get involved

Only with the help of caring volunteers can AALEAD succeed in reaching out to our children and their families. You can volunteer by:

- Becoming a mentor
- Tutoring students
- Helping with special events

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact our Volunteer Coordinator. To donate to our organization, please contact the Executive Assistant. We are part of the Combined Federal Campaign, CFC #7452.

Achievements

AALEAD actively seeks input from the community. Our Board of Directors includes parents and youth, who help steer the direction of our organization and provide valuable insights about our programs.

Over the past four years, AALEAD has built an effective model for child and youth development in the Vietnamese and Amerasian community. Our students have been accepted to George Mason University, UVA-Charlottesville, and Temple University, and received university scholarships and community awards.

Our executive director, Sandy Dang, has been recognized by numerous organizations for her work with the Vietnamese immigrant and refugee community. Her awards include the Mayor's Neighborhood Action Award, the Linowes Leadership Award, and *Washingtonian of the Year.*

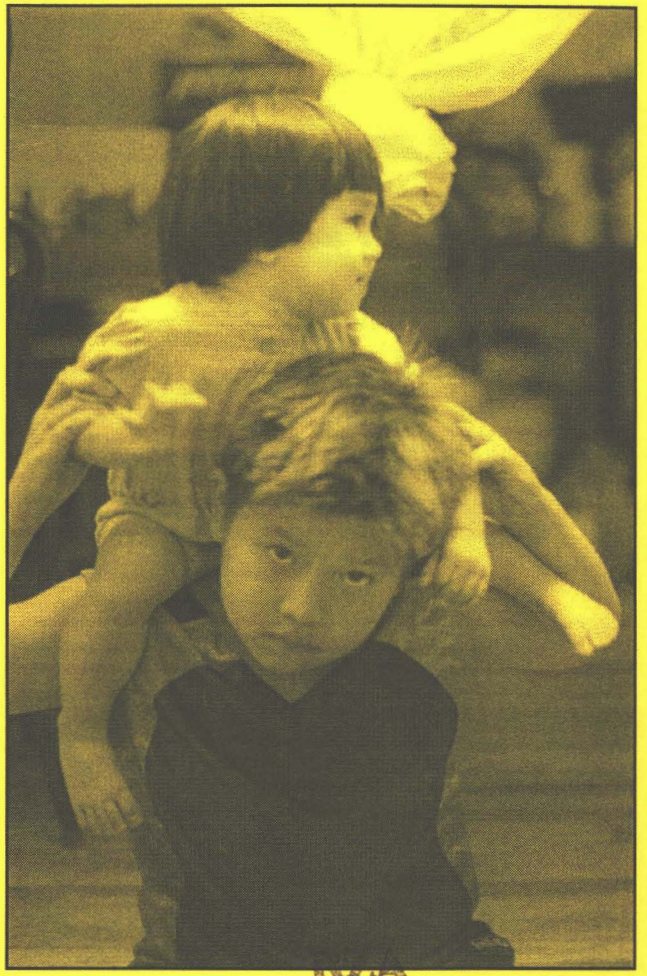
Contact Us

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Asian American LEAD

Leadership, Empowerment, and Development for Youth and Families



Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 17080
EXHIBIT NO. 34

Case No. 17080
Exhibit No. 34

About Us



Founded in 1998, Asian American LEAD (AALEAD) seeks to promote the well-being of Asian American youth and families through education, leadership development, and community-building. We serve the Vietnamese and Amerasian refugee and immigrant communities in the Mt. Pleasant and Columbia Heights neighborhoods of Washington, D.C.

AALEAD understands that a child is best equipped for success if s/he has support in all domains of his/her life, particularly in the individual, family, school, and community domains. Guided by this principle, AALEAD uses a four-pronged approach that integrates mentorship, parenting education, after school intervention, and school partnerships. Our programs provide a safe space for students and families to build self-confidence and develop personal talents through recreational, arts, and sports activities.

AALEAD Programs

The Mentoring Program matches Vietnamese American youth (10-18) with caring adults who support them one-on-one in their efforts to develop the linguistic, academic, and life skills necessary to succeed in the United States.

