

ACRS NEWS

COMMUNITY POWER

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DEAR FRIENDS,

We entered a new chapter in our nation’s history since our last newsletter. The challenges we face as a country are immense. The challenges to ACRS and the community we serve are more daunting than any in recent times. Like other immigrant and refugee communities and communities of color, our Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities are in crisis, with individual, policy and legislative threats to our rights, our safety, and our well-being. An anti-immigrant, anti-refugee, Islamophobic and racist climate stoked by outspoken white nationalists among elected and appointed officials, and a minority of the American public provides fertile ground for hate incidents and hate crimes, as well as exclusionary policy and legislation. It is creating fear and anxiety among immigrants, refugees and citizens alike. The rights of women, gender minorities, workers and people of color are under greater attack. Like every other living thing on this planet, our very survival as a race we all belong to, the human race, is also at stake, with accelerating climate change and air, land and water pollution while environmental protections are being rolled back.



Though we must face these challenges, there is reason for optimism, even in these difficult times. Like other communities, our AAPI community is stepping up our civic engagement through a variety of means, in our communities, in the streets, in the courts, at the airports, in legislative and Congressional offices and town halls, and at the ballot box. Our AAPI Democracy Initiative is right on time, breaking down cultural and linguistic barriers through culturally competent and linguistically accessible means, to increase our community’s voice, naturalization, voter registration, voter education, and votes on the issues affecting our community and the nation. Our Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Washington State and API community based organizations in King County like the India Association of Western Washington, Washington State India Trade Action Committee, Tasveer, InterIm, Japanese Americans Citizens League and Densho, along with ACRS and many others, have been mobilizing thousands to show up, take action and speak out not only for our AAPI community, but to link the painful experiences of our community to the struggles for justice by other communities, such as the Latino community, whose immigrant and refugee rights movement we share, the Black Lives Matter movement, the women’s movement, the LGBTQ movement, the workers’ rights movement, interfaith efforts to address the hate inflicted on their members and places of worship, and Native Americans on the frontlines of the environmental movement.

Though we must be prepared for mobilizing rapid responses to the immediate crises threatening our community, we also need to continue the long-term work of strengthening our community through civic,

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WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR AAPIs



ACRS clients filled meeting spaces and the offices of elected officials during APA Legislative Day.

Photo by Dean Wong

Like many other immigrant and refugee communities and communities of color, our Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community faces challenging times ahead.

Our AAPI community includes a greater percentage (66%) of immigrants and refugees than any other community. We have the fastest growing immigrant community and are the fastest growing racial group in the nation. More immigrants are coming to the U.S. from Asia than from any other region of the world. The majority of AAPI immigrants are here legally, but up to one million are undocumented. Though not the largest, the fastest growing undocumented population in Washington is Asian. We are the most culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse community, and include Muslims, as well as members of other faiths.

Despite the persistence of the model minority stereotype, we are not all doing well. When the data on our very diverse communities are lumped together, or aggregated, it looks as if we are. But when the data are disaggregated, a very different picture emerges.

Various Asian and Pacific Islander ethnic groups have some of the highest poverty rates and lowest educational attainment rates of any ethnic/racial group. Asians and Pacific Islanders also experience negative health disparities, both mental and physical. Prior to the passage of the Affordable Care Act, or "Obamacare," Asians had the highest uninsurance rate. After its passage, this rate was halved.

The enforcement of recent Executive Orders on immigrants and refugees would affect our community. States have challenged the temporary travel ban, the "Muslim ban," as unconstitutional. Judge Robart here in Seattle temporarily stopped the first version of the ban. Judge Watson in Hawaii found that the President's past statements about keeping Muslims from entering the country signaled a discriminatory intent behind the ban and temporarily stopped implementation of the latest version. The Islamophobia driving the travel ban threatens the rights, safety and well-being of Muslims here from any country. Asian Muslims, like other Muslims, face discrimination based on their faith. Sikhs, who are often mistaken for Muslims

because they wear turbans and cover their hair, have experienced discrimination for the same reason.

The Executive Order would also cut refugee admissions in half, and put the entire refugee program on hold for months. Refugees are seeking safety, and delaying or denying their entry through these measures puts their lives, including the lives of children, at stake.

