

NUS computer science undergraduate Ng Jun Kang hopes to develop applications that can help other people, especially the community of people with disabilities. He says: "My advice to others with disabilities is to keep pushing on. If you have a goal in mind, don't give up. Even if you fail, get up and keep going."
ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH



puter engineering at Ngee Ann Polytechnic. Some modules there required him to use both his hands to solder small electronic parts, and it took repetition and practice to successfully complete them.

Mr Ng graduated with distinctions in 16 modules, earning a near perfect 3.9 grade point average.

He was awarded the Xilinx Asia-Pacific Prize for the best academic performance in his specialisation.

Asked why he pushed himself so hard to do better than his peers, Mr Ng said: "I know that my disability disadvantages me compared with other candidates in the job market, so instinctively, it's fight or flight."

"I have to outdo them in order to compensate for my physical shortcomings. This moulded me into someone who always chooses to excel in everything I do and not settle for less."

After enlisting in national service (NS), he served as an intelligence research specialist in the Open Source Unit, actively monitoring global current affairs – including security developments and natural disasters around the world.

Mr Ng voluntarily extended his service by a month so he could provide technical support to the unit.

While in NS, he also applied his technical skills to three projects he worked on in his spare time: findapet.today, a pet adoption website; whatintheworld.xyz, an online resource search engine; and Food Hitch Singapore, a Telegram bot.

Now in his first year at NUS, Mr Ng was this year awarded the Asia Pacific Breweries (APB) Foundation Scholarship for Persons with Disabilities – a welcome relief to him and his family.

He said: "The scholarship will be especially helpful during this period as my father had to stop work for around six months because of Covid-19."

Sponsored by APB Foundation and managed by local disability-focused charity SPD, the scholarship recognises students with disabilities who have excelled in their studies, demonstrated achievements as a well-rounded individual and made contributions to the community.

Mr Ng said: "I would like to develop applications that can help other people, especially the community of people with disabilities, as I know that we face more problems than others in our daily lives."

"My advice to others with disabilities is to keep pushing on. If you have a goal in mind, don't give up. Even if you fail, get up and keep going."

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SCAN TO WATCH
Determined to succeed for his family.
str.sg/gengrit23



GenerationGrit

Brain injury at birth fails to stop student from excelling

Ng Jun Kang has cerebral palsy, but it has only made him push himself harder to get good grades and clinch scholarships

Malavika Menon

The road to university can be difficult for any student, but Mr Ng Jun Kang had to overcome daily challenges that others managed easily. Like getting to class, for in-

stance, or taking notes. Or even getting a drink of water.

The 22-year-old computer science undergraduate at the National University of Singapore (NUS) has spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy, which was caused by a brain injury during birth.

Although his condition affects his muscle control, motor skills and speech, it has proved no obstacle to his achieving good grades and clinching scholarships. Quite the opposite, he argues.

He said: "My condition has gifted me resilience and patience in everything that I do."

Even the act of drinking water has to be done consciously as his muscles may tense up, increasing

the chance of him spilling the drink.

The younger of two sons in his family, Mr Ng credits his success thus far to his family's unwavering support, in particular his mother's dedication in his early years.

"Growing up, my mum helped me the most. When we had to get to places such as the hospital and school, she sometimes had to carry me on her back," he said.

"My mum also spent most of her time at home helping me with therapy so that I could get better."

While his father, Mr Ng Kim Tee, 54, went out to work as a plumber, his mother, Madam Leow Mui Lan, 56, cared for their son at home.

To supplement the family in-

those days," said Madam Leow, adding that she was determined to teach her son to perform tasks such as feeding himself, so that he would be independent.

"Never give up and don't be ashamed. Treat your child as normally as possible," she said.

Besides check-ups and therapy sessions, Mr Ng required two ankle foot orthoses – supports intended to control the position and motion of his ankles – and Botox injections to release tension in his legs.

His medical and other bills took a toll on his family's finances.

But, by the age of seven, he was able to tie his shoelaces, ride a two-wheeled bicycle, use the bathroom and even go to school by himself.

Even so, mainstream school presented numerous obstacles. These included the challenge of needing to take plenty of notes in classes such as history and geography.

He said: "As a result, I channelled my energy into doing things that did not require high writing intensity, and things that I knew I could excel in."

In all things, he displayed a dogged determination to do his best.

After his O levels, he pursued a diploma in electronic and com-

come, she would take on work folding paper like invoices, paper bags and boxes, and making cake bases.

When he was about three years old, little Jun Kang suffered fits caused by high fever, and Madam Leow would rush him to a clinic on her bicycle before he fell unconscious.

"I literally could not sleep in

GENERATION GRIT

Know of someone aged 35 or below who has shown grit amid life's adversities? E-mail us at stnewsdesk@sph.com.sg