

Preserving Today for a Better Tomorrow...

Iu Mien Scholarship Fund 2011

Erica Saephan: One Step Closer

A dream for a successful future – for me and for the Iu Mien community – is one step closer to being reached. Ten years ago, I was a high school senior and a recipient of the IMSF Scholarship. As a high school senior, bound for college, my main wish was to graduate from college without any debts and to eventually have a career where I was happy and financially secure.

When I first applied for the IMSF Scholarship, my involvement in the Iu Mien community was minimal and was restricted to family functions. But, I vowed to become more involved and to learn more about my own history.

As a senior in high school, I knew that the only way to pay for college was through financial aid, and one of the scholarships that I received was the IMSF Scholarship. Even though



Erica (R) on a visit to a Iu Mien village in Thailand in 2008

the IMSF was not the largest monetary amount, it was one of the most important. Receiving the IMSF Scholarship was a huge honor. The Lao Iu Mien Culture Association was recognizing me for my efforts and it really opened my eyes that I was part of this community. At UC Berkeley, I was able to connect with other Iu Mien students, take classes about

the history of the Iu Mien, and I was also able to study abroad and actually visit some Iu Mien villages in Thailand. After graduating from UC Berkeley, I joined the IMSF committee to help my community.

In the past ten years, the Iu Mien community has become more solidified, but there are still many changes that can be made so that the Iu Mien com-

their families. I decided to get involved, and co-founded the Iu Mien Scholarship Fund. It was crucial to find strategies to be responsive to the Iu Mien students' educational needs so that they could continue their college education.

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Special points of interest:

- 2011 Scholarship Applications are now available online at www.limcancer.org
- Applications are due on May 9, 2011
- This year's event is on June 24, 2011 in Oakland
- We need your help: Become a supporter of the IMSF

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Moung Saetern: IMSF's Origins

It has been my honor to serve on the IMSF Committee since its inception in 1997. IMSF was originally founded by a group of concerned Iu-Mien educators, such as myself, who saw a lack of resources for Iu Mien students.

As refugees who came to this country in the early 1980's, we struggled financially. In the 1990's, as a LIMCA volunteer, I heard so many stories of young people who had hopes of going to college, but instead had to work full time to support

Vincent Saephan: My Vision for the Future

The IMSF Scholarship meant a lot to me. Coming from a minority group and growing up in the ghetto, it showed that there was still hope for our Mien youth. It showed me that there were people that cared and were working hard to help us achieve higher education. It showed me that our hard work pays off and that our community supports us all the way.

With this scholarship, I was able to buy books for two semesters. It saved my family a lot of money and it helped me get through 2 semesters of college. I am currently in my sophomore year at Laney College and considering a major in Sociology.

I can envision our community getting stronger than ever, with more youth getting more involved with LIMCA and the community. I can see a future where our youth stray away from joining gangs so that they can help build our community. However, I also still see our community hurting and in pain. As of now our youth do not see the importance of our culture, history, and religion, but I have hopes that in the future, it won't be the same as now. Our youth needs to be shown that there is still hope and there are people who care.

This scholarship has provided the hope and guidance that our youth need.



Vincent Saephan (R), IMSF 2009

One Step Closer: con't

community becomes even stronger. The formation of the LIMCA Center and the King Pan Buddha Light Palace was a huge step forward in bringing the Iu Mien community together. With a center dedicated to preserving the culture of the Iu Mien as well as to help the Iu Mien integrate into the United States, a huge step forward has been made.

A truly united Iu Mien community is one that I envision for the future. Steps have been taken to reach that dream and more steps will follow. I would love to see a

more harmonious community, especially between the different generations who are divided by cultural upbringing and language.

As for my own personal dreams, I have made significant gains as well. I graduated from UC Berkeley with honors, debt free. After teaching for over two years, I discovered that my niche would be in another part of education, working with students. I am currently a graduate student pursuing my Master's in School Counseling. I am also an active part of the Iu Mien communi-

“With this scholarship, I was able to buy books for two semesters.”-Vincent Saephan

ty and I really would not have been able to do it without the IMSF Scholarship. In order for the IMSF Scholarship to continue to positively impact lives and for dreams to be fulfilled, we really need donors and sponsors to keep the scholarship alive.

Seng Fong: Looking Ahead to 2021

Each year, as new ideas are developed and as more Iu Mien youth join the Iu Mien Scholarship Committee, I anticipate great accomplishments in the coming years.

What I hope for our Iu Mien community within the next ten years is the growth of the IMSF to be able to provide more scholarships to our Iu Mien youth. Additionally, I hope to see the completion of the LIMCA cultural center where the youth, Iu Mien community, and general public are able to

visit and utilize the cultural center to learn about the Iu Mien culture and history.

It is the vision of the Board of Directors and its volunteers to have the current LIMCA center expand to two floors. The second floor would contain a library and mini museum of all Iu Mien cultural artifacts, writings, manuscripts and documentaries. The existing first floor would serve as a hall for Iu Mien gatherings and events that would promote the preservation of the Iu

Mien culture and traditions. I envision LIMCA having programs that would bridge the gap of our youth and elders, with our youth taking the lead in preserving the Iu Mien language and culture.

Lastly, I hope to see LIMCA supported by not only committed individuals who volunteer and contribute, but also to have great champions in making this vision a reality.

