

ACRS NEWS



GIVE HOPE, OPPORTUNITY & VOICE

Each year, over 26,000 people find hope for a better future at ACRS, along with opportunities to meet the basic needs of their families. In the process, they often find their voice.



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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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DEAR FRIENDS,

This has been an action packed year. ACRS worked with our community members to bring hope, opportunity and voice to the community we serve. ACRS grew from the social justice movement, and remains firmly rooted in it. We understand that hope, opportunity and voice are inextricably linked.

We gave hope to our youth, adults and seniors healing in mind and body through our mental health, substance use disorder, problem and pathological gambling services, nutrition and wellness programs. We gave opportunity to youth and adults seeking better lives through employment and career growth. We gave voice to all generations of our community through our citizenship services and civic engagement activities.

And we see the beautiful fruits of our labor. We see a new generation of young leaders, ready to change their lives, and change our world. We see a wise generation of elders, unafraid to advocate for their rights, and eager to improve conditions not only for themselves, but for everyone facing the same challenges. They are determined to leave a better world for future generations.

We see and hear our community speaking out on the front lines of climate justice and the work to stop climate change, because we know of climate refugees from the islands, coastlines, and lands of our ancestral homelands, and we know that our neighborhoods have some of the worst air quality and health indicators resulting from carbon pollution. We see and hear our community testifying for improved public transportation to enable our transit dependent community members to get to the places they need to go to sustain their lives, and to provide greener transportation options. We see and hear our community join with others to call for greater police accountability and an end to biased policing. We are inspired by clients who break the stigma and stereotypes of people with mental illness by publicly sharing their stories of suffering and recovery, to better educate policymakers and legislators about the need for adequate investment in mental health services and that recovery is possible when services are available. Our clients and community members are active and outspoken on key issues of our times. Their voices were never more needed than in these times and the challenging days ahead.

Our community is the fastest growing racial demographic in the nation. With our growth comes the opportunity to use our powerful voices and votes, so that our community can better participate in and strengthen our democracy.

Thanks to you, we are poised on the cutting edge of change, whether it is change in the individual lives of those we serve, or change as a people, whether in our community, our country, or the world.

Thank you for all your support and making our work possible,



Diane Narasaki
ACRS Executive Director



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A STORY OF HOPE, OPPORTUNITY AND VOICE



With support from her care team at ACRS, Pheangdy became a U.S. citizen in June of 2016.

Photo by Ryan Catabay.

Pheangdy left Laos in 2002 and came to the U.S. to care for her ailing father. After he passed away, she decided to set down roots and make America her home.

In time, Pheangdy met and married her husband, and was able to obtain a green card and become a permanent resident. Unfortunately, her marriage did not work out and once she separated from her husband, Pheangdy found herself without a roof over her head. She moved from couch to couch while working as a cook. Her English was poor, which prevented her from getting a better job so she could afford adequate housing. She also suffered from depression and experienced kidney failure in connection to her diabetes.

In the fall of 2010, Pheangdy found her way to ACRS. She worked with a case manager, who helped her manage her depression and diabetes. He helped Pheangdy find stable housing, served as an interpreter during medical appointments and enrolled her in a citizenship class for Lao speakers at ACRS so she could achieve her goal of becoming a U.S. citizen. Pheangdy

failed in her initial attempts at naturalization, but she was a diligent student and continued attending classes and working to improve her English so she could one day succeed.

Pheangdy found hope and opportunity at ACRS. She found a sense of community and began to develop her voice so she could advocate for people in situations similar to her own. Even though she could not vote, she looked forward to an annual trip to Olympia, when hundreds of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) meet with legislators about issues of importance to them.

Things took a turn for the worse when Pheangdy was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer in 2015. Her chemotherapy schedule made it difficult for her to continue attending her classes. Her depression and medications affected her memory and interfered with her ability to learn and retain information. Pheangdy confided in her case manager, "I hope I can become a citizen before I die." Her case manager enlisted the

▪ *Continues on page 21* |

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY WITH OUR DEMOCRACY

The language and cultural barriers that result in disparities in access to healthcare and other services for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) can also be hurdles to full participation in our democracy. That is why ACRS works all year-round – not just during elections – and throughout our programs, to lift up the voices of our community. We help thousands overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, and gain the ability to advocate on behalf of themselves, their families and their communities on the issues that matter most to them. Here's a quick recap of what we've been doing since we last shared our work in the spring edition of *ACRS News*.

Building the Momentum

This year was filled with targeted work to increase visibility, engagement and leadership. We found that people are engaged. They are ready and excited to participate. Ahead of the primary election, we placed Get Out the Vote (GOTV) advertisements in Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese in eight ethnic newspapers. We ran voter registration and GOTV public service announcements through Desi 1250 AM radio to reach

the South Asian community and on Crossings TV that reached Cantonese, Hindi, Mandarin and Vietnamese speaking communities. We helped hundreds of people to register to vote. We called over 1,200 people across Washington State to remind them to vote in the primary election and provided information in Cantonese, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Korean and Khmer. Staff, volunteers and interns visited community centers, knocked on doors and attended local events to register new voters and assist King County voters with requesting their election materials in Chinese, Vietnamese and Korean from King County Elections.

