



TNP PHOTO: KELVIN CHNG

“Sometimes, I do wonder why I have so many things to do when my classmates are just studying.”

— Hillary Heng Jia Xin (left)

She studies for O levels while cooking for sick dad

Hillary Heng Jia Xin, 17, went from the N levels to O levels while juggling family commitments. The Northbrooks Secondary School student scored 23 points for five subjects.

About a decade ago, her father, now in his 60s, was frequently hospitalised after being diagnosed with a chronic illness. While studying for her O levels, Hillary cooked for him and did housework.

Her mother, who is in her 50s, works as a cleaner.

Said Hillary: “I do the chores and keep the home clean. Sometimes, I do wonder why I have so many things to do when my classmates are just studying.”

She said she enjoyed science but struggled with Chinese and mathematics, so she studied for 10 hours during weekends with friends to keep up.

She gets support from The Straits Times School Pocket Money Fund and the Singapore Children’s Society (SCS).

Her monthly visits to her social worker at SCS have inspired her to become one as well.

Said Hillary: “The social worker is understanding and patient when she listens to my problems. It made me want to help others as well.”

Last year, Hillary successfully applied for early admission to the social work course at Nanyang Polytechnic.

“I was really shocked to get in. I did not expect it because I heard it is a competitive course,” she said.

As a senior warrant officer in the Red Cross Youth, Hillary helped to plan activities for juniors to interact with the residents of old folks’ homes.

To those who are struggling, she has some words of encouragement: “Do not give up. It does not mean that if a situation is bad, there is no way out. There is always another angle to look at a problem and a way to overcome it.” — SUE-ANN TAN