



Perfecting the Act of Giving Back.

Finding Warmth and Purpose Amidst a Chilling Start to the Year



JANUARY 2025 E-NEWS

It is often said that the way a new year begins sets the tone for the rest of its journey. With that in mind, I spent my New Year's Day in the barren, frozen suburbs of Utah. I felt uninspired, lonely, mundane, and a little miserable, believing that everything else would follow the same pattern, despite the upcoming events.

As of the 25th of January, however, so much has happened in such a short span between in and out of AASuccess. Yet, in the midst of all this, our commitment to giving back to the community shines just as brightly. Students are currently participating in a demonstration of their perseverance, creativity, and understanding of courtesies. From learning camps to business expos, it all starts with an idea. While our outlook on the year may change, what remains constant is our dedication. We continue working consistently, checking in on each other, and supporting one another—ensuring that at AASuccess, we stay committed and diligent.

Saying we started this year with a bang would be an understatement, as I believe we, as a collective, are still stunned by it all halfway through the decade. So much can happen, and so much is still happening, especially in the era of social media, but don't let that weigh you down. The mundane experiences I go through can be exciting in the right moments when you know where to look, and misery only exists in solitude. I can't deny that it's still cold (at least here, in VA,) but, with so many more aspirations and a drive forward, it's a bit warmer with everyone together.

Allyson Nguyen, AASuccess Level 1 Student

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THE TAPESTRY OF FAMILY AND BELONGING: REFLECTIONS ON TET AND SHARED IDENTITY

As we fast approach the Tet – or Lunar New Year holiday, I have given some thought to what is meant by the concept of family. Of course, we all know that family is best described as those relatives, often related by blood with whom we have grown up, and other extended family who seem to have always been there in our lives. Multigenerational, multinational, and sometimes even multiethnic, these family members serve to weave ever tightly into the fabric and tapestry of our lives.

But family is more than just those with whom we share DNA. We all have family friends, not related by blood, who we call Uncle or Aunt – and we all have close friends who we call sister or brother. Through shared experiences, we find ourselves deeply connected—whether as schoolmates, or military friends who endured challenges together, or colleagues who overcame obstacles and celebrated successes. These relationships embody the spirit of friendship, family, and appreciation.

As is often the case with members of a transnational diaspora—people displaced by history or tragedy—they gather to preserve their language, food, religious practices, and, most importantly, their memories of home. These cherished recollections are carefully preserved and shared in new homelands. In this country, there are many such communities – going back for generations. Vietnamese in the U.S. are in large numbers, members of this diaspora – starting in the Spring of 1975. And some 50 years later, there exists a strong and vibrant Vietnamese community throughout our country – and in many other countries as well.

Most of our AASuccess students, mentors and friends are members of this community, founded by brave parents and grandparents, seeking freedom from oppression, and a chance to start a new life. And here we all are, living our lives as free Americans.

But such experiences are of course not limited to Vietnamese. Our country is full of such communities. I too am a member of such a diaspora – the difference is that my family came to the U.S. – seeking freedom from ethnic and religious oppression, from Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Belarus in my family's case) starting in the 1890s until the 1910s. (Had they waited for another generation, they – like their [and my] other more distant relatives, would and did not survive the Nazi Holocaust.)

I grew up with my family and extended family members, some who spoke a strange language (Yiddish), with strange and almost undecipherable accents, and ate even stranger food. We observed holidays that few of my friends observed and carried out customs that I discovered were unique to our community. But the sense of family that I developed with my family have been woven into my tapestry – and I would not trade it for anything else. It is who I am.

So – as we will soon gather together for the traditional Tet holiday, please take a moment to reflect on the real meaning of family, friendship and what it is that makes us who we are.

Jim Kelman - Board Member & Mentor

GROWING BIG IN 2025 WITH INNOVATION, IMPACT, AND EARTH DAY EXCITEMENT!

Passionate about protecting the environment, the Go Green Project at AASuccess is a student-led initiative founded by junior high schoolers Leo Lue and Aashee Balani, dedicated to promoting sustainability through plants, eco-friendly lifestyles, and innovative green projects. Below is a writing from Leo, sharing their exciting plans for the new year and their vision for how Go Green will continue to grow and make an impact in 2025.



At Go Green, we are driven by innovation and a shared passion for environmental impact. Each year, Go Green stands out because it's more than just raising awareness—it's about the excitement of planning, participating, and witnessing our hard work come to life. Once an idea hits us, we feel energized to work with all of AASuccess and this year we have Go Green's Earth Day event planned, making it bigger and better than previous years.

Despite our successes, Go Green has faced moments of stagnation—much like experiencing writer's block. Rather than trying to force ideas onto ourselves, we have both learned the importance of having patience and waiting for the lightbulb.



Go Green has been more than just an environmental project to the two of us. It has been a journey of growth and self discovery. Believe it or not, Go Green has had insane ideas such as building the perfect AI “at home green shelf” and even making an environmental movement across the globe. These ideas have all been shelved away but slowly and surely, we know they can go big. Eventually, we hope to make the idea of Go Green more mainstream and to make 2025 the year where we spread our interactive and innovative ideas on social media.



We're already excited and looking forward to hosting a booth at **Fairfax County's Earth Day Festival** on Saturday, April 26, and can't wait to see what exciting opportunities lie ahead for Go-Green this year! If you haven't already, make sure to sign up and volunteer for our upcoming earth day event using this link:

<https://forms.gle/dThYhWDUVocGf4f57!!>

Anyone and everyone is welcome 🌱

Leo Lue, AASuccess Level 2 Student