Introducing Candidates, Issues and Processes

On August 12, folks across the country tuned in to watch the first-ever AAPI Presidential Election Town Hall, which was held in Las Vegas but streamed nationwide. Over 500 people from across our state gathered in community spaces to take part in this historic event – including at ACRS. Despite technical difficulties that interrupted the livestream, people

Community members enjoyed real-time interpretation during the AAPI Presidential Town Hall.

Photo by Hyunchul Luke Jung.



had a chance to learn about positions taken by the presidential candidates on issues important to them. Participants at ACRS had the chance to practice voting through a mock vote. They gathered to discuss the positions of leading presidential candidates with community members in 7 languages and dialects, including Cantonese, Mandarin, Vietnamese, Korean, Nepali, Khmer and Samoan.

Candidates running for local office spoke directly to community members at candidate forums in eastern and western Washington. Asian Pacific Islander Coalition partners hosted the Spokane candidate forum and the candidate forum at ACRS was a collaborative effort between the Asian Pacific Islander Americans for Civic Empowerment, International Community Health Services, InterIm Community Development Agency, Northwest Asian Weekly and Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation Development Authority. Community members had the chance to hear directly from candidates on the issues that AAPIs care about – including climate change, education, immigration and the economy.

Stories from the Field

A member of our Club Bamboo senior center asked about upcoming ballot parties for Vietnamese speakers. She was planning a vacation and didn't want to miss the opportunity to vote and wondered if she needed to change her vacation plans.

A husband and wife, both successful graduates of our evening citizenship class were scheduled to take their Oath of Allegiance at a naturalization ceremony on October 11. They emailed staff, worried that they would miss the voter registration deadline and not be able to vote in their first election this year. We reassured them that they have until October 31 to register in person.

'Asian representation in politics,' 'LGBTQ rights' and 'immigration reform' were just three of the most important issues identified by youth participants at our "Celebrate Your Freedom" event, held at ACRS in October. This was our first civic engagement event aimed at celebrating the power of youth civic voices. We assisted a young participant in our Peer Leaders of Tomorrow program who had recently turned 19. She

Youth used sticky notes to share things they care about during our "Celebrate Your Freedom" event.

Photo by Hyunchul Luke Jung.

- Immigration Reform
- DACA + DAPA
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shared that “registering to vote or voting never crossed my mind as a priority. If it wasn’t for this event, it would not have been as easy for me to register and become a voting member of our community.”

The 2016 AAPI Democracy Summit

Over 2,000 community members from all over Washington State attended the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition’s (APIC) Democracy Summit on September 15. ACRS joined with local and statewide partners from Pierce, Snohomish, South Puget Sound, Spokane and Yakima to organize this successful event. The theme was “Celebrating Unity and Civic Engagement.” With interpretation in 27 languages, participants heard from local and state leaders about the importance of their voice, not only during election periods, but year-round. The highlight of the event was a gubernatorial candidate forum where the two major candidates for governor responded to questions raised by the community, which included climate change and its impacts on vulnerable low-income communities and

communities of color, raising the state’s minimum wage, and funding for education and health, human and social services.

Getting Out the Vote

On September 27, ACRS joined partners across Washington and nationally in National Voter Registration Day. Along with our partners, we helped community members update voter registration information and register eligible new voters. Outreach with local partners in 5 languages spanned King County from Shoreline to Kent and east to Bellevue.

Over 1,000 letters went out to community members who became citizens with the help of ACRS’ Naturalization Program, to remind them to register to vote, to offer assistance to register, and ask them to vote if registered.

Prior to the 2016 General Election, our office was abuzz with our “Get Out the Vote” efforts. We placed multilingual ads urging and reminding people to vote in 10 local ethnic community newspapers – including

AAPIs from all over Washington State gathered in the Tacoma Dome for the APIC Democracy Summit.

Photo by Dean Wong.



those read by Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese community members. We held over 10 ballot parties in various languages. At each gathering, we explained the roles of different elected offices, the initiatives on the ballot, and how to ensure that one's vote is counted.

As information on ballots can be difficult to understand, we created non-partisan policy briefs that provide simplified and accessible answers to basic questions like "what is this initiative about?" and "what does a 'yes' or 'no' vote mean?" Lastly, we recruited volunteers to help us get out the vote through local door knocking and multiple multilingual phone banking sessions which ran up until November 8.

Looking Toward the Future

Though the November election is over, the work of civic engagement is far from done. With the goal of building year-round capacity for civic engagement within our communities, we continue to work across generations, ethnicities and geographic boundaries to

ensure that AAPI community voices are heard. We are already preparing for AAPI Legislative Day in Olympia, set for February of 2017, so that we are ready to mobilize communities state-wide to meet with the governor and legislators to address the budget and issues on behalf of their families and communities. We are continuing the momentum to increase the visibility of AAPIs; support the development of youth and community leaders; and outreach to new and emerging sectors of AAPI communities.

