

ACRS NEWS



ACRS Anniversary

Celebrating Community



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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,



After nearly 17 years away, I am thrilled to be back in the Pacific Northwest and to serve as ACRS' new executive director. I want to take a moment to thank Diane Narasaki who retired after 23 years of incredible service to ACRS and to this community. She's a fierce advocate who has made a lasting impact to advance civil rights, equity and social justice. She transitions leaving an organization stronger than ever. For this, I'm grateful to her.

As I begin in this position, I think about ACRS' 45 years of service to the community and what it means. At the recent 45th anniversary gala, I learned very quickly the answer to that question. There, I saw the presence of an electrified crowd of 850+ friends, community leaders and members, elected officials, past and present staff and board members, volunteers, donors, as well as leaders from our region's finest

academic, corporate and philanthropic institutions. Their presence demonstrated that ACRS is about the power of our community and how much we can accomplish when we all work together. And through this collective community effort, ACRS has become what it is today – a major advocacy voice for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) and other communities of color or vulnerability – as well as a leader in linguistically accessible, culturally relevant services.

I appreciate how ACRS is about all of us and reflect on my own 15 year tenure leading a very similar agency in Ohio working with a passionate and committed AAPI community. In Cleveland, I saw firsthand how working side-by-side with community members and leaders, policymakers, and other key allies that we were able to create a health center for AAPI immigrant and refugee communities so they no longer needed to take a midnight bus to New York City to access care in their language and care that recognized their cultural background. There, too, AAPI communities fulfilled their vision to have a stronger advocacy voice, and came together from all corners of the state of Ohio to organize the annual AAPI Legislative Day to communicate with our policymakers about the needs of the community.

We are at a very challenging moment in our history that will test our community's resolve. The Muslim ban last year has resulted in members of our Muslim community feeling unsafe. The increased presence and action of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) means the separation and detention of parents and their children. There are also proposed changes at the federal level that will make it more difficult for our community members with limited means to apply to become a U.S. citizen, or force lower income AAPI families to choose between accessing basic public assistance of food, healthcare, and housing or becoming a lawful permanent resident (green card holder). Hate crimes against our community and others are also on the rise – a recent Seattle Times article using data from the FBI indicates a dramatic rise in our area; faster than the national average. Lastly, there continues to be threats to the most vulnerable members of our community, including transgender people, who are members of our families and our friends, as proposed policy changes seek to eliminate the recognition of transgender people.

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STRENGTHENING OUR APPROACH TO WHOLE HEALTH CARE



Whole-person, client-centered care is part of the Medicaid Transformation Project.

For so long, people seeking services to improve their health have had to deal with many different systems—medical, behavioral health, government and social services—with little or no coordination between them. This makes it hard or even impossible for people to get the care and support services they need, especially if they already face challenges, like having limited English-speaking skills and financial resources.

For most of ACRS' 45 years, coordinating care and helping our clients access most if not all of their needed services within the continuum of linguistically accessible and culturally competent services at ACRS, or externally among our community partners and other public resources, has always been a critical part of our service model. One example is our Wellness for Asian Pacific Americans (WAPA) program which is offered in close partnership with International Community Health Services (ICHS). ICHS medical and dental staff provide onsite primary care for ACRS adult mental health clients. In turn, our behavioral health staff and psychiatrist provide services at ICHS clinics.

Whole-person, client-centered care will now be launched in King County as part of the Medicaid

Transformation Project. Fully Integrated Managed Care (FIMC) will begin January 1, 2019, with five Managed Care Organizations and King County Behavioral Health Recovery Services Division partnering to manage Medicaid funds from the State. Organizations like ACRS will be delivering services under a special partnership entity between providers and King County called Integrated Care Network or ICN.

