

ACRS NEWS

VOTING FOR OUR COMMUNITY

AAPIs are the fastest growing racial group in the West. ACRS is making sure we are heard on election day – and every day – on the issues that matter most to us.



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Asian Counseling and Referral Service is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization providing behavioral health and social services to Asian American and Pacific Islanders in King County and throughout Washington state.

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ACRS has long been active with both local and national partners in pursuit of common goals that benefit our community, our country and the world. Whether it is sharing cutting edge models for a holistic approach to health which balances mind and body, art and movement, nutrition and community building; whether it is pioneering large scale multilingual, multi-generational and culturally competent advocacy and civic engagement; or whether it is bringing the perspective of our community, here and abroad, to the work against global warming and for climate justice, ACRS works with and learns from our partners, and shares what we have learned to strengthen our community.

This year we were honored to work with Asian Americans Advancing Justice – L.A. and D.C. – on the Seattle Metro portion of “A Community of Contrasts: Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the West.” Our local partners on this project, Asia Pacific Cultural Center in Pierce County and Refugee and Immigrant Services NW in Snohomish County, joined us in providing material and guidance since the area includes these counties as well as King County. As you will see in the story on page 4, Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders are the fastest growing racial groups in the nation and the West. We are a community of contrasts, with some groups ranking well on economic and educational indicators, while others have some of the highest poverty rates and lowest educational levels of any racial group. The report belies the “model minority” stereotype for which aggregated data, which lumps all of our communities together, is so often used to distort our true conditions. The report demonstrates how important it is to disaggregate, or separate, data on our very diverse communities – so that policy, legislative and funding decisions are based on facts, not stereotypes. We will give briefings, and distribute the report to policymakers, legislators, educators, funders and libraries to equip them to understand and better meet the needs of our rapidly growing community.

This year, we were also excited to work with our partners in the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) of Washington State. We co-founded APIC nearly twenty years ago to promote and defend civil and human rights, and to create a statewide safety net of services which were denied to many immigrants as a result of anti-immigrant federal legislation. Our community was, and is, disproportionately affected to this day, as immigrants and refugees comprise over 60% of our community.

We have mounted statewide annual Asian Pacific American Legislative Days with our partners since APIC’s founding, and brought thousands of community members to Olympia to speak with the aid of interpreters to their legislators, on the issues that matter the most to our community. Our collective efforts attracted the attention of a national foundation, which

