

TYAF Outstanding Taiwanese American Youth Award Essay (2025)

My name is Stella Schreiber and I'm a senior at Bethesda Chevy Chase High School. My father is a 4th generation American, and my mother is an ABT (American Born Taiwanese). My family speaks English at home and we are a "typical" American family, except for our involvement in the Taiwanese American community. I have had the opportunity to experience this wonderful community, which has become my family outside my family.

I started to attend Washington DC Taiwanese School in the toddler song and dance class. Pretty soon, I developed friendships in these fun cultural classes. During recess, the amars and akongs would bring me food from the tea table. I participated in numerous cultural events such as Taiwan Fun, Winter Solstice party, and the Spring Solstice/Ancestors Day party. I was fond of the games at Taiwan Fun especially the ring toss and loved the food. I learned to make rice balls (tang yuan) at the Winter Solstice celebration and lun pia at the Spring Solstice / Ancestors Day party. I vividly remember watching one of my teachers, CC, make the wrapper for lun pia from scratch. I never knew you could put ice cream inside. I also enjoyed special activities like Miss Stephanie's art class and Field Day. I basked in the victory of winning Tug-Of-War against the other language schools and participated in the relay race.

Besides the cultural aspect, I learned Mandarin. I even participated in the Mandarin Speech contest and earned Second Place in the Modern Taiwanese Language Essay/Video Contest. Not only did my family encourage me to participate in the Taiwanese community locally, I also went to Taiwanese American Next Generation summer camp (TANG) from Juniors to High School. We would perform on stage at Taiwan Night. My friends and I would look forward to the Night Market, the culminating event at TANG. We would enjoy the traditional foods and see our parents or grandparents mingling with their friends. This was my Taiwanese family. Starting in middle school, I began to give back to the Taiwanese community by volunteering during many events from the Halloween Parade to the Winter Solstice Party at WDCTS. In high school, I volunteered at the ring toss that I played as an elementary schooler at Taiwan Fun Day. I helped to emcee the 2022 Winter Solstice Party along with one of my longtime friends at WDCTS. I also introduced the winners of this very scholarship at the 2023 Lunar New Year Banquet. Eventually in high school, I was able to be a counselor at Dr. Liang's Summer Camp, helping to prepare traditional foods like turnip cake (luo bo gao), man tou, and delicious sticky rice cake (nian gao), as well as leading the younger kids in arts and crafts and outdoor activities. In high school, I also helped to serve the food at the Night Market for TANG. Helping younger children learn about Taiwanese culture is rewarding and has brought my experience full circle from toddler to high schooler in the Taiwanese community.