

# FROM VIETNAM TO AMERICA: AN EDUCATIONAL JOURNEY

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## MY LIFE CHANGING MOVE

In 1997, at the age of 10, I left Vietnam, my home country to settle in America, the land full of opportunities for foreigners. That opportunity for me is education. I started 5<sup>th</sup> grade right away, yet I did not speak a word of English. While being labeled as a “5<sup>th</sup> grade student,” I was learning English as a second language as well as learning grammar from the 1<sup>st</sup> grade level up to the 5<sup>th</sup> grade level. At the time, I knew I had to study very hard in school to catch up because I did not want to sit in a 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom learning math, which I excelled at, but not know how to communicate using proper English. That feeling pushed me to study a little extra.

## WHY I CHOSE TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT

With a degree in Tourism and Hospitality Management, I can develop my professional career in any field within the travel industry. The travel industry in Vietnam has been growing very rapidly, and since my goal has always been to go back and work in my own country, this is the perfect time for me to emerge myself within the country’s travel industry.

## PRESIDENT’S EDUCATION AWARDS PROGRAM

Every weekend, my parents and my grandmother would read the Vietnamese newspaper and found articles praising specific Vietnamese students who received outstanding academic excellence certificates from the president of the United States. They would simply say to me “nho co gang hoc nha con.” Which meant, “study your best.” I am grateful for having them humbly encouraging me to study hard and not giving me pressure to compete with anyone. Therefore, in 2001 I thanked them by bringing home what they have always secretly dreamed of, a certificate of outstanding academic excellence by the President’s Education Awards Program signed at the time by President George W. Bush and U.S. Secretary of Education, Rod Paige. That day, I was the happiest kid in the world, not because of the award, but because I made my family proud.



President’s Education Awards Program Certificate

## GIVING BACK TO THE VIETNAMESE COMMUNITY IN AMERICA

Every summer since 2005, I have been going up to Boston, Massachusetts to volunteer at a charter bus company, Golden Riders, to help out Vietnamese families in planning their vacations by booking tickets, hotels, destinations and much more. Since I am bilingual, I am an asset to the Vietnamese Community living around Boston as many of them are not fluent in English. Thus, it will be difficult for them to plan their vacations if they have to speak English. Planning a family vacation should not be stressful, but should be fun and easy; therefore, I help ease their language barrier by giving them Golden Riders services in Vietnamese.

