

Friday, April 21st, 2017 * 9:00 am - 3:15 pm
California State University, Fresno * North Gym
5241 N. Maple Ave, Fresno, CA 93740



ALEC ~ FRESNO

1ST ANNUAL LAO
EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE

4.21.2017



Presented By:

In Collaboration With:



2017 ALEC

Conference

The ALEC (Annual Lao Educational Conference) is an event inspired by the original conference started over 10 years ago at the Sacramento City Unified School District, founded by Dr. Khonepheth Lily Liemthongsamout. The conference takes place in Sacramento annually and is still going strong today! Given that there is a significant number of Lao American students and families here in Fresno, the Laotian-American Community of Fresno (501c nonprofit organization) along with passionate leaders and advocates came together to put on the First Annual Lao American Educational Conference of Fresno (ALEC-Fresno).

By exposing students early to higher education, college campus and a great educational environment, we know and are confident that students will be inspired and empowered to make attending college and achieving higher education a priority.

Welcome!

Sabaidee



Sabaidee/Greetings Students,

The Annual Lao Educational Conference (ALEC) was founded 10 years ago by Dr. Khonepheth Lily Liemthongsamouth who is the Executive Director of the Lao American Advancement Organization (LAAO) and the coordinator of Linked Learning at Sacramento City Unified School District. The mission of the event is to inspire and empower Lao American students to pursue and achieve higher education for the betterment of self, families, community and society.

The Laotian-American Community of Fresno (LACF) is proud and grateful to bring the Annual Lao American Educational Conference to Fresno. We are very thankful to Fresno Unified School District and California State University, Fresno for being our partners and sponsors. Without the support of the community and these two very important institutions, ALEC-Fresno would not be possible.

We would like to congratulate each and every one of you for making the commitment to be here today and for participating in the First Annual Lao American Educational Conference. We have many exciting workshops and a full planned program to share with you. We hope that you will actively engage in these workshops and absorb all the important information that will help you navigate your journey to success.

By being here today and attending the event, we are confident that you will learn and gain new insight, knowledge and excitement in pursuing higher education. Education leads to knowledge and knowledge is the key to achieving your goals and a great life for yourself, your family, and the community.

We are very proud to be a part of this great event and we hope that you will enjoy this day and take with you tools and knowledge that will last a lifetime. Lets put our hearts and minds together, and as friends and community, we can achieve our goals and dreams!



Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Khampha Thephavong". The signature is written in a cursive style on a light-colored background.

Dr. Khampha Thephavong
LACF Executive Director

- 9:00 AM – 9:30 AM **REGISTRATION CHECK-INS**
Breakfast, Workshop Sign-Ups, and Pre-Conference Survey
- 9:30 AM – 9:50 AM **WELCOME AND CONFERENCE OVERVIEW**
Opening Remarks by Dr. Khampha Thephavong,
Laotian-American Community of Fresno (LACF), Executive Director

Welcome and Formal Address by
Dr. Joseph I. Castro, President, Fresno State
Bob Nelson, Interim Superintendent, Fresno Unified School District

Conference Overview: Lany Sivongsay-Avakian, LACF Board Member
- 9:50 AM – 10:05 AM **TOUR OF CAMPUS**
Guided tour of campus, tour will start from North Gym to
the Leon S. Peters School of Business Building where workshops will be held.
- 10:10 AM – 11:10 AM **WORKSHOP SESSION I**
Two concurrent sessions will take place. Please look at your color
sticker dot to determine which session you will attend.
- 11:15 AM – 12:15 PM **WORKSHOP SESSION II**
Two concurrent sessions will take place. Please look at your color
sticker dot to determine which session you will attend.
- 12:30 PM – 1:15 PM **LUNCH PROGRAM**
Greetings from Dr. Frank Lamas, Vice President for Student Affairs and
Enrollment Management, Fresno State
Inspiring Words and Keynote Address by
Dr. Khonepheth Lily Liemthongsamout, Lao American Advancement
Organization (LAAO), Executive Director

Cultural Entertainment/Presentation
- 1:20 PM – 2:20 PM **LAO PROFESSIONAL/COLLEGE STUDENT DISCUSSION PANEL**
Meet Lao professionals and students in our community.
Learn about their experiences and opportunity for questions/answers.
- 2:25 PM – 3:15 PM **CLOSING PROGRAM**
Inspiring Words and Keynote Address by
Lucky Siphongsay, Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries (FIRM),
Program Manager
Diane Phakhonekham, Big Brothers, Big Sisters, Executive Director
Group Photo and Raffle Drawing
Closing Remarks, Post-Conference Survey

