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Headline: Children of ex-offenders get bursary boost

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Children of ex-offenders get bursary boost

CHEOWSUE-ANN

Last Christmas was filled with tears and pain for Esther and her two young children, Bella and Ason. Her husband was sent to prison after he overdosed on heroin.

The family was devastated. Bella cried for almost a month. She would also insist on wearing her father's shirts to sleep at night.

Despite their struggles, Esther prioritised her children's education, scrimping and saving so she could send them to tuition classes to ensure that they could keep up in school.

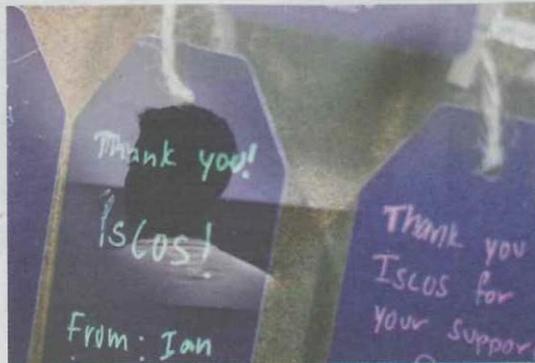
We are not using their real names to protect their identities.

This year, both children were awarded bursaries, which Esther will set aside for long-needed items such as spectacles for Bella and household necessities.

Ason and Bella were recognised for their hard work and effort through the annual Iscos Bursary Award under the Fairy Godparent Programme, which is managed by Industrial and Services Co-operative Society (Iscos) ReGen Fund.

About \$100,000 was disbursed to recipients from primary to tertiary levels through this initiative.

Since its introduction in 2011,



Iscos is an organisation that aims to help families of former offenders get back on their feet and prevent re-offending and inter-generational offending.

TNP PHOTO:
KELVIN CHNG

close to 2,000 children and youth have received the bursary awards or book grants, which range from \$100 to \$500 each to help defray some costs in preparation for the new school year.

Another bursary recipient grew up in an infant care home along with his two younger sisters, after years of suffering abuse under his father, who was in and out of prison for various offences.

Since his primary school days, Leonard (not his real name), 18, would try to spend as much time as possible in school, because it was the space where he felt safest, developing a love for studying and learning.

He told TNP he had to look out for himself and his sisters whenever his father, a single parent, was in prison. All three children worked part-time jobs to make ends meet.

Leonard dreams of starting

his own digital engineering company and to develop a product that will be used widely.

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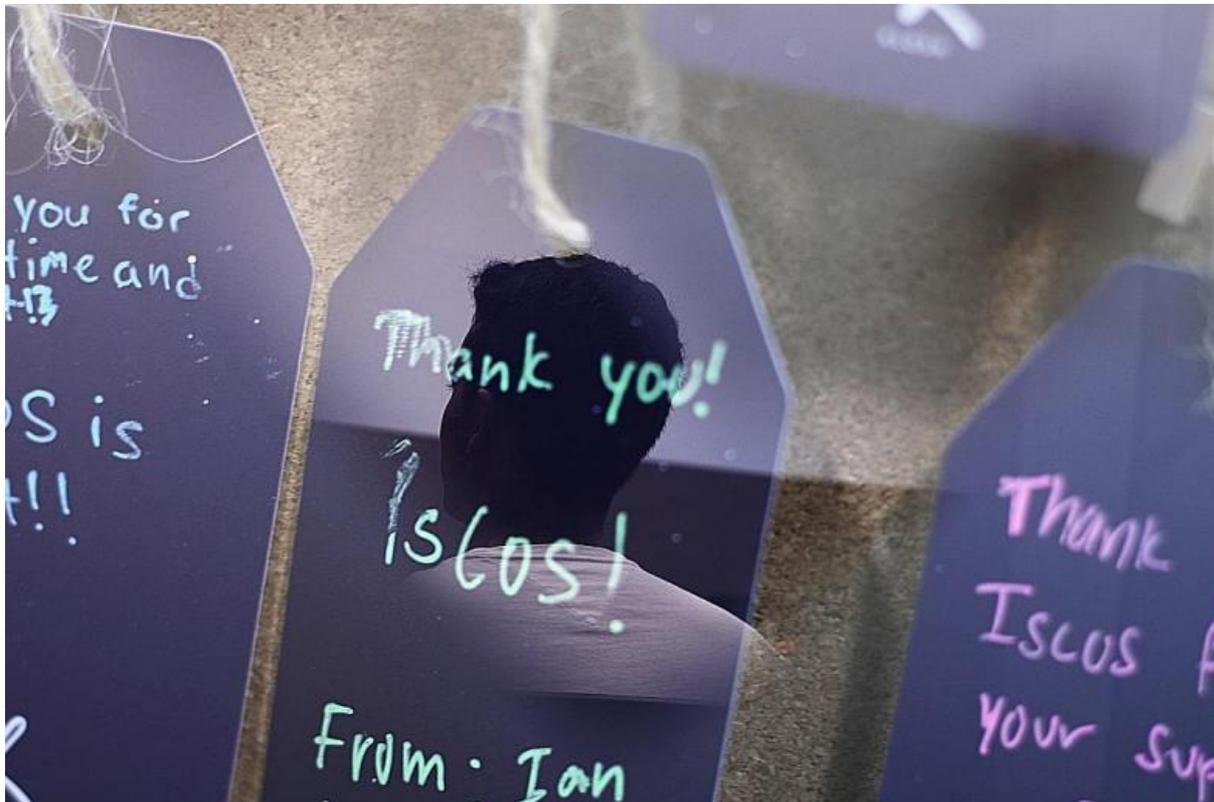
Besides the bursary, Leonard also has his polytechnic education taken care of by the Fairy Godparent Programme.

Speaking at the award ceremony on Saturday, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Home Affairs and National Development Sun Xueling said: "The (Iscos) Bursary Award recognises more than academic performance – it also recognises the resilience of students who have overcome the challenges they faced and done well in their studies."

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By Cheow Sue-Ann

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