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OAPIA Bi-Weekly Newsletter

News Updates from the DC Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs

A Message from the Mayor



VINCENT C. GRAY
MAYOR

February 12, 2014

Dear Community Members,

I am pleased to highlight my administration's efforts to get District residents back to work that continue to bear significant fruit.

The city's unemployment rate for December dropped to 8.1 percent, the lowest it has been in five years. The latest figures also show that Wards 5, 7 and 8, which historically have had the highest unemployment rates, have seen significant drops of nearly 6%, nearly 7%, and more than 9%, respectively, from their recent highs. The improvements in the District's unemployment rate have been the most dramatic since my administration launched the innovative One City – One Hire program in 2011. The program operated by the Department of Employment Services (DOES) connects unemployed D.C. residents with employers seeking qualified workers. I am delighted that DOES has helped more than 8,700 District residents find jobs with more than 1,000 employer-partners. For example, my Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs has engaged more than 100 Asian American and Pacific Islander businesses to participate in One City – One Hire.

Furthermore, the District government has formed partnerships with nonprofit organizations to offer on-the-job training that meets the needs of industries looking for people with specific job skills and qualifications.

Earlier this year, I was also pleased to sign into law the Minimum Wage Amendment Act of 2013, which increases the minimum wage for all District workers to \$9.50 per hour starting in July of 2014, and includes provisions that will further increase the wage in the future. Although I was disappointed that the Council chose not to approve my proposal to increase the minimum wage to \$10 per hour, I believe this change is long overdue and an important first step to ensure that District workers earn a wage they can live on.

We still have a long way to go to ensure that everyone in the District who wants to work can find a good job with a good wage, and I will continue to work hard at reaching that goal. I am optimistic that through collaborative efforts, unemployment rates will continue to go down as hard-working D.C. residents find jobs that allow them to earn a decent living in our great city.

Sincerely,

Vincent C. Gray

OAPIA in the Community

OAPIA Launches its Celebration of the 10th Year Anniversary of the Language Access Act



OAPIA Director Koo and Program Coordinator and Grants Manager Neel Saxena addressing the audience regarding the 10th year anniversary of the Language Access Act.



The audience at the breakfast launch event listening attentively.

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - The Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OAPIA) launched its celebration of the 10th year anniversary of the Language Access Act at the Community Room of the Residences at Gallery Place on January 29, 2014. The event was an intimate breakfast where OAPIA kicked off its year-long initiative to celebrate ten years of language access in the District of Columbia. The diverse audience was made up of DC government leaders, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) organizations and community leaders, members from the Language Access Coalition, and other interested parties.

The goal of OAPIA's year-long initiative is to celebrate the passage of the Language Access Act and explore its effect on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in the District. OAPIA will also highlight its role in the implementation of the act over the past 10 years and provide recommendations for future work. OAPIA will have five major projects that will comprise this initiative:

- 10 for 10: 10 highlights of OAPIA's resources on language access in the District of Columbia. OAPIA will release its resources to key stakeholders.
- 2014: A Language Odyssey: Policy report and panel discussion reflecting on the past 10 years using various reports that paint a picture of language access in the AAPI community.
- I got a story to tell: Put a face on language access to connect "who" in the AAPI community is affected by the Language Access Act.
- Language Arts: To view language access through an artistic lens.
- Ground Broken: A reception celebrating 10 years of language access in the AAPI community by highlighting the work of OAPIA and recognizing the AAPI pioneers who contributed to the Language Access Act.

For the entire press release, please visit [here](#). For photos, please visit [here](#).

Mayor Vincent C. Gray and OAPIA Participate in the Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA)'s Lunar New Year Parade



Mayor Gray and OAPIA Director Koo marching in the Chinatown parade.

On February 2, 2014, Mayor Vincent C. Gray and OAPIA Director Soohyun "Julie" Koo celebrated the beginning of Lunar Year 4712, the Year of the Horse, at the annual Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA) Lunar New Year parade in Chinatown. Chinese folk dancers, kung fu performers, traditional lion and dragon dancers, community organizations, and other performers and groups marched in the parade.

Remarks were made by the CCBA, the parade organizer, the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office, Mayor Gray, President Obama's Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, and other government officials. The event concluded with a traditional firecracker display.