The new system calls for collaborative and innovative partnerships among health, behavioral health, social service and government organizations to improve health equity and outcomes for people with Medicaid coverage. This means screening clients for health issues like heart disease, asthma, diabetes or other health issues. It also means asking clients if they need housing, food, job assistance, child care, transportation, financial or legal aid, etc., as well as taking care of their mental health issue(s) or substance use disorder(s). While ACRS staff have done this for years, we can now expand the WAPA model to regional adoption of the model. It will benefit the entire community by reducing costly emergency room visits and readmissions, early deaths and suicides, and help folks live self-sufficient and healthy lives. ■

PROPOSED CHANGES TO PUBLIC CHARGE POLICY WILL HURT IMMIGRANTS

In the final months of 2018, we have seen more attacks on our immigrant communities from the Trump administration. These attacks have come in the form of proposed administrative rule changes, which would have significant impacts on immigrants in the U.S., especially low-income individuals and families.

One of the proposed changes was announced by the Trump administration in October and pertain to what is commonly referred to as the “public charge” consideration. Public charge policy has remained consistent for over a hundred years and may be used by the federal government when someone applies for legal permanent resident status (a green card). If someone is likely to become a “public charge,” or dependent on the government as their main source of support, their application may be denied. However, the public charge “test” has rarely been used to deny green cards, and only in very narrow circumstances.

On October 10, the administration published a proposed rule change to the Federal Register that, if enacted, would deny visa holders a green card if they have used any of the following public benefits (which they are legally eligible for): public housing or Section 8 housing vouchers, Medicare Part D, Non-emergency Medicaid, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

(food stamps). Furthermore, it would penalize green card holders who have used these benefits and who wish to sponsor family members living in their home countries to immigrate to the U.S. Some immigrant groups, such as refugees, asylees, and other humanitarian visa holders would not be subject to the public charge test.

If this rule change is enacted, it will represent a significant departure from current policy and would make immigrants have to choose between utilizing temporary public assistance programs they need to achieve financial self-sufficiency or becoming a permanent resident of the U.S. This rule change would encourage immigrants to forego essential services such as primary care and public housing—potentially resulting in increases in such things as emergency room visits or homelessness, both of which would cost taxpayers more money in the long run.

This rule change was leaked to the press last spring, and the immigrant advocacy community has been preparing for it since then. ACRS, and many others, are working to stop this change, which will hurt the most vulnerable, low-income immigrants and their families. To date, over 180,000 comments have been submitted to the Federal Register in response to this proposed rule change. The comment period closes on December 10, 2018. ■

Jorge L. Barón, executive director of Northwest Immigrant Rights Project shares information about the impact of proposed changes to community members at ACRS.

Photo by Joseph Lachman.



ACRS PARTNERS WITH NEW ARRIVALS TO NAVIGATE LIFE IN U.S.

Imagine moving to another state where you have to immediately establish safe housing, apply for social services, enroll your children in school and figure out the best methods of transportation in your community. Learning how to navigate new systems can be a daunting and stressful situation. Now imagine you are a newly arrived immigrant or refugee to the United States, how would you navigate the systems? The various systems in the United States can be challenging for anyone, let alone someone who may not speak the language, know the culture or have access to the appropriate resources.

ACRS provides supportive bicultural and bilingual services for our immigrant and refugee communities and diligently advocates for new services when needed. In 2019, we will launch a new family support program as part of our Children, Youth and Families (CYF) department. With generous support from the City of Seattle, we will address gaps in systems navigation assistance and focus on empowering self-sufficiency within our Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities.

The Support for Asian American Pacific Islander Families program will work with newly arrived immigrant and refugee families with school-aged children who reside in Seattle or attend schools in Seattle by sharing comprehensive information to build knowledge and self-sufficiency skills to strengthen their understanding of and ability to navigate U.S. systems such as public schools, social services and government systems. The program offers opportunities for families to learn about services available to them and empower them to utilize the services independently through culturally and linguistically appropriate community workshops about systems navigation. Our staff will work primarily with Chinese families since they make up the largest (27%) AAPI ethnic group in Seattle Public Schools. However, families of any ethnicity are welcome to participate.

