

# Refugee on a Mission

**She grew up without home or homeland. Jasmine Moo says returning to help others is her calling.**

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By [Wayne Washington](#) - The Atlanta Journal-Constitution



## Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission

1 of 10

Paw Ner Moo leaves her apartment home to begin study at Hartland College. HYOSUB SHIN / [HSHIN@AJC.COM](mailto:HSHIN@AJC.COM)

Jan. 2 was as good a day as any for goodbye.

It was a gray day, wet, with an occasional whip of cold wind. The holiday season over, winter would soon be getting down to business.

Despite the day's pallor, 22-year old Jasmine Moo was ebullient.

Dressed in faded gray jeans, a red Lumberjack-style shirt and cowboy boots, she wore a smile that seemed like it would never break.



## Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission

2 of 10

Paw Ner Moo came to Georgia in 2008, she was 17 years old. She had had very little formal education, but she had learned more than any child should. Born in a Burmese jungle near the Thai border, her life had been a cascade of deprivation and suffering. Her grandfather was killed when she was a toddler a victim she thinks of the ongoing, murderous strife between the Karen of Kawthoolei and Burmese government forces. After four or five years in the jungle, surviving on what could be grown, what could be hunted and what could be scavenged from the burned-out villages nearby, Moo, her parents, and siblings were moved into a refugee camp. It was supposed to be a salvation, and, ultimately, it was. But salvation had a cost: 12 years of finding enough water to drink, a terrible irony in a place touched by the monsoon; 12 years of trying to avoid rape; 12 years of surviving on meager food rations; 12 years of waiting and hoping that somewhere would be different, somewhere there'd be hope. Georgia has been different. Georgia has offered hope. JOHNNY CRAWFORD / [JCRAWFORD@AJC.COM](mailto:JCRAWFORD@AJC.COM)

Surrounded by suitcases, plastic bags and a black guitar case in her family's tiny Clarkston apartment, she hugged her little brother, Alex San, 5, and one of her younger sisters, Daisy, 13. Alex was as squirmy as Daisy was clingy.

With tears in her eyes, Daisy wondered aloud who would wake her in time for school. That had been Jasmine's job, but soon there would be no Jasmine.

Final goodbyes waited for their mother, Du Doo. When she emerged from her bedroom, her dark hair still wet from her morning shower, her face showed none of the joy that lifted the daughter she had christened Paw Ner Moo. In Karen, their native language, the name means beautiful flower, and it inspired the nickname Jasmine gave herself when she arrived in the United States.



### **Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission**

**3 of 10**

**Christened Paw Ner Moo, Jasmine spent her first five years living in a bamboo hut in the jungles of Myanmar before relocating to a refugee camp in Thailand.**

The two women have some physical similarities — both are small in stature with shoulder-length, dark hair and dark eyes. They share a type of opaque, matter-of-fact inscrutability. Neither enjoys talking about themselves or what they’ve experienced. But Jasmine is more confident, more willing to take risks for what she wants.

While Jasmine checked her bags to make sure she had everything, Du Doo looked off into the distance beyond the sliding glass doors of her living room, saying nothing.

Only she could truly fathom the significance of Jasmine’s journey. Only she knew what the luggage on her living room floor really meant: goodbye, yes, but survival, too.

And hope.

## **A country in chaos**

From the time a military junta wrested control of Burma in 1962, students protested to restore democracy to the Southeast Asian nation on the Bay of Bengal, south of China and east of India.

The junta cemented its power by brutally squelching protests and killing students.

As the economies of other Asian nations took off in the 1970s and 1980s, the country spiraled into poverty. Rice exports plummeted. The country's reserves of precious metals, oil and gas didn't stop the free-fall.

Life was supposed to improve after the junta and its dictator, General Ne Win, were toppled by the 8888 Uprising — so named because it started on Aug. 8, 1988.

Two years later, a pro-democracy party led by Aung San Suu Kyi, whose father helped negotiate Burma's independence from Britain in 1948, won a large majority of the seats in Burma's parliament. But instead of ushering in a new era of democracy, Suu Kyi was placed under house arrest, where she would remain for nearly two decades. The misery of everyday life for many Burmese continued.