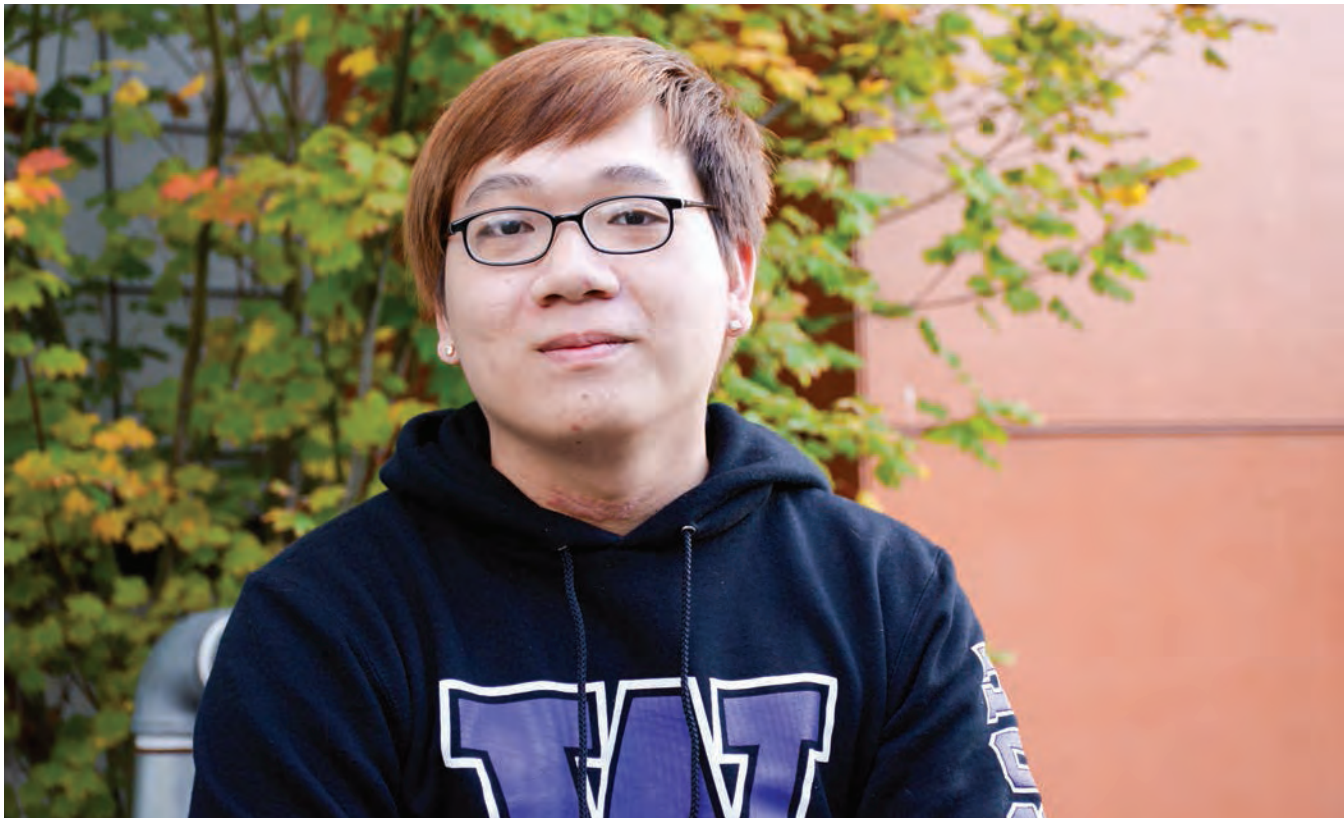
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GETTING BULLIED, GROWING UP AND GIVING THANKS



Former ACRS client Tien is proud to call himself a Husky.

Photo by Hong Chhuor

Tien Tran Huynh's family left Vietnam in 2000 and came to the U.S. in search of better opportunities. Like many immigrant parents, Tien's mother and father worked hard to support their young family, but lacked experience to offer support and guidance to their children in navigating a foreign language and culture, let alone in making new friends and balancing two different cultures.

Middle school was awkward for many of us, but for Tien, it was the source of a particular kind of dread: his classmates verbally abused him, and he couldn't see an end to it. "I would go to my counselor, and I would sit there crying. I begged my counselor to go home because I didn't want to be in school. I would make up excuses. And that was basically just the start of it," says Tien. When asked to reflect on why he didn't just stand up for himself, Tien says, "Put yourself in the shoes of the person being bullied. It's intimidating. You're treated as less of a person. You're made to feel inferior. That sense of fear of physical harm; you start believing the bully. So much so that you don't want to exist."

Tien couldn't have known that he was part of a troubling trend that was becoming more visible all across the country. From California to New York, various studies have shown an increase in the instances of bullying of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI), and other minority students in recent years. AAPI students who come from immigrant families often face additional risks from lack of support from parents, peers and schools due to linguistic, cultural and religious barriers. A 2011 study (DeVoe & Murphy) by the U.S. Department of Education found that over half of AAPI students who reported being bullied said that it occurred at school. Just last fall, the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders launched a Bullying Prevention Task Force to determine how frequently AAPI students are being bullied and identify the obstacles students and families face when it comes to getting support.