The long-term goal of the Support for AAPI Families program is to support immigrant and refugee families in building lifelong skills and knowledge to help them succeed and thrive in our communities through increased confidence and self-sufficiency. ■

ACRS works to empower youth and strengthen families in our community through our various Children, Youth and Families programs.

Photo provided by Kimi Kogachi.



AAPIS AND OUR DEMOCRACY

Like other immigrant and refugee communities, and other communities of color in our country, there has hardly ever been a more important time for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) to be engaged, organized, and able to advocate for ourselves.

In just the past year, we have seen more and more policies and rules coming from our federal government causing concern among AAPIs as well as immigrants and refugees, but we have also seen greater enthusiasm for civic engagement both locally at ACRS and statewide in Washington.

Through the AAPI Democracy Initiative at ACRS and in collaboration with our Asian Pacific Islander Coalition partners, we've been able to mobilize our community members to participate in the midterm elections through a variety of exciting civic engagement activities. Along with our partners, we have helped activate AAPIs through election information sessions, multilingual phone and texting banks, ballot and voting parties, and candidate and issue forums. We have made direct contact with thousands of AAPI voters through our activities in more than 10 languages, and have seen very high interest from our communities in participating in our democracy.

All of the activity and energy around the midterm elections resulted in strong voter turnout in King County, with 981,439 ballots returned (76% turnout rate). This is the highest we have seen in the county in at least 20 years.

As a result of this election, Washington State passed Initiative 940 (also known as De-escalate Washington), which will help our state reform laws on police accountability by removing a need for prosecutors to prove that an officer acted in 'malice' when using lethal force, and also creating stronger requirements for mental health and de-escalation training for police officers.

Strong AAPI candidates on the general election ballot may also have helped to encourage turnout from our community. As of this election, Joe Nguyen has become the first Vietnamese American to hold the position of State Senator in Washington, and My-Linh Thai has become the first first-generation refugee to win statewide office in our state. Mona Das, a first generation Indian American woman won her race for State Senate to become our second South Asian woman in the State Senate. They will join other AAPI legislators in the upcoming legislative session, including Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos, Sen. Bob Hasegawa, Rep. Cindy Ryu, Sen. Manka Dhingra, Rep. Vandana Slatter, Rep. Mia Su-Ling Gregerson, and Rep. Monica Stonier.

While ACRS is a nonpartisan organization and we do not support candidates for office, we are excited to see greater representation for our communities in our elected government.

With the midterm elections behind us, ACRS and our other civic engagement partners are looking forward to the upcoming 2019 legislative session for our state. We will work together again to mobilize over a thousand of our community members from across the state to join us in Olympia for Asian Pacific American Legislative Day on January 23, 2019. This will be the next opportunity for our communities to come together in our state's capital to make sure our representatives hear the voices of diverse AAPI communities and learn what issues matter most to them. It will be an incredible day of action where our diverse AAPI groups can come together to continue to build their political power as we draw closer to the 2020 presidential election and the all-important decennial Census, both of which will have long-lasting impacts on our AAPI communities. ■



Learn more and get involved! Email civicvoice@acrs.org for more information.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT: YOYO YAO

Yoyo Yao has seen more of ACRS than most volunteers. During her year and a half of service, she has helped out in more than eight different programs across the agency. She has supported ACRS programs ranging from our English language classes to Individual Provider (homecare worker) Compliance, to the Club Bamboo Kitchen, Get Out the Vote phone banking and medical billing, and even lending a hand with preparations for our major community events. She has dedicated more than 460 hours of service during this timeframe and has added tremendous value to our work.

"I like being able to try our new areas and new types of work. It's been nice as it has helped me learn more about what I want to do as a career," says Yoyo. We love it when volunteers help out across different programs because when we have someone who is already caring and familiar with the agency, it can be an easy transition from one role to another—and there is always so much that needs to be done at ACRS!

