

A HIGHER Consciousness

From South Korea to back road farms in New York state's Southern Tier, Hye Ri "Anna" Lee '16 has been using Korean, Spanish and English to build bridges of understanding.

As an elementary school student, she became a cellist and perfected her English at summer camp, where she adopted the name Anna.

At age 14, she left South Korea for Miss Porter's School in Farmington, Conn. She volunteered to play the cello at a senior center and discovered her compassion for the elderly and her interest in working with people and organizing events.

Lee became ill and returned to South Korea, where her newfound vulnerability increased her empathy for others.

While recovering in Seoul, she served as an interpreter for an uninsured factory worker with a head injury. For Lee, the experience clarified the importance of labor rights and corporate social responsibility. She saw her future in

human resources in the health care industry and applied to ILR.

During a trip to Spain, she hiked with her father and enjoyed interacting with the Spanish-speaking citizens, which led Lee to add a college minor in Spanish. At Cornell, she joined Friends of Farmworkers.

For several years, Lee traveled to farms in the Finger Lakes Region weekly in order to tutor migrant workers in English. She also delivered on-farm workshops covering safety and emergency planning.

An internship at Corning Inc., where a number of ILR alums are in HR leadership positions, honed Lee's work experience across human resource functions.

Lee graduates from ILR with an academic background and a discipline that defies boundaries of language, culture and geography.



Transitioning to Adulthood



One family at a time, the \$32.5 million New York State PROMISE project — the largest federally funded initiative in ILR history — seeks to improve the futures of teens with disabilities who receive Supplemental Security Income.

"When PROMISE came along, it sparked a new hope in me," said Gloria Corsino, who has two daughters in the project.

It nurtures "hope for a future for my children so that they can be trained in any ability that they have to be part of society, which is what we've always wanted for our children," said the New York City resident, an eloquent disabilities advocate.

PROMISE, short for Promoting the Readiness of Minors in Supplemental Security Income, is designed to advance employment and postsecondary education outcomes for youth ages 14 to 16 as they transition into adulthood.

Michelle Podolec, project coordinator at the K. Lisa Yang and Hock E. Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, said, "One of the goals of the institute is to advance opportunities for people with disabilities by improving transition outcomes for youth with disabilities beyond public school."

"PROMISE provides a great opportunity to see what works for this group through a random-assigned trial, data collection and analysis."

The five-year grant for New York state is among six PROMISE grants impacting 12 states. Of the 2,000 teens enrolled in the Empire State grant, 1,000 were randomly selected for a control group receiving standard transition and education services.

Another 1,000 were randomly selected to receive additional, personalized intervention services.

Support includes a family case manager, case management coordination, parent training and support, transition skills assessments and career development activities.

These supports, said ILR's Arun Karpur, co-principal investigator of New York's PROMISE, "allow researchers and practitioners alike to see what works and what does not, allowing all stakeholders to learn and build a stronger transition system for youth with disabilities."

"Our roles include understanding the extent of the implementation of the program by collecting data to help inform quality program outcomes," he said.

"We are working with the statewide steering committee and the state Office of Mental Health in building the capacity of state program partners, and improving their abilities to implement a complex program of this nature into the regular practice environment."

Project partners include the New York State Governor's Office, state disability agencies, public schools, regional parent centers and local service providers.