

THE ESSENTIAL CENTER



ANNAM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

2021

*Welcome to the
Essential Center*





Table of Contents

Welcome	4
Greetings	5
Annam CDC	8
Community Center	10
A Year of Chaos	12
The Essential Center	16
Volunteers	17
Food Programs	18
Celebrating Lunar New Year	19
Holiday Gifts To Share	27
Community Garden	30
Contributors	35

Pictures by Tam Bui

Written, compiled and edited by The Do Children

Published by Annam Community Development Corporation

ANNAM COMMUNITY CENTER

9530 Antoine Drive

Houston, Texas 77086

Website: annamcdc.org

Dear Reader,

2020 has proven to be a historic year; it will be interesting to see how both this year and the Center will be remembered during these uncertain times. Annam has always sought to be there for its community, be it through socioeconomic impact or natural disaster relief. Yet, COVID-19 has presented the Center with truly unprecedented obstacles. From the Board of Directors to our volunteers, this past year has challenged us all to adapt and respond to rapidly-changing circumstances so that we may continue to service those around us are in need.

Annam's main activities of the past year were focused upon confronting community issues surrounding the global pandemic. The Center had to change its operating practices in order to keep pace with the situation locally and to comply with government directives regarding public safety. Food distribution efforts increased. 3,120 low-income families have used such services at least once within the past year. And public health resolutions were enacted in order to promote hygiene.

Given the demonstrated increase in community need and Annam's already limited budget, the Center found itself upon hard economic times. Yet, with the support of its volunteers and generous donors, including the Houston Food Bank Foundation, it was able to meet these challenges with resilience. In fact, the Center is currently planning an expansion of its activities that will primarily aim to promote education within second-generation youth. It additionally intends to continue current benefits offered to senior citizens and low-income individuals.

As many in this community are well-aware, our beloved Advisory Board Member, Mr. Ralph Marek, passed away last April. On behalf of Annam's community members as well as its stakeholders, we hope to honor Mr. Marek's memory and family by celebrating all that he was able to do for our Center. To fill this vacancy, Senator John Whitmire has accepted Annam's invitation to serve on our Board. We are incredibly pleased and excited for this fantastic news. It is our hope that his leadership can help to inspire our Hispanic, African American, and Vietnamese American communities here for years to come.

We look forward to receiving continued support from local nonprofit organizations, volunteers, and our elected government members at all levels in this coming new year. This pamphlet is dedicated to all that we have been able to accomplish in this previous and most difficult year.

Thank you very much.

*Joseph Do
Executive Director*

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
18TH DISTRICT, TEXAS
COMMITTEES:

JUDICIARY
SUBCOMMITTEES:
Ranking Member
Crime, Terrorism, Homeland Security and
Investigations
Immigration and Border Security

HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEES:
Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security
Technologies

Counterterrorism and Intelligence

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE

HELSINKI COMMISSION MEMBER

VICE CHAIR
CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE
CAUCUS

SENIOR WHIP
DEMOCRATIC CAUCUS

FOUNDER AND CO-CHAIR
CONGRESSIONAL CHILDREN'S
CAUCUS

February 12, 2021

Dear Friends,

I proudly serve as an Advisory Board Member of Annam CDC and I am pleased to have the opportunity to send greetings and wishes for a Happy New Year to all of you. During these unprecedented times, please celebrate joyfully and safely this New Year. COVID-19 restrictions will not allow for the annual Tet event gatherings that we have grown accustomed to. I will miss celebrating the Tet with all of you and look forward to when we can gather again together.

This New Year brings the promise of a return of civility and humanity and I will work tirelessly with Our President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and the new presidential administration to help end this pandemic so that we can return to normalcy.

This world health pandemic has reminded us how important it is for us to help our friends and neighbors overcome the burdens they may suffer. While Annam has been a stellar example of the selflessness of our communities as service providers over the years, it has been a particular beacon of light to many during these difficult times.

Because of my personal involvement with Annam CDC for so many years, I am particularly aware of the tireless efforts of the Executive Director, Board Members and its volunteers in serving the community admirably for more than 20 years. So many of us have endured job loss, health challenges, and hunger during this past year. I am grateful that Annam CDC was there with its food bank to deliver a historic amount of food to our community.

Annam CDC's efforts will continue to inspire communities across the city and state to follow their example. Please accept my sincere congratulations and best wishes for an enjoyable and successful New Year.

Very truly yours,



Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress



WASHINGTON OFFICE:
2187 Rayburn Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
(202) 225-3816

DISTRICT OFFICE:
1919 Smith Street, Suite 1180
Houston, TX 77002
(713) 655-0050

HEIGHTS OFFICE:
420 West 19th Street
Houston, TX 77008
(713) 861-4070

FIFTH WARD OFFICE:
4300 Lyons Ave., Suite 200
Houston, TX 77020
(713) 227-7740



The Senate of The State of Texas
To all to whom these Presents shall come, this

Certificate of Recognition

Is Presented to the

Vietnamese American Community Center

in honor of the Lunar New Year celebration
Commemorating the Year of the Buffalo



In testimony in hereof, I have hereunto signed my
name and caused the Seal of the State of
Texas to be affixed at the City of Austin,
This 29th day of January 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "John Whitmire".