It's not just about the quantity of service, but also the quality. Yoyo has received four nominations for volunteer of the month. This is what some of ACRS staff have to say about Yoyo:

"Yoyo will come in early in the morning with a positive attitude and a bright smile accompanying it. She goes above and beyond with the work that she does. Not only will she complete tasks in a timely manner, she is comfortable speaking with clients and assisting them to other departments!" – Case Manager in Aging and Adult Services

"Though Yoyo is not a volunteer in my department, I have always found her to be open and welcoming. A couple of weeks ago, we had some youth drop-in requesting help with math, which is not a strength of mine. I tried my best, but later in the evening I had a family come in for a session, I was not able to continue helping the youth and we did not have other staff available. As I passed by Yoyo, I asked her if she would be willing to help out and she quickly agreed. The youth she helped out reported that she was able to clearly explain the concepts and I am grateful for



Yoyo embodies what it means to bring hope, opportunity and voice to others.

Photo by Nate Baum.

her willingness to step up to help. The following week I shared the youth's feedback and Yoyo presented me with printouts she had made for the students. Yoyo really went above and beyond of what I could expect of anyone!" – Counselor with our Children, Youth and Families department

"[Yoyo] is always willing to step up and also supports us with needs that arise that are not always glamorous but need to get done. She's incredibly efficient with things like data entry and translation yet also very warm and thoughtful towards clients others." – Member of our Development team

"She helps wherever she is asked. Her skills are excellent, as is her attention to detail, She has a great attitude, and is very well-liked by staff in many departments at the agency." – Member of our Employment and Citizenship team

We are so often humbled by the way in which ACRS volunteers go above and beyond to support our community. Yoyo is certainly one of our many volunteers who make ACRS the amazing place it is. She has brought hope, opportunity and voice to our community and we are immensely thankful for her contributions. ■

A CELEBRATION OF 45 YEARS OF COMMUNITY



ACRS' 45th anniversary gala brought together four and half decades of supporters.

Photo by Wilmer Galindo

ACRS' 45th anniversary gala was a record-breaking success, with almost 1,000 ACRS supporters, corporate partners, and volunteers joining the celebrations at the Hyatt Regency Bellevue on October 27, 2018. The gala featured a VIP reception with local luminaries, a vibrant Samoan slap dance by the Laumua Boys and a special performance by local AAPI artists Geo Quibuyen and Daniel Pak, who unveiled a song they wrote for ACRS to commemorate 45 years of hope, opportunity and voice.

The audience was moved by Diane Narasaki as she thanked all of the individuals who gave their support to ACRS during her 23 years as executive director. The baton was then passed to incoming executive, Michael Byun, whose tenure began on December 3.

The crowd raised more than \$300,000 during Raise the Paddle portion of the evening and along with spirited live and silent auctions, and other fundraising activities, the community gave more than \$660,000! We extend

our deepest appreciation to Presenting Sponsor Comcast NBCUniversal for their partnership throughout the year, as well as our Anniversary Sponsor, Ellen Ferguson, for her unwavering support and friendship spanning decades.

Hats off also to Legacy Sponsor Pacific Market International (PMI) and Partner Sponsor The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. Big thanks to Helsell Fetterman LLP, Kaiser Permanente, Miller Nash Graham & Dunn, Rainier Vehicle and Vessel Licensing, UW School of Social Work, Seattle Healing Arts, and Swedish.

Please accept our heartfelt thanks to all the guests, volunteers and staff who made our 45th anniversary gala a resounding success. Finally, we are so appreciative of our dedicated gala committee, co-chaired by Angelie Chong, Derek Edmonds and Harold Taniguchi. ■



1 Gala guests fervently bidded on silent auction prizes. 2 The Laumua Boys heralded the beginning of the dinner program and were a highlight for guests. 3 Long-time friends Diane Narasaki and Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal sharing a moment of joy. 4 Past ACRS executive directors Theresa Fujiwara (L) and Dave Okimoto (R) delivering the opening remarks. 5 New ACRS executive director Michael Byun sharing his excitement about his return to the ACRS family. 6 ACRS board member and gala committee member, Gloria Shin, posing for a glamor shot with friends at the photo booth. Photos by Naomi Ishisaka (lead photographer) and Sam Le.

