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From Adversity to Achievement: Qistina's Journey of Hope and Resilience

<u>Singapore</u>, <u>30 December 2024</u> – At just 15 years old, Qistina's vibrant world was turned upside down. Diagnosed with leukaemia, she faced not only the gruelling reality of battling cancer but also the emotional toll that comes with it. Yet, through sheer determination and the unwavering support of Children's Cancer Foundation's (CCF) and its programme, Place for Academic Learning and Support (PALS), Qistina rose above her challenges, excelling in her N-level exams and becoming a beacon of aspiration for others.

A Life-Altering Diagnosis

For Qistina, the diagnosis was devastating. Once a lively teenager focused on school and friendships, her days became filled with hospital visits, chemotherapy sessions, and medical procedures. "It felt like my whole world stopped," Qistina recalls. Her family was suddenly thrust into a whirlwind of caregiving, juggling work, hospital schedules, and the emotional strain of supporting her. "I remember the nights I stayed up, watching her sleep, praying she'd make it through," Qistina's family shares. Despite the overwhelming uncertainty, they refused to give in to despair, choosing instead to stand firm for Qistina.



Qistina with her family.

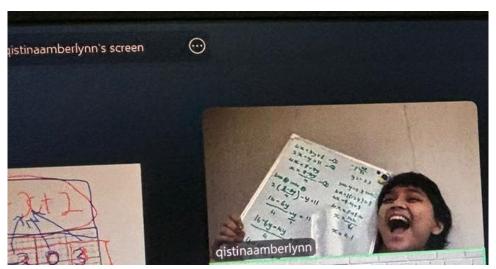


A Community of Care

Qistina's determination to continue her education was remarkable. Even on her toughest days, she clung to her studies, using them as a lifeline to normalcy and a source of hope for the future. It was during this time that CCF's PALS programme became her anchor. PALS programme, a cornerstone initiative by CCF, ensures that children like Qistina can access academic, emotional, and psychological support during their cancer journey. For Qistina, it was a lifeline. From tailored tutoring sessions to counselling support, PALS provided the resources and encouragement she needed to keep going. "Without PALS, I would have lost hope in achieving my dreams," Qistina shares. "They believed in me even when I doubted myself."

Turning Challenges into Triumph

PALS wasn't just about academic support—it was a community. Through CCF's teachers, social workers, and therapists, Qistina found a safe space to voice her fears and share her triumphs. She built friendships with other children with cancer, who understood her struggles, reminding her she wasn't alone. With the encouragement of the PALS team and her unwavering determination, Qistina not only kept up with her studies but excelled. Her N-level results were a proud milestone—not just for her but for everyone who had supported her journey.



Qistina in an online lesson.

A Message of Hope

Today, Qistina is determined to inspire others. "I want other children facing cancer to know that they are not alone. There is always hope, even in the darkest times," she says.

Her story is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the power of community. It also highlights the critical role of CCF's PALS programme in ensuring children like Qistina have the tools, encouragement, and support to thrive despite the odds. Qistina's journey underscores the importance of community support in the fight against childhood cancer. CCF remains committed to empowering children and families, ensuring no child has to face cancer alone. Stories like Qistina's remind Singaporeans all of the impact we can create when we come together.



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ANNEX A

About PALS

Incepted in 2012, Place for Academic Learning and Support (PALS) was set up to cater to the educational needs of children and youths with cancer of different academic levels, from Nursery 1 to Secondary 5 who are unable to attend mainstream schools due to their compromised immunity.

The centre provides an infection-controlled environment, a holistic curriculum and personalised academic coaching to prepare the children for their eventual return to school. In 2019, PALS also started offering support to students with special needs in the primary level. As of 2024, more than 400 students have enrolled in PALS.