The Executive Orders directed at undocumented immigrants target the Latino community, but will affect all undocumented immigrants, including those in our AAPI community. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents are now encouraged to even more aggressively sweep up and deport millions of undocumented immigrants, no matter the cost to families, communities and our economy. The administration is empowering ICE agents to deport undocumented immigrants who are merely suspected, not charged or convicted, of even minor legal violations. The administration proposes expanding enforcement personnel by thousands, and encouraging local police around the country to act as ICE agents. We are hearing of workplace raids occurring in Asian communities in the country as well as stepped up deportations and frequent raids affecting the Latino community.

Bills introduced by Congressional members in other parts of the country also exemplify anti-immigrant sentiment. Senators Cotton and Purdue from Arkansas and Georgia have introduced a bill which would cut immigration by half, and limit family members eligible to immigrate. If passed, this bill would have a direct and disproportionate impact on Asian immigration, though it would affect all immigrant communities.

The Republican health care plan, the American Health Care Act, threatens health care access for low-income Americans and immigrants. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that under the proposed health care plan, 24 million people could lose coverage by 2026. Among those would be over one million AAPIs. Medicaid, a federal entitlement program serving as the nation's health care safety net for millions, pays for half the country's births and nursing home costs for three-quarters of seniors. It pays medical costs for people with disabilities and mental health needs who could not otherwise get the care they need. Medicaid is a crucial support for the middle class, as well as for people with low incomes. It would be severely cut by

over \$800 billion through capping and block granting a fixed amount to the states. The federal government would shift the cost burden to states and individuals. People with low incomes, seniors and individuals with disabilities would pay thousands more for coverage. States would face the challenge of covering the true cost of care through a reduced federal subsidy. A recent amendment to the bill would make it even worse, putting access to healthcare coverage for pre-existing conditions at risk, along with access to mental health and substance use disorder services, and maternity care. Two million Asians and Pacific Islanders gained health care coverage under Obamacare; passage of the plan would disproportionately affect AAPIs.

The President's budget plan includes severe funding cuts for benefits people rely on, such as Meals on Wheels, affordable housing, job training and financial aid. All people with low incomes will be affected by his budget, including AAPIs, if passed.

Xenophobia, Islamophobia and racism are more openly expressed by both politicians and members of the public in these times, fueling hate incidents and crimes. The shootings of South Asians in Kansas, resulting in injury and death, and a shooting and injury of a member of Kent's Sikh community, had in common shooters who believed their victims did not belong in the country. Desecration of mosques, temples, churches and graves, and threats to community centers are sadly on the rise.

Immigrant and refugee communities, faith communities, communities of color and LGBTQ communities are all targets of hate incidents, hate crimes and policies driven by bigotry. Our communities are on the front lines of resistance to preserve Constitutional rights for all, interfaith and multiracial unity, and personal and environmental safety.

We are joined by the majority of Americans in our desire for a country based on shared values, rather than on shared race, religion and national origins. Many of our local and national elected officials have declared local jurisdictions as welcoming places for refugees and immigrants, and will not deploy local police and other resources to aid ICE in pursuit of the vast majority of undocumented immigrants and refugees. Though in some ways the worst of times in decades, these difficult

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LOOKING BACK AND PLANNING AHEAD



The annual APA Legislative Day is only one part of our year-round efforts to lift up AAPI voices.

Photo by Dean Wong

Our statewide Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Democracy Initiative (the Initiative), in collaboration with the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition of Washington State (APIC) and local partners, is very timely in an era of dramatically increasing civic engagement in all communities. We are building on the work we did in 2016 and forging ahead in 2017.

The Initiative ensures that AAPI communities are seen and heard in civic life, and lowers cultural and linguistic barriers so our communities feel and are included, and have opportunities to participate in our democracy. In 2016, we made sure that AAPIs were seen in multilingual “Get Out the Vote” ads in ethnic newspapers in different languages, on TV and radio, and op-eds in community newspapers. Collaborating with our partners, we reached an audience of 2.5 million through our media work. We helped local AAPI communities to engage in a variety of ways; including voter registration. They learned how to register to vote and how to help friends, family and community members to register. We engaged nearly 75,000

community members through meetings, community and cultural events, social services like food banks, pledge to engage cards and voter registration.

