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Lost the Crown But Gained Her Dream

BY LISA LEE

Janine Lee is your typical girl in the San Francisco Bay Area: a 23-year-old recent college grad, budding socialite in the

nightlife scene, and sometime actress, martial artist and community activist.

She also happens to be CEO of Capture the Dream, a nonprofit aimed to help underserved and at-risk Bay Area residents suc-

ceed at school and find fulfilling, sustaining careers. The group delivers financial aid to low-income families, single-parent homes, foster children and children recovering from traumas. It also supports youth development and leadership

advancement through mentoring, education, arts and cultural programs. This year, the organization took home the Maybelline New York Empowerment Through Education Award and a \$10,000 donation from Maybelline New York and *People* magazine.

But a year and a half ago, the U.C. Davis alumna was almost too discouraged to live out her dream after she failed to win the 2005 Miss Asian America title.

Janine's mentor Rauhmel Fox, CEO of WHOmentors.com, Inc, counseled her to keep things in perspective. "I told her, 'Here's the problem: if you win, you reign for one year. But what happens after a year?'" Fox said. "I said to her, 'How about doing this for a lifetime instead?'"

Janine took her mentor's advice to heart, and in July 2006, Capture the Dream was born from

courage to help the community," marveled Rose Chung, Miss Chinatown 1981 and president of the Miss Asian America Pageant. "I always noticed that she was a doer."


Though Janine admits that she has recurring dreams of entering the beauty pageant for a second time, she said she is satisfied with being a nationally recognized CEO and a member of the 0.16 percent of Asian American women executives in American business today.

And her optimism is contagious. "Always chase your dreams; after all, they are not going to chase you" is part of her life philosophy and the inspiration for her company logo: the Native American Ojibway dream catcher, which is traditionally hung from the bed of a child to catch bad dreams and filter bad spirits.

Capture the Dream is also appreciated by seasoned social work-

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Left: Janine Lee with Betty Hsu (left), Ms. Chinatown USA 2007, and Nicole Fox, Ms. San Jose 2007. Right: Lee receives Certificate of Honor from Dorin Devi.

her pageant platform. Today, the group's work includes the Dream-pack program, which provides a backpack brimming with school supplies for underprivileged students, and a scholarship fund for budding minority leaders in memoriam to her grandfather, George Geng On Lee.

"I was always interested in volunteering," she remembers, "but it wasn't rewarding to feel like just one of a hundred faces, feeling forgettable." She recalled an incident in high school when people failed to recognize her during a signature drive, despite having volunteered at various libraries, schools and hospitals since the age of 13.

Today, Janine realizes that minor setbacks are never personal, and she aims to make herself unique by setting an example. After the library at Oakland's Peralta Elementary School suffered massive smoke damage due to a fire in March, Capture the Dream organized a book drive that received great applause from the *Oakland Tribune*. She even corralled her family to lend a hand: her father shuttled books between local bookstores and the school.

"I'm very proud of Janine. She represents contestants who are ambitious, original and have the

ers such as Vandnez Lam of San Francisco's Legal Services for Children. "[We] are working at the front lines," she explained. "The pay sucks and it's emotionally draining, but every hour people can donate makes a difference, especially in San Francisco where the living standard is so high."

Janine played hostess and master of ceremonies on Nov. 6 at The Atrium in San Francisco and also enjoyed a lavish and celebrity-studded award ceremony in New York City on Nov. 1, attended by Maybelline New York spokeswoman Danna Garcia, Tomiko Fraser, Erin Wasson and Hollywood fashion guru Phillip Bloch.

In her spare time — when she can find it — Janine just looks forward to Tuesday night dinners with her grandmother and a casual jog. She's just a normal gal, with big dreams.

To volunteer in the San Francisco Bay Area: capturethedream.org. To start your own charity today, visit WHOmentors.com

Find out what Janine Lee will do with the \$10,000 and see her NYC makeover at maybelline.com/education

Plus, you can bid on 7 Amazing Adventures auction items, including a session with skateboard legend Tony Hawk, online now through 12/29/07.

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