The pressures Tien faced as a newcomer to this country – like working to please his parents as a model student, while experiencing bullying – made Tien feel weak,

▪ *Continues on page 21* |

A COMMUNITY OF CONTRASTS

Unlocking the Potential of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders in the West

Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (AANHPI) are part of a diverse community, and the success of certain ethnic groups often masks the difficulties faced by others that fall under the AANHPI umbrella. While some AANHPIs have achieved economic success, others still struggle to make ends meet. In the Western United States (the West), AANHPIs are more likely to live in poverty and have lower incomes, and are less likely to own homes than Caucasians.

In October, ACRS hosted the regional launch of AAAJ's latest addition to their report series, A Community of Contrasts, which examines the demographics of more than 40 ethnic groups that comprise the AANHPI communities living in the West, which includes five states: Arizona, Hawaii, Nevada (Las Vegas specifically), Oregon and Washington (King, Pierce and Snohomish counties). The report highlights the social and economic diversity within AANHPI communities, and addresses issues like housing, civic engagement, language, employment, income, education and health.

In their report, AAAJ presents three key findings; AANHPIs living in the West are:

- The fastest-growing racial groups in the West.
- A growing political power that will be pivotal in determining the future direction of our country.
- Significant contributors to their local economies through job creation, business ownership and consumer spending.

The report underscores the different experiences across ethnicities and seeks to debunk the “model minority” myth that is so often used to the detriment of AANHPIs, as well as other communities of color. In addition to highlighting disparities between ethnicities, the report identifies the potential that the AANHPI community holds in terms of taking a more active role in regional and national politics and as drivers of economic activity. ACRS hopes that the report and its recommendations will assist policy makers, government agencies, funders, community organizations and others better serve AANHPI communities. We want to thank report and launch partners – Phyllis J. Campbell, Asian Pacific Cultural Center, Refugee & Immigrant Services NW and Asian Americans Advancing Justice – and the Coulter Foundation and Bank of America for funding the report. ■



The report is available online at http://bit.ly/AAAJ_West. If you wish to receive a hard copy of the report, please contact Jocelyn Lui, jocelynl@acrs.org.

Joanna Lee with Advancing Justice Los Angeles sharing findings at a press conference at ACRS.

Photo by Hong Chhuor



AAPI DEMOCRACY INITIATIVE

Helping Our Community be Seen and Heard on Issues that Matter Most to Us

Multilingual voter education, ballot parties, leadership training and phone banking are just some of the activities going on through the ACRS Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Democracy Initiative. As of this writing, the 2015 election is upon us and ACRS staff, clients, volunteers, community partners and the state-wide Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) chapters are working energetically to foster community participation in our democracy.

Our AAPI Democracy Initiative was launched earlier this year, and is a three-year project in partnership with APIC of Washington State to boost our civic engagement work to the next level. We will develop grassroots community leadership and teach them the skills to engage decision makers on the issues affecting them, their families and communities. We will help our community members naturalize, register to vote, become informed voters and encourage others to vote. We will assist with multilingual candidate forums, and hold community briefings, ballot parties and phone banks in many languages. We will knock on doors and reach community members through ethnic media. We will work to build a culture of year-round civic engagement in our communities statewide. All of this builds on our long history of advocacy locally and at the annual Legislative Day at our State Capitol in Olympia.

For many reasons, our community has not reached the full potential of our political power. In 2014, only half of all eligible AAPIs were registered to vote. Of those registered to vote, less than half actually voted in the

2014 general election. AAPIs had one of the largest voter disparity rates out of any community of color – but why? Registering to vote and the act of voting can be challenging for community members who face language and cultural barriers. Community members report that they don't know the candidates or issues on their ballot. A 2014 survey by APIAVote showed that 80% of Asian Americans in the Western U.S. were never contacted prior to the election. At multiple points along the voting continuum, we see barriers that make voting difficult – the same barriers that ACRS was founded to address.

