

The responsibilities that stem from motherhood are both plentiful and diverse. Whether it is knitting a new sweater or tending to a tooth ache, my maternal responsibilities have enhanced ability to work with my hands. Furthermore, I gradually learned the importance of dental health as a mother, and more crucially, how adequate dental heal and care can materially impact one’s life. Through my four children, who I incessantly remind to “brush and floss” or accompany to the dentist, I fluidly developed a growing interest in dentistry – which fueled my desire to complete the prerequisite courses, and prepare myself for a career as a dentist. Dentistry integrates human interaction with technical professionalism. My interest in science, intellectual rigor and passion for maximizing peoples’ quality of life makes dentistry my ideal career.

Mothering a child, both before and after birth, is a life-changing experience. In addition to revolutionizing my perspective on life, carrying and tending to Anne inspired my interest in human physiology, medicine and dentistry. Pregnancy gradually reshaped my body, and also, influenced my behavior, diet, and most critically, my priorities. I scrutinized and attempted to understand how external and internal factors affect the human body, both inside and outside of the classroom. Apart from merely an intellectual passion, optimizing my comprehension of my body and well-being evolved into both a personal necessity and a motherly responsibility. Through my pregnancy, I took measures to improve my diet and overall health, which encompassed a greater awareness of my dental health. Therefore, my pre-dental education was twofold, and I harmonized my academic preparation with the practical education required to mother, and care for, my child. In time, my responsibilities as a mother were broadened with the birth of Richard, Michael, and David, a trio of boys who accompanied my first child, Anne.

Although I desired to pursue a dental degree well before 2007, the demanding, and full-time jobs of being an independent mother and businesswoman postponed that career goal. Thus, I chose to fully pursue my dental school dreams when my children approached adolescence and early adulthood, so that I could dedicate ample energy and time to completing the foundational courses, and second, preparing for the admissions process. Instead of diverting me from my life’s dream, my children inspired my hard work and commitment to attend dental school. In fact, the professional sacrifices I made for my children’s benefit harkened me back to those my parents made nearly three decades earlier in Vietnam. While driving my children to and from school and extracurricular activities, I routinely reflected upon my childhood in war-torn Saigon and the difficult journey my family traveled in search of a better life in the United States. I recalled lack of access the people of my country had to adequate dental health care, which was the principal cause of tooth decay and disease. Furthermore, following the footsteps of other

Vietnamese refugees, my father found work on Nabisco's assembly line while my mother procured a job as a cook, as I assumed the role as my younger brother's and sister's *de facto* parent. Emulating my parents' spirit of sacrificing for me and my siblings, I enrolled in prerequisite science courses while working full-time and independently parenting my children. Furthermore, dental school developed into far more than simply a personal aspiration or professional dream, but also an avenue to provide my children with a better quality of life, and also, a source of great pride for their mother.

Unlike the vast majority of my classmates in my prerequisite science courses, my study sessions were routinely intertwined with preparing next-day lunches or interrupted by late-night tutoring sessions I had with my children. Although the responsibilities part and parcel with being a mother of four vibrant children are plentiful, the experiences that stem from it have also furnished me with a more comprehensive insight into being a dentist. Indeed, four children who regularly experience a range of ailments, including toothaches and cavities, provide me with four permanent in-house patients who have me at their beck and call. Furthermore, my parental responsibilities have also cultivated my philanthropic spirit and commitment to community service, which fuels my interest in the philanthropic dimension of the dental profession. Therefore, I look forward to learning more about both domestic and international movements within the dental profession to extend adequate dental care to third-world nations, or indigent communities within the United States. As a refugee, I am intimately aware of the dental and medical crises experienced by marginalized communities in the developing world, but also, the trying challenge immigrants and refugees also have at home in America. In addition to improving a patient's smile or confidence as a dentist, I also aspire to be a domestic and global agent committed to macro-oriented solutions regarding dental health and care for those in dire need. Without question, healthy teeth should not simply be a luxury accessible to those with financial resources, but a human right bestowed to every individual.

My journey as a mother of four broadens my perspective as a future dental student, but also diversified my skill sets as a prospective dentist. Mothering four children empowered my focus and fueled me to accomplish a number of feats I once thought I was not capable of. I excelled as a businesswoman, establishing my own Baskin Robbins franchise and dry cleaning business, and helming them both while balancing this with my studies. I raised four beautiful children, evolved into a good mother, and never deserted my goal of attending dental school. Today, I stand at the cusp of achieving my goal. I look forward to the prospect of commencing my first-year as a dental student during the Fall of 2010, and ultimately, shaping myself into a world-class dentist.