The CCBA of Washington, DC was founded in the 1940s and formally registered in 1952. The CCBA has organized the Lunar New Year parade in Chinatown for over 40 years. On average, around 40,000 individuals attend the parade each year.

For photos, please visit [here](#).

OAPIA Attends Tết Lunar New Year Celebration



OAPIA Outreach Coordinator Ngoc Trinh conducting outreach to community members about DC Health Link and OAPIA activities.



OAPIA staff with community members at the Tét Lunar New Year celebration.



From left to right: OAPIA Outreach Coordinator Ngoc Trinh, Metropolitan Police Department Assistant Chief Diane Groomes, Community Member, and Metropolitan Police Department - Asian Liaison Unit Officer Steven Nguyen.

On February 3, 2014, OAPIA attended a Vietnamese Tết Lunar New Year celebration in Columbia Heights. OAPIA helped promote the importance of the Affordable Care Act and DC Health Link to the AAPI community at the event.

For more information on [DC Health Link](#), please visit [here](#).

The Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs Awards the Vietnamese American Youth Empowerment and Capacity Building Grants

(WASHINGTON, D.C.) - The Mayor's Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs (OAPIA)

awarded its first time Vietnamese American Youth Empowerment (VAYE) grant in the amount of \$43,169.48 to community-based organizations (CBOs) providing culturally and linguistically competent, mentoring and academic, direct services to the Asian American and Pacific Islander community. Additionally, the VAYE grant will help increase the capacity of low-income Asian American and Pacific Islander immigrants to achieve independence within the general community. OAPIA also awarded two capacity building grants totaling \$3,500 to support the ability of CBOs to fulfill its mission over time, and to enhance their ability to create a positive impact on the lives of District residents.

For the entire press release, please visit [here](#).

OAPIA Promotes DC Health Link and Conducts Voter Registration Outreach at the Chùa Giác Hoàng Temple



OAPIA staff and the DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority (HBX) answering questions regarding DC Health Link.

On Sunday, February 9, 2014, OAPIA helped inform individuals about DC Health Link and helped conduct voter registration outreach at the Chùa Giác Hoàng temple in Columbia Heights. The DC Health Benefit Exchange Authority, assisters, and insurance brokers were onsite before and after the temple service to answer questions and to help enroll members in affordable health plans through DC Health Link.

For more information on [DC Health Link](#), please visit [here](#). For more information on [registering to vote, upcoming elections, or general information about voting](#), please visit [here](#).

OAPIA News

OAPIA Welcomes New Community Outreach Assistant Frank Huynh



Frank Huynh

Frank Huynh recently became the community outreach assistant for OAPIA, after previously serving as an intern. During his time at OAPIA, Frank has helped with case assistance, community outreach, event planning, and administrative duties. With his new position, Frank hopes to be able to make an even bigger impact on the Asian American and Pacific Islander community.

Outside of OAPIA, Frank is heavily involved with assisting Vietnamese youth, where he strives to develop the next generation of leaders by being active with the Union of North American Vietnamese Student Associations (uNAVSA) and serving as the Co-Entertainment Director for their national conference.

OAPIA Welcomes Additional Spring Intern



Leesak Wang

Leesak Wang was born and raised in Suwon, South Korea. He lived there until the age of 12, and later lived in Tianjin, China for three years before moving to the United States in 2005 to attend St. Paul Preparatory School. As a senior at Marymount University, Leesak Wang expects to graduate with a degree in liberal arts and concentration in politics. Leesak has adopted a great sense of cross-cultural understanding after having lived in three different countries. He is strongly dedicated to supporting the Asian American and Pacific Islander community in the Washington, DC metropolitan area.

In his spare time, Leesak enjoys playing soccer, tutoring Korean and English, and teaching at Northern Virginia Community College. He has also practiced Taekwondo for five years and has earned a third degree black belt. Leesak has a positive mindset and strongly believes that if he works hard, the rest will follow.

Greetings from the Program Coordinator and Grants Manager



Hello everyone, this is Neel Saxena, Grant Manager and Program Coordinator for the Office on Asian and Pacific Islander Affairs.

How long have you been in DC?

I will have worked for DC government for 10 years in September 2014.

