

From refugee camp in Nepal to DU in the fall

It's hard to write the story of this inspiring young woman in just a few paragraphs. Apshara Siwakoti recently graduated from Grandview High School. She is a Daniels Fund Scholar, who will attend University of Denver in the fall. At the young age of 18 (her birthday is this week), she already has goals that span far beyond the vision of most. But it is what she has experienced in her short life thus far that punctuates her already impressive accomplishments. Her story begins during the Bhutanese refugee crisis. Apshara was born in the early 2000s, where her family found themselves living in a small bamboo hut with no running water and little to live on.

Apshara giggles as she mentions her favorite memory of that refugee camp in Nepal. From the age of 6 until about the age of 8, it was her job every day to get up, leave her mom and younger brother, and carry five 10-liter jugs to the water tap. She would fill those containers with water that her family would use to cook, clean, bathe and drink that day. Even at that young age, she recognized that if she got up early enough, she could get a head start on everyone and would not have to wait in line. School started at 7am, there was no time for that.

Just before she turned 9, the family's United Nations representative explained that they would have an opportunity to leave Nepal and settle elsewhere. Their first choice was

America because there were better educational opportunities in the States. They also had family on the East Coast and were able to obtain jobs a bit easier.

When Apshara first arrived in Massachusetts, there was a short waiting period before she could start school. She would sit in the window of her 3rd floor apartment and marvel at the sheer number of cars this country had. She also assumed that since only the wealthy in Nepal lived with running water that she would be getting up early once again and trekking to obtain water. She couldn't believe both the kitchen and the bathrooms had water!

She has never forgotten her experiences as a young girl. She continues to remember where she came from. She uses those memories to motivate her and never let the little things get to her.

Eventually, the family moved to Colorado when jobs became scarce out east. It was in middle school when Apshara was first



Apshara Siwakoti will be attending the University of Denver in the fall.

introduced to a counselor that saw her motivation and knew she just needed the opportunity and additional guidance to really break out. That is when she was introduced to the Boys Hope Girls Hope program.

Boys Hope Girls Hope's mission is to get academically motivated children-in-need, like Apshara, through high school and help them ultimately earn their college degree. The scholars in the program are bright, talented, and driven, but often lack the resources and support to finish high school, much less get into

Although BHGH has been a lifeline to Apshara when it comes to many things, she is incredibly determined and credits that desire to achieve to the need to set an example for the rest of her family. Currently she has over a year of experience as a nurse's aide, serving hours on end during the Covid-19 pandemic, and plans to apply this week to provide nursing assistance in either Oregon or Washington for a few months this summer. She also plays the violin, is learning to fly small aircraft and hopes to get better at long-

boarding. Apshara is the first in her family to earn a high school degree.

She earned a four-year Daniels Scholarship and will enter University of Denver's Pioneer Leadership Program this fall. Not surprisingly, she already has her sights set on medical school after graduation. She'd like to end up in the Air Force and become an aerospace medical specialist or flight surgeon. The end goal is to work for the United Nations and build a clinic in Nepal, to help others just like herself.

When asked if she ever takes a day off, she says, "I've sometimes felt I needed an hour to just do nothing. In that hour, I am a normal teenager, but then I get fidgety and need to get up and start doing something. I really don't like to sit still."

She credits her friends as some of her biggest motivators and admits that she still sees herself as a work in progress. If you ask her if she has taken some time to reflect on this moment and all she has accomplished, she says, "Yes, I am proud at what I've achieved. But I still crave more."



Boys Hope Girls Hope

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and graduate from college.

BHGH provides structure, mentoring, tutoring, and guidance to help kids break down walls and reach their goals. Each student receives one-on-one support throughout both their high school and college careers.

"My parents cannot speak English," says Apshara. "Going to a parent-teacher conference was hard. I was translating the entire time. And even then, sometimes they just were not home and could not attend. I was also presented with many opportunities but no way to get there because they were gone during the day. I appreciated that Boys Hope Girls Hope came with me to my parent-teacher conferences when my parents could not and made sure I had transportation to so many things that helped me succeed. I also didn't know what an application was, let alone how to fill one out. And what is a resume or cover letter? Boys Hope Girls Hope helped me do and understand so much. It has been tremendous."

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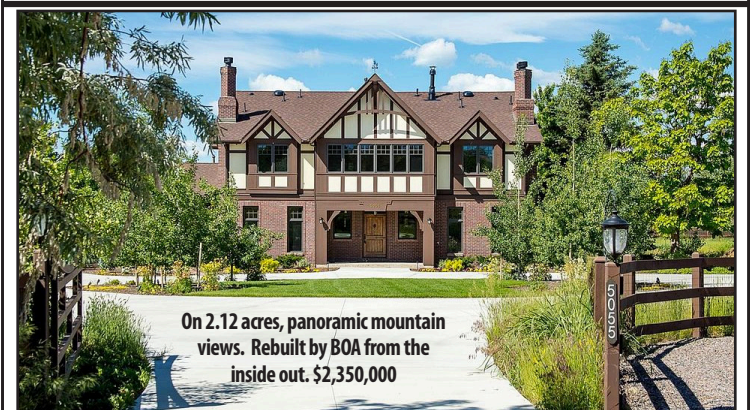
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