



## July E-Newsletter

### Twenty Years Strong: A Community Without Boundaries



Dear AASuccess family, friends, colleagues, and supporters,

As we approach our August 9th Gala, we pause to reflect on an extraordinary journey that began twenty years ago in a basement in Falls Church. What started as one person's vision has evolved into something far greater. It is a living testament to what happens when a community believes in the power of collective impact.

This transformation happened because of you: every mentor who shared wisdom, every student who took risks, every family that opened their hearts, every supporter who believed in our mission when it was just an idea formulated through the AAS logo, designed in 2006 by 10th grader Laren Lin at Woodson High School. From our early days of "stressing over events" and budget meetings to Thanh Nguyen's recent reflection on our journey together, each person has woven their unique thread into our collective work-life journeys.

**This is our story - a community story.**



### Beyond the Expected: Addressing Your Questions, Amplifying Our Impact



Many of you ask thoughtful questions that strengthen our mission. Allow us to speak to a few reflections we've heard, in the spirit of transparency and shared understanding.

**"The Gala doesn't feel like a typical fundraising event. It seems more like a student-led performance."**

That's exactly right, and it's intentional. The AAS Gala isn't run by polished professionals or outside planners. It's designed and led by our students who are the very individuals you're supporting. When you attend, you witness their growth in real-time. As **Wendy Yuan**, one of our board members, reflected, *"Now the students are running everything and we fade into the background as advisors and supporters. They've grown into such wholesome, kind, funny and smart human beings."*



**"Why support a program that works with just 20 students a year?"**

Because those 20 students **are not the end goal**. They are the beginning. They go on to become mentors, project leaders, and changemakers who help organize the Gala, manage health screening efforts, and run scholarships and community events that reach hundreds more. But the impact extends far beyond students: these core trained students become partners working alongside professionals and supporters in managing AAS BioHealth Projects contracted through the AASuccess System. Through our US International Business Development Consortium (US-IBDC), a business network created through AAS, we collectively generate contractual work that benefits the entire community supporting our students. For example, professionals gain project opportunities, supporters access career pathways, and families nationwide benefit from the economic opportunities this creates. Their impact multiplies across generations and geographic boundaries. **The numbers may seem small, but the depth of growth and leadership creates sustainable change for our entire extended community.**

**"I didn't know I could just sponsor a few students to attend the Gala."**

Yes, you can. A one-time sponsorship of \$500 covers the cost of three student seats. These are often young people who are not yet part of AAS, but who are eager and looking for a place to grow. Attending the Gala gives them that moment of connection. That first glimpse into what is possible. Whether you choose to give monthly or support a table for one evening, every contribution helps someone step into their next chapter.

Thank you for considering this journey with us. Whether you are a longtime supporter or just learning about our mission, your questions matter and your support makes a difference. We are grateful to walk this path with you.

With respect and appreciation,  
The AASuccess Core Volunteers and Students

# Creating Career Pathways for Our AASuccess Community Nationwide



Our 20 annual students aren't just developing personally; **they're gaining access to career opportunities through our expanding network.** Through our US International Business Development Consortium (US-IBDC), a business network created through AAS, we serve as prime contractor developing AAS BioGen Centers in Vietnam, creating job training, internships, and leadership positions for active supporters and young people throughout our community, whether they're in Falls Church, moved to Texas, or settled in other states.



*Angela Le (middle) and Vivian Cao-Dao (left) and Grace Tonnu (right) at their Healthcare Symposium Event in 2023*

**Angela Le** exemplifies this career pathway development: Leading AASuccess's Head of Operations, she and her operations team's colleagues successfully **managed our annual budget** while implementing sustainable programs **servicing our community's mental health needs.** Her Healthcare Symposium brought together healthcare professionals and students to address burnout and mental health stigma. Working at Keswick therapeutic boarding school and volunteering at crisis hotlines, Angela developed our Mental Health Awareness Program, demonstrating how our students create systematic change beyond individual impact, while gaining the leadership experience that opens doors to advanced opportunities.