The After School Academic Enrichment Program provides homework support, English language enrichment, sports, and arts to elementary and middle school children.

The High School Academic and Leadership Program engages high school students in sports, service learning activities, college prep, and homework support to build academic and leadership skills.

The Parents Learn, Children Learn Program incorporates case management, parent education, and educational advocacy to help parents guide and support their children.

How can AALEAD help?

AALEAD is committed to providing quality, Vietnamese language services that are culturally appropriate. We believe that education is key to personal and community-wide success, and that all families are entitled to equal and quality access to social, educational, and health care services.

If you are interested in enrolling your family and/or your children in one of our programs, please contact either the Academic Director, the Parents Learn, Children Learn Project Coordinator, or the Volunteer Coordinator.

Special Events



Each year, AALEAD hosts four events, open to everyone.

- Summer Talent Show
- Annual Dinner (Lunar New Year Celebration)
- Volunteer Appreciation Day
- Christmas Party

Opening Doors...

Architectural plans have been developed and reveal what AALEAD could offer its participants by renovating the building. New features include:

* Larger, more functional community room with seating for 30.
* 3 large, well-lit classrooms.
* Modern computer lab.
* Conference room for meetings with community leaders, supporters and staff.
* Handicap accessibility.



Architect's rendering of renovated AALEAD Community Center (front).

Creating Opportunities



Architect's rendering of renovated AALEAD Community Center (rear).

Renovations will transform the AALEAD building from an old house to a vibrant Community Center. When fully renovated, the AALEAD Community Center will be able to truly fulfill its mission – helping children access a better, well-rounded education and offering families a brighter future filled with greater opportunity, while still honoring their heritage.

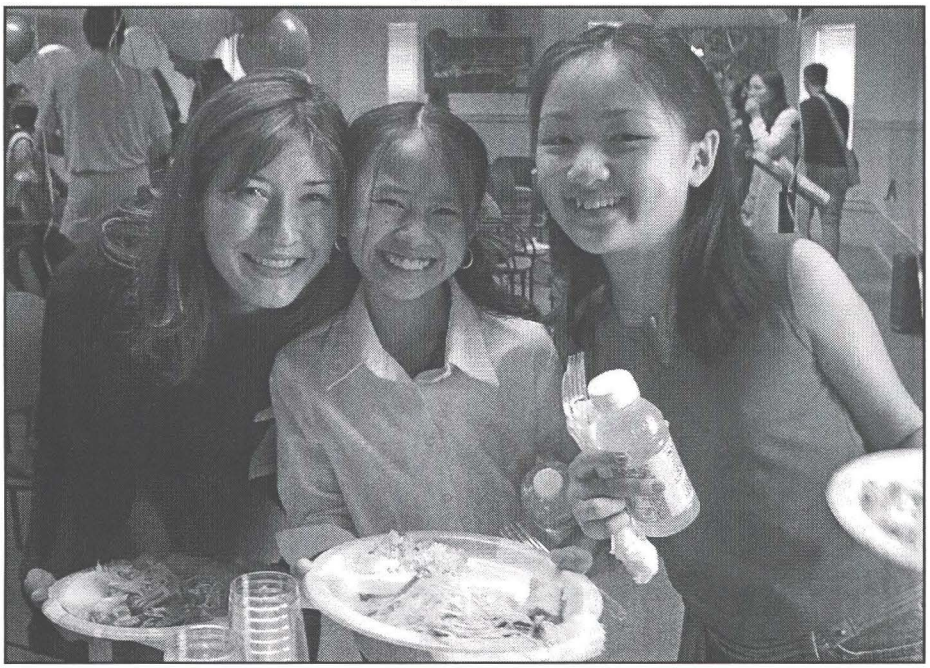
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Asian American LEAD

Leadership, Empowerment, and Development for Youth and Families

Spring 2003

Mentors, Mentees Celebrate Volunteer Appreciation Day



Elizabeth Summers, her mentee Lynda Nguyen, and Khahmni Nguyen pose with full plates of food at AALEAD's Volunteer Appreciation Day.

AALEAD volunteers have some "tight" qualities, agree the youths. During the annual Volunteer Appreciation Day on April 26, 2003, students listed some of the characteristics that made AALEAD's mentors and tutors so special.

