

Teen paints masterpieces to raise funds for medical treatment



By MING TEOH

CHILDREN

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Photo: Angie Lim

...ly bringing colourful masterpieces of flowers and animals to life. ...s erythematosus (SLE), an autoimmune disease that results in ...he organs, and having to spend much of her life undergoing ...ld Belle Chok has a steely determination as she completes her



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Whenever she is hospitalised at Selayang Hospital, Kuala Lumpur, her father, a plumbing contractor, has to pay thousands of ringgit in medical bills. The medicines that she needs on a daily basis also comes up to RM60 per day (RM1,800 monthly).

But rather than just relying on donations or charity, Belle, who loves to draw and paint, hopes to raise funds for her medical treatment and medicine through her own artwork.

Her aunt, Angie Lim, who is a designer and part-time art teacher, has been teaching her acrylic painting so that her artwork can be sold to raise funds for her medical bills.

“From young, Belle has loved to doodle and draw using colour pencils, especially cartoons and animal characters, and I realised that she has a real talent for art,” says Lim.

“While she was in hospital, it was also her love for art that lifted her spirits and motivated her to press on while being in her worst of health,” she says, adding that the specialists and nurses at the hospital also noticed and encouraged Belle’s talent.

Since the pandemic and first movement control order last year, Belle has been exploring and progressing in her creative pursuit, and has produced several art pieces which they hope to sell online to raise funds for her medical treatment and medicine.

“Now that she has turned 13, she’s no longer entitled to free medical treatment for long-term illness at the government hospital,” says Lim. “So the funds will come in handy for her,” she adds.

“Belle was first diagnosed of SLE in Sept 2019, and her father, who is a single parent, isn’t able to bear the cost of her medical treatment and medicine, on his income as a plumber,” says Lim.

“We hope that this will help them since SLE is a life-long disease that requires life-long treatments and medicine,” says Lim.

What is worse, Belle is a stateless child because even though her father is Malaysian, her mother, who is Thai, left them when Belle was born, and before they could get registered.

The family has been trying to apply for citizenship for Belle since she was seven, but to no avail. They have applied for the second time in 2017, but it has yet to be approved even though it’s four years. Upon enquiring, they were advised to “just wait”, reveals Lim.



Belle cheers herself up by drawing when she is hospitalised. Photo: Angie Lim

Belle's stateless status poses countless problems for the family, and she is not able to do or have things that people often take for granted, such as enroll in a proper school, and have a bank account, passport or driver's licence.

"We hope the government will look into the matter, because her father is a Malaysian and she's been raised here in Malaysia, so there's no reason why she shouldn't be granted citizenship or that her application should be delayed," says Lim.

Belle started painting in March 2020 during the MCO, and has produced 10 pieces since. It takes three weeks for her to complete a simple painting while the more complicated ones take up to a month. The price of each painting is RM380.

When she was first diagnosed with SLE, she was admitted to hospital 10 times due to complications. She has symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhoea, fever often. She has been admitted to the ICU twice, and been operated on once. As an SLE patient, she is also likely to develop kidney problems later.

For a year, she wasn't able to go to school regularly because she was hospitalised most of the time. She was only in school a total of two to three months in the whole year due to her illness. With the treatment and medicine, her condition has slightly improved and she is currently going to school online.



Belle's painting of peonies, a flower which symbolises prosperity. Photo: Angie Lim



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One of Belle's works of koi fish, symbolising prosperity and good fortune, which was recently sold.
Photo: Angie Lim

"I feel that it's great that she's learning a skill and developing it, and hopefully it can help support her in the future too," concludes Lim.

For more info, visit: [Love of Art - Belle's Medical Fundraiser](#)

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