



NHAFF e-News

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AAPI White House Initiative

As part of the White House Initiative to increase diversity and access in federal agencies, the United States Department of Agriculture held a meeting in Fresno, California. The meeting was organized and hosted by National Hmong American Farmers and held at Asian Village on September 12th. NHAFF is a community-based organization that works with small, minority farmers, provides training, resources and advocacy in agricultural public policy issues.

The purpose of the roundtable discussion was to increase communication and participation between the Asian American and Pacific Islander communities and USDA. Hmong, Lao and Filipino farmers, community advocates, and officials attended the meeting.

USDA is often criticized particularly in providing adequate access and participation among members of the minority community. This meeting was among several meetings the USDA AAPI committee will hold across the U.S.

“As long as we are discussing these issues, I believe there’s a positive commitment from the USDA to the AAPI community,” says Chukou Thao, Executive Director of National Hmong American Farmers.

Other objectives USDA wants to improve through this initiative is to increase access to healthy food programs and services, increase employment of AAPI staff, and improve language access across its service agencies.

Meet Our Staff: Chukou Thao, Director & Advocate

As a farmers' advocate for the past 15 years, what makes Chukou unique? Chukou not only assists farmers across the nation, but he also understands, first-hand, of the struggles they face each day. Growing up with parents who engaged in farming and the business sector of agriculture, Chukou spent many days working in the field—from early morning planting, weeding, and harvesting, before and after school, every weekend, and selling at corner stands.

Chukou noticed how hard his parents worked in order to support the family and, at the same time, the unfairness of how brokers treated the farmers. After spending more than 12 years working for the City of Fresno, Chukou began NHAf. He wanted to make a change in the farming community while alleviating the financial hardships and work hazards many farmers faced. As an advocate, Chukou understands that the same issues his parents faced, that he saw growing up, were the very same issues that other minority farmers

also encountered. He saw that there was a major need in the farming community, particularly for the limited resource, minority farmers. "Working with farmers has its ups and downs," says Chukou. "There are major needs everywhere and its through continued advocacy and policy changes that will make a difference out in the field for the silent voices," he continues. Chukou has been involved in past Farm Bills that resulted in some improvements for farmers. "But the work is not done," he adds.

NHAf Receives Unitarian Social Justice Award



On October 9th, NHAf was awarded the Unitarian Social Justice Award from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno. The Unitarian Social Justice Award is given to local organizations that strive to make changes in the

community, and is awarded to one organization every month. The Unitarian Universalist Church of Fresno has donated over \$65,000 to local groups over the past five years.

Second Annual Community Garden Conference

NHAf joined the Fresno Community Garden Coalition at the 2nd Annual Community Garden Conference on Saturday, September 10th at Sunnyside High School in Fresno. The conference was free to the public. Information

was provided to the community members on how they can grow their own food, how to create more community gardens in the City of Fresno, school gardens, and gardening's impact on children's health.



San Joaquin Valley's Eater's Guide

The first San Joaquin Valley "Buy Fresh Buy Local" eater's guide to local food—published by the Community Alliance with Family Farmers and Central California Regional Obesity Prevention Program—is

now available. The eater's guide was published to help improve access to healthy food for community members and raise awareness about the importance of buying fresh and local foods. For a free guide visit:

www.csufresno.edu/ccchhs/institutes-programs/CCROPP.



Save the Date!



October 22—Fresno, Ca.

To celebrate Food Day, "Taste of the Valley" will be held on Saturday, October 22 at Kristina's Natural Ranch Market (761 E. Barstow Ave).

Neighborhood Thrift Café (353 E. Olive Ave) starting at 7:00 a.m. Swing on by and learn how to prepare fruits and vegetables the healthy way. You will be able to purchase fruits and veggies from local farmers as well. This event includes cooking demonstrations, food tasting, vendors, recipes, and specialty Asian foods. Don't miss out!

December 1—Washington DC

Rural Coalition's 6th Annual Gala & Networking Dinner will be held at the National Press Club. For more information contact Rural Coalition at (202) 628-7160 or via email ruralco@rurualco.org

January 2012—NHAF Scholarship

NHAF scholarship available. Please visit our website in January for upcoming details, www.nhaf.org.

At National Hmong-American Farmers, Inc., our mission is to promote economic well-being among small and minority farmers. We are committed to making a profound difference in the farming community by providing training, resources and advocacy on public policy issues.

To include information on your organization's upcoming events, or to be added to our e-news list serve, please e-mail us at info@nhaf.org. For further questions, please contact Priscilla Yang at Priscilla@nhaf.org.