

GRASP News

December 2016

Every Week Brings Happy Stories

A parent called the GRASP office this week wanting to speak with advisor Joannalyn Jordan, who had worked with her and her daughter. The daughter had just received her Early Action admission to Virginia Tech - the mother and daughter are thrilled and couldn't wait to tell Joannalyn. The mother sang Joannalyn's praises throughout the conversation - saying how Joannalyn made such a difference that they couldn't wait to give her the good news as she had been such an important part of their journey.



Getting Ahead with GRASP

This young man is getting help with his aspirations of attending one of Virginia's Community Colleges. He plans to enter a medical field. Pictured is GRASP Advisor Retsy Kitchen. Speaking of the Community College system, GRASP will soon announce a new initiative of scholarships for those attending two years of Community College and two years of a four-year institution. The program aims to encourage students to reduce their total debt by taking this cost effective route to a four-year degree. GRASP co-founder Senator Walter Stosch is working with GRASP staff to unveil the new program in 2017.



From High School to the Corporate World

Donor contributions help students like **DonChen (Jay) Guan** who recently spoke at our Reach for the Stars Gala where he said, "I want to thank all of you for supporting GRASP, and supporting students like me, to give us a chance to succeed." Jay came to America from China six years ago and graduated from Douglas Freeman High School in 2014. He now attends Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) and is a Computer Science major. Jay first received GRASP services in high school when he filed his FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid.) He was awarded a GRASP Last Dollar Scholarship in high school. Now he participates in the GRASP College Success Program which assists and encourages students

through their college experiences. Jay's recent comments to the GRASP advisor about his successes included this, "I got good news from companies! I accepted an offer from Capital One and I met even more companies at a national conference in Seattle after that."

One of our co-founders, Ray Garguilo, often references GRASP's role in workforce development. Well, Jay's story certainly underscores this notion. Jay has used the full complement of GRASP's Advising and Scholarship services and is now well on his way to entering the workforce in a fulfilling career.



Our Holiday Wish For You

As many of you know, I was out of the office this Fall with Cancer, yes the terrifying "C" word. This journey felt like I was living through a trip into the wilderness and out again. At one point, I recall being alone and shouting to my fear as though it were a being, "Go away! I have important things to do!" The important thing was writing a scholarship recommendation for Amanda Nolan, for the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. Pressing the fear away, as though it were an actual force, and writing of Amada's academic journey, overcoming homelessness and finishing her first two years at John Tyler Community College, gave me the courage at that moment to squash the fear. I can report that following surgery and radiation, there is ***only a 1 to 2 percent chance of recurrence***. I am grateful beyond words for this result and the kindness of my GRASP family, my husband, daughter and new son-in-law, extended family, and the opportunity to return to work in this meaningful non-profit, GRASP.

When you donate to GRASP, you allow us to persevere with students, overcome the fear and make great things happen. I am well now, and I thank all of you for supporting GRASP. Your support and the leadership of our Board of Directors and Chairman Dr. Holsworth allows us to perform this meaningful work. Your donations enable us to help others, and through this help, bring joy and meaning to our lives and the lives of others this holiday season.

As we at GRASP reflect on this past year, we think about the students GRASP helped in 2016 with their post-secondary education planning, and we appreciate more than ever the donors who realize the need that exists for GRASP services and who fund our mission through their donations.

Warm Regards,

Betty Heggie, CEO

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