Medical students learn where they will serve their residencies

MSU’s Match Day ’15

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Thirty-five years after Phuong and Thuy-Lien Nguyen arrived in the U.S. as refugees from Vietnam, they watched as their daughter Kim celebrated Match Day — the culmination of four years of medical school.

They sat nervously as their daughter and 80 classmates at Michigan State University’s College of Human Medicine in Grand Rapids were handed envelopes Friday that notified them of the location of their residencies.

No one could open the envelopes until noon sharp.

Nguyen’s two sisters were there, too. And her fiance was present — virtually. Christopher Riedinger, a 2014 med school graduate doing a residency in Chicago, appeared on the screen of Nguyen’s smartphone, which she propped on the table so he could watch the big moment.

Nguyen was hoping to join him in Chicago.

The room at Noto’s restaurant was filled with nervous chatter and laughter. There was an official countdown. And that was followed by the flutter of paper as envelopes were torn open and letters unfolded.

Nguyen studied her letter quietly. Then, she looked up and called out: “I got Northwestern!”

Cheers and clapping and hugs followed.

Nguyen’s mother beamed. “Now she can get married!”

Nguyen was awarded her first choice: an anesthesiology residency at Northwestern University in Chicago.

She is the first doctor in the family, her parents said.

“We are one of the best people,” said her mother.

She and her husband were among the thousands of Vietnamese who crammed into boats to flee the country in the late 1970s. After escaping to Thailand, they immigrated as refugees to the U.S. in 1980. Their sponsor was Professor George Loei, the former dean of MSU’s College of Natural Science.

The family has been Spartan green ever since. The parents are both MSU grads and work for the university — Thuy-Lien as an accountant and Phuong as