



Lead Research Project: ASIA's Youth Clean up the Neighborhood

Less than a block away from the Cleveland ASIA office, in between warehouses and residential streets, lay a small urban plot of unused land. Part garden, part science experiment, the land is undergoing a dramatic makeover to become a garden for lead contamination and recovery research thanks to ASIA's high school youth program, the Lantern Project.

The Lantern Project was created in 2007 as a way to accommodate older youth who have graduated from the Community Adult Mentoring program. Through elements of service learning, the Lantern Project builds leadership skills by encouraging community and civic engagement.



Diggin for buried treasure; and helping to turn over the soil.

Community engagement includes caring for the local environment. As such, instead of growing a vegetable garden, the youth are growing plants suitable for phytoremediation: a gardening process that uses plants to sequester and remove toxins and restore balance to the soil in a natural way.

In this neighborhood, where auto and paint pollution have gone largely unchecked, dangerous levels of lead contaminate the soil. Lead can have a very negative impact on health, especially for children, where long term exposure can lead to serious conditions including kidney damage and hearing loss.

Removing lead from the soil is crucial to cleaning up the neighborhood. But before the plants could begin to detoxify the soil, the land had to be prepared. Our youth spent several days preparing the land by raking, digging, and pulling up weeds and grass to create a 12' x 12' garden plot for growing sunflowers, spinach, and mustard.

Some students came with gardening experience, like Matthew Gee who worked on a garden project at his high school. Others enjoyed the complexity of the vacant



The final planting stages in the garden on E 36 St. in Cleveland.

lot, including identifying mysterious bugs and digging up large rocks that were buried.

The lead research project will take several months to come to fruition. Before planting, the soil was tested for lead content and then re-tested at the end of the season to determine how much lead was removed.

"It's an experiment, a process," says Kitty Leung, project manager. "We're excited to see which plants work the best so we can remove lead in a cost-efficient way. The goal is to make this land more usable and safe, while finding a sustainable way to clean up the neighborhood."

It may still be in the experimental phase, but the lead research project is already a great success in community engagement for the students of the Lantern Project.

The economic recession has hit the community hard, especially those who are new Americans. Determined, hardworking refugees and immigrants are facing a tough job market that is squeezing out even the native-born Americans from earning a living, putting food on the table for their families and having a roof over their heads. The national economic woes have meant that state- and locally-funded health and human services are severely impacted. Our state recognized youth mentoring program is anticipating cuts.



The state health department eliminated funding for tobacco control, which means that smoking cessation and youth tobacco prevention will cease to exist for Asians and others in Ohio.

While the picture looks bleak, there are bright spots throughout our Asian American community that bring us hope and optimism. In this issue of our newsletter you will learn about ASIA's Lantern Project youth who are taking a "grassroots" approach, literally, toward addressing their neighborhood's problem of lead contaminated vacant lots to make way for a community garden. There is also cooperation abound in the area of domestic violence services, as ASIA partners with agencies to ensure that Asian women have access to information and referral resources that meet their unique needs. Our legal immigration services program is making it possible for immigrants and refugees to attain their American citizenship so they can become active and engaged members of civic society.

These are all things that we should feel good about as they speak to our community's strengths: fostering emerging young leaders, building strong collaborations to address challenging community issues, and inspiring individuals to attain greater self sufficiency.

We thank you for being part of this amazing experience.

Respectfully yours,
Michael Byun, Executive Director

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ASIA's Mission and Programs

ASIA's Mission and Programs Asian Services In Action's mission is to empower Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in Northeastern Ohio to access quality, culturally, and linguistically appropriate information and services. ASIA's five program areas are:

- ◆ Aging & Adult
- ◆ Children/Youth/Family
- ◆ Community Health Promotion
- ◆ Consultation and Cultural Outreach
- ◆ Self-Sufficiency

Informally, ASIA is considered by many to be the new "settlement house" for the Asian American community. ASIA's programs and services touch the lives of 4,000 people each year.

