

Ryan Chen

2018 Outstanding Taiwanese American Youth Award essay

My experiences, personal interaction, participation, and service to the Taiwanese American Community shaped who I am today. These connections make me build a stronger identity and cultural background which I am very proud of.

One of the main activities I have participated in is the Washington DC Taiwanese School. Having attended the school from one and half years old, I have been able to explore my heritage through the many cultural events provided. Also, learning Mandarin and Taiwanese every Sunday has enabled me to communicate with my family back in Taiwan. Whenever I see my grandmother either in person or on Facetime, I can say “amar, lie hQr” and it never fails to draw a big smile from her. At that moment, I knew that all the hard work every Sunday was worth it. During most of the past decade of participating in the Taiwanese School, I only went to school because my parents wanted me to. But now I can see the reason why they wanted me to go every Sunday. Being exposed to this learning environment not only teaches you a new language, but also builds skills that you will use for the rest of your life. Now I am serving as a teaching assistant in the middle school Mandarin class. By assisting the teacher to prepare material for the class, it allows me to use the knowledge I have learned to teach the future teaching assistants.

My participation in volunteer services with WDCTS, TYAF and TECRO earned me the Presidential Service Award in 2017. Some of the volunteer activities at WDCTS include selling food at mid-autumn festival, serving as the usher at the Taiwan Night concert, serving food for winter solstice and mother's day parties, and helping with activities at Taiwan Fun. One of the weekly responsibilities was to provide athletic activities to kids after school. Formosa Association of Student Cultural Ambassadors is

another one of the main services that I participate in. Along with the Taiwanese school, it also allows me to learn more about the Taiwanese culture through various service activities. For example, one of my favorite activities was making mooncakes. Mooncakes are eaten as a part of the tradition during the mid-autumn festival. Learning how to make them and being able to share them with my family is something I will remember for a long time.

Among all the volunteer activities, the activity I look forward to the most every year is the Mid-Autumn Festival. Helping raise funds for the school makes me proud to be volunteering. Starting as a newbie selling sausages, I gradually become very experienced with cooking and selling sausages. Sadly, our community recently lost our beloved akofng who made sausages and cooked so many delicious food for us. I learned from him that "food is love". It will be one of my ways to show my love of Taiwan by sharing and introducing Taiwanese foods to my American friends. Participating in these activities and services definitely changed who I am today. It also defines my culture and background. These activities and skills I have learned through the past years is something that I will carry on to the future.