PRESENTING SPONSOR SPOTLIGHT: COMCAST NBCUNIVERSAL



COMCAST NBCUNIVERSAL

Many of us use technology every day at work and at home to communicate, connect with others and find resources. For immigrants and refugees who are rebuilding their lives in the U.S., digital literacy is as vital to accessing opportunities as is English language proficiency. Without basic computer skills, they are at greater risk of isolation and are often left behind in the job market. ACRS is grateful for generous support from Comcast NBCUniversal, which has enabled us to develop a robust, year-round digital literacy program for ACRS clients.

ACRS' Digital Literacy Program features a 10 week class, offered four times a year. Students learn new skills each week, beginning with computer basics like typing and how to access the Internet. By the end of the program, students know how to utilize

online job portals, use email, upload their resumes to cloud based storage and navigate resources like Google Maps and LinkedIn.

Thanks to support from Comcast NBCUniversal, the Digital Inclusion Initiative is helping to bridge the digital divide in our communities. Since ACRS launched the program in 2016, hundreds of people have gained vital skills that have opened doors to opportunities, resources and information. ■

The grant from the Comcast Foundation is in recognition of Comcast's commitment to the communities where its customers and employees live and work. Since its founding in 1999, the Comcast Foundation has distributed more than \$200 million in cash support of programs implemented locally in Comcast communities.

THANK YOU 2018 EVENT SPONSORS

45TH ANNIVERSARY GALA:

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Silent Auction: Stella Chao | Entertainment: Voya Financial Advisors, Inc. | Corkage: City of Seattle
Human Services Department | Dessert: Clark Nuber | Volunteer: Sterling Bank & Trust

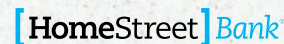
Emcee: Elisa Hahn, KING5 News

WALK FOR RICE:

PRESENTING



VISIONARY



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Special Thanks: ARCORA - The Foundation of Delta Dental of Washington | City Produce |
Crossings TV | East West Bank | First Student | Genoa Healthcare | Quality Press

Emcees: Derek Wing, PEMCO Mutual Insurance Company and Michelle Li, KING5 News

SOLIDARITY WITH IMMIGRANT FAMILIES AT THIS YEAR'S WALK



Young performers with Kinnaly Lao Traditional Music & Dance Troupe.

Photo by Jack Storms.

Each June, we are inspired to see nearly a thousand people gather at Seward Park for our annual *Walk for Rice*. This beloved all-ages community event was founded in 1990 by Herb Tsuchiya and his late wife Bertha, along with their friend, Sam Mitsui. 40 walkers raised \$1,800 during the first *Walk* on Beacon Hill. In the nearly three decades since, the *Walk* has been raising money to support the ACRS Food Bank and our nutrition programs. The funds raised are a vital part of addressing hunger among the most vulnerable members of our local Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community. This year's *Walk* took place on Saturday, June 30, 2018 and included dozens of teams representing businesses, schools, and generations of community groups and families.

King County Executive Dow Constantine made opening remarks about the importance of the event for the community before ACRS' (now retired) executive director, Diane Narasaki, spoke to the current challenges we are facing as a nation with respect to immigration. She invited attendees to join ACRS in reinforcing the message that "families belong together"

by taking up signs as they proceeded along 2.5 mile loop around the park, and joining the rally at the SeaTac Detention Center later on that same afternoon.

Prior to the *Walk*, participants enjoyed a Cambodian blessing dance, a Sikh martial arts demonstration, a Bollywood singer, Lao traditional music and dance, Japanese taiko drumming and a performance by the always stunning Seattle Chinese Girls Drill Team.

