

Vietnam. Three million people died of starvation in 1945 under French rule. Vietnam War: A 30-year long resistance war against France and then USA (1945-1975). Ten million people died. A small country of severe poverty and destruction.

I am a Vietnamese. What can I do for my home country?

I have a big dream: My country, Vietnam, will soar from poverty and destruction into a high level developed country where Vietnamese can live in peace and happiness with other nations on our planet. That is the motivation behind my mission to make a contribution to build up a new image of Vietnam to outside world, through promoting mutual understanding, friendship and cooperation between nations. I strongly believe that is important for my country's development. That is why I am now an exchange student in Massachusetts. This is the beginning of my quest.

I was born and grew up in Hanoi, the capital of Vietnam. Fortunately, the long, sorrowful period of war has gone by and I grew up in peace. My parents both graduated from Moscow University and engaged in business as their careers. I was influenced a lot by them: the desire for studying new things, the way of positive and creative thinking; having my own dreams; the care and love we should give to people surrounding us and making meaningful contribution to the country's development. They always encourage me to do new things, to grab the opportunities around me to learn. Since the time I started to go to school, my little brother was born and it was time for me to take care of myself, as well as to do the chores and to take care of my little brother. I didn't realize that my parents were "training" me at that time, but now when I'm older and able to handle everything by myself, I want to thank them a lot for that. My schedule was always full with things to do: school work,

extracurricular activities, friends, piano class, sports along with time for chores, family and myself. I enjoy school most of the time with almost every subject, but I like English and Math most. I'm an active member in the English and Math club at school. The Excellent Student Award I've earned every single year through eleven years of schooling so far shows that I'm not doing too bad. Besides, I enjoy playing piano and tennis. I started learning to play piano when I was six. Music has provided a valuable lesson for me about hard work and patience. And time left is for hanging out with friends, chores, family times and relaxing time for myself also, which mostly I spend on reading.

The year of 2003 is marked by an important step to accomplish my objectives when I decided to become an exchange student in the US. I want to have an advanced knowledge and skills. I want to know and understand the USA and its people with their culture. I want to promote a new image of Vietnam. I don't want US people to know Vietnam only through Vietnam War while our country has much more interesting things. My parents, as always encouraging me to challenge myself, support me on my decision. With my good academic background and my English proficiency, things are going well that I am now an exchange student in Shelburne, Massachusetts for my senior year. To be honest, things got overwhelming at first: new country, new family, new school, my parents are not here and I'm on my own! But how exciting and enjoyable it is to explore a new country and share a culture! Everything is brand-new and fun to learn. I'm so impressed with the US education system: high-tech equipment, advanced, practical knowledge, new approaches and teachers are so enthusiastic and helpful. I'm having fun with all of my classes here. I also participate in several school clubs, like Biz Venture, for people who interested in business and Peer Leadership, where we can participate in community activities and promote our leadership

potential. I'm making friends and learning so many things about America: a land of diversity in culture and society and full of kind and helpful people. I found a lot of interesting things to do here besides schoolwork and clubs: I gave a talk about Vietnam to a 6th grade class at elementary school. I wrote an article sharing my exchange experience to the newsletter of ASPECT, the exchange student organization. I'm happy that I can be a part of multicultural understanding between people in different countries.

The next step of my plan is to complete college study in the US. I want to pursue a major in Business Administration, which I find really interesting. Four years of colleges in the US will be an important task on my long way to complete the mission and will be a fun adventure for me also. This will help me to have appropriate knowledge on this field for my own business in Vietnam, which is my next step to pursue my dream. I strongly believe that University of Maine at Presque Isle can help me to accomplish my goals.