With your help, we will continue to build on the foundations laid for AAPI civic engagement in the years ahead. Please take our Pledge to Engage and we'll contact you with tips and important, non-partisan election information so you can stay in the loop when it comes to exercising your right to vote: http://bit.ly/ACRS_PledgeToEngage. ■



Contact Monica Ng at (206) 774-2436 or monican@acrs.org to learn more about the AAPI Democracy Initiative.

Our AAPI Democracy Initiative placed in-language ads in local ethnic newspapers.

Photo and ad design by Peggy Liao.



ACRS ANNUAL GALA A SUCCESS



Chef Nirmal Monteiro, center, poses for a photo with ACRS board member, Diem Ly, right.

Photo by Woori Cheh.

Over 550 community leaders, elected officials, supporters and volunteers joined us at our annual gala, *A Culinary Journey* on October 1 at The Westin Bellevue. The event, presented by Comcast, featured remarks from Seattle City Mayor Ed Murray, ACRS Executive Director Diane Narasaki, guest speaker Trang Tu and an onstage cooking demonstration by Chef Nirmal Monteiro of Nirmal's Restaurant in Seattle's Pioneer Square.

The event began with a lively performance by Morning Star, a Korean cultural drum and dance group. In addition to Chef Nirmal Monteiro, our featured chefs included Chef Yuie Wiborg of SOI, Chef Masa Nakashima of Japonessa and Chef Chera Amlag of Hood Famous Bakeshop.

Through video testimonials, we heard inspiring stories of hope, opportunity and finding one's voice from participants of our citizenship, employment, senior and behavioral health programs. Former board member and longtime community advocate, Trang Tu, stepped onstage to share her personal story of hope

and voice. Trang spoke of the life she has shares with her mother, whom she has been taking to ACRS' Club Bamboo Senior Center for the last year and a half. She said, "experiencing Club Bamboo reminds me that we are all one community. There is no 'donor' apart from 'beneficiary', there is only us, as one community." Through storytelling, we learned that while many seek out ACRS for hope and opportunity, what they often find is their voice, a sense of individual empowerment and connection to community that makes us all stronger.

Near the end of the evening, we were moved by the generosity and love of one man for his longtime friend and our great community leader, "Uncle Bob" Santos. This man's heartfelt gift in honor of Uncle Bob reminded us of the treasured responsibility of carrying his legacy forward.

■ *Continues on page 21* |

1 Gala guests raise their numbers to support ACRS. 2 Lucky winner of a Secret Ingredient package. 3 Morning Star Korean Cultural Center opening performance. 4 Trang Tu shares her mother's story with guests. 5 Dessert course by Hood Famous Bakeshop. Photos by Naomi Ishisaka.



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ACRS & COMCAST: BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

Between 2007 and 2013 in King, Pierce and Snohomish counties, the number of unemployed Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) increased 73%, and the poverty rate grew 63%, according to the U.S. Census Bureau. Over half (57%) are foreign-born, and over two-thirds speak a language other than English at home. As wages increase and more job-seekers enter the labor market, those who speak limited English may find it harder to gain entry-level jobs. For those who do not know how to use computers, their inability to bridge the digital divide often means they are unable to find and retain a job, or advance in their careers.

Limited-English AAPI job-seekers and workers will be at a disadvantage if they cannot use tablets, smartphones and the Internet with some level of proficiency. The need for digital literacy affects everything from service jobs like hotel housekeeping to manufacturing jobs. To keep their jobs, learn their schedules, submit timesheets to get paid and communicate with supervisors, employees must now be computer literate. This year, thousands of home care workers in Washington were affected when the state moved their time keeping system online, potentially costing those unfamiliar with computers their jobs or their pay.

That is why ACRS is deepening our digital literacy efforts across our programs. We help community members gain the skills they need to succeed in this country, and we work with employers to learn what they need from workers today. With generous support from Comcast, we launched our Digital Literacy Initiative this past October. Our curriculum builds on new skills and elements each week, starting with basics like turning a computer on an off, typing and using a mouse, and progressing to using Google Maps and LinkedIn.

“This effort is not only about building a bridge to help more Americans cross the digital divide, but it’s also about helping people use the Internet to climb up the economic ladder – to a better education and a better job that will help them achieve their dreams and help end the cycle of poverty,” says David L. Cohen, Comcast’s Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Diversity Officer in Community Investment. Locally, Comcast is also funding similar efforts at the Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, Chief Seattle Club, El Centro de la Raza and others.

Thank you, Comcast, for your continued investment in our community and supporting ACRS as we help clients build a better future for themselves and their families. ■

Digital literacy students filled the ACRS computer lab on the first day.

Photo by Hong Chhuor.



