

Untitled 2

by Maddy Brown-Clark

It was a beautiful day
And the birds were singing
But tears fell from my eyes
I had a broken heart
And my phone was ringing
But the angels heard my cries
I felt like I didn't matter
I felt so thrown away
But a friend of mine stood by my side
And he knew just what to say
If I should live another day
I'll get down on my knees to pray
And thank the lord
For that beautiful day
And the friend who knew
Just what to say...

The Day That Purple Reigned

by Lori Lematta

One morning while working, a patron to the bakery walked by sporting a vibrant purple skirt.

I complimented her and told her that she inspired me to find purple everywhere I looked.

The next day Prince passed away.

I guess he was saying goodbye to us.

REFUGEE, from page 5

Times and The Oregonian, and politicians, including Gov. Kate Brown earlier this year.

Thal recently obtained a commercial trucking license and will soon hit the road, and Bhim speaks English so well he has no accent, and he continues to do well in school.

Sumitra, however, puts the most ambitious of overachievers to shame.

Less than two years after the Chhetris made their transition from bamboo hut to urban apartment, Sumitra was running to catch a TriMet bus every day after class to take an hourlong ride into downtown Portland, where at 16, she was working for the city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability. It was a job she landed after completing a paid internship with the Portland Development Commission the summer before.

That same year, she founded a multicultural club at school and found time for another paid internship at the Oregon Zoo.

Throughout high school, she volunteered with Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon and periodically traveled to Salem to lobby legislators on issues affecting immigrants and refugees.

Her community involvement and good grades earned her the prestigious Ford Family Foundation scholarship.

After two years at Oregon State University, she transferred to Portland State University to major in political science. She soon was elected senator in the student government and later became the legislative affairs director, traveling to Washington, D.C., to lobby for tuition affordability.

"If I didn't have that scholarship, I would have never gone to college," Sumitra said. She said she had looked at the numbers, and there was no way her family could have afforded to send her.

"I think a lot of immigrants' children, have a difficult time thinking about college, even though there are a lot of options out there," she said.

This spring, eight years after moving to the U.S., Sumitra became the first Bhutanese refugee in Portland to earn a bachelor's degree.

Som said 20 of Portland's Bhutanese refugee families have bought their own homes, but many others are struggling with rising rent, and high school graduation rates are low. Many also lack a connection with the greater Portland community

and local government, he said.

"Unfortunately, a lot of community members are moving out of state due to rent increases and high living costs in Portland," Som said, "so we are losing our culture, community and languages at the same time."



PHOTO COURTESY THE CHHETRI FAMILY
Children at the school inside the Beldangi 1 camp, one of seven refugee camps in Nepal.

The Chhetris said Steve was instrumental in their success, having been there for every major hurdle they've had to overcome to get to where they are today. They also said having an American friend made them feel more at home in Portland.

While the relationship that has formed between Steve's family and the Chhetris is unique, Steve said there is a significant need for more people to step up and help new refugee families.

IRCO's family mentor program has evolved, and today the organization is looking for in-home English tutors and youth mentors.

IRCO development associate Kaitlin Barker Davis said that the day-to-day help and orientation the Chhetri family experienced is now covered by these more specific volunteer positions and that volunteers are not required to be bilingual.

Steve said a teaching background like his can be helpful but isn't necessary to work with a refugee family.

"Anybody can be a family mentor. You just need an open mind and a heart and a desire to help other people," he said.

GET INVOLVED

Anyone interested in helping refugee families can contact IRCO at volunteer@irco.org, or visit www.irco.org/support/volunteer.html to fill out a volunteer application.



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