

Inside this
issue:

2015 Karen New Year Celebration a Success 1

Diana Rhoades, KOSD Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator 1

KOSD Middle School Program 2

Formation of Women's Group and Senior Club 2

KOSD's Event Calendar 2

2015 Karen New Year Celebration a Success



KOSD held its 5th annual Karen New Year Celebration on January 10th, 2015. KOSD community members came together for the biggest event of the year in which the community was able to celebrate and preserve their culture through the sharing of history, songs, dances, speeches, awards and traditional food. The event was a huge success, largely due to the preparation and assistance of KOSD's Community Leaders and First Generation Youth Group.

For months leading up to the event, Community Leaders and First Generation youth took time out of their busy schedules to prepare.

Community Leaders taught traditional dances to First Generation youth and both groups did outreach to promote the celebration within the community of refugees from Burma. Leaders also organized the preparation of traditional food to be served at the event.

On the day of the celebration, Community Leaders and First Generation youth arrived early to pack hundreds of delicious traditional lunches for attendees, set up, and assist in transporting community members to the party. They proudly dressed in traditional clothes to promote their culture, greeted community members, and handed out programs as they arrived for the festivities.

A favorite part of the Karen New

Year Celebration for many are the traditional dances performed for members of the audience. First Generation youth did a beautiful job performing the Bamboo Dance, Don Dance, and other traditional dances that they had been taught by their elders. Another highlight was when First Generation youth were awarded certificates of appreciation from the Mayor's office in recognition of their community involvement.

KOSD would like to thank the Community Leaders and First Generation youth for making the 2015 Karen New Year celebration a success!



AmeriCorps VISTA Diana Rhoades joins KOSD as Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator

Diana Rhoades recently joined KOSD as the Volunteer & Outreach Coordinator. She is serving as a part of the AmeriCorps VISTA program. Diana is originally from Pennsylvania and graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with a Bachelor's degree in Anthropology. She has experience teaching English as a Foreign Language to adults and university students in Spain, Japan, and Vietnam. Last year she served as a Team Leader for the FEMA Corps program, supervising a group of Ameri-

Corps volunteers in disaster management projects in Los Angeles, Seattle, and Washington DC.

Diana is passionate about culture and has visited more than thirty countries, spending a month or more in half of these. She recognizes that this freedom of motion is not afforded to most in the world and that refugees fleeing their homelands and living in camps are particularly limited in their movement. She is happy to have the opportunity to lead volunteers in assisting refugees from Burma as they adjust to life in

San Diego. Diana is excited to be at such a caring, empowering organization and looks forward to learning about the culture of KOSD community members.



KOSD's Calendar

After School Tutoring Program, Wednesdays from 1:00 to 4:00:

Volunteers from SDSU are available at KOSD to help students from our community with their homework and English Language Learning

ESL & Citizenship Classes, Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 to 11:00:

Community members meet at KOSD to improve their English and prepare for the citizenship test

First Generation Meetings, Saturdays from 3:30-4:30:

KOSD youth meet to plan activities, workshops, and volunteer opportunities as they develop their leadership skills

Senior Club Meetings, every 1st and 3rd-Wednesday from 9:30-10:30:

Community elders meet for social activities and learning

Women's Group Meetings, every 4th Wednesday from 10-12:

Women meet to share ideas and feel empowered

KOSD Middle School Program

Middle school students are getting more opportunities for leadership development, mentoring, and supportive peer relationships by participating in KOSD's Middle School Program. Currently about 45 middle school students participate every week to build relationships with one another and join in community service activities.

Recently, youth in this program have assisted KOSD by taking a survey door to door to KOSD community members and by volunteering at the Karen New Year celebration, decorating the event stage and cleaning up after the event.

KOSD middle school students have formed a boys' soccer team, Karen Club, and a girls' soccer team, Karen PEACE, in partnership with Social Advocates for Youth (SAY) San Diego. The teams practice every Wednesday and play games on Saturdays. By participating on soccer teams, youth develop good sportsmanship skills and learn to

be team players.

Middle Schoolers have formal meetings together where they talk about their school lives and how to improve their grades, their dreams for the community and their future goals. The youth are excited to have a place to learn and encourage one another.



New Women's Group and Senior Club Form

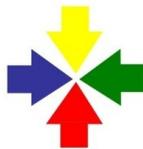
KOSD is proud to announce the formation of two new groups to support our community members. The Women's Group will provide workshops, activities, field trips, and a space to meet together for the empowerment of the women in our community. The Senior Club will provide opportunities for the elders of our community to come together to do activities and support one another.

In February, the newly founded KOSD Women's Group went to the Women's Museum of California in downtown San Diego to see a special exhibit entitled *Tears of War: The Many Faces of Refugee Women*. Members of the group



learned about refugee women from different countries and how they have had to struggle to overcome problems in their lives. Women in the group felt empowered hearing the stories of other women who had migrated as refugees just as they had, and realized that as women united together they are capable of more than they may sometimes think.

Members of the Senior Club have also been active in recent weeks. Senior Club members study English together and enjoy field trips as a group. This month, community elders visited Sea World. They enjoyed the trip and look forward to doing more activities together soon.



5354 University Ave. #1
San Diego, CA 92105
(619) 582-0783

The Karen Organization of San Diego was established in 2009 to meet the needs of Karen and other ethnic minority groups from Burma who reside in San Diego. Karen Organization of San Diego is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Our primary purpose is to provide social services and opportunities for culture preservation for the Karen and other ethnic minority groups from Burma who reside in San Diego to improve their quality of life.