Dr. Khonepheth Lily Liemthongsamout



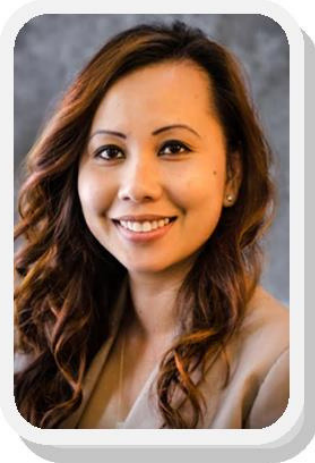
Dr. Khonepheth Lily Liemthongsamout earned her Doctor of Education degree in 2009 in International Multicultural Education from the University of San Francisco. She has over 10 years of teaching experience in elementary grades, middle school and adult education. Her administrative experience includes school instructional coordinator, summer school principal, Refugee Students Assistance Program manager and Reading First coordinator. Currently she is the coordinator for high school Linked Learning pathways for Sacramento City Unified School District. Dr. Liemthongsamout has also been an active community leader. In 2006, she founded the Annual Lao Educational Conference (ALEC) for Lao American students in grades 6-12 in the greater Sacramento area. She is the executive director of the Lao American Advancement Organization (LAAO), which is the non-profit organization that has been successfully sustaining the ALEC for the past eleven years. Her community service also includes teaching traditional dances and the Lao language to children of all ages during the summer months at the Wat Lao Saophuth, which is the first Buddhist temple in Sacramento that was established under the leadership of her father.

Lucky Siphongsay



Lucky Siphongsay is a first generation Lao refugee. He is currently a Program Manager for Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministry (FIRM). Prior to working in the non-profit sector, he was honorably discharged from the US Navy in 2008. His background is in social services/behavior health which helped pave the way for him to obtain a Masters of Arts degree in Counseling Psychology with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Therapy from National University, Fresno. While pursuing his degree, he worked in different sectors of mental health including inpatient and outpatient care, substance abuse, foster care, and conservatorship systems. In addition, he also currently serves as a board member for Abrazo Foster Family Agency. Furthermore, his passion lies in serving and advocating for his refugee community.

Phouangmala Diane Phakonekham



Diane Phakonekham is the youngest of five children. Because of the Vietnam War, her family escaped to Thailand in 1982. Living in a concentration camp for over a year, their journey continued to Santa Ana, CA in 1983. While her family has known true hardship and tragedy, Diane credits the experience into helping shape who she is today. Diane currently serves as the Executive Director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Central California (BBBSCC). She also is a proud member of the North Fresno Rotary. Diane has more than 20 years of management experience, having worked in management since 1995 at the age of 16. She graduated from Duncan Polytechnical High School in 1998, holds a Bachelor's of Science in Child Development, and a Masters of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling, both from California State University-Fresno. She also received a minor in psychology and criminology and certificates in: Victim Services, Drug and Alcohol Counseling, BBBS National Fundamental of Youth Protection, Youth Advocate, Rape Counselor, and Program Management.

Social Justice

Presenters: Dr. Henry Delcore, Ph.D. , Anthropology Professor, Fresno State
 Noy Bounkhoun, Elementary Teacher, Fresno Unified School District
 Youth Leadership Institute

What is social justice and what does it have to do with you? In this workshop, we will explore some issues in the Lao community and ways everyone can contribute so that we all rise up together. This workshop will include a visit from a youth who has been involved in a social justice campaign in Fresno.

Leadership Building

Presenters: Victoria Phosykeo, CSU, Fresno Student, Lao Student Association (LSA) Secretary
 Dr. Khampha Thephavong, LACF Executive Director

*"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."
 -- John Quincy Adams*

In this workshop, students will learn how to engage in team-building activities as well as produce a fun presentation. Since Lao culture embraces courtesy and humbleness, Lao Americans may sometimes be viewed as being less bold than their American counterpart. Through this workshop, students will gain skills and knowledge of how to become a leader in their own right by stepping outside of their comfort zone. The workshop will consist of students working in groups of 5 to 6 people. Each group will be given a creative project which will encouraged them to speak up and step up!

Lao Cultural Heritage

Presenters: Lysing Prathamavong, Lao Cultural Broker, Holistic Cultural Center
 Anusone Keochai, Lao Community Advocate, Insurance Agent at Cal-Valley Insurance Services

Baci/Soukhoun is a unique and special ceremony in Laos that has been practiced by the the Lao people for hundreds of years. This ceremony is being held during numerous occasions including weddings, New Years, celebration of births, during illnesses or sickness and for opening of businesses among many other events. It involves the tying of white cotton strings around an individual's wrists and while tying the string, prayers are being said to wish someone well and to bless them with good health, happiness, love and prosperity. During this workshop, students will have the opportunity to participate in the Baci/Soukhoun ceremony and experienced firsthand this beautiful tradition.

