



# County of Fairfax, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** April 10, 2013

**TO:** Dave Nguyen, Executive Coach, AASuccess

**CC:** Sharon Lynn, Director  
Fairfax Area Agency on Aging, Department of Family Services

Jacque Woodruff, Director  
Livable Communities Development Unit, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging,  
Department of Family Services

**FROM:** Amy Trang, Multicultural and Community Planner  
Livable Communities Development Unit, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging,  
Department of Family Services

**SUBJECT:** Vietnamese-American Community Discussion Meeting Summary Report

Thank you for inviting the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging to the "Business Support Community Partnership Meeting Series: Meeting Challenges in Building Healthy Livable Communities" on April 7, 2013. Below is a summary report that has been submitted to the Director of the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging.

### Executive Summary

On Sunday, April 7, 2013, the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging was invited by AASuccess and Vietnamese Americans Organization of Virginia (VOAV) to help facilitate a community discussion meeting. This meeting is the first of these two organizations' "Business Support Community Partnership Meeting Series: Meeting Challenges in Building Healthy Livable Communities." The three hour meeting was from 11AM to 2PM.

The purpose of the meeting was to revisit the results of a "Community Needs Assessment" meeting two years ago that was held on March 31, 2011 at Thomas Jefferson Library.

### Revisiting March 31, 2011 meeting at Thomas Jefferson Library

Two years ago, Boat People SOS held a community "town hall" style meeting at Thomas Jefferson Library to bring together multi-generations to discuss community needs, especially the broad topic of developing leaders for the community. At the time, Fairfax Area Agency on Aging was given an opportunity to provide an icebreaker session, which allowed attendees around the room to introduce themselves and provide one issue or item they felt was considered a "priority need" for the Vietnamese-American community. Forty-seven (47) people, ranging from ages 15 to 72, shared their thoughts that evening. Three (3) other individuals who could not attend emailed their concerns. Thirty (30) common themes were identified from feedback that was gathered from these 50 individuals.

From the 30 common themes identified, 18 issues were identified as "Community needs that Fairfax County may DIRECTLY assist and plan" and 13 issues were identified as "Community needs that

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Fairfax County may INDIRECTLY assist and plan.” To clarify, one common theme about “Facilities and location for large community events for over 300+ people” had to be addressed in both categories. Fairfax County can **directly** assist community-based organizations identify and access county facilities for their events through the use of Community Developers through the Department of Neighborhood and Community Services. However, Fairfax County can only **indirectly** assist and support community-based organizations in planning for a “Vietnamese Community Center” that many had elaborated on.

Due to the time constraint provided on March 31<sup>st</sup>, I did not have the opportunity to identify the group’s top three issues immediately that evening. As discussed at that meeting, I would design an outreach tool to survey the priority needs as to continue the dialogue that had begun. Using SurveyMonkey.com, 67 individuals within the Vietnamese-American community, were invited via emails collected at the meeting to participate in the survey. Individuals who were not able to attend, but had been recognized by their peers as “community leaders” were also provided a chance to participate in the survey. Data collection for this survey was from April 5, 2011 to April 26, 2011. Two follow up emails were sent (April 12 and April 25) to remind recipients to complete the surveys. A total of 27 completed surveys were collected for a response rate of 40%. (A response rate of 32% or higher is normally considered “good” by research standards.) Results of findings will be presented in a table at the end of this report for easy comparison with the more recent results collected at the April 7, 2013 meeting.

### **Outreach Efforts, Referrals, and Assistance Provided By Fairfax Area Agency on Aging**

Since the meeting held two years ago, a number of community-based organizations and individuals were connected to the services that were listed below (from the list of needs identified by the community on the outreach survey) through direct referrals I made or through the assistance of volunteers who staffed the Vietnamese Senior Information Line (703-324-5400) that is housed in the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging’s office in Fairfax, VA. We also attended community-organized events and provided information about our program services and resources.

- Awareness of Senior Programs and how to take care of older adults
- Central channel of communication for intergenerational communication, i.e. community activity announcements, explanation of service programs, discussion forum (virtual or in person), opportunities for joint activities, resource networking, etc.
- Civic engagement & volunteer service opportunities, including charity work
- Domestic violence awareness
- ESL and Citizenship classes
- Exercise & physical activities for all generation
- Facilities & location for large community events for over 300+ people
- Fundraising strategies or resource leveraging
- Health care information and services for low income and older adults
- Human rights services awareness & resources, including self-advocacy skills
- Intergenerational resources for parents to communicate better with their children
- Legal system navigation, including resources & awareness for US law compliance, and public safety
- Mental health services provided in Vietnamese, including counseling
- More focus on local issues & program outreach to youth to connect them to older generation
- Nonprofit opportunities and resources
- Organized and structured strategy to promote economic growth & financial education
- Resources for religious needs
- Resources for Vietnamese language and culture classes for youth



## **April 7, 2013 meeting at Hoang's Grill and Sushi Restaurant**

As a follow-up to the March 31, 2011 community discussion meeting, AASuccess and Vietnamese Americans Organization of Virginia (VOAV) were interested in addressing the unmet needs of the "Vietnamese Community Center" that was identified as the top priority issue the Vietnamese-American community had, which Fairfax County could only indirectly assist and support.

