

Six-year-old baking prodigy seeks help for studies



By MING TEOH

CHILDREN

Monday, 01 Feb 2021 10:00 AM MYT



Jonah really loves to bake and spends most of his time in the kitchen. Photo: Miyumi Yanagi

Jonah Michio Tan may only be six, but he's already an accomplished little baker who sells his cookies online through his own website, "Jonah Bakes"



Not only that, Jonah, who suffers from the rare genetic condition of skeletal dysplasia – which makes it difficult for him to move about smoothly and results in his bone fracturing easily whenever he falls – hopes to own his own bakery one day.

The idea for Jonah Bakes came about one day when Jonah said to his mother: “Mummy, I want to be a baker, I really like to bake. Can I have my own bakery?”

“So we started Jonah Bakes to let him know that even though he may be different, and not able to run around and play like the other kids, he shouldn’t give up on his dreams,” says his mother, Miyumi Yanagi, 30, a Malaysian of Chinese-Japanese descent.

“At least, if he works hard at this, he can be assured that he won’t have to be dependent on others or the system when he grows up because he already has the foundation to earn a living,” says Yanagi, a single mother.

She reveals that her son first started baking when he was four.

“I would cook meals at home every day, and when I was in the kitchen, Jonah would always offer to help. Since he can’t run and play like other kids, he would stay focused on his baking,” she says.

“Jonah’s disability has never stopped him from doing what he enjoys,” she adds.



Yanagi recently left her full-time job to focus on Jonah Bakes after her son expressed his hope to have a bakery of his own in the future.

“On my single income, I wouldn’t be able to afford sending Jonah and his younger brother Jamian Minoru to daycare, paying for school fees and transportation, rental and utilities,” admits Yanagi.

“At least, now I can save on daycare and transportation costs,” she says.

“I’ll also have more flexible time for my two boys and the bakery, since Jonah will be starting primary school this year,” she adds.

Jonah Cooks Mac & Cheese - Epsd 6



Yanagi reveals she initially had difficulties finding a school that would accept Jonah due to his condition.

“Most schools don’t have the facilities to support children like him,” she says.

“There's the Integrated Special Education Programme (PPKI) class for children with learning disabilities but Jonah isn’t mentally handicapped. He can learn like other children, but just has a physical condition. There’s also the Inclusive Special Education Programme (PPI) where special needs children are taught together with other children, but the facilities just aren’t built to support children like Jonah who would need assistance to get around and even to go to the toilet,” she explains.





Jonah (right) and his mother, Yanagi, are grateful to all those who have supported and helped them, and hope to make Jonah Bakes a platform to provide opportunities for the disabled in Malaysia. Photo: Miyumi Yanagi

She adds that although she considered homeschooling, she hasn't been able to find a homeschool that she can afford.

But with the help of FGA Cheras church pastor Robert Wong and its members, Jonah has been able to start studying (online during the second movement control order) at a learning centre in Petaling Jaya. "Our church and its members desire to help the poor, especially single mothers. So when Jonah's predicament was highlighted, we helped connect him to this learning centre in PJ where he will be studying on a trial basis for one month," says Wong.

"He will go through diagnostic level testing to assess his suitability for homeschooling before proceeding with his education there," he says.

Wong adds that the church will also be sponsoring half of Jonah's monthly tuition fees and also his schoolbooks.

Love Cheras Care Services (LCCS), an NGO that does community work among the poor in Cheras, will be sponsoring the other half of Jonah's school fees for January.

“We’re very blessed and this means a whole lot to us. Last year, we were worried how to proceed with Jonah’s studies,” says Yanagi.

She tearfully expresses her gratitude to all those who have supported and helped them during this time: “We’re more than grateful to find out there’s a school that’s not only willing to accept Jonah but also to sponsor him and provide a place where he can learn, as well as school books.”

But Yanagi says this is just the beginning. She hopes to make Jonah Bakes a platform to provide opportunities for the disabled in Malaysia.

“We understand how difficult it is to be differently-abled in Malaysia, and the opportunities can sometimes be so limited. So we’d like to use Jonah Bakes as a platform to help others who love to bake and are different like Jonah,” she says.

“We’re going to get other disabled bakers to help bake the cookies on weekdays and Jonah can help bake during weekends after his studies,” she adds.

