



NEWS

El Camino College | Public Relations & Marketing Department
16007 Crenshaw Blvd., Torrance, CA 90506
Contact: Ann M. Garten, Director, Community Relations
Telephone: (310) 660-3406 | E-Mail: agarten@elcamino.edu

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El Camino College Celebrates 11th Annual Cherry Blossom Festival; Awards Scholarship to Radiological Technology Student

With a spring breeze in the air, El Camino College student Nghi Le Trinh stood among blooming cherry trees at El Camino College and accepted a scholarship that will help her reach her educational goals.

Trinh recently became the fifth recipient of the Dr. Nadine Hata Memorial Scholarship, and was presented with the award at El Camino College's 11th Annual Dr. Nadine Ishitani Hata Memorial Cherry Blossom Festival.

"I am so thankful – this scholarship will help me so much," said Trinh, a radiological technology student. "One of the most difficult parts about affording college is that books cost so much. This scholarship will definitely help me with my textbooks."

Growing up in Vietnam, Trinh attended school while working to help support her family. She enjoyed her classes and did well, but her first priority was helping out at home. After graduating from junior high, she had to quit school because her family did not have enough money to continue her education – high schools require fees in Vietnam.

Two years later, she moved to the United States and had the opportunity to resume her schooling – Trinh attended Gardena High School and graduated in 2003 with honors.

She hasn't stopped since.

"My main goal in life is to continue my education," Trinh said. "Right out of high school, I was accepted to Cal Poly Pomona, but I couldn't afford it and I wasn't ready for that environment. At El Camino College, I found tutors, study groups, and other people to help me become independent in my studies.

"This spring, I will be the first in my family to graduate from college. It is my mom's dream to have all her kids in college. Here I am – at El Camino College. That's a dream come true, right?"

The Dr. Nadine Ishitani Hata Memorial Cherry Blossom Festival is named after the college's former vice president of academic affairs who served El Camino College for 34 years as a history professor, dean, and vice president. She was instrumental in working with American

Honda Motor Corporation to bring several dozen Japanese cherry trees to El Camino College 11 years ago. The trees were donated as a traditional gesture of friendship, similar to the gift given to the United States by Japan in 1912. Those cherry trees still bloom in Washington, D.C.

The \$1,000 scholarship award was created by Dr. Hata – during her battle with cancer, she was a direct recipient of the professional care provided by many El Camino College graduates who had chosen careers in healthcare. She witnessed first-hand the critical role these professionals play in the quality of modern healthcare, so it was her wish that a scholarship be established to support students working toward healthcare careers.

Trinh's decision to major in a healthcare profession came after trying other career paths. After graduating from high school, she worked as a manicurist while taking classes at El Camino College. She also considered becoming a math teacher. Eventually, she was encouraged to investigate radiological technology by ECC Counselor Ken Gaines and now she is headed toward a successful career in this area.

"I enjoy the work and studies so much, especially my clinical days at the hospital," Trinh said. "I like the different modalities and I find it all so interesting. Now I am looking forward to continuing my studies to qualify in other areas, such as MRI. I know I can do it."

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