The meeting was divided into five parts: Opening Remarks and Guest Speakers, Facilitation & Survey Completion, Lunch, Open Forum, and Closing Remarks.

### ***Opening Remarks & Guest Speakers***

The meeting began with a flag ceremony that included the singing of the national anthems of the United States of America and the Republic of Vietnam. This was symbolic in the sense that it emphasized how important it is for Vietnamese-Americans to have a place they could call "home" and be able to preserve a culture that could not be found anywhere else, but overseas. For 1<sup>st</sup> generation Vietnamese-Americans, the yellow flag with three horizontal red stripes is identified as their heritage flag with very few opportunities to honor it. It's a reminder of the difficulties and struggles that many have had to overcome in exchange for freedom; it also helps many cope with their post-traumatic stress. It was apparent later in the program and among the discussion tables that the older Vietnamese-American adults had concerns of whether or not the next generation would fully understand the significance of the flag ceremony and whether or not its history could be preserved.

Interestingly, one of AASuccess' board members, Scott Plein (who is not Vietnamese), expressed his perspective of how important it would be to document and preserve the Vietnamese-American experience, which is not readily available in school textbooks or mainstream books and media. Virginia Delegate Kaye Kory also expressed her support for the community and praised the organizers' attempt to create an intergenerational dialogue.

### ***Facilitation & Survey Completion***

Before lunch was served, attendees were asked to individually complete a survey. This was the same outreach tool that was used through SurveyMonkey.com two years ago, but without the question about attendance at the Thomas Jefferson Library. Participants were also given an opportunity to write in other concerns. Looking at the attendance list provided by the organizers and comparing it to the list of attendees two years ago, there were only three individuals who attended both events. In total, there were 62 people in attendance (representing over 30 different community-based organizations and small businesses) at the April 7<sup>th</sup> meeting, but only 47 surveys were collected before lunch. Four (4) more surveys were found at the registration table before the event ended, for a total of 51 surveys collected from the event.

### ***Lunch***

Participants sat in 8 tables and chatted during lunch, with at least one facilitator at each table taking notes, recording observations, and making sure the discussion was focused on discussing community needs.

While participants were having lunch, I was able to hand tally results from 40 surveys (away from the main dining area), providing preliminary results for the Open Forum.

### ***Open Forum***

The Open Forum began with my presentation of preliminary results for the 40 surveys that were reviewed and informing the group that there were more surveys collected, but not yet evaluated. Preliminary results showed that the top 3 issues of concern that "Fairfax County may DIRECTLY assist and plan" for the participants at this meeting were:



1. Facilitation & location for large community events for over 300+ people
2. Central channel of communication for intergenerational communication, i.e. community activity announcements, explanation of service programs, discussion forum (virtual or in person), opportunities for joint activities, resource networking, etc.
3. Awareness of Senior Programs and how to take care of older adults

The top 3 issues of concern that “Fairfax County may INDIRECTLY assist and plan” for the participants at this meeting were:

1. The Vietnamese Community Center
2. Youth programs, including mentoring, job seeking, and leadership development for high school and college students
3. General leadership development (for all ages), including organizing skills, structural training

Age ranges among participants showed a significant gap; nearly half were between ages 19 to 30 or 51 years or older. There were very few who were between 31 and 50 years old and no one under 18.

There was nearly equal representation among male and female attendees and the majority of participants resided in Fairfax County.

After presenting preliminary results, the floor was open for public comments. Four people were asked to take notes. In addition, six table facilitator notes and observations were collected. There were lots of similar concerns presented. Below are highlights of the Open Forum based on notes taken:

- We need a Vietnamese Community Center; it promotes unity in the community and mutual understanding between generations. If the county can identify a physical building, we can:
  - Remodel it to accommodate 300 – 1,000 people in a multipurpose room
  - Match funds to renovate it
- Larger space and/or more rooms at the Wilston Multicultural Center for our office and activities
  - We’ve voiced our concerns over the years to the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, but haven’t seen anything; we just want a bigger (and cleaner) office space at the center
  - Instead of finding a new community center, can we transform / renovate what we already have?
- There are concerns for the reality and success of creating a Vietnamese Community Center.
- For three decades, the Vietnamese-American community in Fairfax County has jumped from one place to another to hold different large community events, such as scholarship ceremonies, wellness fairs, Tet festivals, cultural memorial ceremonies, etc. Annual cultural holiday events are dependent upon the availability of the facility and FCPS is not always easy to work with.
- We do our best to help each other in the community, but there’s no sense of home and unity when we can’t find a stable place to congregate.
- Accessibility and communication in the community is very important; we need a central channel of communication.
- Health Concerns:
  - Food product inspection; are imported food products served at restaurants safe to eat?
  - There are concerns of food sanitation, especially at Eden Center.
- We should encourage more people to engage in the government communication process; we have not spoken enough, advocate, push more policies at public meetings.
- We should continue to create opportunities for intergenerational discussions on how to plan and build a healthy livable community.
  - The 1<sup>st</sup> generation has a lot of best practices and lessons learned to share to the next.
  - The younger generation may have better opportunities to plan for the community.

