

Fighting for right to get a good education



LETTERS

Thursday, 31 Dec 2020

I WOULD like to share a short story about six-year-old Jonah Michio Tan who is fighting for the right to an education.

Born with a rare form of skeletal dysplasia (genetic disorders that affect bones and joints and hinder children's growth and development), Jonah, who lives in Petaling Jaya, is always full of life! He is always smiling, happy, thoughtful and well-mannered, besides being a great brother to four-year-old Jamian.

Nevertheless, Jonah's life is full of challenges. His physical condition, however, does not stop him from pursuing his two passions in life – baking and dancing. He has been taught by his mother that cooking and baking can help him develop a sense of responsibility and also release stress. His ability to move to the beat of music is simply admirable.

Unfortunately, Jonah is lagging behind in his studies. He turns seven next year, but his parents are still unable to find a school with facilities to cater to his

needs. His mother says they have been in touch with a government school which offers the Integrated Special Education Programme (PPKI) tailored for children who are differently abled.

However, she has come to the conclusion that Jonah isn't fit enough to join these classes as they do not differentiate between physical and mental disabilities. Children in the classes are hyperactive and may not know how to interact with Jonah for whom a simple fall may easily fracture his bones.

Jonah's mother has gone to the State Education Department to seek help but has met with disappointment. She was told that the school's caretakers are not allowed to step out of the classrooms, and this means Jonah would not be able to get any assistance during toilet breaks.

After learning about his situation, I felt that I had to do something to make a difference in Jonah's life. I may be only 13 years old, but I think my opinion as a young person matters. I am sure that all Malaysians



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We must put our efforts together to produce another Nick Vujicic. Nick, an Australian American motivational speaker, was born without arms and legs, but he is able to do so many things in life.

I believe we should all work together to bring positive changes to Jonah's life as well as other children who suffer from the same condition. I really hope the Education Ministry will consider Jonah's case.

JOCELYN YONG , Subang Jaya

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