Many food bank and nutrition programs beneficiaries are seniors over 65 and youth under 18 years of age. ACRS staff and volunteers serve our mostly AAPI clientele by providing foods they recognize, like rice, tofu, noodles and fresh fruits and vegetables, which are purchased with proceeds from the *Walk* and not readily available through the regional food pantry network. Earlier this year, ACRS expanded the number of our mobile meal sites to 26 in order to serve the needs of additional groups who live further out in King, Snohomish and Pierce counties and cannot readily get to the ACRS Food Bank. In recent years, proceeds from *Walk for Rice* has accounted for up to half of the funds needed to offer these vital services, which distributed



about one million pounds of food to more than 5,200 individuals and families in 2017.

Fortunately, *Walk for Rice* continues to help meet the needs of our community. A coalition of AAPI business professionals with representatives from some of the region's largest employers including Pacific Market International (PMI), UPS, Comcast, Microsoft, Boeing, Starbucks, Swedish, Amazon, Kaiser Permanente, Ernst & Young, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and others joined forces to raise additional funds and awareness of hunger in response to a loss of funding from ACRS' past participation in a nationwide food

bank match that has provided between \$50,000 to \$100,000 each year for the last few years.

Everyone's combined efforts secured more than \$200,000 as part of the 2018 *Walk for Rice*. We are so grateful for our generous community and hope you'll join us next year! ■

1 ACRS board members and Diane Narasaki at the start of the Walk. 2 ACRS senior nutrition programs manager, Miguel Saldin, with his daughter. 3 Ranjeet Gatka Akhara Martial Arts team members wow onlookers with their moves. 4 The Mighty Monsters made a splash at this year's Walk with their matching purple tees. 5 A beautiful Cambodian blessing dance kicked off this year's Walk. Photos by Jack Storms (lead photographer) and Teresa Ling.

CELEBRATING A DECADE IN OUR HOME



Community members from near and far joined us at ACRS to celebrate 10 years in our home on Martin Luther King Jr. Way S.

Photo by Tam Vo.

On August 23, more than 300 community members attended ACRS' Open House in commemoration of our 10 year building anniversary. Guests enjoyed cultural performances by Club Bamboo seniors, interactive workshops led by staff, delicious food and guided tours of ACRS highlighting the programs our clients rely on. This special event celebrated a community-wide labor of love from staff, clients, donors and community members who contributed to the design of ACRS' main office in the Rainier Valley.

ACRS opened the doors to the building in 2008, after a five-year planning and construction process. Former capital project director, John Chen Beckwith, recognized the importance of the project and said "ACRS is more than a building. It is a pre-eminent platform of all things that are important to the community."

ACRS has become a second home to thousands of Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders and others in our region, where everyone from youth to elders can find hope, opportunity and voice. It is a safe and welcoming space where people can find support, community

and a sense of belonging. From the entrance, to the culturally significant artwork found in every hallway – our communities are reflected, honored and celebrated. Beyond the buildings' esthetic, its beauty is reflected in our compassionate staff, board, volunteers and clients.

A special thank you to ACRS' volunteer art committee and donors, who helped curate art pieces representing communities we've begun to serve since 2008 including East African, Latinx/Hispanic, South Asian and Native American. ■

ACRS ART COMMITTEE

- Carina del Rosario
- Elisa Del Rosario
- Cora Edmonds
- Michelle Kumata
- Susan Kunitatsu
- Jocelyn Lui
- Linda Suyama
- Gary Tang
- Mayumi Tsutakawa

DEAR FRIENDS,



Diane Narasaki (C), with Lori Matsukawa (L) and Elisa Del Rosario (R) at the 1997 Walk for Rice along Alki Beach.

ACRS Photo Archives

I write with a full and grateful heart to thank you for all your support of ACRS over the years, and to say goodbye as ACRS Executive Director. When I accepted the position in 1995, I remember telling Lori Matsukawa, KING 5 news anchor and incoming board president, that I planned to be here for the long haul. ACRS had been very fortunate to have had two longtime executive directors, David Okimoto and Theresa Fujiwara, who had served for most of the first half of ACRS' 45 years in their roles, and had laid a strong and enduring foundation for the organization. I could not anticipate that 23 years later, I would still be privileged and proud to serve as executive director.