*Liem Nguyen (left) is the Marketing & Fundraising Head and Lara Tran is the Life Skills Academy Head at AASuccess. Together with Angela Le, they oversee and support 8-9 student led projects per year.*

**Lara Tran** and **Liem Nguyen** form our Operations Team backbone, **managing year-round Life Skills Academy activities every Saturday** for high school students. They **coordinate real-world projects** including YouthCon scholarships, Gala planning, and community initiatives, ensuring our students gain practical leadership experience while developing the project management skills that lead to professional opportunities.



*Vivian Cao-Dao giving her speech at the Biohealth Conference in Vietnam*

**Vivian Cao-Dao**, our University of Virginia graduate now entering medical school, **led our July BioHealth Conference in Vietnam** while developing the **international experience and cultural competency** that will distinguish her medical career. These students represent the direct return on investment our community receives: talent equipped with emotional intelligence, crucial conversation skills, and leadership experience that creates competitive advantages wherever they live and work.



## Thuc Hoang's Speech: Beyond Technical Skills, Life Skills for Meaningful Work

*Presented at the July 19, 2025 BioHealth Conference*



My name is Thuc Hoang and it's a pleasure for me to share my personal story of why I joined and continue to be involved with AASuccess.

Firstly, allow me to briefly introduce my background. I am an electrical and computer engineer by training. I have 33 years of service with the United States Department of Energy and currently serve as the director of its Advanced Simulation and Computing program. My program funds many Department of Energy National Laboratories, universities, and industries, and I have collaborated with international programs in Japan, France, the United Kingdom, and Germany for many years.

Because of the technically complex and broad nature of my program—now 30 years old and one I helped to found—I've had to learn how to communicate effectively with large, diverse teams at national labs and with external stakeholders who may not share our goals, language, or strategy. Managing these dispersed teams across three U.S. time zones continues to challenge and strengthen my leadership and coordination skills.

My involvement with AASuccess began in 2005 when my husband, Dave Nguyen, founded the organization alongside David Montanari and other friends. In its early years, the AASuccess office was literally in the basement of our home. Our children, Lani and Liem—now 25 and 21—were students and later mentors in AASuccess. They benefited tremendously from their relationships with professionals like David Montanari and Tom Forsberg, and with peers such as Lara and Vivian. Through AASuccess, they matured into thoughtful, capable young adults, just like many of the students at this conference today.



*Ms. Thuc was one of our enthusiastic volunteers at the free health screening event at Dai Giap Temple in Bac Giang, inspired students and fellow volunteers with her shining leadership and contagious spirit.*

Now, as I approach retirement, I find myself even more passionate about giving back. I am committed to helping cultivate the next generation of Vietnamese leaders—leaders who will make meaningful contributions to social services, the professional community, personal development, and economic prosperity.

That is why I continue to support AASuccess. Because through mentorship, collaboration, and community, we are shaping a future where young people not only thrive—but lead.



## Student Voices from Vietnam: Real Impact, Real Growth

*Our July 19 BioHealth Conference in Hanoi gave students a platform to share their experiences. Here are highlights from our Q&A session, moderated by Len Tran.*



**Leo Tran** (Rising High School Freshman): *"Leading YouthCon was a big challenge. In the beginning, it was stressful and a long process. However, with the help of my team, I was able to refocus and finish my part... This being my first time in Vietnam, it made me feel more connected to my roots."*



**Xandra Phan** (Virginia Tech Senior): *"I feel very fortunate, excited and a bit scared to see Vietnam and the Vietnamese community in a different perspective than I have before. I've been back to Vietnam to travel and visit family before, but the manner in which I've connected with the native Vietnamese community, it opened up a different world to me. I saw and engaged with the community with no rose colored lens. I truly saw and understood that a large portion of the community in Vietnam doesn't have the same privileges and opportunities that are already given to me in the United States. Being at the temple and interacting with the Monks, observing Dr. Thuy and the wonderful staff at the DECA [A core business partner through US-IBDC] brought me closer to the reality of Vietnam. And it made me extremely emotional and grateful for what I have and empowered me to engage and support the other side of my culture as well."*



**Kathleen Pham** (UVA Senior): *"AASuccess has always had a special place in my heart. What brings me back is the mission and the people. I truly believe in the mission of giving back and connecting with people; it's what gets me up in the morning. AAS is full of truly good people that inspire me to be the best version of myself."*

# Vivian Cao-Dao's Conference Leadership: From UVA to Medical School

*Presented at the July 19, 2025 BioHealth Conference*



**"I want to start off with a question: What does being empowered mean to you?"**

To me, being empowered means I had the opportunity to be a part of something greater than myself in Vietnam, back where my parents were born, working alongside an incredible team of Vietnamese and American individuals to create and lead the July 19, 2025 AAS Biohealth Conference.