The elegantly dressed Master of Ceremonies, Son Luu, age 13, welcomed the guests: a crowd of 70 youths, parents, staff, and volunteers.

"There are many reasons why we love spending time with our mentors and tutors," announced Son, and Lynda Nguyen, 11, stepped forward:

Reason number six: "They help us with projects," she said.

Reason number five: "It's easy to talk with them about anything," said Minh Phan, 13.

Reason number four: "They help with our schoolwork and we have fun at the same time," said Hoa Nguyen, 17.

continued on next page

High School Students Win Awards

by Sonal Sheth

Kim Phu Nguyen, a recent graduate of Bell Multicultural High School, humbly accepted the Mayor's Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month Award in May for her extraordinary contribution to the Asian Pacific Islander community in the District. She was the only youth award recipient, and more notably, the only award recipient to whom Mayor Anthony Williams offered a microphone to give a brief impromptu speech.

Although new to public speaking, Kim Phu expressed herself confidently and clearly. Since arriving in Washington, DC four-and-a-half years ago, she has served as a role model to her siblings, translator, apartment hunter, tutor, church choir member, dancer and choreographer, parent-teacher conference assistant, and tenants' association representative.

Kim Phu Nguyen is not alone in her achievements. Khanh Nguyen, who just completed her junior year at Benjamin

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Case No. 17080
Exhibit No. 34

Appreciation Day

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Reason number three: "They're funny," announced Khanhmi Nguyen, 10.

Reason number two: "They take us to different places to learn more," said Nguyet Nguyen, 14.

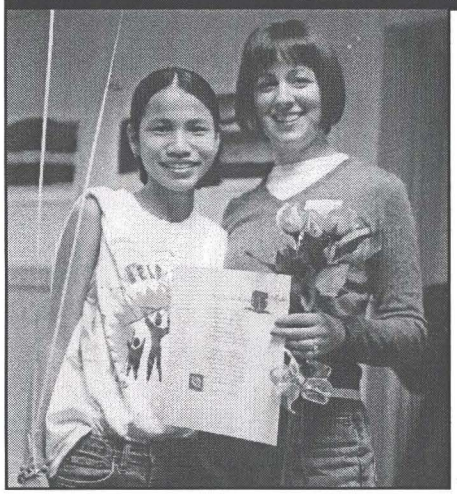
Reason number one: "They're caring and thoughtful," said Anh-Tai Nguyen, 17.

Amid the festive atmosphere, Executive Director, Sandy Dang, and parent board members, Anh Tang and Nhai Nguyen, thanked the volunteers for their efforts with AALEAD's students. This year, several mentors received flowers and a special recognition for their long commitment to their mentees and to the Vietnamese and Amerasian community in Mount Pleasant, Columbia Heights, and Shaw neighborhoods.

Always a highlight of the event, parents contributed delicious Vietnamese food for refreshments. The event, which was organized by Youth Leadership Coordinator, Johanna Park, was also an opportunity for parents and volunteers to meet Ngoc Trinh, AALEAD's new volunteer coordinator. After over a year in the mentoring program, Ingvild Bjornvold will continue her work with AALEAD developing evaluation frameworks for the organization.

Ingvild Bjornvold is the AALEAD Program Development Specialist.

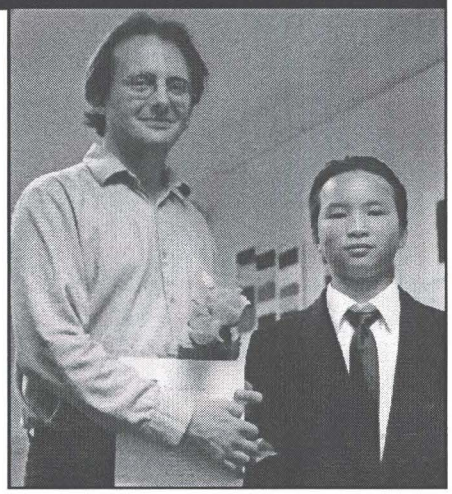
A Tribute to Mentors



Tuyet Nguyen, 13, and **her mentor, Heidi Strom Moon**, have been together for three years. Tuyet likes to hang out with Heidi because she's funny!



