

# St. Paul gets its first Hmong firefighter

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP)—St. Paul, which has one of the largest concentrations of Hmong people living in the U.S., is finally getting its first Hmong firefighter.

Tou Lo, 25, graduated from the St. Paul fire academy this month. He told *The St. Paul Pioneer Press* that his career path was inspired by a documentary about New York City firefighters responding to the September 11 terror attacks, which he saw as a teenager.

"I was inspired by what they were doing, and I just made up my mind right there—that's what I wanted to be doing later," said Lo.

St. Paul's police department has had Hmong officers since the 1980s, but its fire department has lagged in diversity. Fire chief Tim Butler said he made it a goal when he took the job in 2007 to pin the badge on a Hmong firefighter during his tenure.

"The police seem to have tapped into that cultural group, and there's a lot of interest in law enforcement, but there has been little or no interest in the fire service,"



Butler said. "Tou looks like he's going to be really successful, and he's very enthusiastic. I think he's going to be a great pioneer for the Hmong people in the fire department."

Minneapolis, which also has a sizable Hmong population, has two firefighters

who identify as Hmong/Chinese, a department spokeswoman said.

Lo has lived in St. Paul since he was 11 years old. His parents left Laos after the Vietnam War and initially settled near Paris, France, where Lo and his sisters were born. The family moved to St. Paul

**ST. PAUL FIREFIGHTER.** Tou Lo participates in a rescue training exercise for St. Paul firefighter recruits on the ice of Lake Como in St. Paul, Minnesota. Lo has become the first Hmong firefighter in St. Paul, which has one of the largest concentrations of Hmong people living in the U.S. (AP Photo/The St. Paul Pioneer Press, John Doman)

when he was 11, initially living with his grandmother in the Payne/Phalen neighborhood.

After graduating from high school in Lakeville, Lo joined the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve where he did three months of training with the military's fire academy. He said he wanted to be a firefighter in St. Paul because it's the first place he lived in the U.S.

Lo said he learned while at the city's fire academy that he'd be its first Hmong firefighter.

"I think it's an honor," Lo said. "There's a large community of Hmong people that live in St. Paul. I think it's going to be a good opportunity for me to get them educated with public safety, firefighting, and be a bridge that connects St. Paul fire with that community."



**CREATIVE KUTAI.** Kutai, a 20-year-old Sumatran orangutan known for his intelligence, creativity, and "mischievous but sweet" personality, passed away at the Oregon Zoo in early January following a monthlong illness that had vets battling to save his life. (AR Photo/Jan Landis)

## Sumatran orangutan Kutai passes away after illness

Kutai, a 20-year-old Sumatran orangutan known for his intelligence, creativity, and fun-loving personality, passed away at the Oregon Zoo following a monthlong illness, according to zoo officials.

"It's a devastating loss for everyone here," said Mitch Finnegan, the zoo's lead veterinarian. "Our animal-care staff did all we could for Kutai, but we just couldn't help him through this."

Finnegan said the zoo's animal-care staff had been treating Kutai for an ongoing medical issue since early December. Kutai originally responded well, but his condition declined.

Zoo staff described him as extremely intelligent and creative. Before Red Ape Reserve opened at the zoo in 2010, keepers joked that they needed to make the habitat "Kutai-proof," referring to the orang's love

for dismantling objects, which he often fashioned into his own toys and tools.

Kutai was born December 16, 1993 at the Sedgwick County Zoo in Wichita, Kansas and came to Portland in 2001. He is survived by his grandmother, Inji, who, at 54 years old, is the oldest Oregon Zoo resident and one of the oldest orangs anywhere.

The median life expectancy for Sumatran orangutans is 25.1 years for males and 32 years for females, and some can live up to 60 years, according to the Association of Zoos and Aquariums.

"I remember very well when Kutai first arrived here," reminisced Dr. Finnegan. "He was this goofy, gangly, eight-year-old adolescent, and we watched him grow into a huge, burly, full-grown orangutan. He was one of those animals with a strong presence and a big personality. It's hard to imagine the zoo without him."

Habitat loss, palm oil plantations, and illegal pet trade are pushing orangutans toward extinction in Sumatra and Borneo, and, according to Orangutan Outreach, it might take fewer than 10 years before they could completely vanish from the wild.

## COMMUNITY CALENDAR

### Beyond Convention: Women of the Portland JACL

Through Mar 21, 7:30am-midnight (Mon-Thu), 7:30am-7pm (Fri), 10am-7pm (Sat), noon-midnight (Sun), Portland State University, Millar Library (1875 SW Park Ave, Portland). View Beyond Convention: Women of the Portland Japanese American Citizens League, an exhibit highlighting the pivotal roles women have played in the Portland Japanese American Citizens League (JACL) since its inception in the 1930s. The display draws on Portland State University's collection of historical records from the JACL. For info, or to verify library or exhibit hours, call (503) 725-5874 or (503) 725-8577, or visit <www.pdx.edu/cjs>.

### Manzanar: The Wartime Photographs of Ansel Adams

Through Mar 29 (Mon-Sat), 10am-4pm, Gonzaga University, Jundt Art Museum (502 E Boone Ave, Spokane, Wash.). View Manzanar: The Wartime Photographs of Ansel Adams, an exhibit of 50 images taken by the renowned photographer at the Japanese-American relocation camp in Manzanar, California during World War II. Also included in the display are three reproductions of Dorothea Lange photographing Japanese Americans who were being evacuated; a first edition copy of the 1944 book, *Born Free and Equal*, by Ansel Adams; a watercolor painting of a camp by an internee; an original 1942 poster of the civilian exclusion order that announced Japanese Americans were to be rounded up for imprisonment; and many other items. For info, call (509) 313-6611 or visit <www.gonzaga.edu/jundt>.

