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## Top grad: Toan Bui

*Top grads were nominated by principals and guidance counselors at the invitation of The Star-Ledger. They are representative of some of the interesting and well-rounded members of the Class of 1997. Toan Bui was interviewed by Star-Ledger reporter Kristen Alloway*

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**Age:** 18

**School:** Dover High School, Morris County

**College:** Fairleigh Dickinson University, hopes to major in biology.

**Goals:** To become a dentist and eventually open an art studio. "I don't want to be a starving artist, that's why I want to be a dentist first. I know I could be good dentist and get a good foundation and then start an art studio. I'm going to do both. I just figured art and dentistry go together because you're working with your hands."

**About his art:** Bui paints, mostly abstracts, and draws. "I've been drawing all my life, since I picked up chalk in Vietnam. We didn't have pencils or

anything. I used chalk to draw on the sidewalks."

**Latest accomplishment:** Started writing poetry last year and had one of his poems published this month in the National Library of Poetry's anthology "Fields of Gold." Bui's poem is called "Like a Rose." "It's about praising a woman's beauty, like a rose."

**Favorite poet:** Edgar Allan Poe.

**Last book read:** "Frankenstein," by Mary Shelley.

**Family history:** The youngest of five children, Bui and his family came to the U.S. from Vietnam when he was five. "My dad, first he came and ... got his citizenship, and we came over. They wanted a better life for us."

**Culture shock:** Overcoming the language barrier. "I hated school at first. I was alone, no one talked to me. I was the new kid in town and didn't know anyone. Sometimes I'd get in trouble, and I couldn't talk my way out of it because I couldn't explain myself."

**Summer job:** Working in a plant nursery.

**Life goal:** To have one of his paintings exhibited in a museum and a book of his poetry published.