Like many in the audience, I aspire to be a physician and to provide compassionate care to patients. So why am I here, if I'm going to medical school? Why learn how to lead a conference? Whether it's a conference or any other project, I've learned from the people and the skills and experiences in the projects. Our Leadership Empowerment and Advancement Program has taught me project management, relationship building, and communication skills while working with community leaders, young students, and professionals from all walks of life between the US and Vietnam.

From every project I've been a part of in AASuccess, these skills, I fully believe, will make me a better friend, better doctor, and of course, a better leader. I plan to attend medical school in two and a half weeks from now, but this experience will not be one I can find, let alone be empowered to do in medical school."

**Vivian Cao-Dao, AASuccess Senior Intern**

Made with **GAMMA**



# The AASuccess Community Advantage: Emotional Intelligence and Career Development

Every one of our 20 annual students receives year-round training in emotional intelligence and crucial conversations. These are the skills that transform not just their careers, but their impact wherever they live and work. These aren't abstract concepts; they're practical competencies that create professional advantages for AASuccess families nationwide, whether they've stayed local or moved to new states over our 20-year history.

## Why This Matters for Our Extended Community

Each student represents multiplied impact across our national network. Leo's leadership skills will benefit whatever community he serves. Xandra's creative confidence and business acumen create value in Virginia and beyond. Kathleen's project management expertise enhances civic engagement wherever she applies it. Through LEAP, they become not just more emotionally intelligent neighbors and colleagues, but qualified candidates for the internships, project leadership roles, and professional opportunities our US-IBDC network creates.

## Dr. Mai Mac's Reflection



"The past month as an intern at AASuccess has been a truly memorable journey for me. Not only was I professionally trained and thoughtfully mentored by Mr. Dave, but I was also entrusted by senior members, which taught me how to trust others, to open up, and to grow in the way I interact with the world around me.

I had the chance to live and work in an environment where my thoughts and voice were heard, respected, and understood. I didn't have to worry or hesitate about whether what I said would be judged or scrutinized. The atmosphere at AAS was genuinely open and welcoming, and yet still grounded in a strong sense of responsibility, trust, and mutual sharing. What touched me deeply was that all of this came from people I had only just met—something that rarely happens in my experience.



Our journey to Dai Giap Pagoda in Bac Ninh Province of Vietnam, where we provided free health checkups and consultations to 80 Buddhist monks, nuns, and followers, gave me a profound experience of the values AAS truly stands for: knowledge, compassion, and community service.



Though I am already a professional doctor, AASuccess allowed me to simply be myself—a learner, a team member, and a prospective participant in the LEAP program, where I hope to grow even more.

I feel both fortunate and proud to be a part of AASuccess, and I truly believe that any young person who joins this organization will feel just as I do."

