

Lao Iu-Mien Culture Association

Spring 2010

What's Happening Right Now:

- **2010 Scholarship Applications are available**
- **Applications are due May 10, 2010**
- **This Year's event is June 18, 2010, in Oakland, CA**
- **We Need Your Help: Become a Supporter of the IMSF**

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Our Brightest Young Voices: *Checking in with past IMSF recipients*

Fay Saepharn: Knowledge is Power

Being awarded the Iu Mien Scholarship impacted me on many different levels. Receiving this recognition was empowering for me because it gave me hope in my pursuit of higher education. It gave me confidence that there shouldn't be barriers to face when one seeks to go to college. Our education is a right that we should attain, regardless of our background.

Many people assume that because we are Asian, getting into college is natural. However, knowing the history of

the Iu-Mien people, we know it has been a struggle. I feel privileged to be in college and I hope that I can lay a foundation of hope for the younger generations in our community to seek this path as well. Knowledge gives us so much power, and with that power, it can bring positive change to our community and to the greater community as well.

The Iu-Mien Scholarship doesn't just provide a financial award, but it also provides a mental and emotional boost. It gives Mien high school

graduates the feeling of empowerment and inspiration to excel, bringing back knowledge to our community. What we need is hope and support, and from that we can have a brighter future.



**Fay Saepharn, IMSF 2008
UC Berkeley, Class of 2012
Major: Public Health**

Crystal Saetern: Getting Beyond "Over-Acculturation"

As a second-generation Iu-Mien American, I found it difficult to juggle between the demands of American culture and our Iu-Mien culture. As a child, my family moved around a lot, which distanced ourselves from the greater Iu-Mien community. I felt as though my identity had been

swallowed by the prevailing American culture. Many immigrants come to America with the hope of acculturating; however, I felt that I had been over-acculturated.

The IMSF scholarship was a key factor that helped me re-discover my Iu-Mien side. The essay required me to reflect on

my views and values for the Iu-Mien community, which was new for me. Going to the scholarship banquet in Oakland was also rewarding because I was able to meet other scholarship recipients and other Iu-Mien community leaders who shared my value of higher education.



Crystal Saetern
IMSF 2007
UC Davis, Class of 2011
Double Major: Economics and Sociology

“The IMSF scholarship was the seed to my apple; it helped me become a more curious individual who wants to learn and give back in any way possible”



Kao Zack Saelee
IMSF 2003
San Francisco St. Univ.
Class of 2009

Crystal Saetern, con't

I didn't realize it when I first received the award, but this scholarship helped pave the way for my journey into the adult world as a Iu-Mien American. When I was first applying for the scholarship, I felt that it would be just an additional source of funds to help pay for college. However, after going through the entire process, I realized that it was

much more than that. It was the tool that helped me re-establish myself as a Iu-Mien in America.

We are an ethnic minority within the Asian minority, and I have been yearning for more and more information about my culture. Recently, I volunteered at the Iu-Mien Student Conference in Sacramento, another organization that pro-

motes higher education for Iu-Mien youth. I chose to re-search the Iu-Mien journey to inform others who have no idea who we are. The IMSF scholarship was the seed to my apple; it helped me become a more curious individual who wants to learn and give back in any way possible. Yes, it is difficult to maintain our values, but I am proud to be Iu-Mien.

2009 IMSF Recipients

L to R: Johnson Saetern, Julie Saeteurn, Vincent Saephan, Kami Saechao, Nathan Saepanh, Kae Siew Saetern, Fou Phan



Kao Zack Saelee: Inspired to Give Back

After finding out I was a scholarship award winner, I was proud of myself, but more importantly I made my parents proud. As I accepted the scholarship, I realized that not only had I come a long way, but I also realized that my community has also come a long way.

As individuals, we go on in

life not really knowing ourselves but when we have our community commending us on our goals and accomplishments, it gives us an identity and it's very inspiring. To actually be recognized by my community, it gave me confidence in pursuing my academic and life goals. When you have your

community behind you as you pursue your goals, it's easier to overcome the obstacles that life throws at you.