John Whitmire
State Senator



February 12, 2021

Greetings,

As Mayor of the City of Houston, I welcome you all to the Annam Community Development Corporation (CDC) Lunar New Year celebration. The Annam Community Development Corporation has been a pillar of our community for more than 20 years and has worked tirelessly for the enhancement of our great city and its people.

The City is proud to recognize Annam CDC's selfless work that embodies the true Houston spirit of community. Houston is proud to be a diverse city that attracts attention from people all over the world and Annam CDC's represents the spirit of diversity in all that it does.

Annam CDC's embraces our diversity by addressing the varying needs of people in our community who have the least. Through its service, families are fed and clothed, and senior citizens have a center that embraces their unique cultural experiences.

I thank Annam Community Development Center for its tireless dedication to our community and extend best wishes to who celebrate the Vietnamese New Year and Tet Holiday. May you enjoy prosperity, happiness and good health in this New Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sylvester Turner".

Sylvester Turner
Mayor



In Our Loving Memory

RALPH MAREK

April 10, 1925 - April 25, 2020

A long time friend, donor, and Board Member of The Annam Community Center



ANNAM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Board of Directors



Nguyen T. Chinh, CPA
*California Tax Board
Chairman*



Roy Douglas Malonson
*African-American News&Issues
Publisher*



David Doan Bon
*Joseph Doan Nursery
Secretary*



Tran Q. Danh
Treasurer



The Honorable John Whitmire
Texas Senate



Sister Tran K. Phuong
Sisters of Charity

Advisor



The Honorable
Sheila Jackson Lee
U.S. Congress

Administration



Joseph Do
Executive Director



Prof. Marcia Johnson
*TSU
Legal Counselor*



Lorena Solis
Public Relations



Lanh Nguyen
*Coordinator
Vietnamese American Community*



Christina Ochoa
*Coordinator
Hispanic Community*



Tuyetnga Lephuoc
*Coordinator
General Community Food Fair*

The Annam Community Center

The Annam Community Development Corporation (ACDC) is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization, established in August 15, 2000, with the purpose of enhancing and promoting healthy living conditions for disadvantaged families and senior citizens. In 2003, ACDC was granted \$1,052,000 through Harris County CDBG funds for the construction of The Vietnamese American Community Center for Seniors. In 2005, the Center was built and furnished with continuous support from Houston Endowment, Sisters of Charities of the Incarnate Word, and local businesses. As the

need for development and community service grew, the Board of Directors changed the name of the Center to Annam Community Center in 2015.

The Annam Community Center is comprised of a cafeteria which can be converted into an auditorium and is equipped with a commercial kitchen including a walk-in cooler and freezer, extensive library, fitness room, medical room, computer lab, food pantry, storage rooms dedicated for gifts-in-kind, courtyards filled with tropical fruit trees and exotic plants, and a community garden.

Under One Roof: *Currently, the Center is a hub for the Seniors, Culture, and Community Garden Clubs, Zen Tai Chi Association, Mutual Aid Fund and the local Hispanic Community of Houston. There are 15 programs/services/activities offered at the Center, including Computer Training, Field Trip for Seniors, Well-balanced Meal Services (free breakfast, lunch, and meals-on-wheels), Photography Class, Food Fair, CSFP (Commoditive Supplemental Food Program, a federal food program designed for seniors), Bingo, Go Western, Monthly Birthday Parties for seniors, Haircuts, Mammogram Screening, Community Healthcare, Referrals, and the International Festive designed to unify all people at the Center in October. The newest program, KidsZone, seeks to inspire youths by teaching them coding technology.*





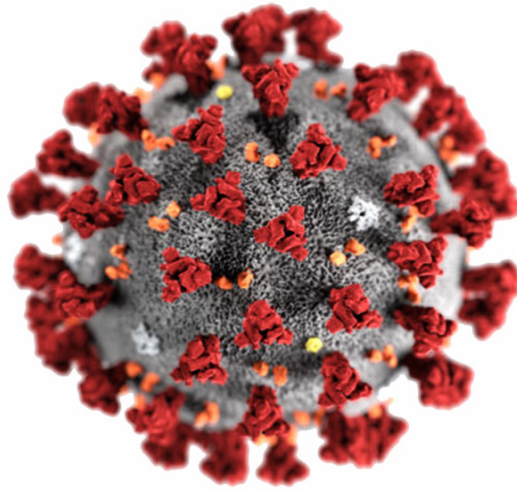
*Annual Meeting
of the Mutual Aid Fund*

*In 2020, the Center collaborates
with the Rose Network to provide
on-site mammogram screenings for
75 women in the local community.*



