

# From selling fish to May Day model

FOR five years, Madam Koh Hwee Koon, 44, woke up at 4am daily to prepare for work as an assistant fishmonger at a Hougang wet market.

Life seemed as bleak for her as her unearthly 12-hour workday. The mother of two girls, now aged 14 and 12, she earned \$40 a day. And as a casual worker, she received no CPF contributions.

After a divorce in 2003 from her cabbie husband, and yearning to spend more time with her children, she got a job as a part-time clerk at Mee Too Primary School.

Her dedication and conscientious work attitude caught the eye of the principal, who enrolled her in a course to become a teaching assistant. Madam Koh, who studied up to Secondary 4, overcame her fear of textbooks, persevered and graduated.

Today, she earns \$1,350 a month doing a range of tasks, from helping teachers prepare materials to buying props for school plays.

Citing her success yesterday, Prime

Minister Lee Hsien Loong praised her as an example of how low-wage workers can tap on opportunities to learn new skills and upgrade themselves.

Madam Koh is delighted with the transformation and reminds her children of the need for life-long learning: "I used to think I would spend my entire life selling fish and being a housewife. Now, I know that as long as I am willing to upgrade myself, the future will be bright for me and my family."

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