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New Health and Legal Programs Continue to Break Down Barriers

Change is in the air this autumn as ASIA launches two new programs to meet the needs of the underserved: Domestic Violence Information and Referral and Immigration Legal Services.

Domestic violence is an age old issue that carries such a social stigma that it often goes unnoticed and unreported. Even with the frequency of news stories emerging about this issue, domestic violence remains a hidden and sensitive topic, both in mainstream American and Asian culture.

Addressing issues of domestic violence has been difficult specifically in the Asian culture. Asian American and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) tend to be overlooked because statistics show a relatively low number of reports of domestic violence. Reporting domestic violence is thought to be low amongst AAPIs because of the collective nature of the Asian culture and the desire to protect family honor. However, many other issues may contribute to the degree of silence in the Asian culture surrounding domestic violence including a victim's lack of knowledge about their rights, desire to avoid authorities, sense of powerlessness, fear of racial stigma, or financial dependency on their abusive partner.

In consideration of these cultural barriers, ASIA is offering a new program for Domestic Violence Information and Referral services. Josefina Chou, a graduate intern in our Cleveland office is spearheading ASIA's domestic violence initiative. She describes what the program will



Josefina Chou (center) with members of the BIWS

entail: "We're offering this service to provide social support and connect the victim to an agency and an agency to the victim. We also want to provide community education in terms of awareness of domestic violence." ASIA will act as a direct counseling center, as well as refer victims to several local agencies, including the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center, who are excellent community resources.

Partnerships with the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center and other community programs have been slowly forming over the past year. In April, the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center visited ASIA to talk about dating violence with high school youth. In addition, Chou has been acting as a representative of the Asian community since December 2008 at the local police training programs on domestic violence.

The Battered Immigrant Women Sub-committee (BIWS) of the Cuyahoga County Domestic Violence

Coordinating Council utilizes people like Chou who can help to inform police officers about culturally specific barriers and challenges in handling cases of domestic violence.

Outside partnerships certainly improve the effectiveness of ASIA's domestic violence program. However, internal information about domestic violence in Asian communities is also crucial in serving people better. There is a shortage of national and local data pertaining to AAPIs and domestic violence so Chou began writing and collecting surveys herself in the community.

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New Health and Legal Services Continue to Break Down Barriers

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“In the survey, people seem willing to call the police or public services to report domestic violence.” Chou adds, “However, in the past three years the police and the Rape Crisis Center have gotten zero reports from the Asian community.” These survey results indicate an information gap in the Asian community regarding domestic violence and Chou is eager to educate the community. Education will not only inform people of resources, but also expose them to the many facets of domestic violence that extend beyond physical, emotional, or economic abuse.

The Domestic Violence Information and Referral program has great potential to reach the Asian community and address the needs of those victims of domestic violence who seem to have remained hidden.

In keeping with ASIA’s mission to address the needs of those who might ordinarily be overlooked, the Immigration Legal Services Program was launched to provide information to immigrant families about their rights.

Eunice Park, the program coordinator of the Immigration Legal Services Program is partnering with an experienced immigration attorney, Inna Simakovsky, to provide comprehensive immigration legal services for low- to moderate-income families. The program helps immigrants and refugees secure their immigration status as well as reunite with their family members. Clients can also adjust their status to a lawful permanent resident (also known as applying for a green card) and apply for naturalization. The legal services are designed to be affordable and approachable to immigrant and refugee clients.

“Securing legal or immigration status is one of the most important steps to take in order to become a US citizen.”

– Eunice Park

Affordability is important to ASIA’s clients. While many law firms in the area offer immigration services, ASIA

saw a need to provide access to these legal services for people who may not be able to afford the high costs of a private firm.

