



(Douace [center] with Mayor Sullivan and Cindy Campbell, her CREATE recipient)

Douace Thao

Douace is a very modest person. You would never know from looking at her or talking to her casually that she carries an enormous burden, one that would be too much to bear for many of us. Douace is the middle child in a family with 15 children, and she has acted as one of the primary caregivers for her younger siblings for years. Each night, Douace supervises the children, cooks meals and does laundry and lays out everyone's clothing for the next day. She does this because her mother is not in the picture and her father is very ill. In short, she has crushing responsibilities for someone her age.

But you would never guess the challenges Douace faces. Her teachers report that she is perpetually sunny and smiling, and arrives at school each day enthusiastic and eager to learn. In fact, Cindy Campbell, her Early Childhood teacher at the King Career Center, says Douace has the most positive attitude of any student she has instructed in 20 years. She also says the question she gets the most from Douace is "What can I help you with?" That's music to any teacher's ears, especially in a classroom that has pets like turtles and bunnies whose cages need cleaning; Douace willingly and cheerfully completes these unpleasant tasks, and seems almost grateful to be asked. It's a phenomenon rarely seen in today's young people.

When Ms. Campbell approached Douace about nominating her for this award, she responded in typical humble fashion with: "Why me? Please don't waste your time. I am sure there are many more students more deserving than me." Her humility is that of a saint, and she is only beginning to know her worth.

Douace's supporters are positive that she will graciously give back to the community 100 fold what she receives. In this case, Douace is eager to continue her education at UAA and become an Early Childhood Teacher, and to assist her siblings in obtaining higher education as well.