



# KOSD News & Notes

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## Karen New Year Celebration



On January 9, 2016, hundreds of people from the KOSD community celebrated Karen New Year in San Diego. This is the biggest celebration of the year for the Karen community here and around the world, and it is meant to preserve the traditions and culture inherited from Karen ancestors.

Traditional culture was honored through beautifully choreographed dances performed by children, youth,

and adults. After months of practice, dancers impressed the audience with high energy performances involving large and carefully coordinated dance groups. The Don Dance, in particular, was a highlight of the event with more than 20 youth participating. KOSD was also proud to include traditional dance performances by Burmese and Shan artists in this year's celebration.

Another highlight of the event was the youth fashion show. Youth proudly wore the traditional clothing of their ancestors and shared Karen culture with the public by posing with traditional objects

like a horn, a harp, woven baskets, and the Karen flag.

Following the performances, attendees enjoyed an incredible spread of delicious traditional Karen food and spent time visiting with other community members.

KOSD would like to thank everyone who worked so hard to make this year's celebration a meaningful event!



## KOSD Collaborates with San Diego Unified School District to Support Students from Burma

Over the past few months, KOSD has strengthened its relationship with the San Diego Unified School District by collaborating with administrators of a new Refugee Impact Grant. This grant has provided the opportunity for KOSD to work closely with school administrators to facilitate workshops for parents to learn more about the school system in the United States. While parents from Burma

are very interested in helping their children succeed, they often do not know how to do so since the school system in Burma and in refugee camps in Thailand is very different than in San Diego. Most parents speak no or very limited English, so this makes it hard for school workers to involve parents in their child's academic life. KOSD addresses this challenge by coordinating outreach efforts and providing skilled translations as school

experts share about topics such as how to report student absences, how much homework their kids will have each day, and what the grading system is like in California. KOSD also facilitates parent/ teacher conferences to address urgent student needs.

KOSD is excited to be able to provide support for students and parents in our community!



### KOSD's Calendar

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

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

#### Citizenship Classes, Tuesdays 9:00 to 12:00 Thursdays 11:00 to 1:00:

Classes offered for community members from Burma in partnership with Jewish Family Services

#### First Generation Meetings,

#### Fridays 3:30 to 5:00:

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

#### Senior Club Meetings, Wednesdays from 9:30 to 10:30:

Community elders meet for social activities and learning

#### Women's Group Meetings, every 4th Friday from 3:30 to 5:00:

Women meet to share ideas and feel empowered

## KOSD Holiday Gift Giveaway

In December, KOSD held a holiday toy drive to collect gifts for members of our community. Thanks to generous donations, children could choose from a great selection of toys, from dolls and stuffed animals to toy cars and soccer balls. Adults received useful household items and Walmart gift

certificates. A long line of excited community members filed through the

office and everyone was very grateful for the gifts.

We were so happy to be able to spread holiday cheer to members of our community and would like to sincerely THANK everyone who helped to make this special day possible!



## New Art Exhibit at the San Diego International Airport Features KOSD and Refugees from Burma

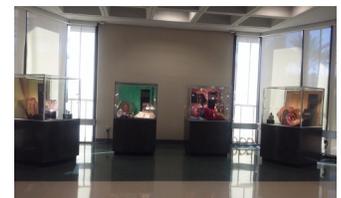


KOSD is so proud to be featured as a part of The Aja Project's exhibit entitled *Flight + PATHS* currently on display in Terminal 2 at the San Diego International Airport. The display is visible to many tourists and locals coming and going from the airport each day and it showcases the hope, strength and resiliency of San Diego's immigrant and refugee communities. Cultures from Burma are represented through a display case that features

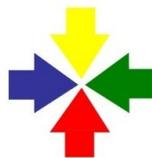
traditional clothing of several ethnic minority groups as well as through portraits of some of our community members. We are incredibly excited to increase the visibility of our beautiful community in San Diego and we hope that you will check it out the next time you are at the airport!

New American Museum in Point Loma.

KOSD values its partnership with The Aja Project and hopes for continued collaboration in the future.



KOSD has partnered with The Aja Project in the past to bring photography based programming that explores concepts around community to middle schoolers from Burma. KOSD also worked with The Aja Project recently to curate an exhibit about Karen weaving at the



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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.