

Spotlight on: Deng



When Deng was growing up, he never even dreamed of going to high school... much less college... much less earning a masters degree! But, thanks to the great fortune of meeting several people in his life that truly supported and inspired him, Deng has achieved far more than he ever had imagined.

When Deng was 17, he first arrived in the United States, and was placed with a family that welcomed him with acceptance and love. Deng recalls the sincerity of the trusting relationship he had with his foster parents from the very start, and credits them with inspiring him to focus and excel in school.

Deng enrolled in Arlington High School as a freshman, an experience which was met with initial frustration. He was barred from participation in extra-curricular activities because of his age, and struggled with classes taught in English, a language which, at that time, he didn't speak fluently. But, with diligent study in ESL classes and the help of his foster parents, Deng graduated high school, and was accepted at Boston College, where he enrolled in September 2004.

At Boston College, Deng pursued his lifelong interest in medicine, studying psychology and taking pre-med courses. He also took advantage of the opportunity to travel abroad, studying for a semester in Melbourne, Australia. Both in Melbourne and in Boston, Deng met friends with many different backgrounds from all over the world. He speaks fondly of the student body that he was privileged to be a part of, remarking at the open-mindedness and maturity of those he encountered during his experience as an undergraduate.

It was also during his time as an undergraduate that Deng realized that his unique experiences as a Sudanese refugee and an immigrant to the United States could be of special benefit to those that may find in Deng someone who can relate to and understand their own struggles. So, after earning his bachelors degree in May 2008, Deng chose to continue his studies at Boston College and enrolled in a masters program in clinical social work. Deng plans to tailor his curriculum so that he may develop a particular expertise in mental health. He then aspires to take that knowledge, as well as his eventual Masters of Social Work and clinical license, and work in a hospital to enhance patient care by addressing mental health needs.

What appeals to Deng most about becoming a social worker is the opportunity to help those less fortunate. "People just want good and equal opportunity," Deng says. "There is a real social justice aspect of social work." By choosing this career path, Deng hopes to help young people achieve their goals, much like his foster family helped him to achieve his own.