With key elections for president, governor and other local positions in 2016, we have the opportunity to unlock the political power of AAPI communities. Our AAPI Democracy Initiative has already begun to develop statewide capacity, cross-generational leadership and the tools to promote long-term, year-round engagement on issues critical to our well-being and empowerment. Going forward, our work will continue to be shaped by and build on leaders developed and lessons learned today. In 2016, ACRS and our partners are organizing a statewide Democracy Summit and inviting candidates to engage AAPI communities on issues we care about. At the end of three years, AAPI communities will have learned from each year's experience and built the capacity, leadership, skills and tools for lasting change, and a strong community culture of being seen and heard on the issues that matter most to them. ■

ACRS staff and volunteers taking part in phone banking to encourage AAPI voter participation.

Photo by Hong Chhuor



A CULINARY JOURNEY IN SUPPORT OF ACRS



Gala emcees Derek Wing (L) and Thanh Tan (R) pose for a photo with Top Chef finalist Melissa King.

Photo by Naomi Ishisaka

With Presenting Sponsor Comcast, this year's gala raised over \$220,000 and highlighted stories from and about ACRS clients in their own words. Over 500 community leaders, elected officials, ACRS supporters and volunteers took part in *A Culinary Journey* on October 3 at The Westin Bellevue. The evening featured live music, client stories, remarks from U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell and an on-stage cooking demonstration by Chef Melissa King, Top Chef Season 12 Finalist.

Through video testimonials, Club Bamboo client Kennedy, who is Vietnamese, talked about how he came to ACRS when he was very sick and unable to walk without assistance. At Club Bamboo, he found nutritious and familiar hot ethnic lunches along with friendships and physical activities that helped him regain mobility, and break through social isolation and depression. Teresa and Edward, a Chinese-Indonesian couple who are 73 and 80, respectively, connected with our aging and adult programs to find a homecare worker to provide the intensive level of day-to-day assistance that Edward now needs, and in so doing, they both found renewed confidence and much needed relief. Take a look at the videos on our YouTube channel.

Former ACRS client Tien stood up in front of a room full of gala guests and talked about how ACRS' youth programs helped him successfully overcome bullying, and the pressures of being what he called the "perfect Asian son" that had driven him to contemplate suicide (read more about Tien in the client spotlight on page 3).

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell thanked Diane Narasaki for her 20 years of leadership at ACRS as executive director. She also thanked gala guests for supporting ACRS and noted that "with all that's happening in the world, we don't need any more reminders of how critical mental health services are."

As part of ACRS' commitment to social justice, Diane highlighted climate change as an issue that affects AAPI communities uniquely, "Our families are often trans-Pacific and trans-continental. Family members in the

■ *Continues on page 22* |

1 Chef Melissa King wows the crowd with an onstage cooking demonstration. 2 ACRS board member Eunhee Sumner unwraps her winnings during our wine grab. 3 Table centerpieces created by ACRS board member Juliana Wong made each table feel special. 4 Gala guests loved catching up with friends. 5 The evening's main dish: flat iron steak with baby market carrots. Photos by Naomi Ishisaka.



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COMCAST

ACRS is grateful for generous support from Comcast NBCUniversal as this year's Presenting Sponsor for *A Culinary Journey*, our annual benefit dinner, which raises funds to bring hope and opportunity in over 40 languages to 27,000 people touched by ACRS each year.

Comcast NBCUniversal invests in digital literacy, community service and cultivating tomorrow's leaders throughout the country. Closer to home, ACRS has greatly benefitted from Comcast NBCUniversal's focus on bridging the digital divide by helping youth of color access digital tools and skills through their support of our Southeast Asian Young Men's (SEAYM) group. Since its start in 2007, SEAYM has experienced great success and national acclaim for the documentary films created by these young men that address issues important to the youth and their communities. With film as a form of positive intervention, the program helps participants uncover their own family stories and gives them a voice in sharing their own experiences.

"Documentary filmmaking is a powerful tool for learning about and sharing experiences and histories that are not often seen in mainstream media. Comcast NBCUniversal is proud to support Southeast Asian youth in strengthening connections with their

community, culture and identity through ACRS's Southeast Asian Youth Men's group," says Diem Ly, Comcast NBCUniversal's external affairs manager for Washington.