ACRS has seen tremendous growth over these years, growing from 76 staff to 270, from 135 volunteers to over 700, from 14,415 clients a year to reaching over 35,000, from service in 25 languages and dialects to service in 40 languages and dialects, from a budget of \$3.3 million to over \$20 million, from an organization with a strong local reputation to one that is nationally

recognized. Thanks to many of you and our community and philanthropic, corporate, and government support, we built our first permanent home, a beautiful 82,000 square foot LEED certified green building full of culturally welcoming art and rooms designed for culturally competent service delivery, community organizing and civic engagement. Most importantly, it is filled with community members of all generations getting the support, services, skills and information they need to build better lives, better futures, and stronger communities with the help of amazing, caring staff and volunteers.

I have seen and led a lot of change over these years, with all of our ACRS board members, leadership team members, staff and volunteers, and great community partners, but one thing has never changed: ACRS' commitment to social justice and to providing innovative, culturally competent and linguistically

▪ Continues on page 22

LIVING WITH ANXIETY by Ling Chua, LMFT



We are living in times of uncertainty. In the past week alone, the country has been shaken by news, first, of a man sending homemade pipe bombs to liberal politicians, then of a mass shooting in a synagogue in Pittsburgh. Such news serves as a stark reminder that we live in an increasingly divisive society, one in which we can no longer take our safety for granted. No one knows what to expect or how to prepare for an uncertain future. Who needs Halloween when every day it seems we are spooked by something new?

By the time you are reading this, we may already have a better picture of the state of affairs politically and economically. Still, it is understandable that people find staying updated on current events an overwhelming task these days. Many have refrained from using social media in order to avoid the endless barrage of negativity stemming from disagreements about the direction our country is headed. On the one hand, folks may want to make a difference by taking a stand on some of the issues that grab the headlines; on the other, keeping abreast of the development of these issues can leave them exhausted, helpless and anxious. And when they do not see a light at the end of the tunnel, avoidance can seem the only solution.

Add to that the expectations we get from work, family and relationships—all made inescapable by an appendage of the human body known as the cellphone—and you can imagine the suffocation one

can feel under stress. We have become a nation of anxious people. And savvy businesses are quick to jump on the bandwagon to meet our needs.

Is it any wonder that cannabidiol (CBD) infused products are now flooding the market, touted as the elixir that relieves stress? Any surprise that float spas have sprung up all over town as the new go-to place to melt our tension away?

Even before these millennial pursuits appeared, there was no lack of means to find escape. Think about all manners of addiction—to drugs, food, shopping, sex, gambling, video games and, some say, digital devices—and often you will see that the behavior exists initially to help the person cope with, or avoid, emotional pains such as anxiety and trauma.

I would argue that some of us who feel compelled to keep our eyes and fingers on our cellphones while dining in restaurants or waiting in the doctor's office are doing so due in part to some degree of FOMO (fear of missing out or FOMO) and/or social anxiety. But that is a wholly different subject for another day.

Why do so many of us feel a desperate urge to escape from anxiety? A major reason is that we label certain feelings as bad and therefore undesirable. Beginning in childhood, when we cry from pain or fear, we

 A large, stylized graphic of the word "ANXIETY" in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letters are slightly transparent, allowing a background image of a person's face with their hands covering their eyes to be visible through the text. The overall tone is dark and moody.

ANXIETY

hear the soothing voices of our parents hushing us and telling us everything will be fine. Later we learn that we can always count on our friends to cheer us up when we are sad. All such well-meaning gestures, though vital to the development of a healthy sense of self, indicate to us that we should always put a stop to painful feelings. With time, some of us might even believe that we cannot handle intense “bad” feelings on our own.

