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Three who rose and shone

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Kang Joo Soon, 18 (left), Nur Afiqah Rapee, 20 (top, right), and Dineaish Rajendran, 12 (above, right), are beneficiaries of The Business Times Budding Artists Fund

OVER the years, The Business Times Budding Artists Fund (BTBAF) has helped thousands of kids from less privileged backgrounds realise their dreams of pursuing the arts. Here are three touching success stories:

Kang Joo Soon, 18

Kang joined the Little Arts Academy's visual arts programme when he was 12. His primary school teacher helped him get a place there because his parents could not afford to send him for art classes outside of school.

BTBAF fully sponsored his training and transformed him from a defiant boy prone to playing truant to a young man with leadership skills. Today, he is a youth leader at 10 Square and leads 24 of his peers in commissioned work and fund-raising initiatives. He is pursuing an Arts Business Management diploma at Ngee Ann Polytechnic.

Nur Afiqah Rapee, 20

Nur Afiqah wanted to be a dancer when she was 17. She joined 10 Square's dance programme on the recommendation of her teacher. BTBAF paid for her training and she quickly fulfilled her early promise by becoming a youth leader in 10 Square's dance group Saltare Beats.

Last year, she auditioned for a place in Lasalle College of the Arts and clinched it. She also successfully applied for the Mendaki Tertiary Tuition Fee Subsidy to have her tuition fees waived.

At the Lasalle audition, she talked enthusiastically about her role and experiences in 10 Square - a moment that made Colin Goh, a founding member of BTBAF, "so proud because it shows our students want to tell the world about us . . . that there's no stigma to being a beneficiary of BTBAF".

Dineaish Rajendran, 12

Rajendran attends advanced dance classes at the Little Arts Academy and is regarded as one of its stars.

He has performed at major competitions and events such as the Monaco Ball, the Dream Ball and ChildAid Singapore. Last year, he stepped up to be the emcee of ChildAid Asia Tokyo, the Tokyo offshoot of the ChildAid annual charity concert started by The Business Times and The Straits Times.

His mother says that since he started taking dance lessons through BTBAF's full sponsorship, he has become more focused and disciplined in all areas of his life. The 12-year-old now believes that he is "confident and brave, and nothing is impossible".

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