

Speech By Ms Shantini D/O Subramaniam On Behalf of 2023 Lifelong Learning Scholarship Recipients

A very good evening to Guest-of-Honor, Mr Alvin Tan, scholarship recipients and all invited guests. I am Shantini, a Year 2 student at Ngee Ann Polytechnic, currently pursuing a Diploma in Nursing. It feels like a fairy tale dream come true, for me to be standing here to give this speech as a recipient of the inaugural Tan Kah Kee Foundation Lifelong Learning Scholarship. Thank you so much for the honour.

My heartiest Congratulations to all the scholarship recipients who are here with us today.

From *Nitec* in Nursing to Diploma in Nursing ... Many have asked me, why Nursing? Why not other courses? My younger brother, Durkes, has cerebral palsy. I remember the days when my siblings and I pushed him in his wheelchair and walked to school. We were always together but I didn't know what he was going through until I progressed to Secondary School. After understanding what he went through, I decided to pursue a career in Nursing and to expand my knowledge. I wanted to learn about the diseases that people are suffering from and know how to care for them and our loved ones when they are facing such difficult situations.

Other than my passion towards attending to patients with medical conditions, I have a soft spot for elderly people. During my childhood days, whenever I saw old aunties and uncles in the void deck of my block, I would get very excited and would approach them to chit-chat. I was 11 years old when I first started volunteering. I remembered it was at Yishun involving the elderly residents. We played games and did craft activities. That day I felt something towards the seniors. I felt compassion. I wanted to connect, and communicate more with them, and to assist them with their needs. As time passed, it became a hobby for me to devote my time and volunteer to help out in the community activities in my district. Every time I complete a volunteer work, I feel very happy and satisfied.

I feel that my learning at ITE and Ngee Ann Polytechnic have prepared me not only to be work-ready, but to become a holistic learner. During my studies, I was given opportunities to learn, grow and serve through the participation of many youth service-learning programmes. Education is like a passport to our future. However, it comes with a lot of expenses too. Finance has always been my biggest concern during my study journey, then in ITE and even now. I want to be an independent child and lessen my family burden. Each day has been a struggle— I have to worry about paying for my transport and my meals. I am deeply grateful to Ms Lynn Tan, Director for College Services at ITE College East, and Mr Hayden Er, staff advisor for Student Council, for reaching out to me and informing me about this Scholarship even when I have graduated from ITE. Thank you Ms Lynn and Mr Hayden.

At the same time, I would like to express my sincere thanks to the members of the Tan Kah Kee Foundation, and the interview panel for the opportunity to continue my education with reduced financial worries. To receive this Scholarship at my lowest point is beyond a dream come true.

From the bottom of my heart, thank you. Now, to my dear fellow scholarship recipients, I encourage each and every one of you to take education seriously. Why? Because not many people in other countries are given the opportunity to even study, and here we are, receiving scholarships and subsidies for us to do well and excel. We should seize every opportunity.

I have worked very hard to be where I am today and I will continue to work even harder to reach many more milestones. I believe that life is full of challenges and each day has its own worries and problems. To all my fellow scholarship recipients, and everyone, continue to push yourself and work harder, and remember to give back to the society whenever you can. In the spirit of Mr Tan Kah Kee for his dedication to education, let's continue to learn, grow and serve. All the best and thank you.