Tara Leaman, who has been a mentor to three siblings since 1998, was unable to attend due to law exams. Her mentees, Tammy, 9, and Tiffany Nguyen, 10, received Tara's five roses (one for each year) on her behalf.



Mario Farrugia, received three roses for three years and three reasons why he is a great mentor: (1) Mario is really smart and can talk about anything; (2) Mario comforts his mentee Son Luu when he is sad; and (3) Mario helps Son's family.



Mary Ellen Foley has been a mentor since 1996, when her mentee, Ngoc Duong, was only seven. As Mary Ellen was unable to attend, 14-year-old Ngoc received seven roses (one for each year) on her mentor's behalf.



Kiran Ahuja is good company, can talk about anything, and is a great help with projects, said Nguyet Nguyen, 14, about her mentor of three years.

AALEAD would also like to recognize the following mentors and volunteers, who have been with us for over a year:

Karen McClure
Sukhi Dosanjh
Rachel Bae
Kara Delahunt
Thanh Nguyen
Didier Trinh
Nu Wexler
Don Reisman
Christina Lagdameo
Terry Huynh
Ho Yan Chan
Teresa Lee
Phu Diep

Thank you for your dedication and commitment!

Tackling Fears and Filming a Garden in Progress

by Todd Cherkis

As some of you may suspect, city kids tend to be afraid of all things in nature. Spiders make 'em jump. Worms make their skin crawl! So it is with great courage that AALEAD's sixth, seventh, and eighth graders have set about making a garden out of an old abandoned lot on Newton Street. Yes, they have even found percent carbon and learned to appreciate it!

"Worms are very important for plants to grow because they decompose stuff and make good soil for our plants," Phat explained.

How did this transformation take place? Very slowly, of course. First, students had to clear the abandoned lot of all trash, including a broken bicycle and radio.

We also discovered a problem that needed solving before we could plant. The lot had too much shade, which, as you know, is no good for growing flowers and vegetables. Students worked to resolve this problem by painting the surrounding fence a beautifully reflective white.

The Tran, the hardest working painter among us, commented, "First I got the brush and dipped it in the paint. Then you paint the fence up and down so the paint dries evenly. But the most important thing is, don't get paint on your clothes!"

After cleaning the grounds and painting the fence, we still had a lot of work ahead of us. We had to dig up and turn the soil, loosening it so that our plants could grow their roots more easily. What made this task especially difficult was the large number of bricks we unearthed. As it turns out, the lot used to be a store of some kind. The bricks had been part of the old store. It took a lot of time and painstaking effort to remove over fifty bricks from the soil.



Students Minh Phan and The Tran help turn over manure at their community garden to prepare for planting corn.

Finally, we were able to plant our seeds into the soil, which included cucumbers, tomatoes, spinach, lettuce, beans, peas, carrots, chili peppers, melon and flowers. We will soon be planting two types of corn.

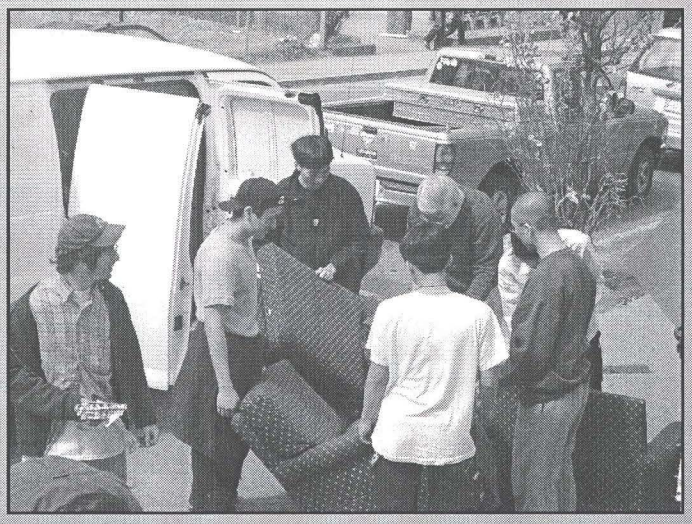
Now, we have a lot of smart people in our class. So we're not just planting a garden, we are also conducting science experiments and making a video using computer editing software at AALEAD. Students have designed their own experiments to learn how to make soil. We have read that glass bottles will take a million years to turn into soil!

