisper, even now," said the business administration student at the National University of Singapore.

But he has learnt not to let it affect him: "You just need to learn to shut those voices out."

Mr Lim, who is studying criminology and security at the Singapore Institute of Technology, has not experienced bullying. But he thinks this may not be the case for others who also have muscular dystrophy.

Seeing how others who are weaker than him persevere in life inspires him, he said.

Ms Low, who spoke at the event, said: "Support from the community is also very important in enabling and empowering persons with disabilities."

"We're very heartened to see organisations like SPD and APB Foundation stepping up to fill this need."

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