

## News Release

Everett Public Schools  
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### EHS senior's scholarship covers B.S. to Ph.D.

Everett High School senior Phuc Philip Bui has choices now. Because he is the recipient of a Gates Millennium scholarship, he can decide whether to go to the University of Washington, Amherst, Dartmouth, Stanford, or Swarthmore. Each of those institutions has already told Phuc (pronounced Fook ) they are holding a place for him as a freshman this September, but until he got the good news from Gates Millennium, he wasn't sure his family could afford to send him to college- or that he could patch together enough scholarships to make it possible to attend a four-year university. The Gates award will pay for more than the next four years. It covers undergraduate and graduate school - all the way to a doctorate in a field Phuc also has an opportunity to choose.

Phuc's family emigrated to the United States from Viet Nam in the early 1990's. Always, Phuc says, the question, Where will the college money come from? was a family concern. "My parents have always supported my dreams, but it was hard for them to come here and learn and understand so many new ways."

Phuc credits his supportive family and community for nurturing what his teachers call an insatiable thirst for learning. Phuc said learning to read ignited that thirst, and the staff at Everett Public Library, put up with me as that crazy little kid with a passion for science. Today, the teachers and counselors at Everett High are awed by this student who hangs around after class to talk about the ethics of stem-cell research and world politics and whose academic curiosity is a learning catalyst for all students and teachers.



The caring, comfortable and mutually admiring relationship Phuc has with EHS staff and administrators is clearly evident. Counselor Pam Piatz was among those who encouraged Phuc "( ... nagged him, really, she admits) to apply for the scholarship. She teases him about EHS staff hopes that he will find a cure for diseases associated with aging, before any of us reach that age."

In her scholarship letter of recommendation, AP English teacher Ann Stewart wrote, "... while I'd love to claim credit for the beautiful writing Philip does ..., it is his own drive to revise, rethink and redo essays until they most clearly convey his thoughts that make him the skilled writer he is. Describing his multifaceted talents, she notes, He could as easily be a poet or a novelist as a scientist."

It is science that most fires Phuc's curiosity. As a junior, he earned a "5" on the AP Biology exam - the highest score possible in a class designed to be as rigorous as one taken by a college freshman biology major. The same year he took Chemistry and earned an A in each class. He volunteers in the district science resource center in the basement of Hawthorne Elementary. There he helps refurbish the science kits used by students K-12 in the district. The work is not glamorous. He said the task of cleaning out dead snails taught him that, "Nobel caliber science isn't all about fancy dinners - sometimes you just have to get your hands dirty!"

About his work at the science resource center, the center's support secretary, Shirley Maynard says, "Phuc has never hesitated when asked to do something down right disgusting. And, it doesn't get much more disgusting than sorting through dead snails that have turned to 'goo' and bathing the ones that make it. And, Phuc just keeps coming back to help out - he "gets it" that science encompasses unpleasant, mundane tasks that have to be done in order to support the fun and fascinating parts. We're going to miss his help - and that big smile."

Phuc gives back to the community which has supported him in other ways. He has been a champion for projects at the Everett Gospel Mission and a volunteer at Providence Hospital.

Community supporters of Phuc extend from library bookshelves and school classrooms to hospital surgical theaters. Doctors Sanford Wright and Greg Foltz of the Everett Neurological Center welcomed Phuc as their shadow as part of his culminating exhibition graduation project this year. Phuc grins at the memory of witnessing these doctors in surgery, but he's not sure whether neurosurgery is what he'll decide as a career. However, neurobiology is a possibility or perhaps, chemistry.

"Those doctors do not choose to mentor just anyone," Honors and AP Biology teacher Cynthia McIntyre emphasizes. "Like his teachers and other adults in his life, Dr. Wright and Dr. Foltz are inspired by Phuc's desire to learn."

Repeatedly, Phuc turns attention away from himself to thank those who have helped him. He acknowledges that it was difficult at times for his parents to negotiate a new culture and new system. He says someone in his north Everett neighborhood, library or schools was always there to fill in where his parents could not. "Teachers always had confidence and believed in my dreams."

According to EHS principal Catherine Matthews, "Philip is the kind of kid who makes every minute of our work immensely worthwhile!"

Read more about Gates scholar in [April 17, 2007](#) issue of Everett Herald.