She is currently looking for a place with the right facilities, mainly, it has to be wheelchair-friendly so that others with disabilities can come together and be part of it.

“It’s a win-win situation because we do need help with the baking. Currently, it’s just three of us, and once Jonah and Jamian start schooling, it will be more difficult,” she says.

“It’s also an opportunity to give back to the disabled community,” she adds.

Yanagi also plans to hold workshops and classes for disabled children who seek a career in baking. They will also try to cater to cafes and restaurants in the future.

Just a happy child

Even with all the hospital visits and blood tests that he has had to go through, and still not being able to have a full diagnosis of his condition to date, Jonah is a happy child.

“He always looks on the bright side. He loves to sing and dance, and has a good sense of rhythm,” says Yanagi. “Jonah also helps around the house, and takes care of his younger brother, Jamian,” she adds.

Jonah confidently chips in to say that this Chinese New Year, he’s baking and selling crispy salted egg cornflake cookies, Lucky 8 vanilla cookies, peanut butter cookies, and pineapple tarts, and that his best



While most children his age would be running around playing, little Jonah is meticulously ensuring each cookie he bakes turns out perfectly. Photo: Miyumi Yanagi



Yanagi says that the cookies that Jonah bakes are from family recipes passed down from his grandmother from Penang, and the Lucky 8 vanilla cookies are based on their successful Christmas gingerbread cookies.



(From right) The peanut cookies, pineapple tarts and salted egg cornflake cookies that Jonah is baking and selling for Chinese New Year. Photo: Miyumi Yanagi

“We didn’t expect Jonah Bakes to do so well. We thought it would be just family and friends buying the cookies, but we’re really blessed and where there’s a will, there’s always a way,” she concludes. Jonah will be taking orders for the CNY cookies via the website until the end of Chinese New Year.

For more info, visit: jonahbakes.com

Related stories:

[YouTube sensation Uncle Roger back in Malaysia to see parents](#)

[YouTuber helps Malaysians in difficulties during pandemic, through her recipe videos](#)

[YouTuber shares his humorous take on urban Malaysian life](#)

[Popular YouTuber entertains with his comedy skits during pandemic](#)



Home



For You



Bookmark



Audio



Search

TAGS / KEYWORDS:

Family , Jonah Bakes , Baker , Child Baker , Skeletal Dyplasia , Chinese New Year , CNY , Cookies

Did you find this article insightful?

Yes

No

95% readers found this article insightful

Stories You'll Enjoy

NATION 20h ago

Thomas says he had support of Kit Siang, Karpal to be AG if Pakatan won GE13

NATION 15h ago

Woman loses over RM300,000 to 'boyfriend Andy Lau'

BRANDED 

Show your love for local brands



Home



For You



Bookmark



Audio



Search

CHILDREN 5h ago

Six-year-old baking prodigy seeks help for studies

NATION 55m ago 

Covid-19: Firmer action will be taken against offenders from Feb 4, says Ismail Sabri

STARPLUS 30 Jan 2021

INTERACTIVE: When to expect your Covid-19 vaccine shots, and everything else you need...

WORLD 3h ago

Explainer: All eyes on Myanmar army chief Min Aung Hlaing as military seizes power

CORPORATE NEWS 8h ago

Panasonic to end solar panel production in



NATION 15h ago

Wan Azizah was King's choice for interim PM, former AG Thomas claims in book

NATION 2h ago

Fourteen arrested over Cheras gang fight

MYANMAR 5h ago

Myanmar under emergency for a year after Suu Kyi's arrest, US and Australia call for her...

NATION 21h ago 

MCO can be lifted, but tighten SOPs, no interstate travel, says medical expert



Home



For You



Bookmark



Audio



Search

[Load More](#)

Subscriptions

- [The Star Digital Access](#)
- [SMS Services](#)
- [Newsstand](#)
- [Other Publications](#)

Advertising

- [Our Rate Card](#)
- [Classifieds](#)

Company Info

- [About Us](#)
- [Job Opportunities](#)
- [Investor Relations](#)

Help

- [Contact Us](#)
- [FAQs](#)

Policies

- [Privacy Statement](#)
- [Terms & Conditions](#)



Subscribe to our FREE newsletter!

Enter Your Email Address Here

[Subscribe](#)



BEST VIEWED ON CHROME BROWSERS.

-->



Home



For You



Bookmark



Audio



Search