



PHOTO COURTESY OF KIMMY DUONG



RENDERING COURTESY OF QUINN EVANS

Rendering of new Student Services Center, Rockville Campus, to be named for Kimmy Duong and Long Nguyen this fall.

HOLDING TRUE TO FAMILY VALUES KIMMY DUONG MAKES \$1M GIFT FOR EDUCATION

By David Frey

When Kimmy Duong was growing up in Vietnam, her father instilled in her and her seven brothers and sisters the importance of education. Each month, he'd send much of the salary he earned as a nurse to put his children through boarding school. When testing time came in June, he'd wait outside the school to find out the results.

"It could make him very happy or very unhappy," Duong said, laughing.

That emphasis on education changed the course of her life. Her bachelor's degree in business administration from the University of Saigon earned her a job with IBM in Vietnam. In 1975, the year the capital city Saigon fell under control of Communist forces, Duong fled the country with just \$30 in her back pocket, a few pieces of clothing, some photographs, and cassette tapes. Though she left with so little, she did have something else of potential value: a career prospect with IBM in the United States.

When the U.S. Navy vessel that carried Duong and other refugees from Vietnam stopped in Guam, she managed to meet with an IBM representative there. He helped set her up with a position at IBM in Bethesda but also helped in more immediate ways. "He came to see me and asked me, what do I need?" she said. "Embarrassingly, I said, 'I need money.'"

The \$100 he gave her helped send her on her way. Now, she said, it's her turn to pay back what society has given to help her and her husband be successful. "It's not something we do as a kindness," she said. "It's our responsibility. We took it from society. We have to put it back. If we don't, then we are not going to have any hope."

After a 25-year career with IBM, Duong now serves as vice chair and chief financial officer for Pragmatics Inc., a government contractor founded by her husband, Long Nguyen, a computer scientist and physicist. The couple have given generously to universities in Maryland and Virginia.

This year, Duong established a \$1 million scholarship endowment to support Montgomery College students with financial need.

"The community college is where it helps people with the first step in higher education," Duong said. "Helping a community college is helping the people who need it most."

Four of her nieces and nephews attended Montgomery College before continuing on with their degrees at four-year universities. "College is almost a requirement for everybody in our family," she said. "We want to do the same for other people, too."

MC is naming the Rockville Student Services Center after the couple in honor of this transformational gift. A building dedication celebration is scheduled for October.

SAVE THE DATE

October 28, 2020 | 10 a.m.
Building Dedication Ceremony
(livestream event) via YouTube,
Facebook, and montgomerycollege.edu