Approximately 6,000 community members were activated in 2016 through the Asian Pacific Islander Coalition’s multilingual and nonpartisan AAPI Democracy Summit in September, through multilingual candidate forums with APIC and local partners in different parts of the state, through many multilingual ballot parties, and phone banking to get out the vote, among other activities. Over 2,000 AAPI community members from across the state participated in the AAPI Democracy Summit to hear the gubernatorial candidates speak about issues important to the community, including immigrant and refugee safety net programs, affordable housing and climate change. Issues such as police accountability were also raised. There were more than enough registered voters to be a margin of victory for the gubernatorial candidate race. We also organized viewing parties for a Presidential candidate town hall live streamed from Las Vegas in

August. We and our partners provided multilingual interpretation for hundreds of interested participants.

More recently, in February 2017, we worked with APIC to bring close to 2,000 people who collectively spoke over 20 languages to Olympia from Eastern, Central and Western Washington for Asian Pacific American Legislative Day to hear from the governor and meet with legislators on critical issues facing AAPIs and other communities – including preserving health and social safety nets, civil and human rights for immigrants, refugees, communities of color and people with low incomes, and education funding to close the opportunity gap for our most vulnerable students.

Here's more hopeful and promising news: according to the Win/Win Network, Washington State's AAPIs were more engaged in 2016. Voter participation among AAPI communities reached an all-time high. Washington State AAPIs are closing the gap – more eligible voters are registering and more registered voters are voting.

AAPI voters contacted by ACRS through our AAPI Democracy Initiative voted at a higher rate (74%) than the general AAPI population (67%), by 7 percentage points.

There is much more work ahead of us, despite these successes. In today's increasingly hostile policy climate, ACRS is more determined than ever to continue protecting, serving and lifting the voices of AAPIs across our state. We are already hearing from community members ranging from youth to elders, about their fears of family members being deported, the loss of much needed health care and other threats to services for basic needs, and threats to their personal safety. Look out for multilingual information and resources we will be sharing to help our communities, friends, families and neighbors. We will also continue our year-round efforts to increase the numbers of AAPI voters and voter turnout.

Help keep the momentum going – help us to fully engage the AAPI community, and increase your own civic engagement in the process. Make a pledge to engage and participate!

- **Register to vote if you are eligible**, or check your voter registration – make sure it is up to date – then help someone to do the same. Find out how: <https://acrs.org/democracy-in-action/resources/>. We will be organizing volunteer voter registration training and phone banking parties. Contact us if you would like to help!
- **Speak to community groups about the importance of voting** – we can provide you with materials and training.
- **Host a ballot party or a ballot “dinner” party** – make it fun! Invite your friends over to talk about the ballot and ballot measures. We can tell you how and provide information about the ballot measures.
- **Increase access for limited English speaking voters** by helping to translate voter education material into different AAPI languages.
- **Text your zip code to (520) 200-7940** to instantly find out who your elected representatives are and their phone numbers, and help others to do the same.
- **Call your elected representatives** at those numbers and leave messages for them about how you feel about policies and legislation important to you, and to find out when you can meet with them or when you can attend their town hall meetings. You can also just call the capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 to leave messages for your U.S. Senators and Representatives, or the legislative hotline at (800) 562-6000 to leave messages for your governor and state legislators. It's quick to do, and every call makes a difference!

Take some inspiration from Abidah, who has been working at ACRS as an accountant for over 20 years. In 2016, she went to her community and registered people to vote and helped them fill out their ballots in her free time. She said firmly, “This is my country. I will do the best I can to make society better.” At first, Abidah was hesitant to register as a voter, even though she was eligible as a naturalized citizen. As an immigrant, she didn't think she had any power and believed that most things in politics were predetermined. Abidah's

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SO THOUSANDS WON'T GO HUNGRY



A contingent of young walkers and their family members from the Khalsa Gurmat Center.

Photo by Jack Storms

Nearly 27 years ago, Herb and Bertha Tsuchiya, and Sam Mitsui organized the first *Walk for Rice* to fight hunger in the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. It was their vision to create a tradition that brings people together to fight hunger, as individuals and as a community.

Thousands have joined the annual *Walk for Rice* and have taken an active role in raising awareness and funds to fight hunger. Last year, *Walk for Rice* participants and donors raised enough money to provide nearly half of the funding needed to support the ACRS Food Bank and our nutrition and emergency feeding programs. In 2016, the ACRS Food Bank provided over a million pounds of culturally familiar foods like rice, tofu, fish and fresh vegetables to our most vulnerable elders, youth and families. About 5,700 clients were served through our food bank and 23 other community sites throughout the Puget Sound region. Ninety-five percent of the clients served by our nutrition programs are AAPI and 62% have limited English.

