

Most Honored Elders



ESTEEMED ELDERS. *The Asian Reporter Foundation's Most Honored Elders for 2018 are Tai Duc Tu (left) and Hongsa Chanthavong (right). (AR Photo/Jin Huang)*

Tai Duc Tu

Tai Duc Tu was born September 3, 1941 in the city of Phan Thiet, in the province of Binh Thuan, South Vietnam. In order to help support his large family, Tai Duc Tu left the fourth grade to work in a factory. He was later able to return to school to graduate, and thereafter taught mathematics, physics, and chemistry at several private high schools in Phan Thiet and Song Mao. In 1966, he joined the army of the former Republic of Vietnam. Mr. Tu graduated from the Military Academy as a second lieutenant and worked as an artillery officer, eventually achieving the rank of captain. After the Vietnam War, he was sent by the Vietnamese communist government to prisoner-of-war camps where he was forced to perform hard labor from June 1975 to 1982. He spent 1982 to 1984 under house arrest, and after being set free, worked for two companies that made sea salt and built homes. In 1991, Mr. Tu, along with his wife Chin Thi Le and their two sons — Thao Duc Tu and Tin Duc Tu — left Saigon and immigrated to the U.S. under a humanitarian program. They settled in Portland, where he learned English and worked for Vestal Elementary School as a teacher's aid for a year. From 1993 to 1996, he worked for Foster Farms, then was employed at Nike as an air sole maker until his retirement in 2015. Mr. Tu is the team leader of the Former Artillery Officer Alumni Association of Course 22 (Former Republic of Vietnam). His interests include spending time with his four grandchildren, reading newspapers, writing essays and poems, taking walks, and volunteering for the Vietnamese Community of Oregon.

Hongsa Chanthavong

Hongsa Chanthavong was born October 1, 1934 in Savannakhet, Laos. Mr. Hongsa came to the United States in 1959 where he studied government and political science at the University of Miami on a U.S. government scholarship. After graduating in 1964, he worked for the U.S. State Department as an escort interpreter for three months, after which he returned to Laos to work for the Lao government until the country fell in 1975. Mr. Hongsa was captured by the communists and spent several years in a "re-education camp" during the new regime. In 1983, he immigrated to the United States with his wife, Khamphanh, and three sons — Khamsook, Phonesavanh, and Viengsavanh. The following year, he began his nearly 30-year career at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) as a business specialist in the economic development project. Mr. Hongsa helped found the IRCO Asian Family Center in 1994 and served as its director from 1994 to 2004. He also was instrumental in founding the Wat Buddhathammaram, a Lao Buddhist temple. He serves on many boards, including the Wat Buddhathammaram, the Lao American Foundation, and the Lao Business Association, and is the president of the Lao American Foundation and the Lao Senior Association of Oregon. In addition, he is director emeritus and the community development/special projects department program coordinator of the Asian Family Center. In his spare time, he enjoys travelling, gardening, exercising, and advising younger community leaders.

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Exemplary Community Volunteers



Cambodian American Community of Oregon

The Cambodian American Community of Oregon (CACO) was formed in 1989 by Cambodian refugees and immigrants to unite people from Cambodia; preserve Khmer history, culture, language, and heritage; and empower present and future community members. Led by an active leadership of nearly 40 individuals, CACO's membership encompasses a wide range of ages and backgrounds. Since its founding, the organization has been involved in organizing Cambodian Americans locally in Oregon and southwest Washington in community-based, volunteer activities while also supporting philanthropic activities in the Kingdom of Cambodia, which are focused on the self-empowerment of the people as well as development and education. The group's current local activities include running a Khmer Language School for children and adults; hosting a summer picnic at Vancouver Lake and a camping event in Tillamook, Oregon; participating in the "New Year in the Park" celebration each spring; establishing a high school scholarship committee; connecting with other Asian and Pacific Islander communities; and more. To learn more, visit <www.cacoregon.org>.



Muslim Educational Trust

The Muslim Educational Trust (MET) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1993 to enrich the public's understanding of Islam and dispel common myths and stereotypes while serving the Muslim community's educational, social, and spiritual needs. The group serves a diverse and growing community of 25,000 Muslims in the Portland metropolitan and southwest Washington area and operates two fully accredited schools — the Islamic School of MET and the Oregon Islamic Academy. In the past year, MET launched its Civic Engagement and Positive Integration Project to provide a national example of positive integration, civic engagement, and acceptance; held a college prep workshop at the International Youth Leadership Conference for students from Portland Public Schools; hosted the "Muslim Youth Voices Project," a weeklong filmmaking workshop for Muslim-American youth between 12 and 18 years old; presented monthly public forums; and more. In addition, MET's Youth Ambassadors Club offered presentations about Islam and their experiences living in the U.S. to several area schools, collected non-perishable food items for Neighborhood House's SW Hope Feed the Hungry campaign, and participated in a Habitat for Humanity home repair and painting project. To learn more, visit <www.metpdx.org>.



Philippines Nurses Association of Oregon & Washington

Founded in September 2002 by Filipino nurses from Providence, Southwest Washington Medical Center, and Oregon Health & Science University hospitals, the Philippines Nurses Association of Oregon & Washington (PNAOW) engages in charitable activities that promote unity among Filipino-American nurses in the area. The organization comprises 24 active regular members who are Registered Nurses with active licenses to practice in Oregon and Washington as well as auxiliary members who are unlicensed nurses, nursing students, Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs), and others from various professional and ethnic backgrounds who help the organization's mission. In the past year, PNAOW hosted "PNAOW Healthy, Heart Healthy," an event featuring a Zumba workout and a talk by a cardiologist; organized a bowling fundraiser for Uplift Internationale, an organization that performs cleft lip and cleft palate surgeries in the Philippines; volunteered with the Compassion Clinic to provide free health and dental care to underserved people in the Portland metropolitan area; helped with the local Faith Café Program, which feeds people in need; and more. In addition, members from the organization have also joined Operation Taghoy, a medical mission to Bicol, the Philippines, that provides care for children undergoing surgery for cleft lip and cleft palate. Members also have helped staff a first aid booth during the Portland Rose Festival. To learn more, visit <www.pnaow.org>.

(AR Photos/Jan Landis)

Nomination forms for the 2019 Exemplary Community Volunteer awards will be available January 1, 2019 and will cover volunteer efforts performed between April 1, 2018 and March 31, 2019. For more information, visit <www.ARFoundation.net> or <www.asianreporter.com>.