



STANISLAUS COUNTY BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND RECOVERY SERVICES DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

...a newsletter to address cultural issues that enable us to effectively work in cross cultural situations.

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Cambodian Community Builds Resilience in New Home

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Nestled between the two country roads of Paradise and Grimes in West Modesto, lies ten acres of land, which the Modesto Cambodian Buddhist Society has called home since 2008. Although the US Census indicates that Cambodians make up less than six percent of the population in Stanislaus County, the close knit community outgrew their previous Temple also on Paradise Road but within the city sphere. The congregation is made up of approximately 300 families spanning throughout Stanislaus County. The relocation was almost a decade ago but building of the Sala Chan (Temple) has been slow with a projected date of completion in 2019. Though the scope of the capital project seems insurmountable for such a small community, the Cambodian Congregation has rallied to raise funds and leverage personal resources to support incremental building efforts.

A Small Piece of Home

The Cambodian Buddhist Society serves as a home away from a homeland for a majority of the congregation members who are either refugees themselves or have parents who came to the United States as refugees as a result of the genocidal reign of Pol Pot and the Khmer Rouge from 1975-1979. Arriving in a strange place with unfamiliar food, language, customs and even weather, most Cambodians relied on the small communities they forged within their own networks in order to traverse and acclimate into their new lives. Temples served a very important role for this reason. They not only provide spiritual nourishment but became a place where people can feel whole and reconnect with parts of themselves that can only surface safely in the company and comfort of familiar faces and sounds.

Larger Vision

The Sala Chan is designed to be multipurpose for use as a worship hall as well as a cultural center. Dr. Van Prom who is the President of the Temple board, explains that the larger vision of the organization is to offer a place where people can come to not only reconnect with cultural identity but also strengthen a sense of who they are and where they come from. "We are hoping to offer classes in Cambodian cooking, Khmer literacy and language, traditional and classical dance as well as health education." Dr. Prom stresses the urgency of providing these activities "Our elders aren't going to be with us for too much longer." According to the American Society on Aging, social support and participation in religious activity have been known to buffer the risk of suicide and mitigate a multitude of other acculturative stressors such as social isolation, discrimination and language-cultural barriers among aging Asia Americans. There is purposeful intention of providing a safe place for the elders of the community to gather, participate in social and recreational activities which will enhance their overall well-being. The contrast in cultural practices of the United States have resulted in generational disconnect and isolation among the elders. Creating an environment of communal harmony will aid in promoting connectivity and work to restore a sense of place within the community.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Sala Chan hopes to offer appealing programs for Cambodian Youth to become more active in their community. The Cambodian Buddhist Society currently offers a program for youth who are interested in learning traditional classical forms of dance. Kids of all ages have participated in lessons that have been enriching in both acquiring the dance forms and learning the historical context it exists in. Their goal is to promote leadership, educational opportunity, and cultural preservation efforts among Khmer youth. Cambodian classical dance is an art form that is both ancient and very much relevant to the mission of the group. During the Khmer Rouge genocidal reign, artistic expression of any kind was forbidden. Teachers, practitioners and students were punished, executed or forced to flee. As a result, there are very few survivors who have the skillsets to pass this tradition on to future generations so it is of special significance that this art form is exposed to many diverse audiences as testament to the resiliency of the Cambodian Community.

BHRS Cultural Competence, Equity and Social Justice Committee meets on the 2nd Monday of each month from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. in the Redwood Conference Room, 800 Scenic Drive

Announcement:

MHSA Document

A draft of the MHSA Annual Update FY 2018-2019 is available for 30-day public review and comment May 30 - June 28, 2018. To access the document, go to: www.stanislausmhsa.com



Convening of Community

Hoping to be a beacon of tranquility and serenity, the first feature to be installed on the ten acre plot of land at 1538 Grimes Ave in Modesto, was the statue garden. In the middle of the garden is a Bodhi tree which holds sacred meaning in the Buddhist faith as it is believed enlightenment was achieved under the Bodhi Tree. This is a story all newcomers to the site may hear as a way to establish narrative to the various features and structures on the developing landscape. Dr. Prom identifies the increasing mainstream popularity of developing mindfulness and meditation practices and hopes to invite community members to participate in future sessions hosted by the Cambodian Buddhist Society. "We want this to be a place where everyone will feel welcomed and receive spiritual renewal."

Going Forward

The Cambodian Community in all pockets of the country share the same roots of tragedy and triumph in varying degrees. It is the fibers of optimism and love that ties the community to their roots here as well as to the memories they carry with them of a place they used to call home. It is with fortitude and will that as survivors of humanities darkness they can fully embrace the light for the elder generation to find solace and for future generations to thrive.

Sources;

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/stanislauscountycalifornia/RHI225216>

<http://www.asaging.org/blog/addressing-health-disparities-among-older-asian-americans-data-and-diversity>



Flags at Temple



Looking Forward...



Congregation & Board Members



Highlights of May Cultural Competency, Equity and Social Justice Committee (CCESJC) Meeting



CC Update Newsletter and Discussion

Stomp Out Stigma: People living with a mental health challenge, face one of the largest debilitating issues in our society. Stigma comes down to hate and discrimination of those living with a mental health challenge. It is up to each one of us to be ambassadors of well-being and begin taking an active stance to end stigma.

- The CCESJC newsletter name changed from Cultural Competency Update to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Housing Support Services Program

Resthouse: Male only, 5 bedroom home, 28 day program located at 512 Vine Street, Modesto, CA. own by STANCO.

Transitional Housing: This is a two year program. Goals are set for permanent housing. The individuals will be educated in life skills, housekeeping, finances, cooking, they develop a rent history and repair credit if needed. The individual is required to be connected to a regional team and receiving services. They need to have a severe mental illness, be homeless or at risk.

Permanent Housing: BHRS partners with several housing providers in Stanislaus County. Regional teams can refer individuals that struggle with homelessness or at risk of being homeless. Some individuals have been able to graduate to Section 8 and out of the program.



If you have questions or suggestions regarding Cultural Competency, please e-mail:

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