

## Patients and caregivers who show extraordinary strength and courage

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When Celeste Chang was seven years old, doctors removed a tumour the size of a table tennis ball from the back of her head.

"The world just came to a standstill for us because it all happened too quickly," said her father, Mr Astro Chang, 49, who quit his job in 2010 to look after her.

Celeste had to go through 15 months of radiotherapy and chemotherapy before she could return to school in Primary 3 – and then faced an uphill struggle to catch up with her peers.

Yesterday, the 15-year-old was among the winners at the Singapore Health Inspirational Patient and Caregiver Awards.

The awards recognise patients and caregivers who show extraordinary courage, resilience and



Celeste Chang, 15, had brain cancer when she was seven. Despite that, she persevered and got into a secondary school of her choice. When she was bullied there, her parents Astro Chang and Jackie Lee home-schooled her. Celeste has painted more than 20 bags to raise funds for Brain Tumour Society Singapore. She says she strives to be like Mickey Mouse, who never gives up.  
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strength in the face of adversity of their healthcare challenges. The ceremony was attended by Mr Amrin Amin, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Health.

Each recipient received \$300 worth of grocery vouchers and a plaque at the ceremony organised

by SingHealth Duke-NUS Academic Medical Centre.

Even though the surgery and treatment affected her psychomo-

tor skills, cognitive learning and growth hormones, Celeste persevered and did well enough in her Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) to get into a secondary school of her choice.

However, she was bullied there for being shorter than her peers. Classmates would throw gum in her hair and leave cruel notes on her desk.

Her parents found out and decided to put her through home schooling last year.

Despite the hardships, Celeste found strength to push on through her parents and her favourite character, Mickey Mouse. She said: "Mickey Mouse is very easygoing and he never gives up, so I strive to be like him."

Celeste has painted more than 20 bags to raise money for Brain Tumour Society Singapore. "I love art and it is even more meaningful because I can do what I love and make other people happy. For all those

warriors who are fighting their battles in the ward, remember that you are not alone, and when that is over, we can all come together again and encourage the rest."

Madam Cynthia Tay, 45, is also an award recipient. She took care of her late husband Jesse Peh after he was diagnosed with stomach cancer in 2010. While "news of his cancer felt like a death sentence", she continued to be a pillar of strength for the family.

As her husband longed to go home after months of hospitalisation, Madam Tay took the initiative to ask the doctors and nurses to teach her the treatment procedures so she could take care of him at home, where he eventually died last year at age 45.

Asked what gave her the strength to carry on, she simply said: "True love. That was what kept me going."

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