

David Douglas princess is devoted to helping young cancer survivors

By Maileen Hamto
The Asian Reporter

Working with children who have battled and survived cancer has been a passion for Alanesia “Ally” Vang, the 2018 Rose Festival princess representing David Douglas High School.

Ally was only two years old when she was diagnosed with Hodgkin lymphoma (cancer of the lymph nodes). Living with cancer at such an early age meant she spent a lot of time in the hospital receiving treatments she needed to survive. “My parents are my heroes. Their mental strength and support reinforced my will to live and survive the disease,” she said.

Through Camp Journey, Ally found community among other young cancer survivors. For one week during the summer, Camp Journey brings together children between five and 17 years old who have been diagnosed with cancer to an extraordinary outdoor experience at Ross Point Camp in Point Falls, Idaho. The camp is staffed by volunteer counsellors and pediatric oncology specialists.

“They helped us to have hope” and find a “place where we belong,” Ally explained. “Together, we talked about what’s happening to us, what we’ve accomplished. Even though we were physically weak, we’re mentally strong.”

Surviving cancer has inspired Ally to give back by aspiring to become a pediatric oncologist. Experiencing first-hand the impact of cancer on her entire family, she is committed to making a difference. Ally plans to attend the University of Washington and major in biochemistry.

“Without the experience of surviving cancer, I wouldn’t be the same person. I understand the magnitude cancer had on my life. Seeing other children my age, still fighting for their life, unleashed a sense of maturation and wisdom,” she said.

As part of the Rose Festival Court, the princesses will have a chance to visit Randall Children’s Hospital. It’s no surprise the hospital tour is on top of Ally’s list.

“I love-hate hospitals. I love them for what they’re doing for the children, but it’s also painful to see these kids there,” she



said. “I’m passionate about children and their healing.”

Developing mental strength throughout a childhood punctuated by cancer has helped Ally harness emotional intelligence to adapt to new challenges. Originally from Missoula, Montana, she has attended three different high schools. She spent her freshman year in high school in Missoula, then moved to Jakarta, Indonesia during her sophomore year. She is slated to graduate from David Douglas in June.

Being part Hmong and Indonesian, Ally was eager to experience part of her culture. In Montana, her family was close to the Hmong community that settled in the area. Wanting to “broaden her scope” by experiencing both sides of her heritage, she decided to live with relatives in

Jakarta. Adjusting to her new environment was challenging, so she focused her attention on learning local customs and making new friends.

“I only knew the American culture, and it was a big culture shock,” she said. “That’s when I really took my education into my own hands. I started to learn the language and basics of the culture. But what really helped me cope was making friends at my school. They really helped me get the inside scoop on Indonesian culture.”

Fresh from the immersive experience in Jakarta, Ally relocated to Portland with her family during her junior year. At David Douglas, she worked hard to make new friends and contribute to her new community through volunteering.

SURVIVOR & HELPER. The 2018 Portland Rose Festival princess representing David Douglas High School is Alanesia “Ally” Vang. A cancer survivor, Vang is looking forward to visiting the Randall Children’s Hospital as part of the Rose Festival Court. In the top photo, princess Ally (far left) is seen with her parents and siblings (L-R): father Xe holding Aeddan, Aezayden, mother Arum, Averyella, and Arihianna. In the bottom photo, Vang (front row, fifth from left) poses for a photo with her entrepreneurship class. The Portland Rose Festival’s Queen’s Coronation takes place Saturday, June 9 at Portland’s Veterans Memorial Coliseum. (Photos courtesy of Alanesia Vang)

Undoubtedly, being named to the Rose Festival Court is a highlight of her senior year.

“The Rose Festival is significant to me because I feel I’m able to represent the diversity of my school. Being half Indonesian and half Hmong, I have a lot of culture to bring to the world, and I can signify that to the Rose Festival and my school in a positive way,” she said.

Still relatively new to Portland, Ally continues to learn about her new home. While she has made connections through school clubs, community activities, and volunteer events, she keeps looking for ways to deepen her connection to the City of Roses.

“It was super hard at first, moving from Missoula to Portland. Being involved has allowed me to make friends and to create memories in every school,” she said.

“I’m grateful to see new perspectives. Living in different places made me grow as a person to receive those new experiences.”

A Rose Festival princess represents her school and acts as the “face of the Rose Festival” at many events in the community, including parades, volunteer activities, luncheons with community and business leaders, and more. The Portland Rose Festival Foundation awards each court member a \$3,500 scholarship, courtesy of The Randall Group.

To qualify for the Rose Festival Court, a candidate must be a full-time junior or senior at a 4A, 5A, or 6A high school in Multnomah, Washington, or Clackamas county and have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0. Potential princesses are evaluated on citizenship, scholastic achievement, school activities, civic involvement, volunteer projects, communication skills, and overall impression.

The Portland Rose Festival Queen is chosen from all of the court members at Portland’s Veterans Memorial Coliseum on Saturday, June 9 from 8:30am to 9:30am. To learn more, call (503) 227-2681 or visit <www.rosefestival.org>.

