News Release

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Century Student Receives First Alumni Scholarship

Century College student Youa Kellie Xiong of St. Paul, the first recipient of the new Century College Alumni Association Scholarship, is one of 14 siblings. Tragically, she lost her mother when she was 12 and her father and one brother when she was 18.

Wanting a family of her own, Xiong married young and had two beautiful twin sons. One died at age 15 months. A move to Oklahoma to start a poultry business proved disastrous for Xiong and her family when a large chicken house burned to the ground.

For a time, when bad things just kept happening, Xiong, a 2002 graduate of North High School, wondered if she deserved to be happy – if she deserved to be successful. Against all odds, and with the support of her husband, she enrolled in Century College two years ago and began to broaden her horizons. The more she learned about the world, the more she learned about herself and her potential.

Now Xiong, 26, has goals, plans and a determination to keep going until she achieves a professional career and makes a comfortable living for her family.

“I was so bitter and cold after my mom died, and then when we lost my dad, things really became hard and complicated,” said Xiong. “The only way my siblings and I could survive was to encourage each other and uplift each other by talking about the good moments we used to have as a family.”

Xiong said she began to start feeling more hopeful when she began to trust that a higher power would see her through if she just kept pursuing her goals.

“I just rejoiced when I got the scholarship,” said Xiong. “It was so affirming. You work so hard, and then you realize that somebody noticed – somebody cares.”

Xiong said she and her husband and five-year-old son currently have no permanent place to live, and they are relying on family and friends for shelter. Hopefully, that will change when she is able to finish school and get a job, she said. Currently, she is working as a paid intern for a finance business in Oakdale, and she is gaining knowledge and skill every day.

“Everything is on the line, and sometimes I do not know how I can survive,” said Xiong. “But you keep pushing. You keep moving forward.”

Xiong currently is focusing on a career in business management. She would like to finish her Associate in Arts degree by summer 2011. “I would like to open and oversee an orphan home,” she said. “My heart cries out to those who are broken, those who think there is no hope. I will tell them there is hope. Every moment can make a difference.”

Photo: Youa Kellie Xiong