**Dr. Mai Mac, AASuccess Volunteer & Prospective LEAP**



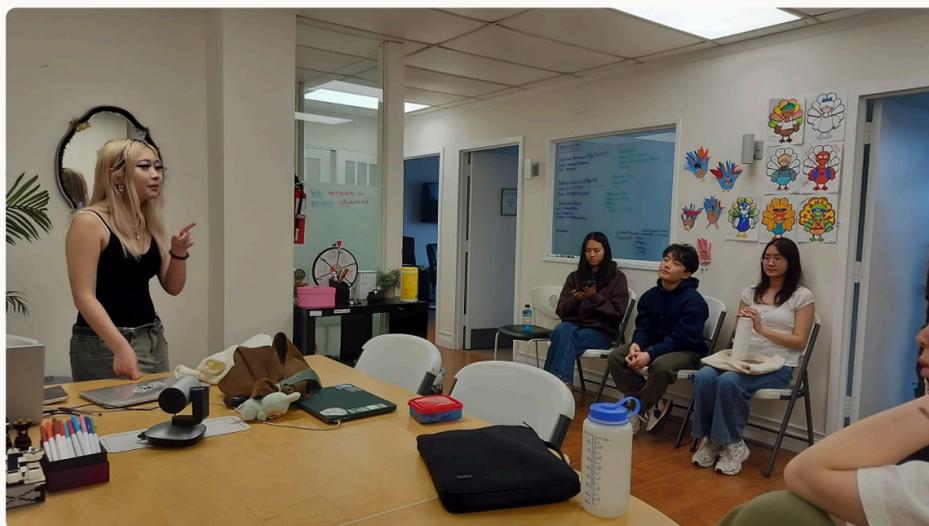
## Emi's Story: Growth & Opportunities

*Emily Liu, Summer 2025 AASuccess Intern, Reflects on Redefining Care Through Culture, Compassion, and Cancer Advocacy*

When I first joined US-IBDC, I thought I had a pretty solid understanding of medicine. Evidence-based science was the gold standard and anything else felt like an outdated supplement. But over the past few months, that view has been completely reshaped. This work hasn't just expanded my academic lens, it's made me pause, question, and rebuild how I understand care itself.

Right now, I helped and assisted for the BioHealth conference, which focuses on breast cancer care in Hanoi, Vietnam. The conference will explore a wide range of topics: from post-operative quality of life and immunotherapy, to traditional medicine and public health. I've been creating research summaries, infographics, and content for outreach and while that sounds straightforward, the process has been anything but. Each task has challenged me to step outside my own cultural framework and understanding frameworks for projects.

I remember a specific moment early on when we were discussing how to approach traditional medicine in our presentations. I felt this tightening in my chest, this sense of confusion I hadn't expected. How could we speak about healing without centering it entirely around science? My instinct was to explain things "correctly," but my senior intern, Vivian, helped me realize something important: if we're not careful with how we communicate and especially as outsiders since we risk turning care into control. That moment was humbling. I saw how easily good intentions could be misread if we didn't respect the cultural values and emotional landscapes we were stepping into.



*Emily Liu (far left) shares her experience during a Saturday AASuccess office hours session.*

That realization changed everything. It taught me to slow down, to listen, and to ask better questions not just about medicine, but about meaning. I started viewing patients not just as clinical cases but as people with layered beliefs and lived experiences. My work began shifting from just informing to empathizing.

This shift felt personal too. I kept thinking back to when my uncle had cancer. For a long time, no one in my family really talked about it. It was quietly acknowledged, but never discussed, which is wrapped in stigma and silence. It wasn't until another uncle bluntly asked, "Why don't we talk about this?" that something cracked open. Suddenly, our family was having loud debates regarding traditional remedies and also about Western treatment, about what healing really means. That moment taught me that talking about illness can be a form of healing in itself and that there are different layered beliefs that tie into treatment!

This internship has also deepened my belief in holistic and palliative care. I've come to see that healing isn't just about treating symptoms; it's about supporting people through the entire alphabet of what they're feeling like physically, emotionally, and culturally. That's a lesson I'll carry with me, especially as I pursue a future in pediatric oncology. Looking back, I've grown so much and not just as a student, but as a communicator, a listener, and a future healthcare provider. I've learned how to adapt my language for different audiences, how to navigate cultural nuance, and how to hold space for multiple truths at once. I've always known I wanted to serve communities that are often overlooked, but this experience has deepened that commitment. It's shown me that health equity isn't just about access and it's about understanding, humility, and respect.

Even in the smaller moments like mentoring, volunteering, simply showing up! I've found a kind of purpose that sticks with me. This work has reminded me why I care so deeply about giving my all to those who often have the least. And it's made me even more certain: this is the kind of work I want to do for the rest of my life.

**Emily Liu, AASuccess Senior Intern**

Made with **GAMMA**



## Your Investment in Career Opportunities: The LEAP Professional Advantage

Here's what makes supporting AASuccess strategically important: Our US International Business Development Consortium (US-IBDC), a business network created through AAS, is architecting career pathways through project-based subcontracts and leadership positions. As prime contractor developing AAS BioGen Centers in Vietnam, we're creating job training, internships, and professional development opportunities for active supporters and young people throughout our community. The competitive advantage flows not just from healthcare innovation, but from the career opportunities and professional networks we create for AASuccess families nationwide.