The lush, mountainous country — renamed Myanmar — had always been home to people of different religions, but religious minorities were now singled out for attack: Muslims, Christians, ethnic Chinese and the Buddhist Karen, who lived on the margins of the nation, scratching out lives by selling bamboo products while keeping an ear out for the next purge, the next government raid.

## **A family displaced**

Du Doo's husband was away the day soldiers made another violent sweep into the village where the 18-year-old lived.

It was 1991 and the Myanmar government wanted to make sure the Karen, who lived in a southeastern area of the country called Kawthoolei, understood their hope for autonomy and religious freedom would be met with brutal force.

Human rights groups have made films of the government's forays into Kawthoolei and captured the cries of the Karen as they abandoned their villages for the comparative safety of the jungle.

But no cameras rolled that rainy May when Du Doo's village was destroyed. No one witnessed her slip into a neighbor's hut, heavily pregnant and in labor. The delivery was difficult. And there was a surprise: Du Doo gave birth to not one baby but two: a boy named Ta Dah and a girl, Paw Ner Moo. A shaved stalk of bamboo severed the umbilical cords.

Life in Myanmar was hard enough for a young Karen woman. Life with two babies — two children to feed and clothe and protect — would be doubly difficult.





## Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission

4 of 10

From left, Alex San,5; Bleth Bleth Hoo,18; Daisy Lay,13; Wah Paw,20; Du Doo,40; and Paw Ner Moo,22; inside their apartment in Clarkston. Paw Ner Moo, 22 came to Georgia in 2008, she was 17 years old. Du Doo is her mother.

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Her village now burned and with two newborns in tow, Du Doo needed to get to safety. Her husband was away trying to find work, but they would have to reconnect later. She and others from the village began a long, perilous trek through the jungle.

“We walked a week through the mountains,” Du Doo said in her native language, with Jasmine translating. “We had to hide from the Army. Because of Burmese on the road, we had to stay in the jungle.”

The family found refuge with a Karen family that had fled Kawthoolei earlier. Together the families shared a bamboo hut. Du Doo’s husband soon reunited with his family, but life was still a struggle.

The most basic necessities were hard to obtain. For diapers, Du Doo tore pieces of cloth from one of her few dresses. They lived on rice and fish caught from a nearby river. And they scavenged from burned-

out villages, a dangerous endeavor because government forces often planted explosive mines to deter the retrieval of abandoned supplies. They lived that way for five years.

Du Doo's sister Klaw Htoo said the family knows few details of what Du Doo and her children endured.

"She doesn't talk about that," Klaw said. "We don't talk about that."

Eventually, the generosity of the Karen family who opened their jungle hut to Paw Ner Moo's family waned.

There simply wasn't enough food and, ironically in a nation drenched by annual monsoons, not enough drinking water. There was no school for Paw Ner Moo or her brother to attend. There was no infrastructure. There was only survival.

A refugee camp held out hope for a better life. And so Paw Ner Moo took the first steps of a journey that eventually would lead her to the other side of the world, and — if her dream comes true — back again.



## Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission

5 of 10

Paw Ner Moo washes dishes inside her family's apartment in Clarkston. Moo took a leadership position in the home when they came to the States serving as a second mother to her siblings.

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## **An uneasy refuge**

Paw Ner Moo doesn't remember life in the jungle. Her earliest memories start in a refugee camp in Thailand, just across the border from Myanmar. They come to her in slivers of images: the mud, pools of standing water, scattered bamboo huts, families desperate for food, water and safety.

The Mae La refugee camp is a sprawling facility perched on the slope of a mountain near Thailand's western border. When Paw Ner Moo and her family moved there, it was home to some 13,000 people. Then, as now, most were Karen.

Paw Ner Moo remembers the barbed wire used to cordon off parts of the camp. A sheer cliff bordered one side.

"We don't go there," she said.

Mae La was Paw Ner Moo's home for 11 years. She shared a hut with her mother, father, twin brother and a growing brood of younger siblings. Technically, it was against camp rules to come and go, but Paw Ner Moo's father was gone much of the time, as was her twin brother, Ta Dah. Deprivation still stalked the family, and father and son were always in search of work and supplies that could supplement what the camp provided.

