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Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards: Rejected by talent shows, he organised concerts for special needs performers



Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards recipient, Mr Muhammad Arshad Fawwaz, 24, poses for a photo on Dec 14, 2021.

Mr Muhammad Arshad Fawwaz has organised six online concerts to date

The concerts have helped raise funds for charities including the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and Jamiyah Children's Home

He was among 13 recipients of the Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards, which recognises the



BY NABILAH AWANG

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SINGAPORE — After multiple rejections from talent shows like The Final One and Asia's Got Talent, Mr Muhammad Arshad Fawwaz, 24, became determined not to let others like him face the same disappointment.

Mr Arshad, who was diagnosed with autism and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) in primary school, decided to organise a series of virtual concerts called "Inclusivity 4 all", where people with special needs can showcase their talent.

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"I want to provide people with special needs a platform because you don't see them performing on national television everyday. You only get to see them on shows like the President's Star Charity, which happens once a year," said Mr Arshad who enjoys singing, dancing and performing magic tricks.

Mr Arshad was among 13 recipients of this year's Goh Chok Tong Enable Awards, an initiative by the Mediacorp Enable Fund which recognises the achievements of individuals with disabilities.

Into its third year, the awards comprise two categories.

The UBS Achievement award is given to persons with disabilities who have made significant achievements in their own fields, with up to three individuals being awarded S\$10,000, while the UBS Promise award, which Mr Arshad won, is given to persons with disabilities who have shown potential to reach greater heights in their areas of talent, with up to 10 individuals each receiving

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mammoth undertaking.

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He had to rope in his mother, who helped to tap her network of parents of children with special needs and invite them to join the show.

To add some star power, the pair also reached out to over 20 celebrities with four responding and agreeing to host the show.

Mr Arshad, who single-handedly edited and pieced together footage of the various performance for the online concert, which aired on video sharing site YouTube on May 24, said he was heartened by the response in the end.

"We included everyone who sent their videos in as their talents were awesome. As for the celebrities, I was super excited when I received their replied to be on my show... it really boosted my confidence."

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Ili Nadhirah Mansor/TOD

Mr Muhammad Arshad Fawwaz at his home studio, Dec 14, 2021.

He has since organised five more online concerts to date, which has helped raise funds for a number of charities including the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, Jamiyah Children's Home and Pertapis Children's Home. The monies raised have benefitted at least 50 families.

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With the next edition of the concert slated to air next month, Mr Arshad said he is actively looking for sponsors that can help pay the hosts and performers.

Asked what he plans to do with the cash award, Mr Arshad said a portion of the money will go into video editing and public speaking courses he is enrolling in. The remainder will be shared with about 25 special needs performers who participated in past editions of his



platform. I want to be able to create paid jobs for people with special needs like me," he said.

DISABILITY NOT A DETERRENCE FOR ADVOCACY WORK

Two other recipients of the UBS Promise award were Mr Allan Cai, 23, and Ms Rosalind Foo, 43, who advocate for individuals with special needs.

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Mr Cai, who was born with Down Syndrome and is facing multiple medical conditions such as low muscle tone, profound hearing loss and difficulties in pronouncing multisyllabic words, has not let his disabilities deter him from helping others.

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He has gone as far as representing the disabled community here to deliver a keynote speech at a conference on self-advocacy in Australia in 2018.

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Mr Allan Cai, 23, poses for a photo at the Down Syndrome Association on Dec 15, 2021.

Mr Cai, who works part-time harvesting mushrooms at a social enterprise, also most recently became a member of The Purple Parade working committee.

The Purple Parade is a collaborative movement comprising those with and without disabilities, caregivers, disability organisations, business corporations, public agencies and volunteers.

Mr Cai said his advocacy work does not come without challenges with the biggest one having to navigate virtual meetings during the pandemic.

“Sometimes I cannot hear when people are talking on Zoom. And sometimes when too many people are talking, I get distracted,” he said.

“If I don’t hear them, I’ll get them to repeat. I’m willing to share these challenges with others so that they can understand me,” said Mr Cai, who strives to motivate others like him to speak up about their difficulties in the

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“Want to make Singapore an inclusive place, and inclusive means both people with disability and people without disability can live together.”

Ms Foo, an advocate for the deaf community in Singapore for the last two decades, shares the same goal.

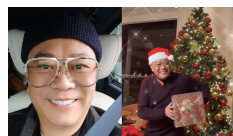
Having volunteered at Touch Community Services’ Silent Club, which supports the needs of the deaf community in Singapore, for the last two decades, Ms Foo wants to pay forward the kindness that she has received growing up when she struggled to communicate with her family and friends.



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Ms Rosalinda Ho Yen Ping, 43, poses for a photo at Bishan Park on Dec 22, 2021.



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Chinese Netizens Slam Bobby Au-Yeung For Celebrating Christmas; He Says He Has a Clear Conscience. The 43-year-old netizen, who has been diagnosed with autism, died owing to the effort of those around her — teachers who knew sign language, classmates who took notes for her in polytechnic, and now, sign language interpreters and notetakers who support her as she pursues a degree



ution to the society can bring joyous smiles to other people.”

President Halimah Yacob, who was present during the award ceremony at the Istana earlier



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and the recipients have shown that there are no limits to what persons with

achieve.

“As a society, we can do more to support persons with disabilities in their integration into



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community by removing prejudices and assumptions of their limitations.
on, Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, said: “We want to show what
our persons with disabilities can achieve when given the opportunity to prove themselves.

We want a society where persons with disabilities are fully integrated in the community and
in the workplace.”

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