The class plans on using more biodegradable materials such as newspapers, food, and yes, an army of worms. A team of students are also filming each day at the garden. Minh Phan, director, editor, and cinematographer, took time out of his busy day to offer up this comment on the film-making process:

"The video looks good. I do a good job. It's all about preparing the garden so far. There is footage of us watering, planting, digging, getting soil, and playing around. The editing on the computer has been fun because you get to mess around with what you want on the video."

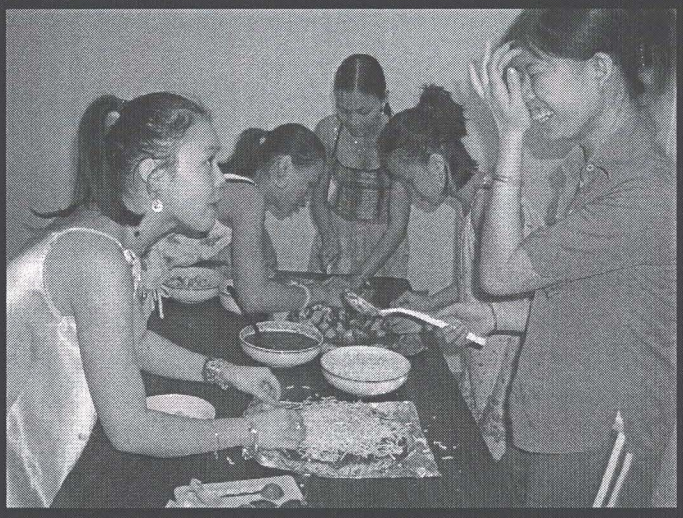
While some students have expressed ideas such as selling the fruits and vegetables that we harvest, more than likely we'll be sharing this homegrown food with AALEAD and friends.

Todd Cherkis is the AALEAD middle school class teacher.



Left, volunteers, staff members, board members, and high school students contribute their arms, legs, and backs to help clean up AALEAD's old building at 3045 15th Street, NW. During a sweaty eight hours, friends and staff moved sofas, packed art supplies, recycled books, took apart bookshelves, and bravely explored dusty closets. Afterwards, everyone eagerly dug into a pile of pizzas and sodas. On March 31, 2003, AALEAD officially relocated to its new facility at 1323 Girard Street, NW, only four blocks away from its old site.

In its fourth year, the Young Women's Group is going strong! During a recent overnight workshop, the group enthusiastically participated in a scavenger hunt and made pizza together. After watching *Real Women Have Curves*, the Young Women's Group had a great discussion about womanhood and balancing family expectations with personal dreams. During a long night of laughter, fun, and serious conversation, young women and staff used each other to "sculpt" societal perceptions of Asian females.





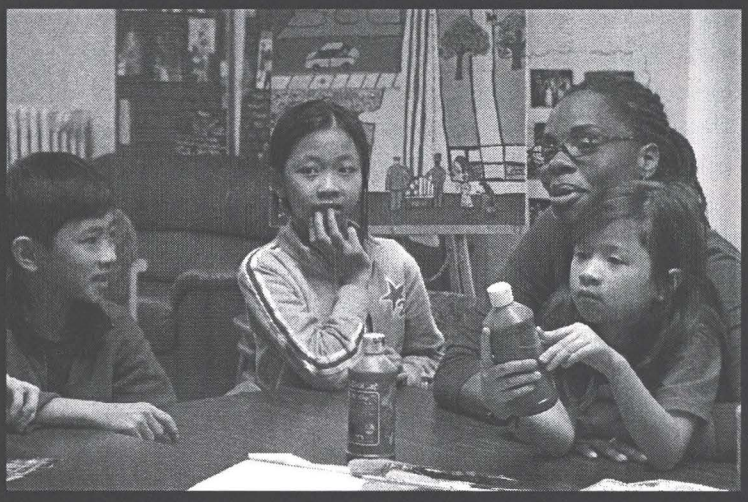
Each year, AALEAD hosts a booth at the Mt. Pleasant Day Festival. Parents, volunteers, and staff members made summer rolls, lemonade, and Vietnamese iced coffee. Organized by the new volunteer coordinator, Ngoc Trinh, the booth was a great success, selling out by 5 p.m. Pictured left, Nghi Le, a former AALEAD staff member, and Kien Trinh, a high school program participant, transfer summer rolls into a cooler.