"We only had a little," Paw Ner Moo said. "Limited food and water. We ate rice every single day. They gave us rice, peppers, salt, peas."

Drinking water was available twice a day for a short time.

"In rainy season, it was very muddy in the refugee camp," she recalled. "That made it very hard to go to school because we did not have enough clothes to wear. We didn't have boots or umbrellas. We also did not have laundry to dry clothes."

Fear of raids by Myanmar soldiers filtered into camp life. Their Thai hosts also provoked fear.

"Thai people come to the camp and sometimes they do bad things to the girls," said Paw Ner Moo, who managed to escape harm.

The family mostly kept to itself; Paw Ner Moo's closest companion was her twin brother. And as they got older, they took on more responsibility.

"I did cooking, washing clothes, cleaning," Paw Ner Moo said. "Because we are the oldest, we have to take care of the family."

Like others in Mae La, Paw Ner Moo's family hoped to resettle somewhere safe. It would be a long process, and the first step was securing identification papers from an aid agency. When the day came for Paw New Moo's family to get their papers, Ta Dah was away.

It was two years later before the family got the opportunity to resettle, but once the wheels were in motion, the process moved swiftly. An interview, a medical checkup and everything was in order.



Paw Ner Moo had never heard of the United States; she didn't know even where it was.

The day they began their journey, the whole family waited at the bus stop. But when the bus arrived, everyone got on except Ta Dah. He had never received his identification papers.

Few things seem to dampen his twin sister's mood these days; but the memories of the separation from her brother darkens her countenance.

"He was so sad," she remembered. "We all are crying because he was the only one to stay in the camp."

Neither she nor her parents have seen or spoken to Ta Dah since that day.



## Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission

6 of 10

Paw Ner Moo photo hangs on the wall with other family photos inside her family's apartment in Clarkston.

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## Strange new world

Paw Ner Moo had to go to the bathroom. And that was a problem.

She and her family were on an airplane flying to New York, and it would be hours before their arrival. She knew there was a lavatory on board, but it seemed forbidding. Others had used it and left unharmed.

Still, the loud, urgent swoosh of its flush was disturbing for a girl who had not grown up with indoor plumbing.



“I was scared I was going to lock myself in,” she said, smiling at her naiveté. “I was scared I was going to fall through.”

Ultimately Paw Ner Moo conquered that small fear. She survived the trip to the lavatory to marvel at the giant buildings of New York City. That was when she realized nothing would be as it had been.

“We can’t imagine that now we are in this country,” Paw Ner Moo said.

The family continued its journey to Clarkston, where agencies and charities were set up to aid their arrival. But adjustment wouldn’t be easy.

“I did not know how to eat hamburger,” she said. “I just eat the meat and throw the bread away. Then I looked at others and say, ‘Ah, they do it like that.’”

Even the smallest details of everyday life proved challenging.

“We did not know how to turn on thermostat, gas stove,” she said. “Many different things that we didn’t know.”

Other refugees helped the newcomers get acclimated. The family got a television, and Paw Ner Moo found a new joy: cooking shows. She’d watch with fascination as chefs went through the fine points of preparing elaborate meals.

The struggles of the jungle and of Mae La were behind them now, but finding their way would present new challenges.

Du Doo’s marriage, troubled during those last years in Mae La, broke apart not long after the family arrived in Clarkston, and her husband left the family.

Neither Du Doo nor Paw Ner Moo would talk about the split.

“Private,” Paw Ner Moo said when asked.

Her father remained near Clarkston but has little contact with the children. Some who know the family say leaving his son behind was a devastating blow, as was the struggle to find steady work in the United States.

It fell on Du Doo to provide for herself and her four children. She found work preparing food at a local jail, her shift starting at 1 a.m. and ending at 9 or 10 a.m.

Just as she had in Mae La, Paw Ner Moo, now 16, took on a leadership position in her household, quickly learning enough English to translate for her mother and siblings. She served as a second mother to the little ones, cooking and settling disputes.

