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Pay It Forward

Having benefited from a strong social support network when he was growing up, Fareez today chooses to excel in a meaningful profession, coming full circle as a social worker.

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SINGAPORE – Losing his father when he was 15 presented a turning point for Mohamed Fareez Bin Mohamed Fahmy. Apart from the emotional pain, Fareez, his elder brother and widowed mother had other pressing concerns – how to cope financially.

“We were fortunate because we had help from many areas. A charity gave us some financial support, my extended family banded together to help us and even my teacher counselled and encouraged me,” he recalled.

This gave Fareez the strength to do well in school and go to university. Inspired by the people who gave him support, Fareez took up a Social Work degree and received the Lien Foundation Scholarship administered by the National Council of Social Service (NCSS).

“Social work is one way I knew I could contribute to society in a tangible way,” said the 30-year-old Senior Social Worker at The Ang Mo Kio Family Service Centres (Cheng San).

Apart from ‘doing his job’ – a holistic process of evaluating cases, building rapport, exploring solutions, pulling together resources, and empowering his clients to work through their problems – Fareez connects with each client with empathy that draws from his own personal experience.

Once, Fareez set off on a determined search upon being alerted about

an elderly lady who was living in a void deck. After numerous searches around the neighbourhood, he finally found 60-year-old Mdm Ho Yoke Kiew¹.

Estranged from her family, Mdm Ho had no one else to turn to and had been homeless for six months.

The appreciation and the smiles from my clients and the resilience I see in them keeps me going.

– Fareez, a professional social worker who draws inspiration from many of his clients.

Fareez first took time to listen to Mdm Ho to earn her trust. He then applied for aid and looked for alternative housing options for Mdm Ho.

Fareez also facilitated her admission to a senior’s home, visiting often to support her adjustment to her new life. The difficult journey was ultimately rewarding for both Mdm Ho and Fareez.

Despite the sad circumstances inherent in many of his cases, Fareez sees the silver lining in each one and draws inspiration from them.

“The appreciation, the smiles and the resilience I see in my clients keeps me going,” he said. Each case has a valuable life lesson.

“The job helps my personal development and makes me reflect

Fareez on a home visit to facilitate access to social assistance programmes for his client

on and value my relationships better. As I help others, they help me too,” he said.

It is a way of contributing; seeding goodwill, empowerment and strength in people and seeing it bloom.

**For career details:
socialworker.sg**

¹ Not her real name, name changed to protect individual’s identity