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Photography: Joris Hilterman

# Ylana is the first of her family to go to university: “I want to become a paediatrician, so I can make a difference.”

**Ylana Sour (19) from Maastricht already knew halfway through secondary school that she wanted to be a paediatrician when she grew up. “When I was three or four years old, I had a bad experience with a doctor myself. I hope that later on, when I’m a doctor, I can show that it can be done differently. That way, I want to make a difference in Limburgish healthcare.” Ylana is now in the first year of her Medicine degree. She is also the first in her family to go to university. A Stichting De Ridder Scholarship gave her the opportunity to study at university; she is the first in her family to do so.**

 **“If you think about it, that is quite special. ‘Finally, someone will become a doctor’, proclaims my mother almost daily. I have to laugh about that.”**

**Doctor in the making**Ylana started secondary school in senior general secondary education, but a teacher noticed that her marks showed greater potential. In the second year, she transferred to pre-university education. “From that moment on, I knew for sure that I wanted to go to university”, describes Ylana. “When we delved into further education options, I always landed on healthcare. I initially didn’t make the cut for the Medicine degree programme, but a week before the start of the academic year, I was offered a place. I was so happy! I don’t see myself becoming anything other than a doctor.”

Next to her studies, Ylana has already been working at a care home, Envida in Maastricht, for a year and a half now. She explains: “I work in the department for people who have a psychological disorder, in addition to dementia or Alzheimer’s. It is quite heavy sometimes, but I can leave the work behind once I go home. This job has proved to me even more that a career in healthcare suits me. I hope to be of value for the healthcare in Limburg once I complete my studies and become a doctor.”

 **The first at university**Ylana doesn’t often reflect on the fact that she is the first in her family to go to university. “But if you think about it, that is quite special. My parents and brother never went to university. Even uncles, aunts or cousins—I don’t know anyone who studied at university.” Her parents are definitely proud. “They always enjoy hearing about what I do.” Ylana says, smiling: “My mother proclaims almost daily: ‘My daughter will be a doctor!’. Then her eyes shine. My parents are happy that the scholarship has given me this opportunity. They also like the fact that I can study in Maastricht. I live in an apartment in Maastricht, rather close to my parents. So I see them regularly.”

**Rather be in the background**
Ylana had to get used to the transition to university at first. “But the first block went very well”, she says proudly. Ylana is still getting used to the problem-driven educational approach. “I am someone who would rather be in the background and listen to others. So, I sometimes find it difficult to take the reins and speak a lot myself. I had to conquer that hurdle in the second block in particular, but it is getting better and better. I know the PBL-education will help me to become a good doctor.”

**Grant for first-generation students**
Before Ylana began her studies, she applied for the De Ridder foundation grant as a first-generation student. “I didn’t expect to receive the grant, but I wanted to give it a try in any case.” She could almost not believe her eyes when she was awarded the grant. “I stared at my phone the whole time, like: Is this real? Then I called my mother, who was also really happy about it. I was mainly relieved. Studying is nerve-wracking enough. At least I don’t have to worry about the financial side of it now. I hope I can give something back to the region once I become a paediatrician, I want to be there for children and families here.”

**Tip: don’t go it alone**What would Ylana like to share with other students? Above all, that you do not always have to go it alone. “I find it valuable to get to know people in my studies, for example. I regularly study with a group of friends. We learn a lot from one another.”

In addition, Ylana has learned to ask for help where needed. “I am scared about administering blood tests, which is certainly an obstacle in this degree programme. So, ever since the start, I mentioned that I find that nerve-wracking. Now, we are looking for solutions together within the programme. For instance, I can start practising earlier, which will soon lower the hurdle. This has shown me: if you need help, ask for it! There are always people who can help.”

**Bio**
Ylana Sour (19) is a first-year student of Medicine at Maastricht University. Ylana has lived in Maastricht her whole life, together with her parents and brother. Ever since secondary school, she knew she wanted to become a paediatrician. When she isn’t studying, Ylana works at a care home for people with dementia and Alzheimer’s.

As a first-generation student, she was awarded the De Ridder foundation grant for her studies. This scholarship gives students from the Maastricht region the opportunity to go to university.