Her mother enrolled her in Clarkston High, but the confidence she was developing at home did not carry over to school. Her limited English kept her from engaging with other students. She nicknamed herself Jasmine because it was easier for English speakers to say and remember.

Still, her circle of friends remained limited. “Just Karen people,” she said.

And the discipline problems of other students frightened her.

“Some students are really bad to the teacher,” she said. “They just do whatever they want to. Every year, students were fighting with teachers. I don’t want these things to happen to me.”



### **Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission**

**7 of 10**

**Paw Ner Moo (right) comforts her little brother Alex San, 5, as her sister Ner Moo Soe, 13, and her mother Du Doo look on before she leaves for a missionary and nursing assistance training program in Virginia at their apartment home in Clarkston.**

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### **Two lives change course**

In 2009, occupational therapist Kelli Czaykowski heard a plea that changed her life and the life of the girl now called Jasmine Moo.

She was attending a board meeting for Duluth Adventist Christian School, of which she is a member, when Jonathan Sumner, associate superintendent of Adventist schools in Georgia, made a request. He said refugee families were desperately looking for ways to get their children out of public school. Their children were scared and struggling, he said. They wanted their children in private schools but couldn’t afford the tuition.

“I thought it was sad,” said Czaykowski. “They wanted a safe environment to learn. It wasn’t because they wanted the label ‘private school.’”

School leaders decided to accept as many students as possible, knowing they’d have to be flexible and creative when it came to covering the students’ tuition. And Czaykowski decided she would try to help any way she could.

She started by going to Clarkston looking for anyone in need. If she came across a child with no winter coat, she’d find a way to get him one. When she learned of a child who needed to go to the doctor, she’d find a way to get him there.

“I didn’t know what a refugee was. Isn’t that terrible?” said Czaykowski, the wife of a surgeon and mother of five. “I didn’t know their need.” Only now she could not now un-see what she had witnessed in Clarkston. She couldn’t overlook the button-less coats, the shoes that were too big.

Just a few days after Sumner’s appeal, Czaykowski found herself at the apartment complex where Jasmine and other refugee families lived. She was there to sign up students for private school scholarships through Arête Scholars Fund, but communicating proved difficult. That’s when Jasmine stepped in.

Czaykowski was struck by the teenager’s determination to help despite her shyness. After the meeting, Czaykowski gave Jasmine her telephone number and told her to call if she had questions or needed anything.

And Jasmine did call. Then she called again. And again.

“She started asking a lot of questions,” Czaykowski said. “Questions about America. It would be everything — food, homework. ‘How does this work?’”

Before long, the two were talking regularly. Czaykowski started taking Jasmine to get her hair done or buy clothes. When she took her own children on a fun outing, Czaykowski would swing by Clarkston and invite Jasmine and a sibling or two to join them.

Slowly, Jasmine’s inscrutability cracked. After a few months, she started to talk about Ta Dah, the twin she fears she’ll never see again.

“At first, I didn’t even know she had a twin,” Czaykowski said. Eventually, though, Jasmine opened up and tearfully shared her story.

Jasmine attended Atlanta Adventist Academy on a \$5,000 scholarship from Arête. It wasn’t enough to cover tuition, so she worked selling cookbooks and pamphlets on health and religion to make up the difference. She and others canvassed neighborhoods that summer, sleeping in the homes of church members or on mattresses in the school.

The work — going door to door, making sales, having doors closed in her face — changed Jasmine.

“She was more outgoing,” Czaykowski said. “She was more confident in who she was.”



Jasmine continued to bloom at Atlanta Adventist Academy. She was more talkative, more open than before. As her English improved, she performed better academically, though she struggled in a few classes, including a health class she'd have to take a couple times.



## Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission

8 of 10

Kelli Czaykowski (right) works with refugees in Clarkston and is close to Paw Ner Moo and her family, gives an affectionate pat on Paw Ner Moo's cheek before Moo leaves for a missionary and nursing assistance training program in Virginia. Czaykowski met Moo through her work with refugees when she visited her apartment complex to sign up students for private schools with scholarships. Before long, the two were talking often and Moo shared her desire to do medical missionary work.

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Paw Ner Moo began to dream about her future. She told Czaykowsky she wanted to become a missionary, to find some way to help fellow Karen and other refugees.

