

Vilay Kith

Dell Scholar Application: Personal Essay

My name is Vilay Kith and I moved to the United States from Cambodia during my fifth-grade year. When I moved here, I did not speak any English and I had to learn how to read and write in English. This was a very difficult time for me because I had never experienced the problem of having to learn a new language. I felt scared, but also excited at the same time.

However, I am so proud of myself because next year I will be graduating high school, but I will never forget the journey I took to get here. I still remember my first day in middle school. At that time, I did not know where to go and I did not have any friends to show me the way, but everybody helped me out.

However, I still had trouble learning and adapting to the new culture. American and Cambodian cultures are so different. The thing that I had to learn was how to be okay with the weather. However, this was not the hardest thing that I have learned. I have learned to accept diversity.

Where I came from, I was only exposed to my culture. In school, I was taught to embrace my culture. From this experience, it has kept me unaware of the many opportunities for me. When I came to the U.S., I learned that I have choices in what I am doing. The school in the U.S. also gave me the opportunity to meet people from different cultures.

I have learned to accept people for who they are. I also learned that women have the same respect as men. This was not the same in Cambodia because women do not have the same rights and respect that men have. However, when I first came here I learned that everyone has the same rights. And that everyone is the same no matter where he or she came from.

Another hardship that affected me when I moved to the U.S. was the death of my grandma, the person who raised me. When she had passed away, it was hard for me to be focused in school. I was already having a hard time adapting to the new life, but the news that my grandma passed away also made it harder for me to study. I felt that I have no need to give my all anymore.

Through this tough time, the friends that I have made in the U.S. helped me out with my schoolwork. They also encouraged me every day. They told me that learning a new language is always tough and I should never give up. They also tried to distract me by making me join an after-school activity. I became happier through school activity. After all of this, I learned that my grandma would have wanted me to be happy, not sad. This

is the reason that every day I will always be happy for the sake of those who helped and cared for me.

Another thing my experience has led me to do is help out in community service because I want to make people happy. I want people to look forward to their day. For example, I volunteer at a church where I escort the elderly to their seat. I also help with cooking food at the church. I have helped out with packing food for kids around the world.

The reason that I volunteer is that since I was little I have always been passionate about helping others. I have always wanted to travel around the world to a developing country and help out. I came from a household that sometimes does not have anything on a plate. And every time I see people needing food, I relate to what they are going through. This is also the reason that I want to pursue researching medicine.