SEAYM youth have created films addressing topics such as bicultural identity, cultural and generational gaps, the digital divide, drug and alcohol dependency, youth violence and teenage gambling. With film-making as a vehicle for engagement, these programs foster the well-being and empowerment of Southeast Asian young men by increasing their cultural connectedness and self-esteem. In the process of chronicling their journey through film, participants have also developed digital literacy and leadership skills. Comcast NBCUniversal financial support has allowed us purchase film-making equipment and editing software, and bring in experts to teach the youth about special topics related to capturing and telling their stories using film.

Thank you Comcast NBCUniversal for your partnership and commitment to helping youth access technology. Your investment enables ACRS' youth to explore their cultural roots today and shape public discourse tomorrow. ■

SETTING ASIDE THE FEAR OF FAILING OTHERS by Ling Chua, LMFT



THERAPY ASSOCIATES

Let me share a personal story. I recently teamed up with my coach in a mixed doubles tennis game. Halfway through, I double-faulted on my service game and gave our opponents a lead. I felt overwhelmed by a sense of shame. In tennis, you have no one to blame but yourself when you are unable to put a serve in. My coach had given me numerous lessons on my serve, and in that moment I felt strongly that I had let him down. So I did what I usually do when I have disappointed someone: I apologized.

Like a child expecting to be chided, I started murmuring about what I knew I did wrong. I barely got two words in when I felt my coach's hand on my shoulder and heard him call my name. I looked up, no longer averting eye contact, and saw his calm expression. He said, "Return."

I felt a shift inside me. One second ago, I was caught up with blaming myself for what could not be undone and worrying about whether we were going to lose. Worst of all, I was concerned about what my coach would think of me. But the single word he uttered reminded me that I only had one task in that moment: to return my opponent's serve. It shifted my focus to the present, and what my body could do.

For all the skills that I teach my clients about staying calm during stressful situations, nothing tests these skills like competitive sports do. The need for quick reflexes, the internal dialogue that goes on in my head, the adrenaline rush and elevated heart rate all conspire to bring down what I think I know about emotional regulation and mindfulness.

We are often overwhelmed by demands in life, every one of which seems to spell catastrophe if we fail to attend to it right away. Even as we rant about the never-ending responsibilities others heap onto us, we secretly hide ourselves for not doing the job well enough and worry about failing in the next undertaking – and thus failing other people.

In my clinical work, a common refrain from Asian American and Asian immigrant clients experiencing anxiety is the fear of failing others. Often, our deeply traditional cultures drive us to embrace values such as filial piety and duty to society. Notions such as face (as in giving face or losing face) point to our sensitivity to other people's feelings and judgments of ourselves. Relationships are paramount to our sense of well-being. Familial and social harmony is the ultimate goal in many Asian cultures that embrace Confucian ethics. As a result, we are constantly looking into the mirror of social interaction to measure our self-worth.

The need to live up to others' expectations is both a powerful motivator and cruel master. One can argue that this is the force behind our ethic of hard work, which some have used to perpetuate the myth of the "model minority," like Nicholas Kristof recently did in his opinion piece in *The New York Times*. Yet, time and again in my therapy practice, I see people who are tormented by their inner critic, people who constantly feel they are not good enough even as they rise through the ranks in school and at work.

I do not think we need to silence our inner critic, break away from our Asian values or stop caring about what other's think. Instead, when we start to feel overpowered, give ourselves permission to take a moment to center ourselves. Ask, "What is the one thing I need to do right now?" This helps turn our focus toward our Self and the present moment.

"Return," I heard my coach say. I nodded. As I took up my return position, I noticed inside me a sense of calm and confidence where my fear and shame resided a moment ago. I knew what to do the next time the ball flew in my direction. I could not tell if the power would be too great for me, or what was going to happen after that, but it did not matter. That simple knowledge of what I needed to do in the moment gave me the focus I needed to meet the next shot. ■



Community workshops and individual or family counseling appointments are available. For more information or to schedule a consultation, please call ACRS' Therapy Associates at (206) 695-7511.