THE ART OF LETTING GO by Ling Chua, LMFT



THERAPY ASSOCIATES

A young monk and his teacher were traveling one day when they came across a woman standing by the river. The bridge that used to be there had been washed away by the torrents. The woman looked visibly upset and impatient. "I need to get to the other side quickly," she said to the monks as they approached. "I haven't got time to take a detour to get to the next bridge. Would you be so kind as to carry me across?" The young monk looked to his teacher, who nodded and proceeded to let her climb onto his back. He carried her across the river and set her down gently, upon which the woman chided him for dirtying her robes and hurriedly walked away without a word of gratitude.

When the teacher returned to rejoin the young monk, the two continued on their journey in silence, the teacher's robes dripping wet. The young monk could only imagine the discomfort his teacher was in. After a few hours, the young monk could not longer hold his silence and asked, "Teacher, why did you let the woman humiliate you when you went through all this trouble to help her?"

"I set her down hours ago," the teacher smiled. "Why are you still carrying her?"

This is one version of a story from Zen Buddhism about living in the present and letting go of grudges. While it is understandable that we respond to unpleasant experiences with emotions such as anger, problems arise when we continue to saddle ourselves with such emotions.

Clients often tell me of their experiences of being unfairly treated, whether it is a perceived slight from a fellow road user just moments ago or a disparaging remark from their grade school teacher. Their emotional responses range from annoyance to anger to shame. Some spend sleepless nights thinking how they can get even with their superior. Some resolve never to call the family member again.

Why is it so hard to just let it go?

Part of the reason lies in our biological pre-programming. When we perceive a threat, our body switches into "fight-or-flight" mode. Just as prehistoric humans instinctively turned around and pointed their

spears when they heard rustling in the grass behind them, we are quick to launch a counter attack when we think we are under fire. To be sure, we no longer fear being eaten alive by lions, but in our urban jungles or the comfort of schools, offices, homes and virtual spaces, we are still watchful of threats, whether they are hurtful words or reckless behaviors from others. This is part of our survival instincts.

Sometimes, we overestimate a perceived threat and our behavior is accordingly outsized. We may snap at our unsuspecting spouses or slam doors on our way out. We may have great difficulty telling our body to "stand down" after an event. While we're huffing and puffing in our indignation, our spouses are left wondering, "What did I say?"

Often, what we perceive to be disrespectful behavior may have triggered a deeper negative belief about ourselves: "I'm incompetent," or "I'm weak." We develop core beliefs about ourselves from our childhood experiences; if we were constantly criticized, dismissed or otherwise hurt, we may come to believe deeply that we are unworthy of love.

Core beliefs can be changed with therapy. In the course of daily life, we can also practice acceptance of our feelings. I recently learned a therapeutic approach that uses tapping on the meridian points on our face and upper body. While tapping, we say aloud self-validating statements, such as, "Even though I am so mad at myself for letting this person get under my skin, I'd like to accept my feelings." Paradoxically, when we accept our feelings no matter how unreasonable they seem, we give ourselves permission to let these feelings go. Our grudges go along with these feelings.

The teacher in the story that began this article was able to set the woman down even in his mind because of his compassion, not just toward her, but – perhaps more importantly – toward himself. ■



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.

INTEGRATED CARE IS WHOLE PERSON CARE

Each of us is made up of body and mind. We cannot separate one from the other, and in order to be happy and healthy, we must care for the whole person.

Even with the best of intentions and knowledge of mental health, our staff can do little to help someone be happy when they're suffering from severe tooth pain, diabetes and chronic pain – or if they don't have a place to sleep at night.

At ACRS, we promote whole health and well-being when providing care to clients. When we learned that people with a serious mental illness (SMI) have a higher risk of premature death (dying on average 25 years earlier than people without SMI), we felt an urgent need to do more than what we had been doing. With a \$2 million federal grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), we developed and have been providing a model of whole health care since October 2010.

We call this program WAPA, or Wellness for Asian Pacific Americans. The goals are two-fold: 1) bring primary care to ACRS, where clients are already gathering, and (2) incorporate health education and culturally competent wellness-activities that complement the medical treatment they're receiving.

Each week, ACRS offers one day of primary care services by dedicated medical staff from International Community Health Services (ICHS). Our clients, who

did not previously have access to primary care services, can now see a doctor and receive quality medical services, preventive care and health education. With support from their mental health care managers, they engage in lifestyle changes.

WAPA offers health and wellness education, and provides activities that address nutrition and exercise. Over half of our clients either have or are at risk for diabetes, high cholesterol or high blood pressure. We've developed over 20 different client wellness groups tailored to specific ethnic groups, and integrating unique cultural practices and beliefs. We use various approaches like acupuncture, Tai Chi, yoga, meditation, traditional dance, prayers, music and ethnic cooking. We even offer dental care at ACRS through the Mobile Dental Van from Medical Teams International and ICHS.

More recently, we've strengthened our approach to caring for clients who are experiencing both mental health and substance use disorder. Treating one without treating other issues is not effective, so we're working to cross-train our staff in mental health, substance use and physical health.