Anxiety is one such undesirable emotion that, when left to fester, can keep us stuck in a vicious cycle. If you have experienced insomnia, you know firsthand how your anxiety amps up fairly quickly when you look at the time, thus making it harder for you to fall asleep. As a result, we want to banish anxiety so we can stop feeling on edge. Times of uncertainty inevitably bring anxiety. It is the fear of the unknown.

What if we have the capacity to tolerate, even accept, our anxiety? Accepting our anxiety does not mean that we resign ourselves to the status quo or to circumstance. It means that we understand that some things just are not within our control. We can accept our anxiety even as we continue to stand against the external causes of it.

What if we could see the part of us that is anxious and be curious about what it needs from us? Is it telling us to change something in our lives, whether it is to end

toxic relationships, spend more time with people we care about, or re-prioritize our goals? Is it telling us we need to keep up, if not do better, in ensuring we leave a better world for our kids, one that is not ravaged by climate change, acts of violence, bitter sentiments and intolerance for those who are different from us?

Instead of eagerly pushing your anxiety out of your consciousness, take a moment to hear what it has to say. Then, picture your anxiety as a crying baby whom you now hold in your arms, gently rocking it while soothing its cries with your soft voice, and be with it for as long as it takes until it finds slumber. ■



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.

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FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK (CONT.)

■ Continued from pg. 2

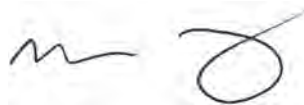
Over the next year, I look forward to meeting with and listening to our community, ethnic and faith-based partners who are working on the frontlines with ACRS at the local, regional, state and national levels, our elected officials, leaders and members of our Asian Pacific Islander Coalition, along with our business, academic and philanthropic partners. To better understand and appreciate how the organization makes such an incredible difference in the lives of so many people, I will spend time with our staff, board, donors, volunteers and those who are served by ACRS' programs and services. The future will be full of many one-on-one conversations, community discussions about the key policy issues and priorities, and other opportunities to work together on shared values.

As ACRS moves forward into the next 45 years and beyond, we will continue to advance immigrant and refugee rights; AAPI engagement and inclusion in the upcoming Census; protection of AAPI and other vulnerable communities disproportionately impacted by unhealthy air quality and global warming threatening the homelands of our people from the Pacific Islands;

law enforcement reform and police accountability to ensure our communities feel safe and experience improved police relations; and other emerging issues that directly impact our community.

Just as Diane worked hard to defend and protect the services, programs and rights long fought for by our community, I am committed to doing the same. The resilience and resolve of this amazing community are strengths stemming from our roots. Together, we will ensure that we uphold and protect our American values of democracy, equity, fairness, diversity and civil and human rights. Together, we will prevail and create a brighter future free of hatred, bigotry, racism, and homophobia. I look forward to the opportunity to work with you. ■

With deep gratitude and respect,



Michael Byun
Executive Director

LETTER TO THE COMMUNITY (CONT.)

■ Continued from pg. 15

accessible services for our community's most vulnerable members; to being a safe and welcoming space for all generations of our community to work together and strengthen our community. Our founders' vision of a place where our community could call home, is something we have never lost sight of. I know ACRS' new executive director, Michael Byun, shares this vision and deep commitment to our community. I know he will bring his compassionate and seasoned leadership and take ACRS to the next level of organizational development to be an even better resource to our

community and our partners. I know he will make us all proud, and I look forward to ACRS' continuing evolution. The best is yet to come. ■

With profound gratitude for all that you have done for ACRS and our community,



Diane Narasaki
Executive Director, 10/23/95 – 12/2/18



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You can also file a civil rights complaint with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office for Civil Rights, electronically through the Office for Civil Rights Complaint Portal, available at <https://ocrportal.hhs.gov/ocr/portal/lobby.jsf>, or by mail or phone at:

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 200 Independence Avenue S.W., Room 509F,
HHH Building, Washington, D.C. 20201, (800) 368-1019, (800) 537-7697 (TDD).

Complaint forms are available at <http://www.hhs.gov/ocr/office/file/index.html>.