Ling is a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist with ACRS Therapy Associates.

FULL FUNDING FOR STATE FOOD ASSISTANCE IS RESTORED

In 1996, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (or “Welfare Reform Act”) cut off access to food stamps for countless legal immigrants throughout the country by terminating their eligibility to participate in the federal program.

ACRS co-founded the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) with community partners in response to these cuts and reports of community members committing suicide, feeling desperate and without options to feed themselves and their families. Together, we organized our allies and community members and worked with then Governor Gary Locke and the legislature to create Washington’s State Food Assistance (SFA) program to feed thousands of vulnerable immigrant families in our state. SFA became just one of eight state funded alternatives to the federal program across the nation. By 2012, SFA was helping 31,000 individuals put food on the table, and nearly 14,000 of those being fed were children. In the same year, Washington State slashed the SFA budget in half.

The cut to the SFA program disproportionately burdened immigrant families experiencing hunger. Many younger Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are low-income workers and/or pursuing their education to prepare for their future careers. They range in age from 18 to 50 and face challenges receiving needed social services and accessing

mainstream agencies. As a result, the enrollment of these AAPIs into this program has been low relative to the actual need. Through ACRS’ Community Resource Program (CRP), our staff reached out to AAPIs to enroll eligible elders and young adults in SFA. At ACRS, the 2012 funding cuts directly affected our Recovery Services clients receiving SFA benefits. As individuals recovering from alcohol or drug abuse, many relied upon SFA to feed themselves and their families since they were often also unemployed as a result of their chemical dependency.

ACRS and APIC organized AAPI community members across the state and partnered with other community organizations like Children’s Alliance to advocate for equity and justice. Community members spoke up courageously and persistently, sharing their stories and holding elected officials accountable for solutions. As a result, full funding for Washington’s SFA program was restored by the Legislature in our state budget for 2015-2017. Families relying on SFA received increased benefits beginning in July 2015. Thank you and congratulations to all who fought to restore full funding and against hunger in all of our communities statewide! ■



For more information to access SFA, please contact Kaesri Keopanya, Recovery Services Project Supervisor at (206) 695-7506.

Young members of the Marshallese United Church of Christ Sunday School Choir sing in celebration of the restoration of full funding to SFA.

Photo courtesy of Children’s Alliance



WELLNESS AND WISDOM IN RECOVERY SERVICES

Did you know that approximately 16% of King County residents are aged 60 or older, and that this number is expected to grow to nearly 25% by 2025? Of those over age 65, about one in five meet the diagnostic criteria for a mental disorder, and as many as 16% are problem-drinkers, or at-risk of developing a drinking problem. Because of these figures, King County Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division expects the number of older adults requiring substance use disorder services to nearly triple in upcoming years. Especially affected are low-income seniors who are vulnerable to the environmental stressors of poverty, poor nutrition, inadequate or no housing, social isolation and limited transportation.

Despite these service needs, behavioral health services are often under-utilized by older adults due to a complex array of factors, including fear of stigma and discrimination, denial of problems, system fragmentation and a shortage of trained culturally competent professionals.

ACRS is committed to addressing healthcare access disparities, and the well-being of older adults and their support systems are a priority for ACRS' Recovery Services Department. This past spring, we received

funding from King County Mental Health, Chemical Abuse and Dependency Services Division, and City of Seattle Aging and Disability Services (ADS) to develop the Wellness and Wisdom program.

We named the program Wellness and Wisdom, as we value the wisdom of older adults, and because we use a holistic approach to foster wellness by treating the mind, body and spirit. Wellness and Wisdom features a continuum of behavioral health and other support services to meet the multiple and changing needs of older adults, including their challenges to cope with mental illness and/or substance use disorder. Our Wellness and Wisdom staff work out of ADS offices in downtown Seattle and Renton, and provide education and trainings in community based organizations, hospitals, and as part of in-home care services. ■



For more information about our Wellness and Wisdom program, please contact Kaesri Keopanya, Recovery Services Project Supervisor at (206) 695-7506.