Our goal is to help clients live happy and healthy lives as productive and contributing members of our society by reaching their full potential. For us, the best way to achieve this goal is to treat each client as a whole person and all aspects of their health by culturally and professionally competent staff and integrated services. ■

Clients benefit when they can receive primary care and other services in one place.

Photo by Hong Chhuor.



THE POWER OF U.S. CITIZENSHIP

If you're a citizen of the United States, when was the last time you paused to think about what citizenship means to you? For many immigrants who have yet to naturalize, it's a question that often weighs on their minds.

When ACRS clients decide to pursue U.S. citizenship, they do so for a variety of reasons. Ask them, and they might tell you that they appreciate the United States. They feel American and want to make it "official." They feel more secure knowing that the U.S. will become their permanent home once they naturalize. Naturalized clients who have lived under repressive governments in their countries of origin no longer have to fear deportation back to their homelands.

Others are motivated by gaining the right to vote and help choose their elected officials. They are excited to know that their voices will be heard and their votes will be counted. We've heard stories from various clients about how voting is not something they were able to do, or something they felt safe doing in their native countries. Many believed their votes didn't matter.

We've also observed that a key motivator for naturalization is family reunification. Newly naturalized clients often petition for their adult children (or their parents, younger children and siblings) to come to the

U.S. and become lawful permanent residents. Someday, they too, will become citizens. Immigrant minors under 18 have an opportunity to derive citizenship from their naturalized parents, which could impact their ability to access financial aid or scholarships, or to apply for certain jobs.

There's the benefit of being able to travel with a U.S. passport, which impacts travel visa fees to certain nations and enables naturalized citizens to take long trips to their native countries without worrying about their immigration status. There's also some comfort in knowing that as a citizen, one could seek assistance at the U.S. embassy in any country, should a problem arise while they are traveling. Naturalized citizens know they can leave and re-enter the United States without fear of not being able to get back into the country.

For refugees and asylum seekers in particular, who may have suffered immensely in their journeys to America, the impact of becoming a U.S. citizen is nothing short of a profound sense of security in knowing that they are safe, at last.

Each of our clients has a unique immigration story, but when they naturalize, they all share a sense of gratitude, pride and a hope for the future. ■

Photo by Hyunchul Luke Jung.



FIGHTING HUNGER AS A COMMUNITY



ACRS board members and elected officials lead the way during *Walk for Rice*.

Photo by Naomi Ishisaka.

Over a thousand people gathered on a sunny Saturday, June 25, at Seward Park in Seattle for the 2016 *Walk for Rice*, presented by Pacific Market International (PMI). For 26 years, *Walk for Rice* has promoted awareness about hunger in our communities while also raising funds for the ACRS Food Bank, where we provide over a million pounds of culturally familiar foods like rice, tofu, fish and fresh vegetables to Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) elders and families who come from across the region.

The family and pet friendly walk/run featured lion dancing, a martial arts demonstration, Japanese taiko drumming and a performance by the Seattle Chinese Girls Drill Team. Jeff Liang, event committee co-chair and ACRS board member reflects, "It's so inspiring to see the community come together to fight hunger and immensely gratifying to see it all come together at the *Walk* itself." We included new elements to this year's *Walk for Rice*, including live music by Theory of Change, AAPI owned food trucks, Mangia Me and Outside the

Box and a Community Appreciation gathering in July, when we honored the passion and leadership of our community.

Through the generosity of our event sponsors, walkers, runners and their donors, as well as a significant match through CenturyLink's National Food Drive effort, *Walk for Rice* raised over \$332,000 to help fight hunger. For the last four years, the CenturyLink match has inspired many to host their own community events resulting in over a dozen community fundraisers such as the Community Health Plan of Washington Rice Bowl, Karaoke for Rice, Rock for Rice, Drag for Rice, Words for Rice poetry reading, a bake sale by City University and more.

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1 ACRS staff lead a lively warm-up before the walk. 2 The Kong family presents Mangia Me food truck. 3 ACRS board member Eunhee Sumner serving up tea and coffee. 4 Top fundraising team, TBS Seattle pose for a photo with Diane. 5 The Seattle Chinese Girls Drill Team kick off the walk. Photos by Naomi Ishisaka, Jack Storm and Rob Sumner.



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A STORY OF HOPE, OPPORTUNITY AND VOICE (CONT.)

| ■ Continued from pg. 3 |

help of ACRS' medical director and citizenship services supervisor to obtain a disability waiver for her, which was initially denied. They worked to put together an appeal, but on the day before the hearing, Pheangdy experienced a reaction from her medications that caused her to fall and break a leg. She started to lose hope during the month that she spent in the hospital.

