

Sharing stories of refugees from Burma in San Diego
...one newsletter at a time.

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Photo by Paw Ka Paw Htoo

KOSD News & Notes

A publication of the Karen Organization of San Diego

Volume 1 ~ Issue 3

July 11, 2013

Learn Karen

Good Morning: Ghoh Leh Ghay

Good Afternoon: Nee Leh Ghay

Good Evening: Ha Leh Ghay

FEATURED STORIES & UPDATES

Recent Event Highlights
Spotlight On: Weaving Class
First Generation Youth Program
Red Cross Trainings
After-School Program
New Volunteers
Summer Schedule

RECENT EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Highlight: WORLD REFUGEE DAY

On Saturday, June 22, 2013 from 11am - 4pm at Market Creek Plaza, individuals and families from all over San Diego and across the globe gathered to celebrate the various cultures that make up our local community. Young members of the refugee community from Burma presented cultural dance performances including a graceful crane dance and a lively Karen Bamboo Dance.

Highlight: ASIAN CULTURAL FESTIVAL OF SAN DIEGO

On Saturday, May 11, 2013 from 10am - 5pm at NTC Park, Liberty Station, several Asian and Pacific Islander communities shared their culture at this day-long event. To the audience's delight, the youth performed their signature Karen Bamboo Dance. KOSD hosted a resource booth and sold traditionally woven items including skirts, shirts, and satchels.

Highlight: BEACH CLEAN-UP DAY

On Saturday, April 27, 2013 from 9am - 12pm at Ocean Beach, the youth of KOSD's First Generation group took to the sand to help clean one of San Diego's beautiful beaches. 14 youth participated in the clean-up, including a few members of KOSD's staff, April, Hsit Hsa, and Eh Eh.

Highlight: CAMBODIAN NEW YEAR

On Saturday, April 13, 2013 from 10am - 5pm at Colina Del Sol Park, a festive celebration of Southeast Asian heritage took place. Youth of the refugee community from Burma performed a traditional Bamboo dance

to the Orphan Chickens song (direct translation).

SPOTLIGHT ON: JOURNEY WEAVING CLASS

Instructors - Andrew Rae, Gracie Michel, Marie Svensson

KOSD Representatives - April Moo, Eh Eh Wah

Together with AjA staff, the Journey (Weaving Class) instructors worked to develop the curriculum around 19 students' stories of their personal journeys as refugees in the U.S. Every Friday for two hours, students gathered to photograph different parts of their stories through the surrounding City Heights landscape. The final product of the class is a piece that uses photographs to tell stories through discussions about identity and transitions while learning the traditional art of weaving. Weaving was cited as something the students enjoyed most about this project. From learning about photography and weaving, to learning about each other's stories, this class not only allowed for individual stories to be told, but also brought community members closer together through a traditional craft. This class will continue as KOSD's new HOMESPUN program, starting Fall 2013.

Highlight: AjA Installation

story+LINES Public Art Fair

On Saturday, May 25, 2013 from 11am - 6pm at the AjA Building, City Heights, youth participants from KOSD's weaving class presented their work to the public.

A set of wood boards hinged together with large photographs displayed on each stood at the center of the day's exhibits.

Event attendees could experience the piece by walking from board to board and listening to audio recordings of students' stories, which were connected to each panel.

AjA: www.ajaproject.org

Record of Truth International Project in

Thailand/Burma: www.ajaproject.org/html/international.html

FIRST GENERATION YOUTH PROGRAM

Everyone "discuss[ed] and [gave] out all the name[s] that [they] like[d], but in the end everyone vote[d] and everyone agree[d]." -- April Moo, Youth Program Coordinator

Right now, 25 young adults participate in this proactive, collaborative youth group. Once a week, the group meets for an hour and a half to develop the group's mission, build relationships with one another, participate in community service activities, and learn about various topics chosen by the group. The group was formed to get youth from all refugee

groups from Burma to work together and empower themselves. All ethnic groups from Burma are welcome and it does not matter if participants have a job or not. For the future, the group's hope is to affirm each other's worth, develop sustainability in the community, and to engage the youth in community service and betterment.

Interested in helping out? Donations are always welcome. Please contact nao@karensandiego.org for more information.

