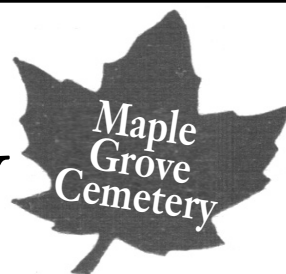


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Came here for education, now she trains others

BY JESSICA LYONS

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When she first came to the United States, Aunaetitrakul "Dear" Vimonsiri devoted herself to learning English and is now dedicating her efforts to being involved and giving back to others.

Vimonsiri, a resident of Long Island and Queens College student, moved from Thailand in 1999. She said better opportunities and a chance for a free education were some of the reasons for the move. Her father also wanted her to learn English.

When she first arrived, Vimonsiri said that she had to deal with bullies who would pick on her because she could not speak English. She was able to get to know them better through playing basketball together, and learning the language helped her. She did so through reading and watching television.

"I taught myself how to speak English because my parents could not afford to hire a private tutor," she said.

As a political science major going into her junior year in the fall, Vimonsiri is involved in numerous activities on campus. She is the president of the Political Science Club, a Queens College Ambassador, Freshman Year initiative mentor, freshman orientation leader, Party Chair of the Democratic Student Alliance and, as of the fall, will be on the Academic Senate's executive committee.

"I like to make a difference and plus you only live once," Vimonsiri said.

Along with wanting to take advantage of the many opportunities available, Vimonsiri said that she also wants to set an example for her two younger sisters, as well as for others who are new to the English

language. She said that regardless, a person can still be involved.

Throughout the course of this past school year, Vimonsiri said that she helped organize about 60 events. One was the Major Minor Fair, which she said had not happened on campus since 2001 and gives students a chance to learn about the college's departments. She said that more than 500 people attended it and that the number of students who declared their majors increased by 10 percent.

Vimonsiri also organized this year's event that commemorated the one-year anniversary of the Virginia Tech campus shooting. It included a panel discussion and was attended by 100 people.

"I really love managing the members and inviting great speakers to campus," Vimonsiri said.

During the summer, Vimonsiri will be working as an intern with the non-profit organization Media 4 Humanity (www.media4humanity.org), which works to eliminate child slavery and human trafficking. She had found out about the organization online. Her responsibilities will include talking to potential donors and organizing networking events.

"I want to know more about it so I can educate more people about it," she said, adding that she encourages people to attend their networking event in Manhattan on July 10.

Besides the work that she does with school groups and community organizations, Vimonsiri works as an English tutor, assisting Thai students between second and seventh grade. She said that she helps them with their homework and helps them pass school.

"I guess it's just determination," Vimonsiri said of how she manages everything. "I get up every day and say 'Hey, I want to make a difference.' That's who I am."



Photo by Nancy Bareis/Queens College

Queens College student Aunaetitrakul "Dear" Vimonsiri wants to make a difference.

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