Older AAPI adults have access to a range of services to maintain wellness at ACRS.



WALK FOR RICE: 25 YEARS OF FIGHTING HUNGER AS A COMMUNITY



Members of "Sam's Team" enjoy the live entertainment before the *Walk* begins. *Walk for Rice* co-founder Sam Mitsui is in the center with his military hat.

Photo by Thao Tran

Walk for Rice turned 25 this year! Over 1,000 community members came together this past spring to fight hunger and support the ACRS Food Bank. They became fundraisers, engaged family and friends, and took part in an all-ages community event featuring traditional cultural performances and a 2.5 mile walk/run around Seward Park on Saturday, June 27.

"I saw so many elderly women and children who lacked adequate food...no one donated rice," says Herb Tsuchiya. Together with his late wife, Bertha Tsuchiya and friend, Sam Mitsui, Tsuchiya organized the first *Walk for Rice* in 1990. It took place on Beacon Hill with just 45 walkers who raised \$1,800.

The 25th *Walk for Rice* has raised over \$265,000 so far. In our third year as a CenturyLink community partner, ACRS supporters raised almost \$93,000 and donated over 3,700 pounds of food in the first two weeks of June alone, during CenturyLink's annual "Food Bank Match Days." Their efforts earned a match of \$42,969!

The success of *Walk for Rice* is matched by the need for it. In 2014, the ACRS Food Bank distributed nearly 1 million pounds of culturally familiar and nutritious foods to more than 5,600 families. In total, clients make over 120,000 visits to the 700-square foot facility in the Chinatown/International District. Most of our clients are seniors over 65 and youth under 18 years of age. ACRS staff and volunteers serve our mostly Asian American and Pacific Islander clients by providing ethnic staples like rice, tofu, noodles and fresh fruits and vegetables, which we purchase with proceeds from *Walk for Rice*.

"The memory I always have, is the generosity of the community. Because without them, this could never have happened...that always amazes me," says Sam

■ *Continues on page 22* |

1 *Walk for Rice* participants came from all walks of life to fight hunger and raise funds for the ACRS Food Bank. 2 Sam Mitsui is a member of Nisei Veterans, who are longtime supporters of *Walk for Rice*. 3 A young member of the Puget Sound Academy of Karate looking fearsome. 4 The International Lion Dance Group helped kick off the morning's festivities ahead of the *Walk*. 5 Kerry Chew, daughter of *Walk for Rice* co-founder Herb Tsuchiya, accepted an award on his behalf in recognition of the 25th anniversary of *Walk for Rice*. Photos by Naomi Ishisaka and Jack Storm.



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CELEBRATING YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE



ACRS is able to serve our clients every day because of our skilled and dedicated staff. Please join us in thanking and recognizing some of our longest serving colleagues for their years of service!

1 Chanchoy Chao (31)

2 Xuyen Ngo (31)

3 Yolanda Ardena (30)

4 Junko Yamazaki (30)

5 Oanh Ha (27)

6 Yoon Joo Han (27)

7 Yong Oshie Lim (25)

8 Saga Samoa (25)

9 Vanna Phoumkeo (22)

10 Sister Emmy Tejano (22)

11 Abidah Haliem (22)

12 Insook Kim (21)

13 Samoeun Him (21)

14 David Tetsuo Beer (21)

15 Diane Narasaki (20)

16 Sompasong Keohavong (20)

17 Kirk Tan (20)

18 Jocelyn Lui (20)

19 Gary Tang (20)

Not pictured:
Annamaria Molinaro (26)

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK (CONT.)

▪ Continued from pg. 2 |

this year has offered ACRS a matching grant of nearly half a million dollars to spur the investment of nearly one million dollars as we raise funds to boost the civic engagement of our community statewide. Our community is a swing vote in important elections in many parts of the country, including our own. As you will see on page 5, we are already hard at work with our APIC partners in bringing our community's civic engagement to the next level, with increased emphasis on voter registration, voter education and get out the vote activities in many languages and ethnic communities.

