

# REFLECTION, APPRECIATION and MOTIVATION

## — A JOURNEY OF DOING GOOD —

Text by Jennifer Lee,  
Deputy Manager, SMA Charity Fund

*"Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."*

– Mother Theresa

### Big thanks to our donors!

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*The list above includes donors from 1 January to 15 December 2016 and may not be exhaustive. If we have inadvertently omitted the names of any donors, we apologise for the oversight.*

It has been four years since the inception of the SMA Charity Fund (SMACF) and three years since we started our charity operations. It has been a great start for us here in SMACF. Slowly but surely, we continue to work towards building a compassionate medical profession to impact the future of healthcare.

### Birth of the SMA-MSAF

Our charitable initiative started in a small way back in 2007. Although there were a number of bursaries, financial assistance schemes and loans available that could help pay for students' tuition fees at the National University of Singapore (NUS) Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine (NUS Medicine), those were not likely to cover the basic living expenses of underprivileged students. A medical education, even a highly subsidised one, is expensive to many. A survey conducted by the NUS Medical Society in 2007 found that about 21% (250) of medical students in the NUS undergraduate course had a monthly household income of less than \$3,000. The same survey also found that an NUS medical student needed at least \$4,410 a year (or \$367.50 a month) for day-to-day expenses such as transport, food, books and miscellaneous expenditure.

Thus, in partnership with NUS Medicine and with the support of the NUS Development Office, SMA started the SMA Medical Students' Assistance

Fund (SMA-MSAF) bursary programme to help students from underprivileged families pursue their dreams and aspirations of becoming medical doctors, without undue financial burdens. The birth of the SMA-MSAF brought a glimmer of hope to our needy medical students.

It has been almost ten years since we started the bursary programme. We have remained firm that our youths from underprivileged families should

never be disadvantaged in their pursuit of becoming medical doctors. We have since anchored this core programme, reaching out to more needy medical students from all three medical schools and putting together a more concerted effort towards building a compassionate medical profession to impact healthcare. We will strive to build SMACF on good governance as we continue this journey. SMACF has successfully renewed the Institution of a Public Character (IPC)

status, which is effective from 27 December 2016 to 26 December 2018. The successful renewal of our IPC status is a testament to the work of SMACF and enables the issuance of tax benefits for all donations received.

With the strong support from the medical profession, we are certain that we will achieve what we have set out to do and will seek to do more for the future of healthcare! ◆

To all the doctors who believe in us:

*Thank you for making a difference!*

I am a medical student from Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine (LKC Medicine). Being accepted into medical school is one of the most privileged opportunities given to me. I come from a single-parent family with an elderly dependent who has medical conditions and there are times when I wished I will live better days. I have lived in a small unit all my life – a two-bedroom flat with two of my family members. Though I may not have parents who are corporate high-flyers or senior medical professionals working in big organisations, I have a small family who has always stood by me and supported me in pursuing my aspirations – to become a good medical doctor. I have been working part-time to help us tide through the tight financial situation at home and alleviate the burden that my single parent has to bear. Coupled with my own medical conditions, life has been an arduous ride. Through it all, advancing through this tough environment has strengthened my personality.

With the plight of my financial limitations, I was happy to hear that my schoolmates and I are able to apply for external bursary from SMACF from AY 2016/17 onwards, even on top of the financial awards we receive from school. This truly brings a glimmer of hope as I am approaching a new phase of my medical training in school that will significantly affect my ability to generate a flow of income on the sideline. With the sudden spike in hours required for school and a change in studying climate, I was destabilised from my comfort zone. I did not want to compromise my education in the path of being a medical practitioner and eventually the standard of care that I would provide my patients with.

I am moved that there are people who do not know me and yet are willing to undertake such a heart-warming gesture that will greatly aid me in my life. I honestly do not think that I am suffering from a very dire plight especially compared to other less fortunate individuals overseas. However, I do believe that my journey has made me grow to see the importance of support in the society and cultivating the next generation of intelligentsia, especially those who are less wealthy and privileged. Once again, thank you for all your generosity and for believing in us!

Yours sincerely,  
A very grateful medical student  
LKC Medicine