Once equal access to legal services is available, immigrants and refugees can begin to realize the goal of becoming a citizen. Park notes that there are several steps toward citizenship, but adds, “Securing legal or immigration status is one of the most important and necessary steps to take for all immigrant and refugee populations in order to become a US citizen.”

All things considered, both the Domestic Violence Information and Referral program and the Immigration Legal Services will require time to fully develop. Partnering with other service providers in the area, ASIA has already seen an interest in these services and is currently working with several clients in each program. In addressing the barriers surrounding both programs, ASIA continues to build on its strengths and seek out new ways to serve the community.

Summer Scrapbook



An attentive girl at Westside CAM in Lakewood



ASIA youth and staff with Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson

[left] A young Iraqi girl joins 80 other refugee students at ASIA’s summer camp program in Lakewood.

[right] Four ASIA youth and intern Robin Konscak met with **Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson** when they were invited to speak at a community meeting in June. The youth highlighted the neighborhood watch program they started in 2009.



The gifts here are from 01/01/09-10/15/09. We regret if we have inadvertently not acknowledged your support or have misspelled your name. Please email asia@asiainc-ohio.org with any changes or corrections. Thank you.

Grants

Corporations, Foundations and Contracts

\$100,000-\$300,000

The Cleveland Foundation

*The Ohio Commission on Minority Health

US Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women

\$10,000-\$99,999

Area Agency on Aging, 10B

Akron Community Foundation

The Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County

The Alcohol, Drug Addiction & Mental Health Services Board of Summit County

*The Cuyahoga County Commissioners

The GAR Foundation

The Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation

National Asian Women's Health Organization

Ohio Department of Safety, Office of Criminal Justice Services

Orange County Asian and Pacific Islander Community Alliance

The University Park Alliance

Western Reserve Area Agency on Aging

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Catholic Charities Migration Refugee Services

Key Bank's Asian Networking Committee

MotivAsian

The National Caucus and Center on Black Aged

The Ohio Association of the Second Harvest Foodbank

Stan Hywet Hall and Gardens



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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

November 1st – 15th ASIA Food Drive, sponsored by MotivAsian (www.motivasians.org)

Are you at-risk for diabetes? Six-week Asian diabetes prevention classes start this winter. Contact Sujata Burgess at 216-881-0330 or sburgess@asiainc-ohio.org

ASIA discount cards just \$10. Receive great discounts from local AsiaTown businesses while supporting ASIA's Youth Programs. Contact asia@asiainc-ohio.org

Interested in getting outdoors and helping the community? Join LightsHelp in Akron's University Park neighborhood. To learn more contact lightshelp@gmail.com

SAVE-THE-DATE for ASIA's Spring Benefit Event (March-April 2010)

Are you looking for cultural competency training for your business or organization? Contact asia@asiainc-ohio.org for more information.

ASIA PROGRAM UPDATES

Program Updates

ASIA received two AmeriCorps Vista volunteers to support the Ohio Benefits Bank program to help low-income individuals sign up for qualified federal, state, and local benefits.

Lucky Seniors recently provided paper cutting and calligraphy demonstrations at the China Week event this past October. The event was hosted by the University of Akron's Confucius Institute and the Akron International Friendship.

CAM received a first place blue ribbon at Cuyahoga County Fair for community display.

Staff Updates

Congratulations to:

Kitty Leung, MSSA, LSW
Promoted to Manager of Children, Youth and Family

Susan Wong
Promoted to Manager of Self-Sufficiency Services

The agency welcomes new staff:

Sujata Burgess, MPA Program Specialist
Paw Pree, Program Assistant
Hewan Slak, RC, Toledo
Kyle Reisz, Program Coordinator
Eunice Park, Program Coordinator

We also thank the 2009 Summer Interns:

Robin Konscak, The Cleveland Foundation
Sarah Elswick, Cleveland State Intern
Xiaoyan Zhou, MNO Graduate Intern
Zhengyi Li, MSSA Graduate Intern
Josefina Chou, MSSA Graduate Intern