



Hue Ceremony and Stories

On Jan 17th, AMA held its award ceremony at the University of Education in Hue, Vietnam. We also enjoyed a 3-hour conversation with our 43 recipients from the classes of 2014 and 2015, whose inspirational stories and courage motivate us all and keep us and our donors proud at AMA. Let us share 5 stories with you:

1. She comes from an agricultural family that now earns money mainly from making conical hats. It is very time-consuming to produce a finished hat by hand, allowing them to earn 2,000 VND per item (8 cents). During 6th grade, her father got very sick and she had to quit school to help her mother earn money and take care of 2 younger siblings at the same time. She worked odd jobs for 3 years before deciding to return to school when the family's financial condition improved a bit. She got into a very prestigious high school in Hue and studied in a class for gifted students. Her original wish was to be a doctor, but she knew that she could not pursue her dream due to financial issues at home. Thus, she later changed her mind and wanted to become a Geography teacher, just like her homeroom teacher in high school. This teacher helped her a lot and gave her proper guidance. She wants to be like her teacher one day. During this time, her eldest brother had to turn down a full scholarship for Masters and PhD degrees in the city of Hanoi so that he could stay at home and help out the family while his 3 siblings went to school. She has always felt guilty because her brother sacrificed his future so that she could go back to school. He is still unemployed at this moment. This year, she and her younger siblings all passed the entrance exams, which worry her parents even more due to the unaffordable expenses. However, her parents still encourage them never to give up their education. AMA is proud to be supporting such a humble, hard-working, focused and determined student.

2. Another student comes from our academic class of 2014. She grew up without parents and lived with her grandmother. Her grandmother gets sick very often due to old age. She has to take care of her grandmother while studying hard and trying to make money from working odd jobs. This student exudes integrity and perseverance. She has been working very hard and got "High Distinction" as her GPA results last year. Since she still has to work part-time jobs to support her grandmother, she did not have time to participate in extra class activities, leading to a slight drop in her grades to "Distinction." She said she would never give up and will try to maintain excellent academic results for the next few years.

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3. When the student was younger, her brother had a serious traffic accident when selling lottery tickets on the streets with their father. Her brother had a traumatic brain injury and is now in a permanent vegetative state. Her father does go out to work anymore since he stays at home to take care of her brother. Her mother is a waste dealer and has been the breadwinner at home. Despite these difficult circumstances at home, she never wanted to give up her dream and worked hard to get admitted into the University of Education so as to become a teacher one day. AMA is happy and proud to be able to support her.

4. She came from a normal family. When her mother was diagnosed with cancer, the family's financial condition deteriorated. Her mother discovered that she got cancer when she was pregnant with the youngest boy in the family. She went right back to hospital for cancer treatment after giving birth. As the eldest child of the family, our student had to help take care of the infant and another younger sibling, while her father was going around borrowing money and going back and forth between home and the hospital to look after the mother. While studying at the university now, her family faces a big debt due to her mother's cancer treatment needs. She goes to work to earn extra money every summer since her junior high school years. She was overwhelmed when she found out that she was chosen for an AMA scholarship, as she had assumed that she failed during our interviewing process late last year. She said that AMA given her great support and motivation to keep moving forward with her life and education.

5. This student began her speech by saying that "my father is still alive". We were all quite surprised and wondered why she said those words. She still sees her father every day, but she has never ever called him "father". Her family never sits down to have a real meal together, since everyone is so busy going out to work odd jobs in order to earn money. She began her working life at an early age by working with her mother to make money for the family. She sometimes feels so unlucky, but then realizes that there may be 2 sides to everything in life. She said that she has learned a lot from her tough life, learning to mature with it and respect it more no matter what happens. After graduating from high school, she did not want to continue studying because she wanted to get a job pay back her mother. She thought that even if she can finish her university education, what is the point of that if her mother dies even earlier? But thanks to a few teachers who gave her good advice and encouragement, she decided to push on as far as possible. These teachers recognized her ability and strong will. She has been going to work every summer to pay for her tuition since grade 7. Now, she asked her mother to save a small amount from her AMA scholarship to pay for her personal expenses in the next semester so that she can pursue doing volunteering work at an orphanage during this summer instead of working for money. Similar to the help that she received from caring people around her, she is now motivated to help others in need. We at AMA are proud of her toughness, perseverance, and kind spirit of "give-and-take" and "pay it forward" -- values that all AMA members uphold as evident in the history of our organization.



We thank everyone at the university for their warm reception and collaboration. They are wonderful people.



We appreciate the support and attendance from our friends at The Compassionate Flower in Hue.



This student (Miss Vo Thi Hue) gave a moving speech about her background and what AMA means to her and her family.



Below: we began our 3 our conversation with the students after the ceremony. They spoke up one at a time.





Below: the students courageously told us their life stories, full of determination and perseverance. We began the session as strangers and left the day hugging and caring for one another.

One AMA member said that he cried more in one weekend than the past 20 years. We did not want to leave the students and promised that we would be back in a few months for our mentoring luncheon.





The students made us realized that the AMA scholarship means so much more to them, because it also touches their family and even their local village. We plan on inviting their parents to the award ceremony starting next year and also visiting some of their homes if possible.



These 4 words are inscribed at the entrance of the university: "Great teacher, Prosperous Country." The city of Hue traditionally has been the major educational center of Vietnam with its heavy emphasis on teaching and education in general. Traditions are still well-kept in this beautiful city.