LEAP creates these opportunities through four foundational pillars:

1. **Student/Professional Pathways:** Different career tracks based on individual experiences and qualifications, with shared foundational skills including emotional intelligence, disruptive innovation, integrity, and compassionate empathy.
2. **Community and Partner Projects:** Current initiatives including our BioGen healthcare centers provide real-world experience and professional development.
3. **Community Leadership Network:** Well-rounded leaders who share resources and create opportunities through servant leadership across our national community.
4. **Career Benefits and Training:** Internships, externships, and job training through project-based learning. Leadership Empowerment and Advancement Program (LEAP) certification courses, workshops, professional retreats, and annual symposiums in both the US and Vietnam provide collaborative discussion and networking within the AAS network.

The Leadership Empowerment and Advancement Program (LEAP) Framework (3H-3S-3A) develops emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills:

- **Head - Heart - Hands;**
- **Seek - See - Seize Opportunities;**
- **Attitude - Action - Authenticity.**

These principles cultivate individual strengths while building career-ready capabilities for today's and tomorrow's opportunities.



## Why Your Support Matters NOW



We need **\$50,000** more by **September 30th** to maintain the year-round training and project infrastructure that creates these career pathways. Without reaching our goal, we risk losing the professional development opportunities that benefit AASuccess families nationwide, whether they're in Virginia, California, or anywhere our community has grown over 20 years.

**Looking forward:** Evidence of lasting impact reveals Vietnamese medical professionals applying our frameworks in rural temples, while high school students conduct sophisticated research. College graduates start careers with emotional intelligence and cultural competency. Alumni like Wendy Yuan raise children with AASuccess values. Career professionals like Tom Forsberg and Jim Kelman find purpose through coaching and business work through our business network .

As **Thanh Nguyen**, our Senior Advisor, beautifully expressed: *"We build foundations with each brick we lay. The accomplishments exist in the future, in the positive transformation of every person we've encountered. We each heal ourselves, strive to excel, and help others grow into the best versions of themselves."*

### You Are Already Part of This Community

Whether you've been with us since the basement days or just learned about our work, you're part of this story. Every question you ask, every student you encourage, every dollar you contribute, every moment you spend reading this newsletter: All of it matters.

This August 9th, we celebrate not just our students' achievements, but the community that makes their success possible.

Join us. The next twenty years start now.

With gratitude and anticipation,

**The AASuccess Community**  
*Students, Alumni, Mentors, Families, and Friends*

# How You Can Support Our Work

Current Goal: \$80,000 by September 30, 2025 | Progress: \$30,000 raised

We invite you to support our mission in the way that feels most meaningful:

- **Sponsor Student Seats (\$500):** Provides seating for three students at our August 9 Gala, many taking their first step into community leadership.
- **Become a Monthly Supporter:** Your steady support helps us plan ahead and provide scholarships year-round.
- **Honorary Sponsorship (\$500/\$1,000/\$2,000):** Direct investment allowing more students to participate in our transformative programs.
- **Attend the AAS Gala 2025:**
  - Date: August 9, 2025
  - Location: DoubleTree by Hilton, Tysons, Virginia
  - Tickets: \$175 per person
  - Register: [aasuccess.org](https://aasuccess.org)



IT'S TIME  
TO WAVE IN THE  
NEW YEAR

SAVE THE DATE

EBB AND FLOW

2025 AASUCCESS GALA

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON MCLEAN TYSONS  
4 PM - 10 PM  
SATURDAY, AUGUST 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2025

AASuccess



## Special Recognition



We honor the countless individuals who've shaped our journey: former and current board members like **Irina Nguyen, Scott Plein, David Montanari, Sumesh Kausal, Wendy Yuan, Vihanh Tham, Jim Kelman, Jim Alstrum, K-Mi Nguyen**, medical advisors like **Dr. Daniel M. and Dr. Huy Luu**, strategic partners like **Dr. Thuy Hoang, Healing Hearts Vietnam**, and **every student** who took a risk to grow. Your fingerprints are on every success story. We are forever grateful.

***AASuccess: Perfecting the Act of Giving Back***

6521 Arlington Blvd., Suite 502, Falls Church, VA 22042

**[www.aasuccess.org](http://www.aasuccess.org)**

*A community without boundaries, built on the principle that when we invest in character development alongside competence, everyone thrives.*