Pheangdy rescheduled her hearing for June 29, 2016. She went to her hearing with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services in a wheelchair,

as she continued to heal from her fall. Fortunately, her appeal was approved and she was sworn in as a U.S. citizen that day. Her mood has improved dramatically after her naturalization and improvement in her cancer; she feels that she has found a new reason to live, adding that without ACRS, she would have had "no chance of obtaining citizenship." ■

ACRS ANNUAL GALA A SUCCESS (CONT.)

| ■ Continued from pg. 8 |

The overwhelming generosity and support from our gala guests helped raise over \$340,000 to sustain vital services that bring hope and opportunity to thousands in our community. Thank you to ACRS board members, staff and volunteers for their support. We extend a very special acknowledgement to our volunteer event emcee, Mary Nam of KOMO 4 News. Finally, our

deepest gratitude to gala committee chair, Derek Edmonds, and committee members Jacky-Vy Chau, Norman Cheuk, Angelie Chong, Daniel Chun, Debadutta Dash, Clara Doctolero, Loretta Little, Shane Rai, Eunhee Sumner and Juliana Wong – your leadership and passion for our community helped make this event possible! ■

FIGHTING HUNGER AS A COMMUNITY (CONT.)

| ■ Continued from pg. 14 |

We wish to extend our many thanks to volunteers, supporters and their families for their generous support of *Walk for Rice*. ACRS is grateful to Blaine United Methodist Church, Chinese Baptist Church, Japanese Baptist Church and our honorary co-chairs Sam Mitsui and Herb Tsuchiya, and the late Bertha Tsuchiya, for their roles in founding *Walk for Rice* and building a cherished community tradition. Big thanks to Stella Leong and Margie Martin for including ACRS in the CenturyLink Food Drive – a partnership and matching opportunity that has brought significant resources to the our food bank. Finally, a heartfelt

thank you to this year's *Walk for Rice* committee co-chairs Jeffrey Liang and Martha Reyes, and committee members Mele Aho, Justin Chan, Kerry Chew, Kathy Kim-Juhn, Victoria Ju, Sam Le, Nicole Ngonevolalath, Brian Nguyen, Cathy Pham, Mike Simbre, Richard Sohn, Soma Subramaniam, Dexter Tang, Ming-Ming Tung-Edelman and Aaron Yeung.

We look forward to seeing you at the next *Walk for Rice* on Saturday, June 24, 2017. Contribute to our year-round effort and support the ACRS Food Bank by making a gift at www.walkforrice.org. ■

CELEBRATING YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE

ACRS is able to serve our clients every day because of our skilled and dedicated staff of 258. Please join us in thanking and recognizing some of our longest serving colleagues for their years of service!

- Rina Adams | 10
- Cheng Saechao | 10
- Xiangping Chen | 10
- Trang Tran | 10
- Rosie Yap | 10
- Tramanh Nguyen | 10
- Mala Lim | 10
- Ke-Jui Chang | 10
- Xuan Do | 10
- Ouzeng Saeyang | 10
- Davantara Yinn | 11
- Harumi Hashimoto | 11
- Hector Kwan | 11
- Shirley Wong | 11
- Yeong Mi Kim | 11
- Saveng Sengdara | 11
- Heayoung Kang | 11
- Kelly Thao | 12
- Lynn Lam | 12
- Victor Loo | 12
- Phong Ly | 12
- Rogato Cubelo | 13
- Hyo-Young Kee | 13
- Josephine C. Mumpar | 14
- Saratte Lim | 14
- Phalla Lean | 14
- Ty Trang | 15
- Sandy Khou | 15
- Panchalee Sonsaykeo | 16
- Vanthy Ly | 16
- Mae Seng Chao | 16
- Michiko Kono | 16
- Hanh Lai | 17
- Naty Lamug | 17
- Mary Shwetz | 17
- Minh-Phuong Nguyen | 18
- Chung-Hsu Hsu | 18
- Kaesri Keopanya | 18
- Fred Le | 19
- Anh An | 19
- Sieng Lee | 20
- Jocelyn Lui | 21
- Gary Tang | 21
- Kirk Tan | 21
- Sompasong Keohavong | 21
- Diane Narasaki | 21
- Insook Kim | 22
- David Tetsuo Beer | 22
- Samoeun Him | 22
- Vannarath Phoumkeo | 23
- Abidah Haliem | 23
- Karen Jackel | 24
- Khamsouk Keowla | 25
- Chalin Pahn | 25
- Letrinh Vu | 25
- Motusaga Samoa | 26
- Yong Lim Oshie | 26
- Annamaria Molinaro | 27
- Yoon Joo Han | 28
- Oanh Ha | 28
- Junko Yamazaki | 31
- Yolanda Ardena | 31
- Xuyen Ngo | 32
- Chanchoy Chao | 32

A FANTASTIC RIDE by Gary Tang, Director of Aging and Adult Services

The last 21 years and eight months at ACRS have been a fantastic ride! I look forward to work each morning and tackling projects on my to-do list. Getting an aromatic latte at Café Hope, admiring the energy of our seniors at their Zumba Gold and yoga classes, and hearing stories about how my co-workers creatively meet their clients' needs keep me positive.