Kae Saeteurn: Showing Our Faces with Dignity and Pride

I was one of the recipients of the IMSF Scholarship in 2009. It sure did help me out a lot because I am the youngest of a family of 6 and the 4th to go to college. Also, it was helpful because I decided to go away to Sacramento State instead of staying in my hometown of Merced.

I am studying communications and my goal is to become a news anchorwoman so I can help promote the Mien community. A lot of people don't know who the "Iu Mien" people are, but if we all work together to show our faces with dignity and pride and take responsibility of saying who we really are, we will have a stronger impact on the

larger society. I envision that within the next 10 years, the Iu Mien Community will be known well, and that I will make many contributions to the empowerment of our community.

We are humble and diligent, yet proud. We strive for the better, yet we are one of the faces in the crowd that no one really knows about. So, it means a lot to know that the IMSF is there, helping out striving college students. This scholarship was very beneficial to me and I know for a fact that it will be beneficial to the future recipients.



Kae Siew Saeteurn, IMSF 2009

IMSF's Origins: con't

IMSF launched the first banquet in 1997 to recognize and award Iu Mien educators for their accomplishments. This fundraising event provided the seed money for the scholarship fund. The IMSF award wasn't the greatest amount of money, but it empowered young people and gave them a sense of identity. The most rewarding aspects of IMSF are alleviating students' small financial burdens and seeing students honored for their accomplishments. I am delighted to see many honorees grad-

uate from college. It is also our goal to increase the number of graduating Iu Mien students in America.

Today, we are proud to say that IMSF has awarded over \$50,000 in scholarships to over 90 students to continue their college endeavors. We hope these recipients will become the next generation of Iu Mien leaders. I extend my appreciation to all the co-founders and on-going committee members for their leadership, dedication, and commitment to sustain IMSF's goals of

"Receiving the scholarship was a huge honor, and it really opened my eyes that I was part of this community." -Erica Saephan

providing educational resources for Iu Mien students in California.

Notes from the Class of 2010

"By receiving this scholarship it's an honor to know that people of your own background are willing to take time and help people grow out of the respect they have for their culture. Also, once I received this scholarship I realized that college was a lot closer than I thought." -Dominic Saelee

"With the scholarship I was able to purchase a laptop for myself to use. I would not have been able to afford a laptop at the time." -Gina Saechao

"I believe IMSF is an important program that must stay funded so we can continue recognizing outstanding high school seniors who have excelled in academics, taken leadership in their community, and have the potential to succeed." -Lai Saechao

"Please donate because it really means a lot to those willing to achieve a higher education because they would succeed and eventually giveback to their community in the future." -Shawn Saeturn



Gina Saechao, IMSF 2010

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Preserve. Develop. Integrate.



Since 1998, Lao Iu Mien Culture Association, Inc. (LIMCA) has been awarding scholarships to graduating high school seniors in pursuit of higher education through the Iu Mien Scholarship Fund (IMSF). As of 2010, LIMCA has awarded over \$50,000 and this would not be possible without the dedicated individuals of the IMSF Committee and the generosity of our committed donors over the past 13 years.

The Scholarship began by acknowledging and recognizing educators in the Iu Mien community. Then, IMSF started awarding scholarships to Bay Area Iu Mien graduating youths, eventually expanding to include the entire state of California. In 2011, the IMSF Committee has decided to increase the total award from \$4000 to \$5000.

Please join us in support of this unique program with a donation, attendance at the scholarship event, or both. This year's event will be held on Friday, June 24th, from 6:00-9:00 PM at Lake Merritt United Methodist Church, 1330 Lakeshore Avenue, Oakland, CA.

Become a Supporter of the IMSF

Now, more than ever, in the midst of economic downturn and rising college tuition, your monetary or in-kind donation to the IMSF is critical to sustain our continued efforts to support the best, brightest and most promising-yet most needy-of our students.

The Iu Mien Scholarship Fund has a meaningful and far-reaching impact on the recipients' college and vocational school experiences. Meaningful, in the sense that your money will help students with tangible goods-from snacks and lunches, to bigger essentials like tuition, textbooks, and rent. As you well know, being a student of higher learning comes with countless challenges and expenses. Your contributions could even help a student engage in a learning experiences from afar, such as the Education Abroad Program.

While we know our scholarships can help students by easing the tangible challenges of colleges and trade schools, we also take

pride knowing that our awards serve as priceless, far-reaching encouragement for determined students to excel in pursuit of lifelong knowledge.

A good education, inclusive of ideas interacted with and attained from other students and professors, the excitement of the learning environment, the time spent immersed in literature and lab work, culminated with the award of a college diploma or a trade skill certificate, is one of the few things in life that cannot be taken away from a person once earned.

To me, there is a grand hope that a group of people, subsistence farmers from the highlands of Laos with less than 40 years in the United States, can continue to develop academically, economically, politically, and culturally.

The Iu Mien have made perceptible strides in the past decades. We truly are one step closer, but our position is precarious, with little margin for error. In order to

stay on the path of progress, it is necessary for our concerned and caring members to lend their support with the time, attention, energy, and funds. With this nurturing, the Iu Mien community can become continuously positive citizens and make our unique contributions to this great nation.

-Thomas Schao
IMSF Committee Member