Johanna Park congratulates the high school Outdoor Community Service Club members for completing a year of service. Over the past academic year, Johanna has led weekly community service and service-learning activities, including preparing meals at Food and Friends; helping with beautification projects at the Josephine Butler Parks Center; building houses at Habitat for Humanity; and volunteering for AALEAD's special events. At the ceremony, students completing over 25 hours of service were awarded with movie tickets.

Youth board member Hoa Nguyen testifies before the D.C. Council in support of the Language Access Act. Supported by staff members Sandy Dang and Thomas Tran, Hoa told the council that she had translated for her mother since she was nine, saying, "Every time she needed to go to the hospital for my little brother or go to the welfare office, my mom would pull me out of school to go with her to translate. I am asking you to help get Vietnamese translators to help my parents and all the Vietnamese parents out there who need [language services], so my friends and I won't have to miss our important lessons at school."





Lisa Pegram and her third to fifth grade class listen to Ingvild Bjornvold, an AALEAD staff member, describe her trip to India. Students asked who, what, where, when, and why questions to learn more about India's culture, clothing, and food. Afterwards, students donned white smocks and painted picture frames to give to AALEAD mentors and volunteers. The frames were designed with mountains, boats, flowers, and messages of appreciation. The frames are still works in progress, and will be presented to mentors and volunteers once they are finished.

Student Awards

continued from page 1

Banneker High School, appeared in the Washington Post for winning first place and a cash prize of $100 in the Letters About Literature 2003 essay contest, sponsored by the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, the DC Public Library System, and Weekly Reader Corp.

Students in grades four through twelve were asked to write to any author, living or dead, and describe how that author's work changed their view of the world or of themselves. Khanh lucidly wrote about how Kaye Gibbons' book *Ellen Foster* affected her.

Phuc-Thanh Tran, valedictorian of Cardozo High School, also appeared in the Washington Post for being named one of Washington's top two youth volunteers in 2003 by the Prudential Spirit of Community Awards. He will receive a cash award of $1,000, an engraved silver medallion, and a chance to be named one of America's top ten youth volunteers for 2003. Phuc-Thanh is also a member of the Boy Scouts of America.

Sonal Sheth is the AALEAD Education and Arts Coordinator.



Kim Phu, left, gives her speech at the award ceremony as Sandy Dang and Mayor Williams look on.

Letter to Kaye Gibbons
Winning Essay by Khanh Nguyen

Dear Kaye Gibbons,

Ellen Foster is one book I shall never forget reading. It reminded me of how much I had wanted love and how much I want to express everything I feel and every emotion I encounter. When I finished reading this book, the only thing that came to mind was that I never want to forget my history. Everything, whether good or bad, should be written down somewhere in case I may need it someday to tell or to remember.

I can relate to Ellen because of the verbal abuse side she received from some of her family members, especially her grandmother. Granted, my grandmother never verbally abused me, for I never really knew my grandmother; however, I was and continue to be verbally abused by people who are close to me, people I see every day. It hurts badly because any sane person would know that words can cut and break a soul. At school, because I am different and look very different from most people, I get picked on and harassed. Those who know me do me no harm, but for those who base their impressions and knowledge by what is on the outside will never really gain true knowledge and respect. Those who only betray others can never form stable and lasting friendships. I know that much, yet I still get the ill-mannered treatment some people think is cool to do.