I have witnessed the healthy growth of the organization. I remember moving from Asian Plaza to the International District Village Square in 2003. Our dreams came true in 2008, when we moved into our current and lovely home on Martin Luther King Jr. Way South.

Our Aging and Adult Services team has grown from 16 in 1995 (the year I joined ACRS) to nearly 80 today. Significant program developments include the successful 'New Freedom' program in Washington State in 2007, which empowered our clients by putting them in the driver's seat with respect to their own care. In 2008, we added a fifth senior lunch program featuring international cuisines five days a week. That program evolved into Club Bamboo – a full-service senior center offering ethnic meals, wellness activities, social time and other services for older adults in 2015. We've just reached a new membership record of 600 this year!

We've helped thousands of limited English-speaking caregivers meet mandated training and certification requirements. In 2010, we hired our own instructors to teach multilingual homecare training classes and began our Navigator program to help thousands of King County caregivers stay in the workforce. Next year, we will implement the Health Home program using integrated care services to assist high-risk elders improve health outcomes.

I love the way that we work as a cohesive team at ACRS to provide integrated and culturally competent services for all generations. We embrace diversity and break down barriers for AAPIs to access services and increase civic engagement. My two-decade ride has been filled with great joy and satisfaction, and I have nothing but good memories here. After an extensive search process, we are pleased to announce G De Castro will be filling my shoes.

He is extremely well-qualified for the job, and the program will continue to flourish under his leadership.

As for me, I intend to tackle my next chapter with gusto by fulfilling some long-delayed dreams that have fueled my imagination for years. Wish me luck! ■

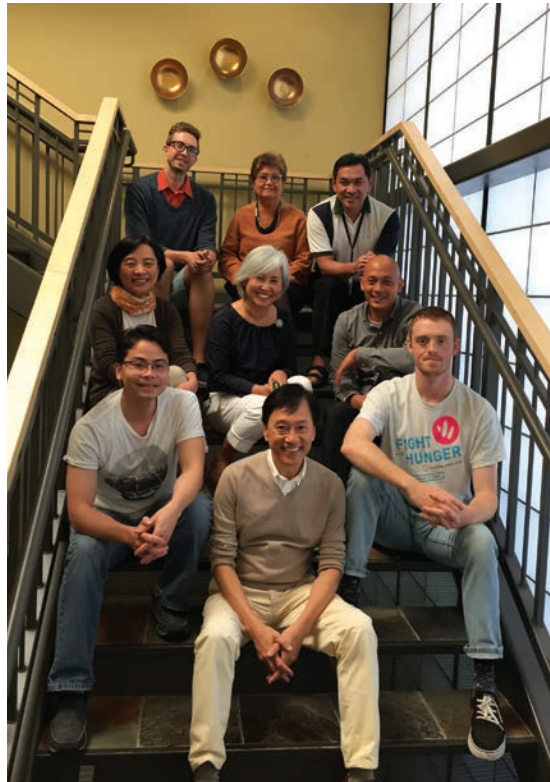


Photo: Gary Tang, center, and his AAS management team.

“ Together, we embrace diversity and break down barriers for AAPIs to access services and increase civic engagement. ”

IN MEMORIAM



Photo courtesy of Dean Wong and the *International Examiner*.

Uncle Bob

Bob Santos, everybody's uncle, and unofficial mayor of the Chinatown/International District, did more than any single individual to preserve the historic, cultural, affordable residential and small business character of the neighborhood.

