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Sac State professor honored for work with homeless youths

Nursing Professor Michelle Dang’s commitment to community service traces its roots to her personal journey to Sacramento at age 10 as a refugee from the Vietnam War. Sponsored by a local family, Dang and her family were given the opportunity to make a new life for themselves in their new community.

Dang has spent the past two decades helping to provide health services and support to people in need, and her efforts were recognized when she was chosen by Sacramento State’s College of Health and Human Services for a 2012-13 Outstanding Community Service Award.

Dang, whose teaching focuses on community health, spent several years as a volunteer nurse with Wind Youth Services and helped to create an online health record service for homeless youth. She was able to relate to these young men and women as a “safe adult” determined to help them.

She has also received a $10,000 Bayada Award for her online project for homeless youth. This nationally competitive award is for technological innovation in nursing education and practice.

Dang’s nursing students complete their community health experience at Wind. “It’s a wonderful way for students to have this learning experience and to provide a crucial service, without cost, to the young people and families,” she says.

She is also a board member of My Sister’s House, a Sacramento-based non-profit agency that serves women and children who are victims of domestic violence. She is trained as a shelter advocate.

Dang is convinced that her Sac State students are more likely to believe that they can really make a difference if they see their instructor doing precisely that in the community. My experiences “walking the talk,” she says, “blend with being a better teacher.”
As the first member of her family to earn a college degree, Dang identifies with many of her students whose goal is the same. She completed her first two years at American River College and headed to San Francisco State for her bachelor’s degree, primarily for a change of scenery. But she came back to Sacramento because it’s her home and because of her desire to earn a master’s degree from the University’s renowned nursing program.

Professor Dang’s journey from the Far East to Sacramento State has made a difference in countless lives and underscores the University’s core mission of teaching, learning and service.

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