I don't receive much encouragement either from those that I expect would give it to me automatically. Sometimes when I create things that are beautiful to me, that come from the heart, and that I like doing, all I receive is "Why are you wasting your time with that instead of concentrating on your studies?" Mostly everything I do is done in secret, and no one I love will know the whole me, a depressing reality. I wasn't motivated to do much, which is probably why I sometimes feel I am a failure. And when I say things like this many people think I need therapy. It hurts when the person I'm talking to cannot respond directly or understand what I'm feeling before suggesting I seek professional help. The least they can do is be concerned and listen instead of pushing me away like I'm some kind of lost puppy, a puppy they don't want to deal with.

After reading Ellen Foster I realized that I do have some things going bad but not bad enough for me to run away from. Sometimes I wish life wouldn't be so hard but in a way it helps the mind to grow. It grows in a painful way but it grows nonetheless. I have always remembered what happened to me as I was growing up, usually the bad things. Maybe it is time to let them go, to let them escape from my mind and onto paper. It is time for my heart and mind to rest, for me to rest, and enjoy what I have been missing all the years I couldn't let go. This is how Ellen Foster has affected me.

Sincerely,
Khanh Nguyen

More New Staff Join Team



Bottom right, Ngoc Trinh cheerfully poses for a picture with the rest of the Mt. Pleasant Day volunteers.

Ngoc Trinh has a ready smile and a warm compliment for anyone who walks in the AALEAD front door. On April 30, Ngoc Trinh became the newest AALEAD staff member to join the team. She replaced Ingvild Bjornvold, who moved into program evaluation.

Ngoc first heard about AALEAD through Giang Wells-Dang, a 2002 summer intern for the Family Strengthening Program.

"I was excited about AALEAD because I heard they served the Vietnamese community in the D.C.," Ngoc said. "When I first came to the U.S., I had no relatives or family here. Strangers in the Vietnamese community helped me out, even though I didn't know them."

As the volunteer coordinator, Ngoc matches mentors to mentees, monitors their relationships, and plans mentor-mentee activities. She recently coordinated the Mt. Pleasant Day Festival booth for AALEAD.

Ngoc hopes to gain a better understanding of the Vietnamese and Amerasian community from her experience at AALEAD.

"It's been very rewarding so far," she said. "I've been so moved by the volunteerism of the people I work with. They have been helping me even more than I had hoped for. In Vietnam, if you asked people to work without pay, you'd get turned down."

Before she came to AALEAD, Ngoc worked for Oxfam as an interpreter. She traveled to remote areas of Vietnam to help aid workers learn more about the people and their needs.

The best part about AALEAD, Ngoc says, is the people.

"At AALEAD," she said, "we have people from all ethnic groups, from all types of backgrounds, from the older and younger generation, and we all work together harmoniously. I've learned a lot from talking with my colleagues and exploring different things, like food."

In her free time, Ngoc loves spending time with her husband. Her favorite activities are reading and walking after dinner.

Haiku Poetry on Asia

by Lisa Pegram

Haiku is a Japanese form of poetry that observes nature, environment and emotions. It is a three-line structure with five syllables in the first line, seven in the second, and five again in the third. Our class wrote haiku as part of the Asian Pacific American Heritage Month geography project. Each student was assigned a country in Southeast and South Asia to research on the Internet. They then looked for similarities between their country and Vietnam. These short poems were composed based on the information they learned during their research.

Malaysia
by Lieu Huynh
The ginger flowers
My flag stands for the night moon
They are nice and bright

Philippines
by Khanhmi Nguyen
Our country flag stands
For the blood of our people
Our pure water

Indonesia
by My Nguyen
Wet and dry seasons
Humidity in the air
Moisture in my skin

Thailand
by Lynda Nguyen
The Red, White and Blue
Red and Blue, Blood and Rivers
White for purity and love

Waterfalls (for Cambodia)
by Tan Huynh
My country is poor
Floods wash away happiness
But there is still hope

India
by Debbie Huynh
Heat makes Delhi hot
Coldness makes Delhi chilly
The Springtime is cool

Lisa Pegram is the AALEAD 3rd to 5th grade class teacher.

Asian American LEAD extends a heartfelt thanks to its many supporters

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Special Thanks:
Sandy Dang, Ngoc Trinh

Mission Statement

Asian American LEAD promotes the well-being of Asian American youth and families through education, leadership development, and community-building.

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