The *Walk* began because Herb Tsuchiya, a retired pharmacist, was moved when he saw so many people in line at the ACRS Food Bank. He noticed that some of the food donated was not typical of the Asian diet. This need ignited the idea to organize a walk to raise funds to feed people in need, particularly in the AAPI community. Supported by local community churches Blaine Methodist, Chinese Baptist and Japanese Baptist, the inaugural *Walk for Rice* in 1990 took place along a pedestrian path on Beacon Avenue with 45 participants. It raised \$1,800 that year.

Today, *Walk for Rice* is still a grassroots effort. It represents the diversity and strength of our community, drawing nearly 1,000 participants including elders, youth, families, elected officials and business leaders who come together to take action and raise funds to fight hunger in our community. While the ACRS Food Bank meets a basic need of providing food,

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COMPUTER SKILLS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE



Americorps volunteer Nathan Zick-Smith helps digital literacy student Farm Saetern finish an online typing game.

Photo by Andria Keirn

Farm resettled in America after leaving Laos in 1988. Before making Seattle home, she lived in a refugee camp and worked on a rice farm in Thailand. Since her arrival, she has held several assembly jobs, from line worker to lead inspector.

Last year, Farm's employer of 10 years added computers into the mix. Farm had never touched a computer before. Though she was given some on-the-job training, Farm could not learn quickly enough. She fell behind and was fired. Decades of experience could not make up for her lack of computer skills. "Before, I knew everything – the whole line – I never need the computer," says Farm. She's now on the hunt for work, and she knows that she needs a basic understanding of computers to be employable. On top of that, she's entering a job market where the application process almost exclusively begins online.

America is home to many immigrants and refugees looking for opportunities. In some parts of the country, there are organizations and services available to support them as they navigate a new land with everything from housing to employment. Many of these

services are found online, and for people like Farm who need them most, but are stuck on the wrong side of the digital divide, help remains elusive.

ACRS understands the importance of bridging this divide, and with generous funding from Comcast, we launched our Digital Literacy Initiative last fall. One component of the initiative is a ten-week computer skills class. The curriculum builds on skills each week, starting with basics like how to turn on a computer, use a mouse and type, to more advanced functions like using email, getting directions and navigating LinkedIn.

In class, students receive specialized attention and gain confidence in using a computer. Farm could not learn on the floor of a bustling factory. Her supervisors did not explain to her the difference between a left-click and a right-click, or the different functions on a keyboard. She was expected to be competent after training for just 30 minutes a day, once per week. "They push me to do it but I could not, they not training me good," says Farm.

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ACRS GROWS TO MEET EVOLVING NEEDS



TPAP participants paused for a quick photo before a self-defense workshop .

Photo by Andria Keirn

For over 40 years, ACRS has been serving community members throughout the Seattle area and beyond. We've continued to grow and step up to the challenge of changing social and economic conditions as well as the evolving needs of the populations we serve. In our rapidly shifting political climate, it is imperative for us to ensure that we respond to the needs of our growing community.

Every year, our Children, Youth and Families (CYF) program serves more and more ethnically diverse children and youth facing complex issues. We serve Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) youth from East and Southeast Asia, as well as South Asia, and have served youth from Afghanistan, Iraq, Congo, Somalia, Ethiopia Mexico and other Central American countries. Our ability to serve such culturally diverse youth and families stems from our bilingual and bicultural staff members, who have strong cultural competency skills in addition to being deeply connected to their respective communities. Our region has seen a significant population shift as more AAPI families settle in South King County. Our CYF program has responded

to this trend by providing more staff presence in South King County school districts including Highline, Renton, Kent and Tukwila, as well as community sites, to support the needs of these community members. In addition, we expanded into a larger satellite office in Kent to meet the needs of south King County residents in that area.

We've also seen an increased need for services on the Eastside. Last fall, we learned that Bellevue had become a "majority-minority city," based on U.S. Census estimates on race and ethnicity for 318 American cities – with non-Hispanic whites forming just under half of the city's population. At over 30%, Asians are the largest racial minority in Bellevue.