Career Exploration

Presenters: Joh Nouanesymanivanh, Fresno City College Program Counselor for the United Southeast Asian Academic Program (USEAA)
 Kami Thepphavong, General Counselor/Coordinator for the USEAA Program

Being able to mindfully assess one's interests and skills can help in selecting a major/career that will best fit a student and will result in a future profession that one will be passionate about. In turn, this will also provide a clear road map on your academic planning, as far as which college you should attend and how long will it take you to complete your educational goal. Workshop participants will be involved in completing an engaging, fun True Colors Assessment to learn more about their own values, needs, and what brings them joy. All these contributing factors will help guide students in finding their true calling.

Sherina Han Souksavong



Sherina Han Souksavong graduated from Fresno State in 2015 with a B.S. in Biology and have returned this past spring to pursue her passion the field of nursing. She shares that she has been very fortunate to be a part of the Lao community for the majority of her life, which she believes shaped her into the more confident and compassionate person she is today. As a child, she went to Stone Soup with her parents and sisters to learn how to Lao dance. She knew at a young age that dancing wasn't for her and decided to learn the ranat, a Lao male-dominated instrument, instead. Little did she know that one day she would have the honor in teaching songs of Lao folktale to Lao-American youths on the ranat. Many have questioned why she chooses to dedicate her time to volunteering in the community while working and being a full-time student. For her, it's possible to excel in academics, while still having the time to work and have fun, actively serving our Lao community and hanging out with friends on the weekends; unfortunately, not many see that too. She has so much joy seeing her students become excited after learning a new song. Not only does it keep our parents' and relative's heritage alive, but it gives Lao-Americans pride in their roots in an era where academics is the only thing so heavily pushed. She hopes that she can positively influence other Lao-Americans to have pride in their heritage, as well as, do what they love and make the smart decisions about their life choices and education that will help them achieve it.

David Sibou Bouttavong



David Sibou Bouttavong is a first-generation queer Laotian. Soon after his parents and older sister left Laos and landed in Seattle, David was born. As a child, Bouttavong's family relocated to California's Central Valley and his father began to work in the fields picking grapes while his mother worked at an agriculture-packaging center. Bouttavong grew up in Fresno, California where gun violence and drugs abuse were normal; however, he was able to persevere through the adverse.

Bouttavong studied at Fresno State, where he majored in health science with a focus in community education. It was during his years at Fresno State that Bouttavong got involved in community change. He started to work with Planned Parenthood's education department, providing programs in schools, community settings and juvenile detention centers for young men. During this pivotal time, he was introduced to healing and trauma informed practices, which he continues to use today.

As a young queer person of color, David grappled with many questions regarding his identity. The intersectionality of Bouttavong's identities created internal conflict when having to decide how "out" he could or should be. As a community leader, however, Bouttavong knew that he had a responsibility to be his full true self. "It is important for me to be out and proud, so that youth who look like me, who can identify with me, know that there is someone out there in the community making a difference and they can do it too." Today, David works as a Program Manager with the Fresno Barrios Unidos in partnership with Fresno Unified School District providing Comprehensive Sex Education in local high schools.

Joh Nouanesymanivanh

Joh was born in Muang Phonthong District of Champassack Providence. Growing up during the Vietnam War Era, Joh understood the meaning of struggles and hardships at a very young age. Around the early age of 5, Joh recalled the horror and traumatic effects of living next to a police station that was later converted to a concentration camp by the communist regime. As a child, Joh shared that when he peeked through the balcony from his house, he could see dead people being hung from poles inside the concentration camp. Joh shared that his mother is his hero. She continues to have profound impact on his life. She played a vital role in helping him cope with his traumatic childhood. Joh recalled as a child, waking up from countless nightmares. His mother was always there to rock him back to sleep and reminded him that even though life is difficult and harsh, bad times do not last forever, and that one should never give up hope.

Joh graduated from Edison High School in 1991 and went on to pursue and obtained his B.S. in Social Work in 1998 and M.S. in Counseling in 2004 at California State University, Fresno. Prior to his current position as an adjunct counselor/instructor at Fresno City College, Joh has previously worked in the law enforcement and foster care social work field. He has a combined experience of 14 years plus with Fresno County Probation (work program/juvenile hall), California Department of Correction and Rehabilitation, and foster care social worker.

Joh noted that he was initially an electrical engineer major. He took a summer job with Stone Soup in 1994, found his calling, switched to social work major, and has never looked back. Joh enjoys working with the communities, building leadership, connecting and reaching out to at-risk youths.