“There are a lot of people in refugee camp that need me to go back and help them,” Jasmine said. “God gave me a life again. If not, I already die in the jungle.”

Czaykowsky and Jasmine were attending a religious convention in Orlando last fall when Jasmine heard about the medical missionary program at Hartland Institute in Virginia.

Mrs. Kelli, that’s what I want to do after school, Jasmine said.



## Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission

9 of 10

Paw Ner Moo smiles as she holds a gift from Kelli Czaykowsky, who works with refugees in Clarkston and is close to Paw Ner Moo and her family, as Moo leaves for a missionary training program. Czaykowsky remains in touch with Moo and her family. She continues to work with refugees through an aid group she co-founded called “Friends of Refugees Providing Empowerment and Education” (F.R.E.E).

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## Step into the future

On that cold, wet January morning, Jasmine Moo said goodbye to her family. She was headed to Virginia's Blue Ridge Mountains, home to Hartland Institute. "I'm so excited," she said.

Du Doo didn't share her daughter's giddiness. But she didn't stop her daughter, either. She had long ago given Jasmine her blessing to follow her dream, to help people who need the assistance their family had once received.

Jasmine climbed into Czaykowski's SUV and waved goodbye. Du Doo watched in silence until the SUV left the apartment parking lot and was no longer in view.



## Personal Journeys: Refugee on a Mission

9 of 10

Paw Ner Moo's mother Du Doo cries as she watches her daughter leaving for missionary training. Jasmine's absence has been a difficult adjustment for her family. The family struggles financially, and younger sister Daisy has a hard time emotionally.

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Jasmine Moo is currently a student at Hartland, studying health and agriculture. When she's not in school, she works on a nearby farm.



Her finances are limited; she has no cell phone and she worries about paying for the remaining costs of the program. But she says she is grateful and happy.

Jasmine's absence has been a difficult adjustment for her family. The family struggles financially, and younger sister Daisy has had a hard time emotionally.

Czaykowski remains in touch with Jasmine and her family. She continues her work assisting refugees in Clarkston through the aid group she co-founded, Friends of Refugees Providing Empowerment and Education (FREE).

Jasmine still has not heard from her brother since leaving Mae La, although she hears through relatives he is now married and has a child. She says finding Ta Dah has nothing to do with her decision to be a missionary or her desire to return to the refugee camp where she last saw him. But during quiet moments at Hartland, she imagines seeing him again.

"I am very busy," she said. "I have to study so hard for school. But I think about him. I pray for him."

### **UPDATE TO THIS STORY...**

Posted: 4:26 p.m. Sunday, August 28, 2022

## **Refugee on a Mission Update**

Paw Ner Moo (aka. Jasmine Moo) a young refugee girl who grew up without home or homeland in the Mae La refugee camp on the Thai/Burma border is so compelling that an addendum to lend clarity or closure to several open threads mentioned in the original article is appropriate at this time. Thus a few paragraphs about events unfolding in Jasmine's life and that of her family.

The original article, "Refugee on a Mission", mentioned several threads whose outcome lay in the future. Threads such as Jasmine's departure to begin college and her burning desire to return to Southeast Asia to help others. The tragedy of her twin brother torn apart from the family having been denied immigrant status forcing the family to leave him in the Mae La refugee camp in Thailand. Also left unresolved was the cause and resolution of the emotional issues Jasmine's younger sister Ner Moo Soe (aka. Day Si Lin or Daisy for short) was struggling with.

## **Jasmine Moo (aka. Paw Ner Moo)**

A few years have passed since that cold wet windswept day in early January when Jasmine departed for college. Since then she has doggedly pursued her studies at Hartland Adventist College in Rapidan, Virginia in a work/study program that trains missionaries to go into every corner of the globe. The program is for students largely from foreign countries who have gone through their application process, have willingness to train as a missionary, but do not have the financial resources to attend Hartland College. While at Hartland she has continued her practice of canvassing (selling Christian literature) during the summer months (an activity she pursued throughout her years in grade school and high school) and weekends she along with other Hartland students work at area nursing homes in the Rapidan, VA area. Following her desire to make the most of her educational opportunities she has been quick to work many hours on the farm adjacent to the college, in the school kitchen, and as a very successful canvasser of Christian literature during the summer. Her strong work ethic is derived from her love for Christ and the knowledge that she is restricted to taking only the courses for which she can earn the tuition and fees.

