The Hmong American Journey: 40 Years of Growth

La Crosse Rotary Club April 25, 2019



But First... Did You Know...?

How is "Hmong" pronounced?

- What's the plural of Hmong?
- Wisconsin is home to the 3rd largest Hmong community in the nation
 - Milwaukee is home to the 4th largest Hmong concentration in the nation
- Judge Kashoua Kristy Yang First Hmong judge elected in the entire US is in Milwaukee
 - First Hmong woman judge in the nation

Hmong History At-a-Glance

- Tribal minority group
 - China
 - Vietnam
 - Laos
 - Thailand

- 1950s Hmong written language developed
- ✤ 1960s Vietnam War aka The Secret War
 - Hmong soldiers died at a rate 10 times as high as that of American soldiers
- Early 1970s Crossing the Mekong River
- Mid-1970s Hmong American Journey begins

The Hmong American Journey

- 1970s Political refugees in the US
 Sponsorships
- 1980s Second wave of Hmong refugees
 - Secondary migrations
 - Mutual Assistance Associations formed
- 1990s Third wave of Hmong refugees
- Early 2000s Last wave of Hmong refugees
 Wat ThamKrabok
 - Relocation of 15,000 refugees



The Hmong American Journey

2000-2010: 40% population growth 2010: WI Hmong – 48,189 (undercount) 2020: WI Hmong – 70,000

✤ 2000-2010: 15% decline in poverty

- 62.5% Employed vs 70.2% Civilian Labor Force
 - 43% in Manufacturing vs 19% WI Population
 - Growing number of Hmong professionals
- 2013: WI Hmong Buying Power \$423 Million
 WI Federal/Local Taxes \$141 Million





Traditional Hmong Family/Clan Structure

Patriarchal structure

Clan-based

- 18 clans based on last names
- Hmong 18 Council of WI
- Hierarchy: immediate family
 - > Father
 - Older brother(s) to younger brother(s)
- ✤ Hierarchy: clan
 - Clan Leader
 - > Male elders



Disruption in the Traditional Hmong Leadership Structure

- Hmong American Women
 - > Working outside of the home
 - Higher education
 - Professional careers
 - Leadership positions inside AND outside the community
- Emerging Young Leaders
 - Women and Men
 - More vocal
 - > More "Americanized" defying "tradition"

Gaps and Disparities Continue

- Lack of capacity to service new needs of the community
 - Leadership development
 - Professional/technical skills
 - Lack of funding opportunities to build capacity
- Health disparities and inequities
 - Culturally-appropriate mental health services are urgent needs
 - Talent pipeline needed
- Economic inequality
 - Lack of wealth-building resources and knowledge
 - Lack of access to capital





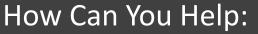


FRIENDSHIP ASSOCIATION INC





A Community Coming of Age...



- Provide capacity-building opportunities for Mutual Assistance Associations (MAAs) and other Hmong nonprofits
- Partner with MAAs and other Hmong nonprofits to leverage greater support and visibility for the Hmong community
- Partner with the Hmong community on policy and systemic changes

Ua Tsaug!

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