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EXCLUSIVE SHOW HIGHLIGHTS



RECOGNISED: Mrs Jennifer Heng was named one of the finalists for the Ten Outstanding Young Persons award yesterday.
TNP PHOTO: KEN LU

HELPING OTHERS FIND PURPOSE

PASTOR WHO WENT THROUGH TWO ABORTIONS IN HER TEENS STARTED CENTRE TO HELP WOMEN IN SIMILAR SITUATIONS

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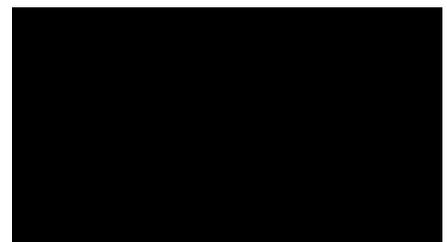
May 1, 2015 6:00am

BY FOO JIE YING

All it took was a picture of a baby or someone joking about labour pain, and horrible memories of her abortions would come back to haunt her.

Mrs Jennifer Heng, 39, had gone through two abortions by the time she was 19.

It took her close to a decade



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before she finally overcame her guilt through faith.

Last year, she started Dayspring New Life Centre to help women who are stuck in similar situations.

Yesterday, Mrs Heng was named one of the 13 finalists for the Junior Chamber International Singapore's Ten Outstanding Young Persons award for her passion to help people find confidence, hope and purpose.

The annual award celebrates young people who excel in their fields.

Mrs Heng, who is now a pastor, told The New Paper yesterday that she started Dayspring New Life Centre because she felt that most of the support available for women here is focused on teens.

The centre helps empower women of all ages facing unsupported pregnancies with life-giving choices.

Mrs Heng knows from personal experience how lonely it can get when coping with an unplanned pregnancy.

Her abortions were a secret that she had shared only with her boyfriends.

She said:

"I began to really ask myself, how can others with similar situations like me not walk down the same road I have?"

"What kind of help and support is available in Singapore for these young women?"

The mother of one said her downward spiral in her youth stemmed from a turbulent childhood.

The bulk of her childhood memories were of shouting matches between her parents.

After her parents were declared bankrupt, her father absconded, leaving her mother to shoulder millions of dollars in debt.

Family troubles, coupled with her transformation to a teenager, led her to "look for love in all the wrong places".

Twenty-two weeks into her first pregnancy, she went for her abortion. She was 17.

All she wanted to do was to look for a solution. The severity of what she had done struck her only after everything was over.

"I wasn't fully ready to face it, but I had to numb myself because if I allowed myself to feel the emotions, I might not have held it together. I don't know what I might have done," Mrs Heng said quietly.

PREGNANT AGAIN

At 19, she became pregnant again. This time, she was able to



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quickly decide that she could not keep the baby. She went back to the clinic where she had had her first abortion.

Asked if things would be different today if she had proper support then, Mrs Heng said: "I don't know, but I think that it definitely would have some kind of impact on me.

"I know this because now I'm helping women in similar situations and I see the difference between when they had no help and when they have help.

"They might still eventually choose the same decision, but the decision-making process is different. Hopefully, the future consequences will not be as detrimental or difficult for them," she said.

A 20-year-old woman who went to Dayspring New Life Centre said she was thankful for the help she received there.

"They guided me and taught me how to manage my son after he was born, giving me emotional support.

"If I need anything for my son, they will see if they can help too."

ABOUT THE AWARD

Every year, the Junior Chamber International (JCI) Singapore looks out for young people - those aged between 18 and 40 - who excel in their own field.

They will compete for the Ten Outstanding Young Persons (TOYP) award in such categories as moral leadership, cultural achievement and academic leadership.

One of the 10 winners each year will vie with more than 100 others from the rest of the world for the coveted JCI TOYP World Honoree award.

Dr Derek Goh, who is on the panel of judges for JCI TOYP Singapore this year, said the calibre of the candidates was so high that the judges had a headache shortlisting the 13 finalists.

Other than being outstanding in their field of work, nominees are also judged on their contributions to society.

The TOYP winners will be announced at a banquet on May 29. One of them will represent Singapore on the world stage.

Among Singaporeans who have won JCI TOYP World Honoree award are Chinese opera actress See Too Hoi Siang in 2001, Member of Parliament Dr Fatimah Lateef (2006) and local actor-host Nick Shen last year.

TAGS: PREGNANCY, ABORTION, WOMEN



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