

No MMA background, but Sim wins Evolve Scholarship

✔ ADEENA NAGIB

Sim Wen Fei may not be a warrior in the ring, but she has proven to be a warrior in life.

Despite not having experience in mixed martial arts (MMA), the 20-year-old undergraduate became the first recipient of the \$10,000 Evolve Warrior Scholarship last month.

That, after overcoming several hurdles in pursuit of becoming a dentist.

The first-year dentistry student from the National University of Singapore (NUS) was at a crossroads when deciding between her university majors.

She was offered a full scholarship at the Singapore Institute of Technology for physiotherapy, which fully backed her studies, provided free medical claims and allowance of up to \$1,000 a month.

She did not receive a scholarship for dentistry and would have to fork out about \$112,000 for the four-year course.

Sim comes from a humble background. Her parents own a fishball noodle stall at Chai Chee Avenue, where she helps out on some weekends and during the school holidays.

"It would have been a comfortable life if I decided on physiotherapy and very tough for dentistry," she said.

"My parents told me to follow my heart but it was difficult to ... because if I chose physiother-



Sim Wen Fei is not only the first recipient of the \$10,000 Evolve Warrior Scholarship, but she was also awarded a lifetime membership at Evolve. TNP PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

apy, it would've been much easier for them too.

Sim chose the harder path and is completing her first year in the NUS.

Evolve MMA's vice-chairman Wesley De Souza, 38, found Sim to be most remarkable out of over 200 applicants.

"We were blown away by her. She's an exceptional human being," said De Souza, adding that it was a unanimous decision among the senior board to award Sim.

When asked about needing interest in martial arts to apply

for the scholarship, he said: "None at all. Just an interest in being special in life and wanting to achieve your dreams."

The scholarship for education was established in conjunction with Evolve's 10th anniversary and is open to all nationalities, schools and ages.

"We look at an individual's values. At Evolve, values like discipline, determination and warrior spirit are important.

"This is one of the better scholarships for students because there is no bond. We want nothing back from them... but simply

to help them unleash their fullest potential."

De Souza is also a living embodiment of the Evolve spirit, having worked his way up the ranks in the company.

He joined the sales department in 2014 and became the general manager of Evolve Orchard eight months later. After three years, he was promoted again to be Evolve's vice-chairman.

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He said: "We hope through small things like (the scholarship), we can continue to change the world and make an impact in the lives of different people."

Apart from the hefty cash award, Sim was also awarded a lifetime membership at Evolve.

Before, she found muay thai classes to be too expensive but took up her first lesson last month under four-time world champion Nonthachai Sit-O.

"It was fun but, throughout the warm-up, I struggled to put on the hand-wrap," Sim said with a laugh.

De Souza assured her: "You may not be a champion in muay thai, but you are a champion in life."

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- Applications for the Evolve Warrior Scholarship is open till the end of the year and can be applied via their website, <https://evolve-mma.com/scholarship>