



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# SUCCESS STORY: YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

## Youth Education and Employment Program METROCENTER YMCA

Tam joined the Metrocenter education and employment program, one year after he stopped attending high school. Tam learned the value of work from his father, a business owner in Chicago. He worked for his father's labeling company in the summers and returned to Seattle for the school year. But in the winter of 2009, Tam's father was diagnosed with terminal cancer. Tam dropped out and returned to Chicago to be with his dad before he died and to mourn with his family. "It hit him so quick and hard. It was really weird how fast he got sick, and how he died. And then I stayed two months afterward for the Buddhist religious ceremonies. We prayed for him a lot, upwards of two hours a day, every day."

Tam returned to Seattle and received GED tutoring at Metrocenter YMCA. He was so motivated and focused that he passed all 5 GED tests in the span of a single month! He was officially awarded his credential in December. Tam also took advantage of job readiness training workshops, and through his employment specialist, Tam served an internship with the Downtown Y's membership services team. He is currently working with the Y's Director of Health and Wellness to carry-out a youth-centered program assessment on group exercise and aquatics classes. His final project will be to develop a youth-designed orientation for young people joining the Y on how to maximize their membership. The best class he's taken so far? "Tai-chi, definitely. I like the tradition, the movement, energy you get from doing it."

Tam has big plans for 2011 and beyond. He's attending Shoreline Community College and eventually plans to join the military and become a law enforcement officer. "The Y helped me meet some of my goals quickly," he says, "and I know that the people will continue to be there for me when I need them."