Interested in speaking to the group? Send along a brief description of what you'd like to share, including topic(s) and your experience, to info@karensandiego.org

RED CROSS TRAININGS

"Be Red Cross Ready: Prepare Yourself for Disasters - at Home, at Work, and in Your Community" trainings have taken place at the KOSD office regularly over the past few months. The three main actions for the training were "Make a Plan," "Get a Kit," and "Be Informed." An overview of local disaster risks and potential impact was followed by suggestions on how families can plan for such disasters. Training participants then received an emergency kit: a red cross backpack filled with emergency supplies. In order to receive a bag, a family had to attend a training. With basic essentials that can sustain families for up to three days, the kits were a huge motivator to attend the trainings. Kits included first aid supplies, a flashlight, 4 AAA batteries, 5 packs of emergency water, emergency blankets, an emergency whistle, and an AM/FM radio. The final step, "Be Informed," was stressed through citation of various sources of information during disaster, and instructions for what to do during the different types of disaster situations (fire, earthquake, etc.).

As an organization, KOSD staff translated materials in Karen and Burmese, prepared 100 emergency kits for the trainings, and coordinated and facilitated 5 training sessions, including on-site interpretation. In addition to passing out kits, KOSD staff aided with interpretation and explanation of the supplies passed out and how to use them. During training, staff also helped with filling out an emergency contact card for each family and copied various ID cards and other important documentation to include in the bag.

Highlight: RED CROSS FIRE PREVENTION NEIGHBORHOOD CANVASSING

On Saturday, May 18, 2013 from 8am - 1pm, community volunteers met at Fairmont Park, City Heights, to gather fire prevention information which they then distributed to their assigned areas.

Equipped with a drawstring bag, t-shirt, water, and breakfast, young members of the refugee community from Burma and KOSD staff and volunteers set out to share fire prevention materials,

which had been translated into Karen and Burmese by KOSD staff.

After a day strolling in the sunshine to each apartment complex where individuals and families from Burma reside, the participating youth and KOSD staff and volunteers enjoyed lunch together and received a certificate of appreciation from the Red Cross.



AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM

May marked the end of KOSD's first ever After-School Program. Beginning in March, volunteers stopped by the office each week to work with elementary students on their homework. From spelling challenges with fill-in-the blank word games to focused math and reading practice, students laughed and learned at the KOSD office under the careful supervision of its staff. Though many school campuses are closed for the summer months, students still have the opportunity to stop by KOSD for learning sessions each week. The Summer Schedule section at the end of this newsletter provides detailed information about each week's happenings.

NEW VOLUNTEERS

On June 21st, KOSD honored its first 5 official volunteers with an Appreciation Celebration at our office. Complete with authentic Karen food and laughs all around, the occasion was filled with joy. KOSD's volunteer program began to take shape in the fall of 2012 and has grown to include service staff from all walks of life. Currently, Bruce, Carlos, Rebecca, Narumi, and Geoff contribute their time and energy (and sometimes a battery-powered pencil sharpener or a ride to pick up books :) to the refugee community from Burma on a regular basis. KOSD could not serve the community's individuals and families as well as we do without help from you! Thank you again and keep up the great work!

SUMMER SCHEDULE

July & August

Monday

- 1:30 - 3pm ~ Karen Class (Beginner)

Tuesday

- 1:30 - 3:30pm ~ Reading Club
- 3:30 - 5pm ~ First Generation

Wednesday

- 1:30 - 3pm ~ Karen Class (Advanced)
- 3 - 5pm ~ Writing Lab

Thursday

- 1:30 - 3:30pm ~ Reading Club

Friday

- 1:30 - 3pm ~ Burmese Class
- 4:30 - 6pm ~ Adult Workshop

Interested in volunteering? Please e-mail our Volunteer Coordinator at erin@karensandiego.org

WiSH LiST

Monitors for PC Computers

Maps (Burma, World)

Puzzles

Games

Tickets

Gift Cards

Blank Notebooks

Binders

Pencils

Have something to donate to us? Please visit <http://karensandiego.org/home/donate> or
contact nao@karensandiego.org

Have a story you'd like to share? A photo for our next issue? Please e-mail
info@karensandiego.org

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