



Dr. Vui Mai

A DOCTOR FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY

MEET **DR. VUI MAI**, CLASS OF 1995, PHYSICIAN IN FAMILY PRACTICE MEDICINE AND OBSTETRICS AT FAIRVIEW CLINIC IN PRINCETON, MN

Ever since he was a 7-year old in Vietnam, Vui Mai wanted to become a physician. He saw loved ones die from lack of medical care and told his grandmother that he wanted to become a medicine man so he could cure her illness. Now, more than 25 years later, his dream has come true; Dr. Vui Mai is a physician with Fairview Health Services in Princeton, MN.

Vui Mai touched the American dream as a teenager. In his quest for a life of freedom, the 13-year old crossed the China Sea in a rickety boat with 78 people, including his sister. They were seeking refuge from communism, poverty, hunger, and lack of educational opportunities. Their father, a South Vietnamese soldier fighting with the US Army to combat communism, had been killed 3 months before Vui was born, so it was an older brother who insisted that Vui and his sister must leave for an education and better life. Though frightened about leaving home and family, Vui knew that he wanted more for himself, "I wanted to escape. I wanted a better education. I wanted to have freedom."

Arriving at Faribault Junior High a shy, lonely teenager speaking a heavily-accented English, Vui Mai remembers that no one could understand him. His English as a Second Language classes improved his English and

taught him about living in America. When staff member Dale Larson spoke a few words of Vietnamese learned when he served in Vietnam during the war, Vui felt more at home, and a life-long bond emerged. Dale and Kathleen Larson worked with Vui to establish a scholarship fund to cover the cost for children in Vui's village to attend school. By the time he graduated from high school and entered St. Olaf College and University of MN Medical School, he was a confident and active person, excelling in his studies, participating in sports, and volunteering to help others in need. Thanks to his Minnesota education, he jokes that he now speaks English--with a heavy Norwegian accent.

The long journey that began for Dr. Vui Mai in 1975 in a tiny remote village in the Mekong Delta culminated in two dreams: earning US citizenship and becoming a doctor. "The best part of being a Family Practice physician is the opportunity to take care of the whole family which sometimes can include 2-3 generations. I enjoy sharing the happiness of the birth of a newborn and am grateful for the opportunity to share the sadness of the loss of a loved one." His former ESL teacher remembers that Dr. Mai was always a young man "of depth" whose mission was, and continues to be, serving others, including those who are ill, vulnerable, or less fortunate.