

Asian Profile Series:

Lao Community



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Culture

Boun Khao Phansa and Boun Awk Phansa mark the first and last days of Buddhist Lent in Laos. Starting on July 24th and ending on October 21st this year. On the first day, it is a very peaceful experience as families gather food and other necessities to bring to the temple and listen to Buddhist teachings and receive blessings. On the last day, candle light processions are held around the temples and end at the rivers to send off small lighted “boats” made of banana stems and leaves. The day after Boun Awk Phansa is boat racing festival day. The Boun Suang Heua held in Ventiane is the largest among the races.

Health

According to SAMHSA’s National Survey on Drug Use and Health, mental health issues have increased significantly among Asian American/Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian young adults. In particular, Southeast Asians who fled Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam more than 45 years ago due to conflicts in the region have higher rates of mental health challenges compared to the general population. There are several barriers that prevent Asian Americans from accessing mental health services, including language barriers, lack of awareness, and stigma surrounding discussions of mental health and seeking care. There are many ways people can take care of their own mental health including exercise, prioritizing sleep, and staying connected with loved ones. For access to AAPI therapists in the U.S., check out the Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian American (APISAA) Therapist Directory: <https://www.asianmhc.org/apisaa>



Center for Asian Health Equity (CAHE) Spotlights

Community Partner

LAOE



Lao American Organization of Elgin (LAOE) works to provide programs, services, and support to the Lao-American population of Elgin, Illinois. LAOE has partnered with CAHE on several programs, including the Hepatitis B program to provide free Hepatitis B screenings to Laotian immigrants in the Chicago and surrounding suburbs. They are currently partnering with us on the Coalition for Healthy Asian Minds Program (CHAMP), which aims to improve mental health literacy and reduce stigma about mental health services and develop culturally tailored mental health interventions for AAPI communities.

CAHE Staff

Lauren joined CAHE in April of 2021. She serves as the program manager of cancer prevention for the IL-CARES program. Often asked the origin of her last name which is Singh, she explains the history of her father's family. Originally, from India her great grandparents were among the indentured laborers from India to Guyana to work in the sugar plantations. Lauren enjoys Indo-Guyanese food which combines Indian and Caribbean dishes. Although, she does not know the official name of the dish, okra, tomatoes, and potatoes is one of her favorites and she was even able to find all of the ingredients at a rural market in Ghana while she worked there.

