

Housekeeper who raised three children alone wins Exemplary Mother Award



Madam Jamalia Shariff's story won her this year's Exemplary Mother Award, given every year by Jamiyah Singapore to a mother who has shown resilience in overcoming life's challenges. ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

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Hariz Baharudin 

SINGAPORE - When she and her husband divorced about 17 years ago, Madam Jamalia Shariff felt her whole world come crashing down.

She was left without a home and for six months, she and her three teenage children had to move from relative to relative, before she found a rental flat in Chai Chee to start rebuilding her life.

With only primary school education, Madam Jamalia did not have an easy time finding a job. She eventually started work as a housekeeper, earning \$500 monthly.

Now 64, her resilience and patience paid off, with her children now finding successful careers. Her eldest son works in the service sector, while her second son is an entrepreneur. Her youngest child, a daughter, is a doctor at Changi General Hospital.

Madam Jamalia's story won her this year's Exemplary Mother Award (EMA), given every year by Jamiyah Singapore to a mother who has shown resilience in overcoming life's challenges.

Chosen by a judging panel from 10 nominees, Madam Jamalia received her award in a ceremony at the Swissotel The Stamford on Saturday (Oct 5) from President Halimah Yacob.

She walked away with a cash prize of \$6,000, a trophy and a commemorative shield.

Speaking to The Sunday Times following her victory, Madam Jamalia said that she was not only shocked to have won, but to have been nominated as well.

With a laugh, she said that her daughter, 28-year-old Mumtaz, had gone behind her back to submit her name.

"I had no idea about such an award, it is all my daughter's doing. And now it is even more surprising to win because there are so many other people in this category who deserve to win too," said Madam Jamalia.

"They all have sacrificed so much and worked hard as mothers, I have so much respect for them."

On Saturday, Jamiyah Singapore also gave out an Exemplary Young Mother Award (EYMA). The social service organisation said: "The EYMA category was introduced in 2018 to honour mothers below 40 years old who have shown resilience in overcoming life's challenges, displayed entrepreneurial spirit, and are contributing to society in their own ways."

The award was won by Ms Peria Nayakhi Manivasagam, a 38-year-old preschool teacher.



Ms Peria Nayakhi Manivasagam, winner of the Exemplary Young Mother Award. ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

Married to a polytechnic lecturer and the mother of three children, aged five to 13, Ms Peria Nayakhi has volunteered in the community for more than seven years.

She currently serves as the chairman of the Punggol West Women's Executive Committee, which organises events and activities for residents like festival celebrations.

Every week, she conducts a volunteer dance class for children, three to 13. This class stages performances at grassroots events, and she choreographs, teaches and plans their performances.

Beaming with pride, Ms Peria Nayakhi said that her enthusiasm for helping others and giving back to the community has rubbed off on her three children, who have asked to join her in her volunteering.

"I very much believe in leading by example. Mothers should always try to set the best examples for their children because it is the best way to learn, especially when they are still so young," she said. She received \$2,000 cash and a trophy for the EYMA.

The EMA and EYMA 11-member panel of judges was chaired by senior vice-president of Banyan Tree Holdings Ms Claire Chiang. Senior Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, and Communications and Information Ms Sim Ann, is the Adviser to the Panel.



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Besides the main award winners, four EMA runners-up each received \$2,000 cash and a trophy, while the remaining five received the EMA Special Recognition Award recipients got \$1,000 cash and a trophy.

Two other EYMA finalists also received \$1,000 cash and a trophy.

In her opening speech where she congratulated the award winners and nominees, Madam Halimah said women often have to play multiple roles and feel pressured to do things better. She called for more support for women in their various roles.

"When women succeed, families and communities also prosper. When various stakeholders, such as employers, Government and community organisations work together to support women in their roles, there can be better outcomes for all," she said.

Link: <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/housekeeper-who-raised-three-children-alone-wins-exemplary-mother-award?fbclid=IwAR0L8451GBfePYV1yafbyUDcVJ8stnh6qPH-VDv9w5Na0sS4WBaLn4nBYSs>

Award for mother of 3 who showed resilience in hard times

Left homeless after divorce, she rebuilt her life and her children now have successful careers

Hariz Baharudin

When she and her husband divorced about 17 years ago, Madam Jamalia Shariff felt as if her whole world had come crashing down.

She was left without a home and for six months, she and her three children had to move from one relative's home to another, before she found a rental flat in Chai Chee to start rebuilding her life.

With only primary school education, Madam Jamalia did not have an easy time finding a job. She eventually started working as a housekeeper, earning \$500 a month.

Now 64, her resilience and patience have paid off, with her children finding successful careers.

Her elder son works in the service sector, while her second son is an entrepreneur.

Her youngest child, a daughter, studied medicine and now works as a doctor at Changi General Hos-

pital, introduced in 2018 to honour mothers below 40 years old who have shown resilience in overcoming life's challenges, displayed entrepreneurial spirit, and are contributing to society in their own ways."

This year, the award went to Ms Peria Nayakhi Manivasagam, a 38-year-old pre-school teacher, who is also a mother of three.

She has volunteered in the community for more than seven years and is also chairman of the Punggol West Women's Executive Committee, which organises events and activities such as festival celebrations for residents.

Beaming with pride, Ms Peria Nayakhi said her enthusiasm for helping others and giving back to the community has rubbed off on her children, who have asked to join her in her volunteer work.

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as a doctor at Changi General Hospital.

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She walked away with a cash prize of \$6,000, a trophy and a commemorative shield.

Speaking to The Sunday Times following her victory, Madam Jamalia said she was shocked not only to have won, but also to have been nominated.

With a laugh, she said her 28-year-old daughter had gone behind her back to submit her name.

"I had no idea about such an award, it was all my daughter's doing. And now it is even more surprising to win because there are so many other people in this category who deserve to win too," said Madam Jamalia.

"They all have sacrificed so much and worked hard as mothers, I have so much respect for them."

Yesterday, Jamiyah Singapore also gave out a separate Exemplary Young Mother Award (EYMA).

The social service organisation said: "The EYMA category was in-

especially when they are still so young," she said.

She received \$2,000 cash and a trophy.

The 11-member panel of judges for the EMA and EYMA was chaired by Banyan Tree Holdings senior vice-president Claire Chiang.

Senior Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, and Communications and Information Sim Ann is the adviser to the panel.

Besides the main award winners, four EMA runners-up each received \$2,000 cash and a trophy, while the remaining five received the EMA Special Recognition Award and got \$1,000 cash and a trophy. Two other EYMA finalists also each received \$1,000 cash and a trophy.

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She called for more support for women in their various roles.

"When women succeed, families and communities also prosper. When various stakeholders, such as employers, Government and community organisations work together to support women in their roles, there can be better outcomes for all," she added.

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Pre-school teacher Peria Nayakhi Manivasagam (left) won Jamiyah Singapore's Exemplary Young Mother Award, while Madam Jamalia Shariff won the Exemplary Mother Award. Both have three children each. ST PHOTO: GIN TAY

PLEASANT SURPRISE

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MADAM JAMALIA SHARIFF, who won the Exemplary Mother Award, on her daughter going behind her back to submit her name.