Consistent with her burning desire to return upon graduation back to Burma as a missionary, on 1 December 2015, Jasmine and a few other students traveled back to Thailand and Burma as a member of a Hartland student mission trip that lasted several weeks. See ["Reaching the Karen.pdf"](#) Jasmine's many experiences during this mission trip served to intensify her long desire to ultimately return to the Karen people of Burma on a permanent basis. While in Thailand Jasmine was able to briefly visit her old home in the Mae La refugee camp in which she lived with her family for more than a decade.



**Jasmine Moo (aka. Paw Ner Moo) standing in front of her old home in the Ban Mae La refugee camp in Tak, Thailand.**

## **Ta Dah ( Jasmine's twin brother )**

Having eagerly anticipated the possibility of finding and meeting her twin brother once again, Jasmine was thrilled to find him. Though she was only able to spend a couple hours at Mae La, oh how Jasmine gushed with emotion as she later spoke of seeing her brother, Ta Dah, his family and the bamboo hut in the Mae La refugee camp where she lived as a child.

Today, Ta Dah is married to Paw Pa and has a young child named Samuel (from the Bible). Slightly taller and thinner than Jasmine, Ta Dah is fit and healthy from years of working as a farm laborer. Ta Dah is not bitter about missing the opportunity as a youth to immigrate with the rest of his family, but it still saddens him that he has been unable to see all his siblings, parents, aunts, uncles and grandparents for these many years.



**Jasmine's twin brother Ta Dah stands between his wife and Jasmine who is holding his child. Oh how different the environment and lifestyle of Ta Dah and his twin sister Jasmine has evolved. Truly it can be said in every sense of the word...THEY ARE A WORLD APART.**



**Ta Dah's home located in the Ban Mae La refugee camp in Tak, Thailand.**





**Ta Dah's wife standing in their home.**



**Jasmine at the Mu Aye Pu Missionary School**

## **Dreams Come True**

Following graduation from Heartland Adventist College in June, 2019, Jasmine began working for ASAP Ministries of Berrien Springs, Michigan where she gained additional practical experience reaching out to various ethnic Karen peoples around the United States. Finally after the a long delay resulting from Covid19 travel restrictions, Jasmine departed to the far east in the summer of 2022 and began living her dream of serving as a missionary teacher at the Mu Aye Pu missionary school located on the jungle on the Thai/Myanmar border.

## Day Si Lin (aka Ner Moo Soe or Daisy)

Since childhood, Daisy ( the youngest of Jasmine's younger sisters ) has suffered medically and emotionally from an immune system disorder. Without access to proper medical care her parents believed the problem to be a somewhat trivial consequence of a dog bite Daisy suffered as a young child living in Mae La refugee camp in Thailand. Later as a youth living with her family in the refugee community of Clarkston, GA Daisy would learn the truth about her medical condition called **ITP**.

**Idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP)** is a bleeding disorder in which the immune system destroys platelets, which are necessary for normal blood clotting. Persons with the disease have too few platelets in the blood. **ITP** is sometimes called **immune thrombocytopenic purpura** or simply, **immune thrombocytopenia**. With too few platelets, the blood becomes less viscous and acquires a pink instead of a dark red color. Complications associated with the disorder are patients are prone to internal bleeding from the most minor bruise and patients are easily exhausted due to the reduced capacity of the blood to transport oxygen to the body. The internal bleeding causes large dark bruises to appear at the site of even a minor bump or trauma to the body. Left untreated the disorder can be fatal; however, whether treatment is unavailable or because physical pain, except for mild headaches, is not a side effect and because treatment is very expensive, **ITP** is often left untreated...a very risky gamble as patients can bleed to death from a minor injury or menses.

