

# Kaiser Scholarship Winner Looks Ahead

## Roosevelt graduate Chaltu Ahmed plans to pursue a career in medicine

By Arashi Young  
Of The Skanner News

**W**hen Chaltu Ahmed arrived in the United States, as a 16-year-old from Ethiopia, she didn't know the language or the culture. Ahmed was a naturally curious and science-minded teen who knew she wanted to pursue health.

She enrolled in Roosevelt High School, studied hard and ended up graduating in three and a half years while she was still learning English as a second language. Ahmed is the oldest sibling of four children and the first person in her family to graduate high school. She plans to attend a college in Oregon and study medicine.

Ahmed recently received a \$10,000 Kaiser Permanente Northwest Health Care Career scholarship - the largest scholarship amount in their health care career program. The scholarship is part of an effort to improve community

health by helping diverse students become health care professionals.

"When the health care workforce reflects the patients it serves, more people have access to better quality care, so it's a no-brainer for us to invest in this amazing group of young, diverse scholars who wish to enter health care career," said Tracy Dannen-Grace, the director of community partnerships and philanthropy at Kaiser Permanente.

The Skanner News met with Ahmed to talk about her life as a new immigrant in the United States, the scholarship and her hopes to improve community health here and in Ethiopia. The interview has been edited for space and clarity.

For more information on the Kaiser Permanente Health Care Career scholarship, visit: <https://share.kaiserpermanente.org/article/northwest-health-care-career-scholarship-program/>

**The Skanner News:** What was the experience like for you coming from Ethiopia to the United States?

**Chaltu Ahmed:** When I first moved here it was Jan. 26, around midnight in 2012. So I moved here, not knowing the weather changes and I don't know about the lifestyle here and I didn't speak any English at all. It was a very life-changing experience.

**TSN:** What was it like for you to come to the United States without knowing the language?

**CA:** It was hard work. A lot of students end up not attending high school or college because the fear of the language barriers might keep them from pursuing their dream. I used to think outside of the box. It's doable and if you work hard, then language barriers should not stop you from attending college.

That is how I am going to change my family's life and the lives we are living now. I am totally sure that I am not going

to work for the minimum wage and a job that I don't like. My goal was to be a health care professional and you need a lot of science and math and a lot of technical skills also, so I did work hard.

**TSN:** Why do you want to pursue a career in health care?

**CA:** In Ethiopia there are a lot of different classes. So, in one community you can find someone that is very rich and you can find someone who doesn't have anything to eat for the night tonight.

I used to observe different careers and saw the people that worked in the health care careers used to help their communities and used to do good for others. And I looked up to them and said this is what I want to do with my life. I want to dedicate my time to helping the community with health which is something essential in life. Also, I love science and chemistry and math.

**TSN:** What does your family think of your



Chaltu Ahmed

goal?

**CA:** My mom is absolutely supportive to my goals because she's diabetic. She has cholesterol and blood pressure problems. She has a lot of health problems, so pursuing health care will actually support her personally and support her with her health.

**TSN:** What are your hopes for the future?

**CA:** One of my hopes is to change the lifestyle that my family is leading, because my parents, none of them graduated from high school and they didn't pursue their college careers. Graduating as a first generation from my family, I will be changing the lifestyle of

my family. My siblings will be pursuing college careers and I will be a professional.

Also, I would like to change the way that the students in Ethiopia are pursuing their education in general. They don't have proper technology, they don't get proper education, they don't get proper medical treatments. I feel, as an Ethiopian, we are very behind. My hope is to help the children back home because they are the future generation.

**TSN:** Is there anything you want to say?

**CA:** Now I can focus on my studies and I can be reassured that I am a Kaiser scholar now.

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