What brings you to DC and what do you enjoy most about DC?

DC is a world class city with so much variety in activities and



many of them are free and always interesting. While small, I still enjoy the rich culture and community feel of Chinatown, especially the food. It's truly a cultural destination to me.

How do you stay engaged within the community?

My work keeps me engaged with the community, as the grant manager I get to learn about all the innovative and exciting projects going on in the community.

Own Words

"If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart." - Nelson Mandela

If you enjoyed reading this profile, please visit [I am AAPI in DC](#) to read additional community member profiles or to submit your own profile!

Spotlight: Deepa Iyer of South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)



For nearly ten years, Deepa Iyer has served as the Executive Director of South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT). After nearly a decade of visionary leadership, she steps down as Executive Director; however, she leaves ready and inspired to continue addressing issues of racial justice and immigrant rights in a changing America.

When Deepa became Executive Director in 2004, SAALT was started in a one-room, windowless office in midtown Manhattan, at a time when South Asian communities were confronting the post 9/11 realities that had taken shape in America. Deepa and SAALT began to build on the connections and knowledge that already existed among groups and community advocates around the country, and developed a common vision to create a progressive national presence that could meaningfully amplify the issues, priorities and needs of the diverse communities.

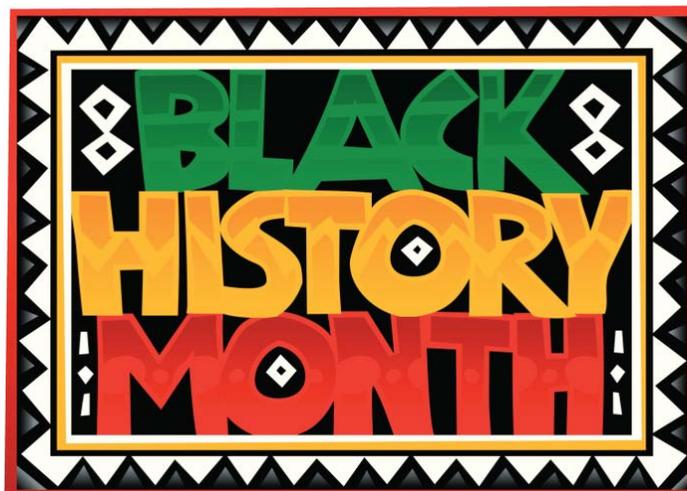
Today, SAALT is a national organization with six full-time staff in our DC area office, a million dollar budget, and strong partnerships. SAALT has become a key player on policy issues ranging from immigration to civil rights, and have sat at tables with Administration and Congressional leaders to advocate around South Asian community needs. SAALT has changed

the landscape of information about South Asian communities through their reports and analyses. Students, organizers, non-profit leaders, activists and professionals come back time and again to take part in SAALT's programs, including SAALT's South Asian Summits, Young Leadership Institutes, and Be the Change events.

Deepa will continue to stay engaged with SAALT as a consultant to provide guidance and input to the new director, staff and board. This work, the community, and the movement for racial and immigrant justice is her home, and Deepa will intend to find ways to be of service as she finds the next arc of her journey.

For more information about [SAALT](#) or ways to get involved, please visit [here](#).

February is Black History Month



February is Black History Month, or National African American History Month, and is a month set aside to learn, honor, and celebrate the achievements of black men and women throughout history. This celebration began as "Negro History Week." By the late 1960s, thanks in part to the Civil Rights Movement and a growing awareness of black identity, Negro History Week had evolved into Black History Month on many college campuses. President Gerald R. Ford officially recognized Black History Month in 1976, calling upon the public to "seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history."

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) and African American communities always have been involved in improving the civil rights of minority groups in the United States. In fact, one prominent AAPI civil rights activist, Richard Aoki, was an early member of the Black Panther Party, and promoted the civil rights protection of black people from police brutality during the 1960s and 1970s. OAPIA proudly celebrates Black History Month by continuing to foster stronger community ties between the Asian American and Pacific Islander and African American communities, as well with other communities.

For more information on Black History Month or related resources in the District, please visit:

- [DC Office of Human Rights: Black History Month 2014](#)
- [CultureCapital.com: Black History Month February 2014](#)
- [African American History Month](#)

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