This issue’s
Community
Calendar
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heir locked out of his inheritance of one of Asia’s greatest fortunes. For info, call (503) 643-3131 or visit <www.powells.com>.

“Race Talks”

May 8, 6pm (doors open), 6:45-9:15pm (talk), McMenamins Kennedy School (5736 NE 33rd Ave, Portland). Attend “The Next 100 Years: Changing the Complexion and Gender of Golf,” a presentation and discussion held as part of “Race Talks,” a series of free dialogues facilitated by trained volunteers from Resolutions Northwest. For info, call (971) 222-8254, e-mail <racetalks01@gmail.com>, or visit <www.racetalkspdx.com>.

OAME luncheon and tradeshow

May 10, 10am-noon & 1:30-3pm (tradeshow), noon-1:30pm (luncheon), Oregon Convention Center (777 NE Martin Luther King Jr Blvd, Portland). Attend the annual Luncheon & Tradeshow of the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME). The event is designed to help businesses increase networking with minority-owned companies, government agencies, and others while sampling their diverse products and services. The tradeshow is closed from noon to 1:30pm during the luncheon. For info, or to register for the luncheon, call (503) 249-7744 or visit <www.oame.org>.

Budget committee public hearing

May 10, 6-8:30pm, Portland City Hall, City Council Chambers (1221 SW Fourth Ave, Portland). Portland residents are invited to learn about the proposed city budget by attending a budget committee public hearing presented by the Portland City Council. For info, call (503) 823-6925, e-mail <CityBudgetOffice@portlandoregon.gov>, or visit <www.portlandoregon.gov/cbo>.

Gresham plant sale

May 12, 8am-4pm, East Hill Church (701 N Main Ave, Gresham, Ore.). Take advantage of the low prices on high-quality local nursery stock, including trees, shrubs, bushes, hydrangeas, lilacs, and more at a plant sale benefitting the Salvation Army’s work assisting low-income families in east Multnomah County. Plant specialists who are able to answer questions are available

onsite. For info, call (503) 794-3200 or visit <www.salvationarmyportland.org>.

Tao Lin

May 18, 7:30pm, Powell’s City of Books (1005 W Burnside St, Portland). Join Tao Lin as he presents *Trip*, his first book-length work of nonfiction in which he charts his recovery from pharmaceutical drugs. Lin takes readers on a trip through nature, his own past, psychedelic culture, and the unknown. For info, call (503) 228-4651 or visit <www.powells.com>.

“Medication Assisted Treatment of Opioid Use Disorders”

May 19, 9am-3:50pm, CLIMB Center (1626 SE Water Ave, Portland). Sign up for “Medication Assisted Treatment of Opioid Use Disorders,” a course now offered by Portland Community College’s Institute for Health Professionals. Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) is a strategy to help combat the growing opioid epidemic that uses medications in combination with behavioral approaches and therapies to offer holistic treatment for individuals suffering from ongoing opiate misuse. For info, call (971) 722-6633 or e-mail <amy.evans3@pcc.edu>. To register, visit <www.pcc.edu/enroll/registration>.

Repair Café

June 7 & Aug 9; June 7, 5:30-7:30pm, Vancouver Community Library (901 C St, Vancouver, Wash.); Aug 9, 6-8pm, Filbin’s ACE Hardware (809 NE Minnehaha St, Vancouver, Wash.). Do you have electronics, clothing, jewelry, knives, small appliances or tools, or other items that need fixed? If you do, bring them to the free Repair Café, an event at which volunteers share their expertise and knowledge to help diagnose and fix a variety of common household items. For info, or to learn more about items that can be brought, call (360) 882-0936, ext. 224, or visit <www.repairclarkcounty.org>.



Free school vaccinations

Ongoing (Mon-Fri), 8am-5pm, Patient Direct Care (209 E Main St, #121, Battle Ground, Wash.). Students younger than 19 years old are invited to a free vaccination clinic to meet school requirements. Participants should call in advance to ensure availability of vaccinations and also bring immunization records. For info, call (360) 999-5138 or visit <www.ptdirectcare.com>.

“Robot Revolution”

Through Sep 3 (Tue-Sun), 9:30am-5:30pm, Oregon Museum of Science & Industry (1945 SE Water Ave, Portland). View “Robot Revolution,” an exhibit that explores how robots, created by human ingenuity, ultimately may become our companions and colleagues, changing how we play, live, and work together. The display comes to life with a collection of cutting-edge robots secured from innovative global robotics companies and universities. For info, call (503) 797-4000 or visit <www.oms.edu>.

Rich People Problems

May 7, 7pm, Powell’s Books at Cedar Hills Crossing (3415 SW Cedar Hills Blvd, Beaverton, Ore.). Join Kevin Kwan as he presents *Rich People Problems*, his new novel that reveals the long-buried secrets of Asia’s most privileged families. Kwan also authored *Crazy Rich Asians*, a book that is now a major motion picture set to release in August. The uproarious novel follows a family riven by fortune, an ex-wife driven psychotic with jealousy, a battle fought through couture gown sabotage, and an