



Elk Grove's Snow Queen

By Linda Le Park - Citizen Staff Writer

Photos by Keri Wood – An Nhu Tran ambassador for Aim Higher, Adult Disability Services, has always dreamt of being a princess. On Dec. 20, Tran got her wish. Wearing her crown and a replica of the faux fur cape from the fairytale the 'Snow Queen' Tran was regal.

Having a disability has never stopped Elk Grove resident An Nhu Tran, 22, from wanting to help others, nor has it given her a negative outlook on life.

In order to honor her for being such a good role model, Aim Higher Adult Disability Services has named her its “Snow Queen,” where she was able to be a queen for a day and be honored at the Sacramento Santa Parade on Saturday, Dec. 20.

“An Nhu is definitely a role model and here at Aim Higher. This is a program for people with disabilities and what we have really tried to do is bring things to them that they wouldn’t normally have the opportunity to experience,” Christa Trinchera, director of Aim Higher, said.

Aside from always volunteering to help out in her classroom, Tran also uses her talent for knitting to create hats and scarves for the needy and to hospitals for premature infants. Being confined to a wheelchair with Cerebral Palsy has not stopped Tran from enjoying her life and helping others.

Tran said that she likes helping people and that it makes her feel happy because she feels like she made a difference.

“We started something new this year with An Nhu being the first Snow Queen,” Trinchera said. “We’re going to select someone who gives back to the community and who is a role model and who people can look up to, to represent Aim Higher as the Snow Queen and ride in the parade and kind of be our ambassador.”

An Nhu was honored at the parade as the Snow Queen in a jeweled crown and wrapped in a long, white fur cape, replicated from the “Snow Queen” fairytale.

“I feel happy,” Tran said.

In addition to being pampered and treated like royalty, Tran was also accompanied by four chaperones dressed in peppermint costumes with top hats while she rode in a “Cinderella” carriage pulled by two white stallions with white feather plumes on their heads.

“We do some fun concerts here, and we have a Roseville site, so she’ll get to host and be ambassador there too, and we’ll go visit some schools for the disabled and talk about how she can make dreams come true,” Trinchera said. “Even though you have a disability, it doesn’t mean that you can’t make these types of dreams and fairy tales come true.”

Tran’s teacher Flora Landiza describes Tran as someone who is easy to get along with and always happy, regardless of how she is feeling. She said that Tran often volunteers in the classroom, whether it is helping to set up or to clean.

Landiza also called Tran a wiz at word search puzzles and math quizzes. Tran even challenges another teacher to math quizzes just for fun.

“She is a strong person,” Landiza said. “She is a role model in my class.”

Tran is very excited about being in the parade. Trinchera describes Tran as being a “girly girl” who loves pink.

Staff members at Aim Higher have been pampering Tran, putting pink make up on her and styling her hair. Something that Tran said she was enjoying.

“I think An Nhu is really going to give a lot of people with disabilities hope in seeing that although she has a disability, she doesn’t let it get her down,” Trinchera said. “She is positive and she is out there now representing us as the Snow Queen. And there are a lot of other little girls out there that may be in wheelchairs or have a disability that don’t have a positive outlook can look at An Nhu and say, you know what, I can be like that too. And I think that that is a really important message” ■