



STUDENT PROFILE: TJay

When Chimedregzen Altankhuyag (aka TJay) entered a large comprehensive high school in Oakland five years ago, he was overwhelmed. TJay was a new Mongolian immigrant, here in the United States by himself, without a family and without a support structure. At this school with 2000 other students, TJay was lost. One semester he made straight Fs and in the second semester he managed to pass only Algebra and Physical Education. His grade point average was 0.25.

"It was hard because I didn't know how to speak English and there were so many people from the U.S.," recalls TJay. "I didn't make any friends. I cut class a lot. I didn't know anyone. It was not a good environment to focus. The teachers didn't work with students like me. I needed one by one attention."

TJay realized he was never going to graduate unless he made a dramatic change, so he transferred to Oakland International High School (OIHS).

Four remarkable years later, TJay has a 3.0 GPA and has passed the California High School Exit Examination in math and English.

"At OIHS I was more successful because



Oakland International High School Student
Chimedregzen Altankhuyag (aka TJay)

teachers worked with me. They helped me with English, enroll in after-school programs, create a resume, and things like that," he says. "I am now attending five programs after school: BAVAC to learn music, video production at KDOL, welding at the Crucible, basketball, and Foster Care's Independent Living Skills Program."

Next year, TJay hopes to take another big step: college. This fall, he is applying to Cal State San Francisco and Cal State East Bay.

About our students:

- We serve 300 students who speak 31 languages.
- They come from 30 countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Brazil, Burma, Cambodia, China, Congo, Cuba, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Iraq, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Mexico, Mongolia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Iraq, Thailand, Uzbekistan, Vietnam, Yemen
- We serve 86 refugee students who escaped from ethnic conflicts in Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Congo, Iraq, Liberia, Rwanda, Nepal, Russia, Sri Lanka, Tibet, and Uzbekistan.
- We offer our students after-school programming in Basketball, Bicycling, Video Production, and Soccer. In addition, tutoring is available for all students daily in the library.

OIHS Awarded \$50,000 Thanks to Outpouring of Community Support

Two months ago, OIHS computer teacher Sailaja Suresh told the staff she had entered us in a national competition hosted by Microsoft. It required our community to vote online to support our school.

We thought we were doomed. How could a little school with 300 immigrant students, who spoke limited English, compete against 768 other schools across the nation? But the result is a lesson in the power of our staff and community. OIHS supporters cast more than 15,000 votes, and we were awarded \$50,000 to support arts, music, and technology programming!

We could not have won without the tireless work of Sailaja and our staff who reached out to friends, neighbors, old college roommates, former bosses, ex-boyfriends, and complete strangers asking for their support. A big thank-you to OIHS supporters for getting out the vote!

Help us
reach our
goal of
\$20,000

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT OIHS

VISIT BY CHILEAN PRESIDENT

In May, Chilean president Michelle Bachelet visited OIHS. She spent two hours speaking in an intimate setting with 25 of our seniors. They found her life story of terror, political imprisonment, exile, immigration, and learning a new language as a teenager strikingly similar to their own experiences.

Senior Renuka Sanjel said to President Bachelet, "I am from Nepal but I was born in Bhutan. I lived in a Nepali refugee camp because the government of Bhutan forced us to leave our country ... I know you and your mother were also forced to leave your country, and I know you were able to come back and become president. How did it feel to return? What was your experience like when you returned?"



President Bachelet inspired students to continue their education and to not "give up" on their native countries.

Years from now, like her, they could make important positive contributions to their countries.

VALUE OF INTERNSHIP

We strongly believe in the value of students working alongside professionals in the community to gain work skills and explore careers of interest. Currently, 40 OIHS students participate in internships twice a week with organizations such as Bay Area Video Coalition, Oakland Technology Exchange West, Media Alliance, and Oakland Chinatown Youth Initiative. These students also take the senior elective course called Internship: Career Development.

The class's activities are closely tied to the students' job sites and

include informational interviews with professionals, research on the work sites, job performance evaluations, and reflection on their experiences. In this class, students also research other careers of interest, write resumes, practice interview techniques, and participate in discussions with local professionals from many fields.

Simin Cai, a senior from China who plans to attend Laney College next year, is an intern at Parent Leader Action Network, a non-profit organization whose mission is to organize and train non-traditionally empowered parents

of school children to become leaders for their children and community. Simin has been helping with Chinese translation and with parent trainings.

Deisy Alvarado, a senior from El Salvador who is applying to California State University, interns with the HepB Project, a University of California, Berkeley undergraduate club. The mission of the HepB Project is to provide free education, screening, and vaccination against Hepatitis B. Deisy has been training with the college group and preparing to help present to groups of adults across Alameda County.

SUPPORT OUR STUDENTS

Donations may be made by mail:
OSF/OIHS Fund PO Box 20238 Oakland, CA 94620
or online: www.oaklandschoolsfoundation.org
(please designate Oakland International H.S.)



Oakland International High School is a member of the Oakland Schools Foundation Network

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