Dog reminds him how far he has come

FINANCE

Easy money if you work hard

WHEN financial trader Christopher Zhuo goes home every day, his dog Rexy is there to greet him, a ball of boundless energy and a pleasing reminder of how far he has come.

The 30-year-old’s childhood had none of the pleasures he enjoys now. As the eldest of three sons in the family, he had to work in fast-food restaurants from the age of 14, for about $100 to $200 a month, to earn his own keep.

His father, an odd-job worker, was a gambler who turned to loan sharks when his luck ran out. They continued to harass his wife and children two years after he walked out on them.

Mr Zhuo was then 18. He watched as his mother, who dropped out of school, tried to keep things going on $1,200 a month as a hawker’s assistant. He nursed a secret dream then – to own a dog.

“I love dogs,” he says. “I’d always wanted a dog. But I knew it would be a burden and cost a lot of money.”

After attending Mayflower Secondary, he earned a polytechnic diploma in business studies and enrolled at Singapore Management University. He borrowed more than $20,000 from his aunt to cover the fees and set about winning scholarships to cover the rest of his expenses.

He landed scholarships in three of his four years at SMU and graduated in 2007 with top honours in business management. He is now a trader with investment company Seatown Holdings International.

“This job is paying very well,” he says, but he remains coy about his salary. It is understood that people in his line earn a six-figure annual package.

It’s certainly enough to keep Rexy, a two-year-old pomeranian he bought for $1,500 in 2009, in creature comforts. He says he has earned enough to offer to buy a hawker stall for his mother and think about moving out of his family’s four-room flat in Yishun to his own private studio apartment, which he is still hunting for.

Social mobility is a breeze in the finance industry, he says. “It’s very easy. If you work hard, there is a lot of opportunity.”

TAN HUI YEE

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