



Gilman Alumni Representative

Uyen Phan

South Korea, Fall 2006
University of Texas, Arlington



There are two ways to live your life: One is to live in hope of an opportunity; the other is to strive for what can become an opportunity. My experience in South Korea has provided new ideas and perspectives about myself and my own culture. The experience has not only strengthened my values, it has caused me to alter or abandon some while embracing new concepts and perceptions.

I have gained a greater appreciation for life through partaking in various volunteer opportunities in South Korea, particularly while at the Hwasung Orphanage. My volunteer days have given me much understanding about humanity, hope and what ultimately sets us free. I must say that in lending a hand to some, I have been the recipient of a great many things in return- in kind and in spirit. I volunteer because I believe in lending a hand. This is the same philosophy I incorporate into my career goal of helping others. I want to learn and hopefully teach the concept of "volunteering" as an action done not out of obligation, but rather from the innate sense of caring.

Upon my return home from studying abroad, I eagerly have been encouraging friends and people whom I have encountered to study abroad, if ever given the opportunity. I strongly encourage studying abroad because often times, Americans are much less informed about the world beyond the nation's boundaries. Students who study abroad return home with an informed and much less biased perspective toward other cultures and people. There is no better and more effective way to learn a language than to be immersed in a culture that speaks the language you are learning. It is an opportunity to discover new strengths and abilities, conquer new challenges, and solve new problems. The Gilman scholarship not only provided me with the necessary financial assistance, it also helped made me feel more secure while being away from home.



Uyen volunteering with the young children of the Hwasung Orphanage in Seoul, South Korea.