Thanks to you and our partners, ACRS continues to grow and address the challenges that our community faces, whether through our services, our advocacy, or the civic engagement of our community. Thank you for partnering with us and our community members as we work together to heal and strengthen our community, our country and the world. In this season of thanksgiving, we give thanks for you! ■

With deepest thanks and warmest wishes in this holiday season,



Diane Narasaki
Executive Director

GETTING BULLIED, GROWING UP AND GIVING THANKS (CONT.)

▪ Continued from pg. 3 |

alone and unworthy to live. It led him to contemplate suicide. Fortunately, Tien found his way to ACRS, where he received individual counseling services and joined our summer youth leadership development program, Peer Leaders of Tomorrow (PLOT).

In PLOT I learned that it was okay to be myself and even to exist. I found that I could still laugh with others, play games with them, and even bond with them. I learned that I was not alone...that I should not fear what the outside world thought of me. Most importantly I learned to lead and be a leader to others who were suffering from the same problems I was...I found something priceless in all of those years. I found happiness.

Through PLOT, Tien began to develop his own voice and identity, and regained his confidence. This fall, he entered the University of Washington's Law, Societies and Justice program, noting that he "owe[s] a great debt to the people around me and my community, and to ACRS..." as to why he chose his major.

Tien's story is just one among the many that are being written at ACRS every day. Learn more about our programs and services at www.acrs.org. ■

A CULINARY JOURNEY IN SUPPORT OF ACRS (CONT.)

| ■ Continued from pg. 6 |

Pacific Islands are losing their homes and nations to rising seas...while here in our neighborhoods, heavily polluted air from carbon emissions wreak havoc on the health of our most vulnerable community members. We are rooted in our community, but we embrace our fragile planet and all who live upon it, because all things are interconnected." Through year-round programs serving youth to elders, ACRS clients are learning the skills to speak up and be heard on issues such as this and others that matter most to them.

Celebrity Chef Melissa King provided an on-stage demonstration of her custom designed dish and expressed her excitement about being able to support

ACRS. She told the audience how she wished her late grandmother could have had access to the culturally relevant and in-language services that ACRS provides, "my grandmother fell ill right before I filmed Top Chef, and it was difficult to find a caretaker that spoke Chinese. If we just had that support that ACRS offers at that time, it would have been really helpful." King also commended ACRS on providing a safe and supportive place for LGBTQ youth, which is another resource that she would have benefited from growing up as a lesbian Chinese-American.

Seattle Times editorial writer and columnist Thanh Tan along with former King 5 reporter Derek Wing served as the masters of ceremony. ■

WALK FOR RICE: 25 YEARS OF FIGHTING HUNGER AS A COMMUNITY (CONT.)

| ■ Continued from pg. 12 |

Mitsui. Mitsui fondly remembers the years people and their dogs wore costumes to *Walk for Rice* – an activity revived this year in honor of Sam and Herb, and their 25 year labor of love organizing this event every year since 1990. ACRS extends its gratitude to the many sponsors, team captains, and walkers and runners who make this the special community tradition that it is. We also thank the *Walk for Rice* committee members with a special shout out to committee chair, Jeff Liang.

We hope to see you in June 2016 for next year's *Walk for Rice*! Form a team with your family and friends, or ask your company to start a team and become an event sponsor. It's not too late to make a gift in support of the ACRS Food Bank in 2015 at www.walkforrice.org. ■



To learn more about how you can support the next *Walk for Rice*, contact ACRS development director, Candace Inagi at (206) 744-2404 or candacei@acrs.org.



THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS

ACRS thanks all of our 2015 volunteers for their time and talents in helping make our work possible.



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ACRS' MISSION STATEMENT

To promote social justice and the well-being and empowerment of Asian Pacific American individuals, families and communities - including immigrants, refugees and native born - by developing, providing and advocating for innovative community-based multilingual and multicultural services.