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How Charlestown Has Influenced My Life

scholarship essays 2006-2007

CPS Scholarship Winner Pat Fidler-O'Neil, Arlington Catholic High School

People failing, tragedy striking families, drug addiction and alcoholism. Gunshots, stabbings, robberies and cons. Tough guy reputation, the Boston accent, admiration and hatred. Cousins living upstairs, best friends five minutes away. Parties nightly, girls everywhere, music blasting and good times. Older siblings screwing up, parents crying, cops arresting and years of jail time.

The code of silence, no betrayal and time spent in the hole. Girlfriends leaving, times changing and new neighbors moving in. No college, drug-dealing and living a gangster life. Pure talent, All State, but ending up with nothing. Same old thing, hanging on the corner and watching the days go by.

Mom and Dad bothering, decisions to make and hope of fulfillment. Remember this, remember that. Being a townie, not caring about what others think. Working hard, being different and changing the reputation. Times change again, new beginning and a different view of oneself. Family proud, tears drop and people cheer.

Life has many turns, but by the time you're done you're right back where you started. Living in Charlestown has showed me that there's more out there but still nothing as good as us. I have learned from the past and will succeed. All of these things, the ups, the downs, influence me all the time. Standing here before you now I'm still just a Townie, and that's good enough for me.



CPS scholarship winner Danni Zhang (right) with her Charlestown High School adviser, Lama Jarudi (left), and CPS Vice President Marilyn Darling.

CPS Scholarship Winner Danni Zhang, Charlestown High School

Most students who respond to this essay will write about Charlestown High instead of Charlestown. I will write about both!

Charlestown High School is a place where I studied for four years, a place where I made American friends, a place where I learned English, a place where I met wonderful teachers, a place where I grew up, a place where I became a stronger person, and a place where I will cry if I ever say goodbye.

When I first arrived, my limited English was my biggest problem. I took all my classes with Chinese bilingual students. Sometimes when I looked out the door I saw American students pass by, and I wanted to join them, be their friend, and address them “Yo!”

Eventually my English improved and I started to take regular classes. I was very excited but also a little afraid. My first regular class was Entrepreneurship I. At first I didn’t speak up and I was afraid the black students would pick on me. But as time went by I discovered the class was not as hard as I thought and the classmates were more friendly than I had expected. I never imagined this class would change my life completely.

The class was about learning how to operate a business. It was formidable for a seventeen year old immigrant who felt uneasy, constrained and out of place. But I worked with my teacher and my coach, and my own company, Dr. Mi, was established.

I teach classical piano with the support of an MP3 player because I want to make a difference in the traditional way that piano is taught and transform boring classical music into fun. Last year I won first place in the New England Regional Competition of the National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship Business Plan Competition and was selected as 2007 Entrepreneur of the Year. My self-confidence improved and I became more independent and outgoing. I dared to say “Yo!” to my classmates and they said “What’s up, yo!” back to me.

Charlestown High taught me to care about my community. I’m Director of Sales for C-town Spirit, our class company. Our mission is to learn entrepreneurship while enhancing school spirit. We sell a school clothing line and support events around Charlestown, including a Clean-Up Day and a \$1,000 scholarship to a graduating senior who shows school spirit. I plan to stay involved as an alum because I want to be sure the business gets stronger and makes an impact in the Charlestown neighborhood.

Charlestown is a town where I went to middle school, a town where I graduated from high school. a town where I had my first office job, a town where I learned to volunteer, a town where I became a stronger person, and a town that I will never forget.