

Gifts that heal

Father's memory, encouragement honored through scholarship

April Nguyen '15 and her father, Jesus Martin Vega, didn't always get along. In fact, there was a time when the two didn't speak to each other for a period of 25 years. But Nguyen credits her education and experience in nursing for helping her to mend her relationship with her father. And before she crossed the stage to receive her Master of Science in Nursing diploma from the School of Nursing at the UT Health Science Center San Antonio in 2015, Nguyen established a scholarship in the school in memory of her father.



April Nguyen, '15, is pictured with her father, Jesus.

“My hope for the scholarship is two-fold – to aide another M.S.N. student, who is also a parent, financially, and to model for other graduates to do the same and pay it forward for others by offering a scholarship as I have,” Nguyen said. “Maybe by reading my story, others will find it in their hearts to make amends with others before they no longer have the chance, and to honor their loved ones in this way too.”

Nguyen said that working as a nurse in an emergency department opened her eyes to a fair share of families who were in turmoil while a loved one was dying or pronounced dead. She decided life was too short and mended the relationship with her father less than two months before he died at the young age of 57.



April Nguyen decorated her cap in celebration of her graduation.

“During one of my most difficult semesters, I lost my father and realized all the years of what could have been were no longer to be,” Nguyen said. “I share this with others in my bedside practice when the time calls for personal reflection. Patients need to know that we all experience the same things at times. Small words of encouragement and support mean a lot to them. I want to honor the memory of my father through this scholarship. He always told me I got my brains from him. He said I could do anything I put my mind to.”

Nguyen is currently working as a full-time RN nurse manager in the Emergency Department at Banner Goldfield Medical Center in Apache Junction, Ariz., where she cares for patients at the bedside and fulfills her managerial roles. She plans on pursuing a part-time nursing instructor position at a local college and will apply for the University of Arizona Ph.D./D.N.P. dual program later this year.

Nguyen said her education at the UT Health Science Center School of Nursing allowed her to form lifelong friendships, make important academic presentations and gain valuable experience through Sigma Theta Tau and a preceptor experience with a chief nursing officer that gave her an in-depth look into organizational structure.

During her final semester in the School of Nursing, Nguyen was asked, through a personal reflection assignment, if her education was worth the cost. Her reply? “Yes. I am quicker to seek understanding before speaking, I am a better listener, critical thinker, global advocate (micro-macrosystem), and more devoted human being. I am a leader,” she said. Nguyen encourages her fellow graduates to support scholarships.

“Scholarships provide a service to the community and to other nurses who may need financial assistance with earning a higher degree. With each recipient, the



legacy of my father will bring forth the remembrance of his bright smile, all of the good memories we had together, a sense of pride, and traits of consistency, endurance, courage, strength and compassion.”

To contribute to the Jesus Martin Vega Scholarship, visit <https://makelivesbetter.uthscsa.edu/vega>.

Or to inquire about establishing a scholarship in the School of Nursing,

contact Gwen Notestine at 210-567-5313 or Notestine@uthscsa.edu.