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### **Closing Remarks**

During closing remarks, AASuccess and VAOV (the organizers) along with the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging thanked everyone for their participation and input. It was shared that the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging will be providing a summary report of the meeting while AASuccess and VAOV will coordinate a workgroup to address the community's needs. Fairfax Area Agency on Aging will continue to understand the community's need and provide indirect assistance for the "Vietnamese Community Center" project under the Livable Communities Development Unit.

Fairfax Area Agency on Aging also took the opportunity to thank Kim-Ha Ly, representatives from present from APACAF (for VATV and Youth in Media programs), Vietnamese-American Community of DC, MD, and VA, Vietnamese-American Senior Citizen Association of Greater Washington, and AASuccess in their collaborative efforts over the past 5 years to promote and support the Vietnamese Senior Information Line so it could assist limited English speaking older adults, adults with disabilities, and caregivers living in Fairfax County. The project originally started with a partnership with Boat People SOS in December 2007 and is now a self-sufficient program operated by Vietnamese-speaking volunteers from the community.



### Comparing Data Collected in 2011 With 2013

	2011	2013
<b>Questionnaires collected:</b>	27	51
Q1. Community needs that Fairfax County may DIRECTLY assist and plan <b>Community Identified Priority #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of Senior Programs and how to take care of older adults (40.7%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities &amp; location for large community events for over 300+ people (49.02%)</li> </ul>
Q1. <b>Community Identified Priority #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health care information and services for low income and older adults (37%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of Senior Programs and how to take care of older adults (29.41%)</li> </ul>
Q1. <b>Community Identified Priority #3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilities &amp; location for large community events for over 300+ people (33.3%)</li> <li>Central channel of communication for intergenerational communication, i.e., community activity announcements, explanation of service programs, discussion forum (virtual or in person), opportunities for joint activities, resource networking, etc. (33.3%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Central channel of communication for intergenerational communication, i.e., community activity announcements, explanation of service programs, discussion forum (virtual or in person), opportunities for joint activities, resource networking, etc. (27.45%)</li> <li>Health care information and services for low income and older adults (27.45%)</li> </ul>
Q2. Community needs that Fairfax County may INDIRECTLY assist and plan <b>Community Identified Priority #1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Vietnamese Community Center (77.8%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Vietnamese Community Center (72.55%)</li> </ul>
Q2. <b>Community Identified Priority #2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Awareness of issues in Vietnamese-American community (40.7%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Youth programs, including mentoring, job seeking, and leadership development for high school and college students (47.06%)</li> </ul>
Q2. <b>Community Identified Priority #3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strategic vision for Vietnamese community (29.6%)</li> <li>Youth programs, including mentoring, job seeking, and leadership development for high school and college students (29.6%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>General leadership development (for all ages), including organizing skills, structural training (37.25%)</li> </ul>
Q3. <b>Age range</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under 18 (0%)</li> <li>19 to 30 years old (18.5%)</li> <li>31 to 50 years old (29.6%)</li> <li>51 years or older (51.9%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Under 18 (0%)</li> <li>19 to 30 years old (33.33%)</li> <li>31 to 50 years old (9.80%)</li> <li>51 years or older (50.98%)</li> </ul>
Q4. <b>Gender</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Male (63%)</li> <li>Female (37%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Male (52.94%)</li> <li>Female (41.18%)</li> </ul>
Q5. <b>Fairfax County resident</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No (25.9%)</li> <li>Yes (74.1%)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No (23.53%)</li> <li>Yes (70.59%)</li> </ul>
Q6. <b>Attendance at March 31<sup>st</sup> meeting at Thomas Jefferson Library</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No (22.2%)</li> <li>Yes (77.8%)</li> </ul>	N/A
<b>Note:</b> percentages for Q3 – Q5 might not add up to 100% due to blank answers.		



## Conclusion

From the two community discussion opportunities that the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging has had with the Vietnamese-American community in Fairfax County, over 100 individual voices were heard. These individuals represent over 50 different community-based organizations and small businesses operating in Fairfax County, many of which have not partnered with county agencies in the past and are being heard for the first time.

Interestingly, the top priorities that Fairfax County could DIRECTLY assist and plan identified in 2011 and 2013 among different sample populations were similar:

- Facilities & location for large community events for over 300+ people
- Awareness of Senior Programs and how to take care of older adults
- Central channel of communication for intergenerational communication, i.e., community activity announcements, explanation of service programs, discussion forum (virtual or in person), opportunities for joint activities, resource networking, etc.
- Health care information and services for low income and older adults

These are service areas that need continued support and access in order to adequately serve the needs of the Vietnamese-American community living in Fairfax County.

Although priorities that Fairfax County could INDIRECTLY assist and plan identified in 2011 and 2013 had some changes, the top priorities still included:

- A Vietnamese Community Center (still identified as most important)
- Youth programs, including mentoring, job seeking, and leadership development for high school and college students

These are issues that the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging can explore and recommend models and resources for the identified workgroup in the Vietnamese-American community to assist them in their development of an action plan.