I feel that I have grown a lot since 2003. I believe I have become a stronger person, psychologically and emotionally. Life experiences as an adult are very different with

Kao Zack Saelee

so many more responsibilities. However, after receiving the scholarship, I am eager to learn more about my heritage and I want to be more active in my community by encouraging future generations to pursue higher education. IMSF's work has inspired me to give back to my community as they did for me in the past. It's inspiring to see IMSF members

to continue to support our future generations in higher education and recognizing their accomplishments.

I can't express my gratitude in words, but I must say that I am really humble to be part of an organization that supports its people in pursuing higher education and recognizing their accomplishments.

Because of today's hard eco-

nomie times, I understand that young people are going to have a much harder time making it through college. Also, it will be difficult for them to maintain their Mien identities because of assimilation. It is so important to have more cultural and community influences with our youth. I hope that this scholarship will influence others as it did for me.

"Because of today's hard economic times, young people are going to have a much harder time making it through college."

Nai Fin Saetern: Why Make a False Choice?

I was born in Thailand but I grew up in America. Over the years, I've assimilated into the American culture very well. As I have grown to see myself as Mien and American, I also think it's important to know where you come from, to learn about your culture and retain your language. Most impor-

tantly, I've learned that it is okay to criticize and disagree with your culture or their beliefs and still be Mien.

Growing up with two very different cultures at times was conflicting, but I was able to choose what I believe were important values I wanted to retain from each culture. I've

learned that I am as much Mien as I am American. To have to choose would be a false choice.

In 2006 when I received the IMSF scholarship, I saw the award as a symbol of how far we've come culturally. This scholarship represents a support system for future Mien

"I am as much Mien as I am American. To have to choose would be a false choice."

Nai Fin Saetern

students who do want to go to college. The scholarship foundation says, "We support you and we believe in you."

As I finish up my undergraduate studies and move towards graduate school, I believe it is more important than ever to continue the IMSF scholarship. So many

people go on and achieve their goals and forget the people who helped and supported them along the way. I intend to give back to my community, and, if possible, pave the way for someone else.

The final product of my education is still unclear. But, as someone who is a strong be-

liever in education, I have no doubt that I will be successful. The definition of success is different for each person, but success to me is the ability to do something that I love while helping people at the same time.



Nai Fin Saetern
IMSF 2006
San Jose St. Univ., 2011
Major: Psychology

PRESERVE. DEVELOP. INTEGRATE.



IU-MIEN SCHOLARSHIP FUND
2010

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We're on the Web!

www.limcacrter.org

In response to the educational needs of the Lu Mien Community, the Lao Lu Mien Culture Association, Inc. (LIMCA) formed the Lu Mien Scholarship Fund (IMSF) in 1997. The purpose of the IMSF is to provide financial support for the Lu Mien students who are in pursuit of higher education and to inspire and motivate the Lu Mien youth to take leadership in their community.

Each year, IMSF awards seven scholarships to college-bound Lu Mien high school seniors. Graduating seniors and G.E.D. students who demonstrate financial need, academic excellence, and leadership qualities are invited to apply.

Please join us in support of this unique program with a donation, attendance at the scholarship banquet, or both. This year's event will be held in Oakland on Friday, June 18th, from 6:00-9:00 PM at Lake Merritt United Methodist Church, 1330 Lakeshore Avenue .



Kae Siew Saetern and Fou Phan, IMSF 2009

Become a Supporter of the IMSF

If you are a potential donor to the Iu-Mien Scholarship Fund, I would highly encourage you to make a contribution to this unique program! It is a very worthwhile cause and its impact on me has been life changing.

The IMSF provides not only monetary aide to aspiring students who are hungry for a chance at higher education, but it also provides a sense of community through networking and self-reflection. Most people are not aware of who we are

and we are often confused with other Asians. For some of us, it can cause feelings of displacement or distancing from our ethnic identity.

Having an organization like the IMSF is critical to support and push for our higher education. They need your support!

-Crystal Saetern

To the potential donors of the IMSF scholarship, I believe I am just one of many stories that are out there. I really am a strong advocate for education

and I believe it is so important to have this scholarship that future high school graduates can identify with. With our culture relatively young in the States, we face intergenerational conflicts. Our parents may not have the knowledge to help us in the academic setting, so this scholarship is important.

I hope that my story has inspired you to help continue this scholarship. Thank you for your support!

-Nai Fin Saetern

This scholarship foundation says, "We support you and we believe in you."