Our CYF staff has noticed the following trends from Bellevue community members during this last year:

- the need for more specialized support groups for Spanish speaking youth
- an increase in cyberbullying, social media

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THE POWER OF WORDS *by Ling Chua, LMFT*



A client told me the other day she suspected she had obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD). "I keep obsessing about how other people are going to judge me," she said.

"What do you do when you obsess about that?" I asked

"Nothing, really. I just worry a lot and I try to please everyone around me."

This client has been in therapy for several years for severe depression. I thought she would know better than to use psychiatric terms so loosely. But when I think about how frequently such terms are misused in everyday conversations, social media and even in the news, my client's misstep is understandable.

Part of how this problem came about is our use of exaggerated expressions in our casual interactions with those around us. Hyperbole has become a part of our daily language and in many instances makes us more socially attractive. Think about how many more "likes" on Facebook you receive when you post an exaggerated expression. Unfortunately, as a form of hyperbole, mental health labels often get thrown around without thought. A coworker who likes to keep his desk tidy is said to have OCD. A girlfriend who became upset is said to have "turned psycho." Feeling overwhelmed by stress earns one the label "having a panic attack."

This misuse is unfortunate. Not only does it reinforce the stigma around mental illness, but it is also deeply offensive to people with psychiatric issues. Calling an unpredictable person bipolar is a form of lazy social shorthand that serves to, at best, convey disapproval or, at worst, hurt that person. When words such as schizophrenic are thoughtlessly used to convey feeling scattered or overwhelmed, the speaker is in reality invalidating the pain that people with schizophrenia experience.

Would one ever say that a person is "a bit diabetic" or casually label a friend who is constantly tired with multiple sclerosis?

We know that language can be used to strengthen or undermine power. The casual use of these psychiatric labels allows the speaker to feel superior to groups

of other people by casting them out from the norm. Calling someone bipolar to express disapproval of their emotional reaction excuses the speaker from examining their own behavior that might have caused that reaction. It is like telling the other person, "You've got issues, and it's not my fault that I've upset you."

Not too long ago, the word gay was often heard as a pejorative among teens to describe effeminate behavior or emotional sensitivity. Now, thanks to a collective effort by gay rights activists and educators, the use of this word as a derogatory term is no longer acceptable in many communities. We call out those who abuse this word, and we see any kind of put-down language used on the LGBTQ community as micro-aggression, if not outright bullying.

The same goes for people with disabilities. Words such as retarded and cripple now draw frowns in many parts of this country. A public figure has drawn criticism for mocking a journalist with a disability.

We now have zero tolerance for derogatory language and discriminatory practice toward members of a sexual minority and people with disabilities. Why not extend such social advocacy to people with mental illness too? In the past ten years I have worked with people with various psychiatric disorders, across various age groups and cultures. Whether it is the client who is so tortured by the frequent flashbacks of sexual abuse that he is unable to hold down a job, or the valedictorian who struggles daily with preoccupations of food, I see in them not just vulnerability but, more importantly, humanity. Their mental health diagnoses do not define who they are; I see in them a loving parent, a child yearning for connection, a human being striving to be a better person, and so much more. Each one of them deserves the respect and compassion we show to people around us.

Let us all be more conscious about the language we use. Let us call out the misuse of psychiatric labels when we hear them in our own social circles. ■



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.

THANK YOU DONORS!

ACRS is only able to offer hope and opportunity to thousands across our region with support from our donors. Big thanks to the individuals and organizations below for making a gift between November 1, 2016 and March 31, 2017!

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK (CONT.)

| ■ Continued from pg. 2 |

educational and economic empowerment, as well as ensuring that the basic safety net of benefits and services for our most vulnerable communities continues. The broad range of ACRS services for our community in these emotionally and economically trying times has never been more important. In addition to seeing you at civic events before and after, we hope to see you at the *Walk for Rice* on June 24. This is a time when we must come together, stand together with our most vulnerable community members, and walk and

march together in support of each other as we build stronger, more inclusive communities and a more humane and inclusive country.

Thank you for all that you do for our community, and for all others, in these trying times. ■



Diane Narasaki
Executive Director

WHAT'S AT STAKE FOR AAPIs (CONT.)

| ■ Continued from pg. 4 |

times are also bringing out the best in Americans who are visibly, loudly, and consistently standing up for all our rights and our democracy.

