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VSA to present culture night

■ The Vietnamese Student Association event includes a dinner of traditional foods and a musical performance

By Kendall Larsen for the Emerald

Students and community members will have the opportunity Sunday to taste authentic Vietnamese food, be entertained by skits and experience a fresh portrayal of Vietnamese culture.

Coordinated by junior Thuvan Hoang and senior Tran Quach, Vietnamese culture night is an annual event that draws people from around the state. Dinner starts at 5 p.m., and at 6:30 p.m. in the EMU Ballroom the Vietnamese Student Association will present "Memories of the Past, Dreams for the Future."

Building on their past success, the students of the VSA will also try something a bit different this year.

Rob Yee, a sophomore multimedia arts major and the VSA's program coordinator, said this year's program is anything but typical. Instead of the

fashion show and dances that are usually the main focus, a musical performance will address the idea of blending Vietnamese traditions with American culture.

In the main skit, a young girl opens up a "time capsule" of her life, and each item reminds her of a certain event, Yee said. A fan, for example, will remind her of a fan dance, which will then be performed for the audience.

"The whole show is based around a grandma and a little girl," Hoang said. "The grandma is reminiscing about her past in Vietnam. The newer parts revolve around her time in the U.S."

Quach added that in this way, the show attempts to "mesh an old culture with a new American culture ... [and show] how it is to be growing up in a bi-racial culture like many of us are."

Another skit tells the story of how New Year's came about in Vietnam. Traditional cultural and courtship dances will also be performed, Yee said.

Authentic Vietnamese food will also be offered, and Quach said that not only will VSA members be cooking, but so will their parents, ensuring that the samplings will be traditional.

The "usual dishes" such as egg rolls will be served, Quach said, but so will many new noodle dishes. Yee said volunteers will also make a tasty Vietnamese barbecued pork.

Quach said although the active VSA members total about 25 people, more than 50 helped with the production.

"A lot of people came out of the woodwork," she said.

Those who are involved in the student group are not all Vietnamese. Quach said the association has people of all backgrounds and races, including Chinese, Thai and Hispanic.

"I believe it's really important for people to come to this event to see what Vietnamese culture is about," Yee said. "I believe a lot of people don't really know about it."

The cost for the event, including dinner, is \$8 for students and \$9 for general admission.

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Event details life in factory towns

■ Thursday night, Jim Keady and Leslie Kretzu described their experience working in an Indonesian village

By Venus Killen for the Emerald

Open sewers lining the streets, undrinkable water, 24-hour workdays, state repression and six-family bathrooms are just a few conditions that Jim Keady and Leslie Kretzu described as part of their experience when they lived in an Indonesian factory town.

Thursday night, Keady and Kretzu, founders of the Living Wage Project, detailed their experiences with a presentation and slide show. To an audience of approximately 150, the pair shared their story of living among poverty-stricken, factory-controlled villages of an Indonesian community.

"The maxim that we work through with our project is education, empowerment and action," Keady said. "There is a lot of information that consumers don't have about this situation that they need to have in order to make informed decisions — as consumers, athletes, shareholders, students at a school heavily funded by the Nike corporation."

After attempts in May of 1999 to find work in a Nike-owned factory abroad failed, Keady enlisted the Kretzu's help to organize the next best thing.

This past August, the two Americans embarked on a month-long journey to investigate the reality of sweatshop life in Indonesia.

Calling their endeavor the Living Wage Project, the pair took up residence in a Nike factory town. The team spent the month of August in a small Indonesian community, living on the standard Nike wage of 10,000 rupees per day, which they said translates to roughly \$1.20 in the United States.

During their hour-long presentation, they spoke of living conditions that they said were unable to sustain basic, family life, such as workers not able to independently unionize without the fear of death, families unable to pay for health care for their children, workers being fed rancid meat, and families having to choose between meals and basic cleaning supplies.

"This is the information that these companies don't want you to hear because this is the human side," Kretzu said. "The reality is that capital and resources are being centralized in the elite and upper middle class. Indonesian factory workers are struggling to feed themselves and their children. The reality is multinational corporations aren't economically developing developing countries."

According to Keady and Kretzu, to double the wages of all 110,000 Indonesian factory workers would cost Nike \$16 million. This is two percent

of Nike's current advertising budget and a small amount when compared to Nike's profit margin and the pay rate of CEOs, they said.

Kretzu and Keady both advocated student action in aiding the cause of human rights overseas. Among other things, they advised writing letters or joining the efforts of student or community groups.

"It is impossible to take the position of neutrality in a situation of injustice," Kretzu said, when referring to current monitoring practices of college campuses.

In the Oregon University System, in particular, the elimination of sweatshop monitoring groups such as the Worker Rights Consortium and Fair Labor Association will have a definite impact on the human rights practices of large companies, Keady and Kretzu said. Unless overturned, they said, the new OUS business policy would disallow University involvement with such groups.

Brought to campus by the Human Rights Alliance, the presentation was part of an effort to increase sweatshop awareness on campus and in the local community.

"We are hoping that the presentation will take the issue back to what it's really about, which is human rights and human dignity," Chad Sullivan, HRA member and student, said. "I feel people are tired of the policy aspects and legal debate. It's time to work on what's important."

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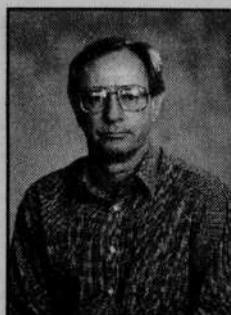
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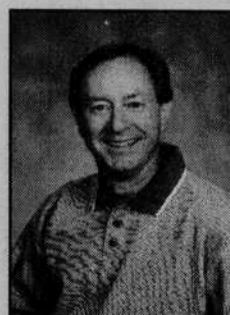
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