For Daisy, the emotional consequences of having **ITP** have been threefold. One...Having frequent very large dark bruise marks all over her body led to depression about her body image despite the fact that otherwise she is a very beautiful young lady. Two...Learning the possible fatal nature of her bleeding disorder only served to heighten Daisy's depression as she worried about her mortality. Three...Daisy's parents were slow to accept the diagnosis of **ITP** because they believed in their heart-of-hearts that it was caused by a dog bite. Failure of the parents to accept the **ITP** diagnosis led them to say she was crazy for believing it was **ITP**. Their statements about Daisy's mental health further negatively impacted Daisy's self image while increasing her depression. Their disbelief further led them to be lax in follow thru in seeking medical treatment for Daisy's **ITP**.

A fourth item has also played a role in shaping Daisy's attitude...her name. A mistake was made on her immigration paperwork which listed her name as Day Si Lay instead of her given name Day Si Lin. This error was not corrected such that all her school, medical, and legal records in the United States as well as the kids at school identify her as Day Si Lay. It upsets Daisy to see and hear her name called out incorrectly whether on a prescription bottle, school yearbook, or on the public address system at Egleston Children's Hospital.

Fortunately for Daisy, serendipitous circumstances have resulted in circumstances that have resulted in her receiving consistent medical care for her condition yielding positive results. In March 2015 a retired couple active in the F.R.E.E. organization volunteered to have Daisy reside full time with them in their home, transport her back and forth to school and take her to her regular medical treatments. The benefit to this arrangement is that for the past year Daisy has received consistent medical treatment for her **ITP**, has taken her medications consistently as prescribed and received counseling for her depression. This led to a marked improvement in her platelet count with a corresponding increase in the time between required ITP treatments and a large reduction in the amount of bruising that occurs...a very important factor for a young lady concerned about her appearance. Together these factors have had a very positive impact on her emotional well being.

Going forward, Daisy just recently completed 8th grade at DACS and has gone on to attend high school at Atlanta Adventist Academy (AAA). Special attention was given during the application process to insure that Daisy would be identified as Day Si Lin in all her high school records.

Meanwhile the organization Friends of Refugees providing Education and Empowerment has been active in sponsoring the educational development of many other refugee students including Jasmine's younger sister Lay Wah Paw who recently graduated from Wildwood Christian Academy(\*1) and Jasmine's other sister Day Si Lin who graduated from Duluth Adventist Christian School in May 2016 and will attend Atlanta Adventist Academy beginning in August 2016. Jasmine's young brother Alex was also sponsored by F.R.E.E. to attend Pre-K and Kindergarten. In fact F.R.E.E. sponsored schooling for 53 students during the 2015-2016 school year. F.R.E.E. members take great satisfaction in knowing that other students currently at high school level have acquired a similar desire to pursue a life of service.

**NOTE 1:**

Wildwood works together with parents (the primary educators of their children), to assist students in the development of their Christian faith. We strive to provide a culture where students are actively engaged in the process of integrating faith and life. As a result, Christian faith and values permeate all that we do at Wildwood, but we do not attempt to indoctrinate students in any particular denominational tradition.

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## **HOW WE GOT THE STORY**

Kelli Czaykowski introduced staff writer Wayne Washington to Jasmine Moo at the request of Arête Scholars Fund, which wanted to highlight some of the students it helped transfer from public schools to private ones. Upon their first meeting, Wayne found Jasmine to be friendly, yet guarded. But her determination to do something positive with her life impressed him. He was particularly struck by her desire to return to Myanmar. “One would think that after surviving all she had, she’d be looking for the most American of experiences — college, boys, spring break trips, a well-paying job,” Washington said. “Instead, she is focused on doing something meaningful.” It is an inspiring story about unfathomable hardships, perseverance and the healing spirit of altruism. And it is the kind of deeply reported, deeply human story we tell each week in Personal Journeys, only in the AJC.

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## **About the reporter**

**Wayne Washington** joined the Atlanta Journal-Constitution in 2012 and covers state education policy. He has 23 years of newspaper experience, including stints at newspapers in California, Minnesota, Florida, Washington, D.C., and South Carolina. He has covered professional football, race relations, county government, higher education, state government, the U.S. Justice Department and the White House. A married father of two college students, Wayne lives in Decatur.