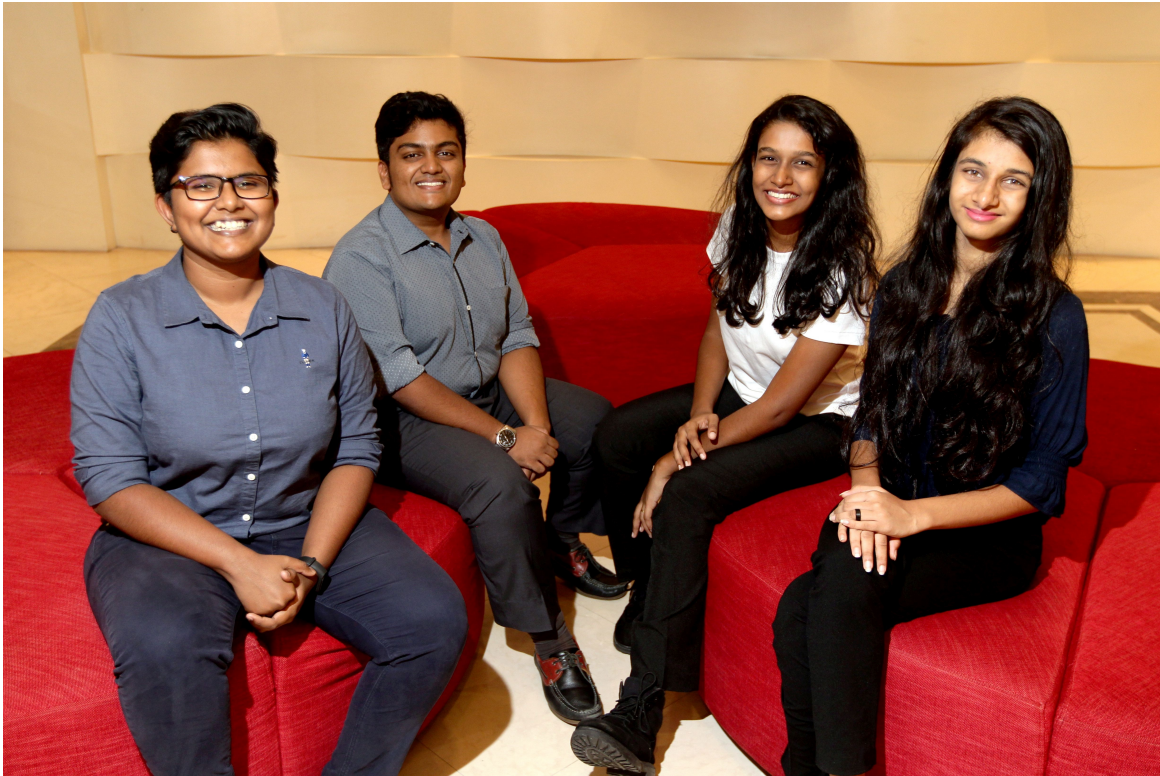


4 Malaysian teens win Diana Award For Young Changemakers

Tuesday, 08 Oct 2019
2:36 PM MYT



Mathura Kanan, Sanadthkumar, Herra Ravindran and Harsha Ravindran. Photo: The Star/Azman Ghani

By the time she was 17, Mathura Kanan was CEO of a social enterprise she had started with her friends – Harsha Ravindran, Heerraa Ravindran and Sanadthkumar Ganesan. Their business: Empowering teens and youths to uncover their passions and go after their dreams.

The four changemakers had set up [Ascendance](#), an empowerment group that encourages Malaysian youth from all backgrounds across the country to believe in their potential, through motivational talks and peer-to-peer sessions.

“When I was younger, I used to wonder how successful business people were able to chase their dreams, achieve success and happiness,” says Mathura, 23, who is pursuing a professional qualification from the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

“How can youngsters like me become as successful? I realised that the only thing stopping me was me myself. Often, we are the reason why we cannot move forward,” she says

Since they founded their group in 2015, the four have been invited to speak at schools, public forums and events around Malaysia. Ascendance has also been appointed by the Education Ministry to conduct their “Ace It Easy” programme at nine secondary schools across the country.



Their efforts won them the Diana Award for Young Changemakers, offered by the British charity of the same name – set up in tribute of Princess Diana Spencer – to recognise “outstanding young leaders, visionaries and role models” from around the world.

"We're honoured to receive this award," says Herra. "We never expected it in our wildest dreams. It means a lot to know that our work is impacting students and it has inspired us to continue working."

She adds, "Our target group is those aged 10 to 17. We were once like them, but we were lucky to have been given opportunities. We made full use of them. We believe that if we could do it, other children can too."

"That's what we hope to share with students," says Harsha, 17, Ascendance's chief marketing officer, who completed her International General Certificate of Secondary Education recently and is on a short break before pursuing a tertiary education. "I suppose it works better when they hear this from someone closer to their age."

Meanwhile, Harsha's sister Heerra and Sanadthkumar are enrolled in a leadership programme with ET Boost, a video production company in Shah Alam, Selangor.



Former deputy education minister Datuk P. Kamalanathan (centre) with Mathura Kanan (right) and SMK Kota Kemuning principal Siti Norlaila Md Shihab after the launch of Ascendance's "Ace It Easy" programme at the school. Filepic

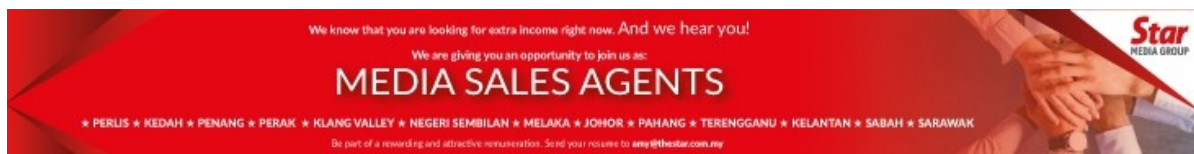
The four girls had met a few years ago at a social business incubator platform, ET Ideas. When they learnt they had similar aspirations, they decided to band together. 💎

They believe no one is too young to achieve their dream and want to encourage other youngsters to go for it.

They also hope to encourage students to be leaders in their communities and help others in turn. “We want them to learn about themselves and discover what they love, and be the best possible version of themselves,” says Sanadthkumar, 19, and COO of Ascendance.

“We look forward to helping these kids establish their careers and even assisting them with any personal challenges they may encounter. We're here to help them work on their happiness, health, education, as well as their passion,” she adds.

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