There is a struggle going on for the soul of our country; for who we are as a people. Now is the time to come together, in community meetings, rallies, marches, town halls, legislative days, and other events to resist

any effort to divide us by race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origins, or our status as citizens, refugees or immigrants, documented or undocumented. History will remember where we all stood in these times. Let us stand, and make history together, across the generations, to create a better country and better world for future generations. ■

LOOKING BACK AND PLANNING AHEAD (CONT.)

| ■ Continued from pg. 6 |

civic journey is illustrative of the experience of many others, especially in the immigrant community. It can take time and effort to familiarize a person with the voting process and inspire them to participate. She eventually registered as a voter during a doctor's appointment, and since then, she has not failed to cast her ballot at every single opportunity. Abidah said that it is not always easy to register people to vote, and sometimes she almost gives up. But she is always optimistic. "I think one person voting is better

than no one, so I keep going!" If each of us follows Abidah's example, we will empower thousands to use their voice and vote, and strengthen our community and democracy in the process. ■



The AAPI Democracy Initiative is funded by grants and donations. To find out how you can contribute to the Initiative, contact Candace Inagi at candacei@acrs.org

SO THOUSANDS WON'T GO HUNGRY (CONT.)

▪ Continued from pg. 7 |

it also serves as an entry point for members of our immigrant population, who may be in need of additional social and health services.

The 27th annual *Walk for Rice* promises to be another festive community event, complete with food trucks, a Zumba warm up, taiko drummers and of course, the Chinese Girls Drill Team to kick off the morning. Many participants take it to the next level and form

teams, wear matching team T-shirts, don costumes, and even dress their pets in costumes. It's a day of fun, and for a good cause! ■



Visit www.walkforrice.org to sign up to walk, register your team and make a donation. If you are interested in corporate sponsorship opportunities, please contact Mary Ann Goto at maryanng@acrs.org.

ACRS GROWS TO MEET EVOLVING NEEDS (CONT.)

▪ Continued from pg. 9 |

- abuse, self-harm and suicidal ideation
- an increased focus on academics and colleges, which has led to an increase in depression, anxiety and stress
- an increase in referrals of more ethnically diverse youth and youth who identify as LGBTQ.

To better serve Eastside residents, ACRS combined our two satellite offices in Bellevue and moved into a larger and more modern space in Bellevue's Lake Hills neighborhood. This office houses our Teen Peer Advocate Program (TPAP) along with our Therapy Associates practice, headed by our colleague Ling Chua (check out her column on page 10). TPAP serves AAPI high school female-identified youth in Bellevue and focuses on helping them address issues like dating violence, how to have healthy relationships, rape and sexual assault prevention through weekly peer education and support groups, and leadership development.

Many Americans start experimenting with dating in their teenage years and unfortunately, some get involved in unhealthy relationships. It can be

particularly challenging for young AAPI women to get the support and guidance they need if they find themselves in a destructive situation. Dating is not widely practiced in many AAPI cultures and many young AAPI women, especially those from immigrant families, are unable to talk to their parents about how to navigate the world of dating. It gets even more complicated when these young women get the message that the sexual assault of women can be dismissed as "locker room talk." These, and many other reasons, are why the work of our TPAP youth leaders is so important. As one TPAP participant stated, "these things (dating violence) happen to my friends and I hate it. I want to help them. I wish they would join this group so that they get it."

ACRS is committed to supporting our youth and community members through our satellite offices by bringing services closer to where they live. They also serve as a safe location for clients to find help for their concerns, fears and stressors. We have seen our community through hard times before and we will continue to see the community through the challenging times that are currently before us. We are committed to our roots as a social justice organization. ■

COMPUTER SKILLS FOR A BRIGHTER FUTURE *(CONT.)*

▪ *Continued from pg. 8* ▪

“Before, I could not work because I could not use a computer. Now, I have computer class. I don’t know if I can learn, but I will try,” she said.

Since enrolling in the class, Farm no longer needs her case manager to check her email for her. She can do it by herself and communicate with potential employers online.

“A large part of integrating into American culture is being able to use a computer,” says Alexandra Olins, Director of Employment and Citizenship Services at

ACRS. “Digital literacy is an essential component of getting a job,” says Olins. Few people know that digital literacy is required for jobs that are popular among our job-seeker clients, like housekeeping. Housekeepers must check schedules, submit time sheets and communicate with their employers electronically. In the classroom, students learn these skills so they can find, get and keep a job. ■



For more information, please contact Olivia Louko at Olivial@acrs.org.

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