### "Asian Soups"

Jan 21, 22 & 25; Jan 21, 4-5:30pm, Gregory Heights Library (7921 NE Sandy Blvd, Portland); Jan 22, 4-5:30pm, Troutdale Library (2451 SW Cherry Park Rd, Troutdale, Ore.); Jan 25, 2:30-4pm, Holgate Library (7905 SE Holgate Blvd, Portland). Teens in grades six through 12 are invited to learn how to make Lao chicken noodle soup using homemade noodles topped with fresh fried garlic, green onions, and cilantro at an "Asian Soups" class. While waiting for the soup to cook, participants can roll up and enjoy salad rolls for appetizers. For info, call (503) 988-5386 (Gregory Heights), (503) 988-5355 (Troutdale), or (503) 988-5389 (Holgate), or visit <events.multcolib.org>.

### "The Unfinished Conversation"

Jan 22, 11:30am-12:30pm (keynote address), 1-2:30pm (student dialog), 5:30pm (film screening), Clark College (1933 Fort Vancouver Way, Vancouver, Wash.). Attend "The Unfinished Conversation," a day of events with filmmaker and educator Lee Mun Wah. Wah's "Only a World Away" lecture takes place at 11:30am, a dialog with students begins at 1:00pm, and a screening of Wah's *If These Halls Could Talk* documentary starts at 5:30pm. For info, call (360) 699-6398 or visit <www.clark.edu/special/mlk>.

### Leadership Development Initiative

Jan 22, noon-2pm, Portland State University, Smith Center Multicultural Center, Room 228 (1825 SW Broadway, Portland). Join members of the Coalition of Communities of Color for a panel discussion about the organization's Leadership Development Initiative. The event is free and open to the public. For info, call Cynthia at (503) 725-4474 or e-mail <gomezcp@pdx.edu>.

### "Monster Typhoon"

Jan 22, 9-10pm; repeats Jan 24, 2-3am; Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB). Watch "Monster Typhoon," an episode of NOVA that looks at Typhoon Haiyan (also known as Typhoon Yolanda), which ravaged the Philippines on November 8, 2013. To verify showtimes, call (503) 293-1982 or visit <www.opb.org>.

### "Know Your Rights"

Jan 23, 4:30-6:30pm, Portland State University, Smith Center Multicultural Center, Room 228 (1825 SW Broadway, Portland). Attend "Know Your Rights," an event featuring a screening of *Flex Your Rights — 10 Rules for Dealing with Police* and a panel presentation by judge Eric Bergstrom, public defender



**FUNKIEST MONKEYS.** "The Funkiest Monkeys," an episode of *Nature* examining black macaques, airs January 29 on Oregon Public Broadcasting. The charismatic monkeys only exist on the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia. (Photo courtesy of Oregon Public Broadcasting)

Ramon Pagan, and district attorney Nathan Vasquez. The event is free and open to the public. For info, call Shannon at (503) 725-4556 or e-mail <slms@pdx.edu>.

### "Financial Aid Day" at MHCC

Jan 25, 9am-2pm, Mt. Hood Community College (MHCC) Library (26000 SE Stark St, Gresham, Ore). Current and prospective students and their families can receive help filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at "Financial Aid Day," which is part of College Goal Oregon, a statewide initiative to simplify the FAFSA process for students. Students should bring their 2012 IRS tax returns or 2013 end-of-year pay stubs, current value of assets, social security card, driver license or state identification card, and alien registration card (if applicable) to the event. Free one-on-one assistance with the FAFSA is available. For info, call (503) 491-7262, or visit <www.mhcc.edu/financialaid> or <www.collegegoaloregon.org>.

### Free "Fix-It Fair"

Jan 25, 9:30am-3pm, Rosa Parks Elementary School (8960 N Woolsey Ave, Portland). Attend a free City of Portland "Fix-It Fair" connecting residents with money-saving, environmentally friendly resources and activities. Exhibits and workshops offer information on home and personal health, utility savings, food and nutrition, community resources, recycling, yard care, lead testing, bike maintenance, and more. The event also features lunch and free on-site childcare. For info, call (503) 823-4309, e-mail <fixitfair@portlandoregon.gov>, or visit <www.portlandoregon.gov/bps/41892>.

### Chinese educational forum

Jan 25, 10am-5:30pm, Portland State University (PSU) School of Business Administration, Room 490 (631 SW Harrison St, Portland). Attend "Technology-Enhanced Chinese Language Teaching in American Classrooms," a daylong Chinese educational forum. For info, call (503) 725-8576, e-mail <confucius@pdx.edu>, or visit <www.oia.pdx.edu/confucius>.

### Asian food market tour

Jan 25, 11:30am-3:30pm, East Portland. Join Indonesia-born chef Surja Tjahaja for a tour of markets specializing in fresh, inexpensive vegetables, seafood, and other Asian food in the Portland area. The tour, which features ideas for the upcoming Lunar New Year, includes a gourmet Asian lunch. For info, meeting location, or to register, call (503) 656-8910. To learn more, visit <www.chef2go.biz>.

### "Pad Kee Mao" cooking class

Jan 26, 10am-1:30pm, West Linn Adult Community Center (1180 Rosemont Rd, West Linn, Ore.). Learn the ins and outs of

### TALKING STORY IN ASIAN AMERICA



■ Polo

Polo's "Talking Story" column will return soon.

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