Khonesavanh Saysamongdy

Khonesavanh Saysamongdy is a 22-year-old Fresno State student who will turn 23 in May, as well as graduating in the same month. He currently attends California State University, Fresno where he will receive his B.A. degree in Media Communications and Journalism, specifically, Multimedia. He is also the Visuals Editor of the Fresno State school newspaper, the Collegian. His passion revolves around sharing stories visually whether it is through photography or video. The overall goal is to leave a legacy behind where his work will be well known throughout the world. His advice for students is to have a dream and to never be fearful of taking risks and opportunities.



Annie Bounthavalang Lansing

Annie Bounthavalang Lansing was born in Laos, raised and educated in Fresno, California. She is an alumna of California State University, Fresno, graduated in 2001 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business, with a focus in International Business. In 2004, she enlisted in the United States Army as a Military Intelligence, Counter Intelligence Agent and was sent to Afghanistan. She was the unit's Intelligence Officer (S-2) and was in charge of eight other Military Intelligence professionals whose mission was to provide threat analysis of the enemy, which included current threat assessments against our Forward Operating Base (FOB), conditions of the roads for outgoing convoys (to avoid improvised Explosion Devices), insider threats, and screenings of Afghans and non U.S. personnel who worked on the FOB. Through the many years of experience in the military, she learned that hard work, perseverance, focus and being disciplined will get you to your goals. From the military, she also gained many invaluable skills that have helped her achieve her many dreams. In addition, Annie also has a passion for business and in 2011, she bought an existing Edible Arrangements Franchise located on Herndon and Milburn in Fresno, CA. When she purchased the store, it was struggling to stay afloat. After taking over the store for less than a year, her ambition, hard work and determination turned the business around and sales increased by three folds. After achieving her dream as a business owner, her and her husband finally decided to start a family. In January 2013, she gave birth to a beautiful daughter who has forever changed her life. Today, she is a full-time mom, raising her daughter 24/7. Currently, she volunteers as a Laotian Language Teacher at Wat Lao Dhamma Sacca Temple, located here in Fresno, California. She began teaching in November of 2016. Annie is proud to contribute to community and society, and believes that her calling is to continue her service to our community and to protect what we love most, our children. It has been an honor and a blessing to have served our country and her community once again.



Athena Keobounnam



Athena is currently a junior at Fresno State and majoring in Public Health Administration. She graduated from Central High School in 2014. From 2014-2016 she attended Fresno City College. While at Fresno City College, Athena was part of the Honor's Program as well as a two-year student athlete for water polo and 1-year student athlete for swim. She also restarted the Lao Student Association (LSA) at Fresno City College in Spring 2015. In 2016, she transferred to Fresno State. She aspires to be a Nurse Administrator in the near future, and also plans to pursue a nursing degree as well. She also serves as the LSA president at Fresno State. Athena has always had a strong passion and love for the Lao community and would like to make a difference in the lives of the younger generation. She has a lot of hope and faith in the Lao people and hope that we can show our talent and skills as well as share some of our culture to the rest of the world.

Partnership Representatives

Fresno Unified School District

Leslie Loewen, Campus Culture Manager

Edith Navarro, Principal of Kings Canyon Middle School

California State University, Fresno

Martina Granados, Director of Outreach & Special Programs

Raul Moreno, Coordinator of Dream Outreach Center

Holistic Cultural and Education Wellness Center

Lysing Prathamavong, Cultural Broker

Presenters and Panelists

Lany Sivongsay-Avakian

Dr. Khonepeth Lily Liemthongsamout

Lucky Siphongsay

Diane Phakhonekham

Dr. Henry Delcore

Noy Bounkhoun

Youth Leadership Institute

Victoria Phosykeo

Lysing Prathamavong

Anusone Keochai

Joh Nouanesymanivanh

Kami Thepphavong

Sherina Souksavong

David Bouttavong

Khonesavanh Saysamongdy

Athena Keobounnam

Annie Bounthavalang-Lansing

Lao Student Association (LSA)

of Fresno State

LACF/ALEC Planning Committee and Volunteers

Lany Sivongsay-Avakian

Dr. Henry Delcore

Kami Thepphavong

Noy Bounkhoun

Victoria Phosykeo

Joh Nouanesymanivanh

Lysing Prathamavong

Anusone Keochai

Dr. Khampha Thepphavong

LSA Members of Fresno State

Special Thanks to our Sponsors and In-Kind Donors

Ameritech Business Systems for providing breakfast and snacks.

Tower Sushi and their staff for our delicious lunch.

Vonky Singharath

Founder and owner of Legacy Printing for our ALEC t-shirts.

Name: _____

Contact Info: _____

This person inspires me because ...

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