

NOTE: THIS STORY IS ABOUT A RECENT INDUCTEE TO WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME. TV VERSION MENTIONS HER INDUCTION AND SHOWS PICTURES FROM WHOF EVENT. ONE PICTURE INCLUDES SUSAN MURANISHI AND SUPERVISOR KEITH CARSON. VIEW IT AT

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East Bay student overcomes illness to achieve college dreams



KTVU.com Staff

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By [Claudine Wong](#), KTVU Channel 2

HAYWARD, Calif. —

Silin Huang's American Dream seemed to be within reach. She was a 4.0 student at San Leandro High and on her way to her goal of heading off to college.

She loved high school. Huang was active in clubs, played tennis and enjoyed her music classes. But then illness struck at the start of her junior year.

Huang told KTVU she was "ill with stomach aches and headaches and sensitivity to light." The pain got so severe she had to drop out of school and for the next two years battled her illness.

By the time she recovered she was 19 years old and too old to go back to high school. So she turned to the Castro Valley Adult School.

On Saturday, she will graduate with a GED and become the school's first ever student to advance to an Ivy League School. Huang, 20, will attempt Columbia in the fall.

"I remember going there crying the first day, thinking how did I even end up here," she said of her first day at CVAS. She thought at that point that she would get her GED and then head to community college, but the staff at the school told her she had options.

She could still complete the requirements for a four-year college. So Huang says she got on her computer and started researching colleges.

Columbia University had a general studies program for nontraditional students who had a break in their education. Huang decided that was the program for her.

So she finished two years of coursework in just 11 months sent in her application and waited. Then one day last November her mom called her to tell her a package had arrived.

She rushed home opened it up and "when I opened it I was like oh my God it's Columbia University."

In that moment, Huang says she knew her dreams were within reach. She says going to Columbia makes her the first in her family to attend a four-year university.

She told us she can hardly believe that after this long road she is now going to attend an Ivy League School. There will still be challenges. Huang says she still needs scholarships and has applied to several.

She knows it will be hard on her family. Her father is unemployed and her mother works part time in a school cafeteria. But she also says she is grateful for what she's accomplished because it gives her new purpose.

As for her future plans. Huang would like to be an advocate and role model for adult education. She would also like to become a multilingual doctor and would like to work in the same community that has helped give her that American Dream.