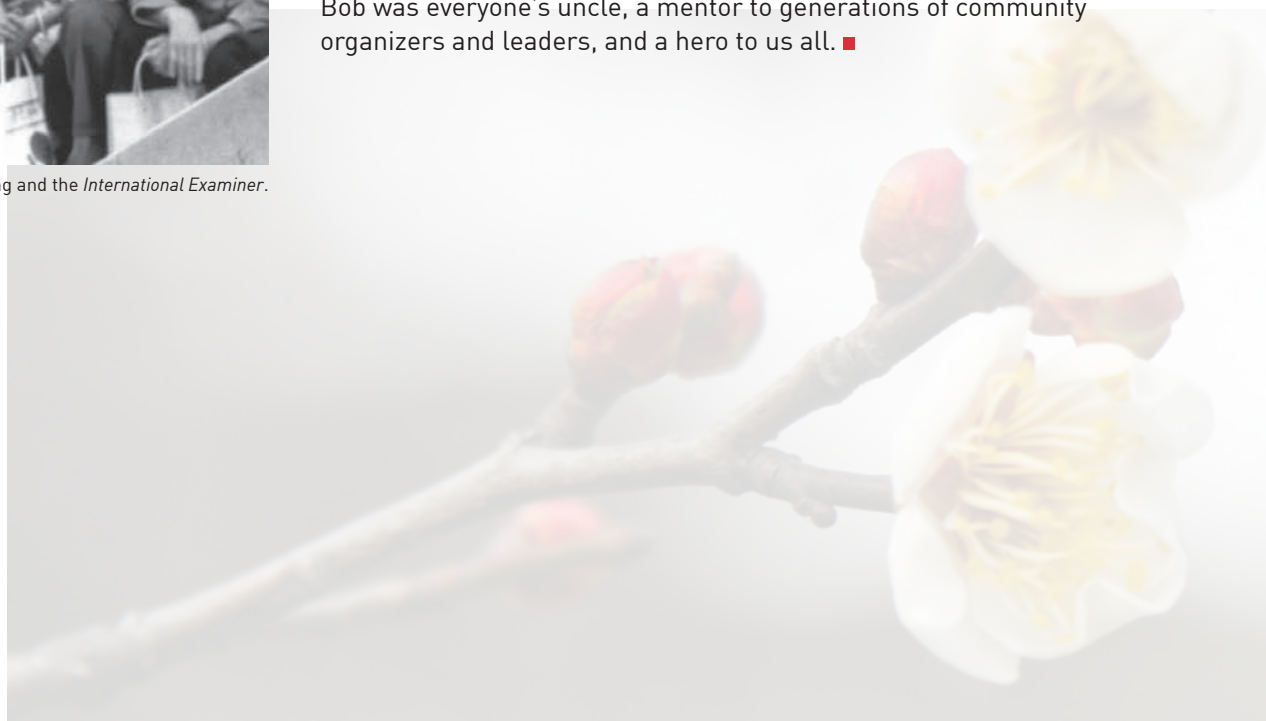
At a time when Chinatowns and historic Asian neighborhoods across the country were disappearing due to the pressures of development out of sync with their character, Bob led the fight to preserve our historic neighborhood for the community to live, work and play in.

Many major pieces of the community's infrastructure, including ACRS, came about because of Bob's advocacy. Uncle Bob's roots were in the neighborhood, but his vision and commitment to a just and peaceful world led him far beyond the CID. He strengthened the ties between the Native American, Latino, and African American and other communities and our own for decades.

As a regional representative of HUD later in his career, he shared what he had learned locally and applied it at a regional and national level. He opened the doors of federal buildings to people who were homeless on cold winter nights. He traveled abroad, responded to invitations to share what he learned, along with his brothers in spirit and in the struggle, Bernie Whitebear, Roberto Maestas and Larry Gossett.

He documented many of the changes he had seen and had a hand in through his books, so that the history of the period would not be lost to future generations. He inspired and mentored generations of community activists, organizers and leaders in our community. He will continue to inspire everyone who knew him, knew of him, or will learn of what he achieved in his lifetime, for generations to come.

Bob was everyone's uncle, a mentor to generations of community organizers and leaders, and a hero to us all. ■



Ruth and Ben Woo

If Bob Santos was the “unofficial Mayor of the Chinatown/International District” and everyone’s favorite honorary uncle, Ruth Woo, who passed away recently, was the behind the scenes political wizard and king maker who played a key role in the cultivation, election and appointment of many of our leaders. Ruth’s warm, down-to-earth, good humored manner and genuine interest in people made her everyone’s favorite honorary aunty. She often had a gleam in her eye as she innocently asked her many breakfast, lunch and coffee partners of all ages, races and backgrounds, for their opinions on issues of the day and people in the news. Ruth laughed readily at herself and our collective human foibles, while sharing her own incisive reading of any given situation in these conversations. She was always looking for talent in our community and other communities of color. She looked for good minds with good hearts and encouraged people with both to run for office or seek appointments to make a difference for our communities’ most vulnerable members. She was a humble powerhouse who shunned the spotlight while pushing others whom she thought could do the world some good, into it. Presidential Cabinet Members, Ambassadors, U.S. Senators and Congressional Representatives, Governors, County Executives, Mayors, State Legislators, County and City Council Members, all turned to Ruth for sage advice and assistance in their political careers. Ruth has been called the most powerful person in political circles in our state, by those who knew first hand.

Ruth’s husband, Ben, who preceded Ruth in death, was a wise and deeply respected and accomplished community leader as well. Ruth and Ben were far-sighted and generous. They were deeply rooted in the community, lived simply and gave generously to build and strengthen its infrastructure to benefit current and future generations. They gave their time, talent and treasure to many organizations, and made a significant impact in major community institutions like ACRS, ICHS, Kin On, the Wing Luke Museum, the SCIDPDA and so many other worthy organizations. Many of the important advances our community has made statewide were possible because of Ruth and Ben’s vision and the political and community resources that were the fruits of their labor. We at ACRS will always be grateful for all that they did for ACRS, our community, our nation and our world. ■



Photo courtesy of Roger Woo.

SHARE YOUR THOUGHTS

In the days ahead, our community may be facing difficult challenges. You have been a vital part of serving the needs of the AAPI community. In the coming year, we will be communicating in new and different ways, and we hope to inform, inspire and engage you. Our community is going to need all of us. ■



Please take a moment to complete our supporter survey:
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 - Qualified sign language interpreters
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