

Vietnamese group links kids to culture

The University Vietnamese Student Association puts on events to immerse children in their cultural roots

Roman Gokhman
Campus/City Culture Reporter

Seven-year-old Helen Lan Anh Shorack is quickly becoming an origami expert. But unlike most American children her age, Helen can name her origami creations in Vietnamese as well as English.

Helen was adopted two years ago from Vinh Phuc, a small rural village in north Vietnam. Her adoptive mother, Candace Shorack, said while Helen has adapted to her new environment, Eugene is very different from what she is used to.

"Eugene is a very white place," she said. "It's good for her to be around people who are grown up and who share her ethnicity."

The University Vietnamese Student Association is helping children like Helen retain their cultural roots.

VSA held its annual Tet celebra-

tion in the International Lounge Thursday. The event provided a chance for Vietnamese children who were adopted by American parents and Vietnamese-American children to play traditional games and learn about their culture.

Tet is the Lunar New Year, celebrated by Chinese and Vietnamese cultures.

"The Vietnamese community is very small in Eugene and (the kids') parents want them to interact with their culture," VSA member Phuc Nguyen said.

About 10 kids participated in the celebration, which marks the coming of spring. Traditionally, oranges are eaten for happiness, and "bad words" are not spoken, because if they are, the speakers will have a bad year. Children learned other New Year traditions, such as not using sharp objects because they will "cut" good luck, and using firecrackers to scare away evil spirits. They were also given red envelopes with "lucky money."

The children folded origami and played puzzle and dice games, where they placed candy on different

squares with six animals from the Chinese calendar — dog, rooster, dragon, rabbit, tiger and snake — and rolled a dice that had the six animals on the faces. If the animal on the dice and the squares matched up, they would win the candy.

VSA organizes this event and others similar to it every year. Member Ricky Ho said the group is always trying to spread awareness of the culture to anyone who will listen.

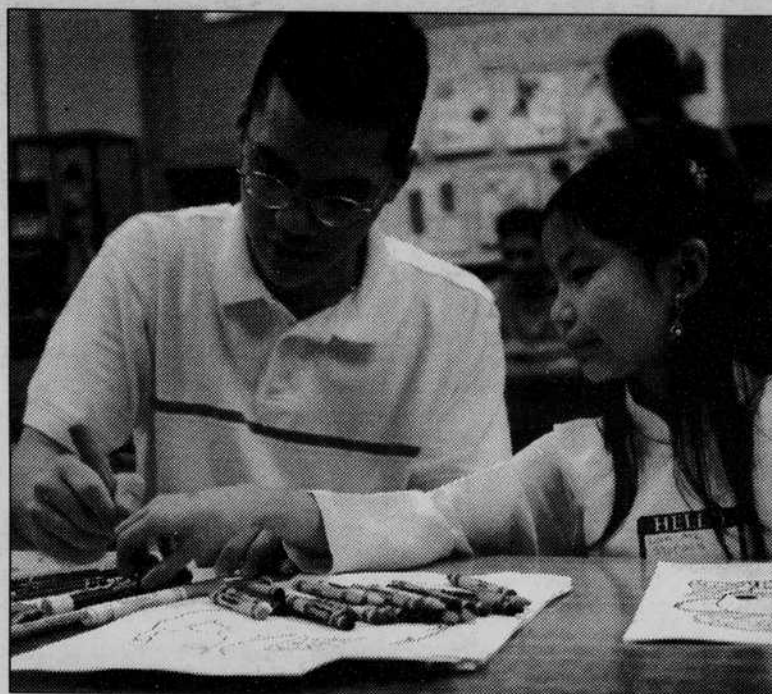
VSA member Wendy Tom added that it is important for children to know their heritage.

"It's for the kids — for them to get to know ... who they are," she said.

Brian McCartin, a VSA member who is not of Asian descent, said the group is a great asset to the University.

McCartin said he is teaching himself Vietnamese because the University does not offer the language. He added that once he can speak the language sufficiently, he wants to attend classes at the University of Vietnam in Hanoi.

Contact the reporter at romangokhman@dailymerald.com.



Mark McCambridge Emerald

Chris Trinh helps Helen Lan Anh Shorack select the appropriate color of crayon during the Tet Celebration.

News brief

Organizations sponsor peace festival

The University and Central Presbyterian Church at 555 East 15th Ave. will host the campus group and community sponsored third

annual Peace Festival on Saturday and Sunday.

University Students for Peace, Eugene Peace Works, Oregon Progressive Alliance and Justice Not War are organizing the festival with a theme of "Peace Begins at Home."

"We're trying to emphasize the fact that in order to attain peace ... we need to start with ourselves,"

Students for Peace member Phillip Anderson said.

A march and rally will take place Saturday afternoon. The march will begin at 3 p.m. at the University and will end at the Federal Courthouse on East Seventh Avenue.

Speakers include authors Paul Lobe and Bhavia Carol Wagner, Mario Africa, founder of the San

Francisco-based Third World Outreach Program at the Center for Conscientious Objectors, foreign correspondent Reese Erlich, and Hope Marston, a member of the Lane County Bill of Rights Defense Committee.

Other activities include workshops dealing with issues of nonviolence and domestic violence,

classes in tai-chi and meditation, and performances by the Eugene Peace Choir and hip-hop band Sirens Echo.

For a schedule of events and speaker biographies, go to <http://www.oregonpeacefestival.org>.

— Roman Gokhman

So there's the job description you always imagined next to your name on a business card. No really, working twenty-four-seven driving a badly abused subcompact car that reeks of old cheese was probably exactly how you saw it all working out for you. And by this we mean not to offend those who bring us discs of doughy delight. NO! We don't know where we'd be without the Mr. Pizza Guys of this world - but making it a career is like taking your mind out back for a good thrashing. So from this little corner of the food chain we'd encourage you to pick up the paper and read it, get into a subject of living a good life. Because this life is yours, and reading can help you make something of it.

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