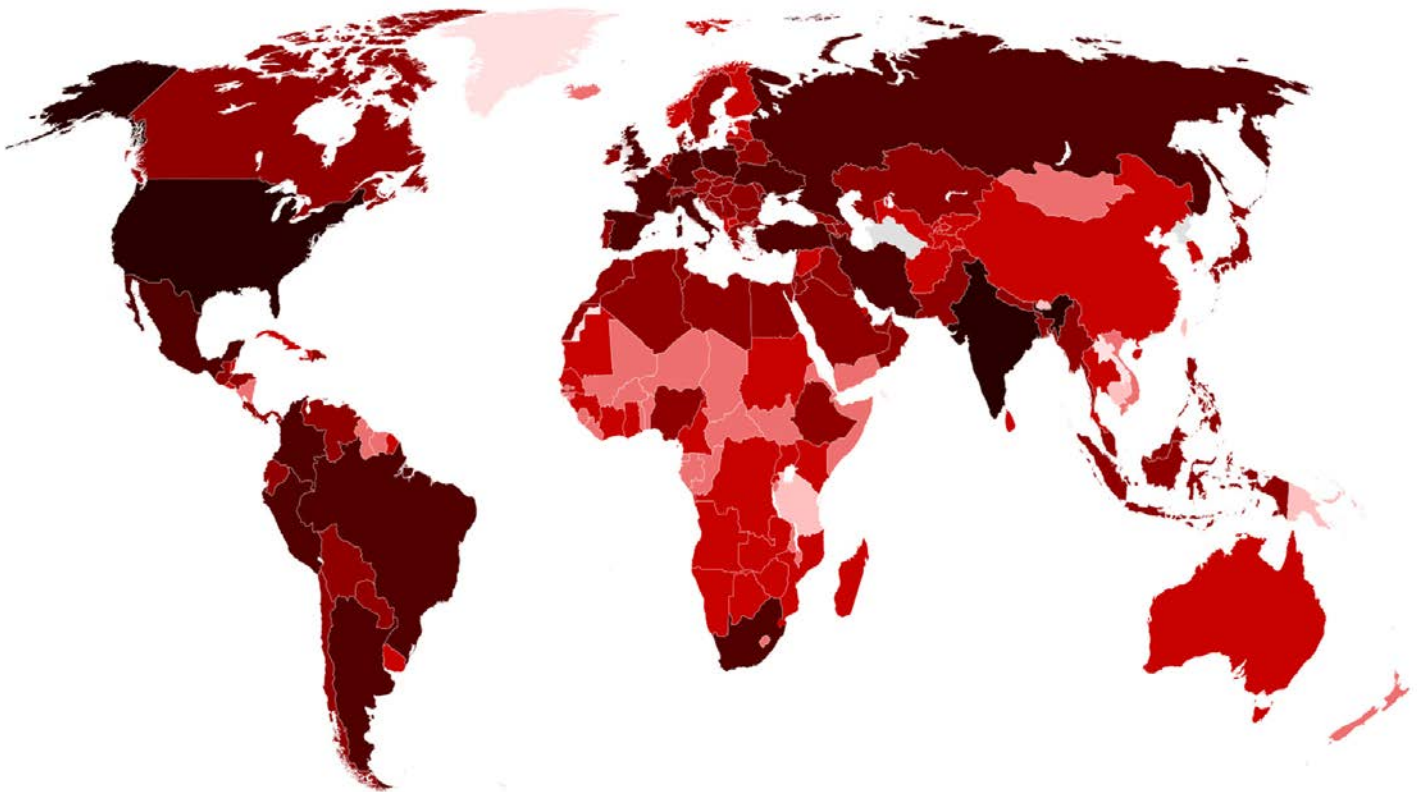
*Zen Tai Chi Association
celebrates its tenth anniversary*





A Year of Chaos: COVID 19

Towards the end of December 2019, an agent of the virus SARS-CoV-2 was discovered. What began as a quiet crisis in China eventually became an international issue with its high transmission rate and mortality rate. On March 11, 2020, The World Health Organization (WHO) issued a statement on the Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), declaring the state of a pandemic and urging governments around the world to prevent its spread.



The darker the color, the more COVID-19 cases by country



When the COVID 19 pandemic began, up to two platoons of the National Guard helped the Food Distribution Program.



During peak times, the Center distributes supplies to more than 500 families, forming long queues onto the street, daily.



During the nationwide personal protective equipment shortage, several volunteers of the Center swiftly sewed over 3,000 masks to stop the spread of COVID 19.

For the entirety of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has both affected and claimed so many lives. Tragically, more than three million people died from the virus last year. To this day, the United States has had more than twenty seven million confirmed cases and nearly five hundred thousand deaths. Economic depression, political instability, and racism also plagued the global community as its citizens also struggled to continue their old way of life. During a time of unprecedented challenge, governments, organizations, and people tried to work together to stop the spread and make a change: wearing masks, staying at home, and sharing their resources.

Like most other non-profit organizations, the Center has truly experienced many pandemic-related hardships. The demand for the Center's services exploded as tens of millions of Americans lost their jobs and businesses. All the while, the implementation of government-mandated social distancing regulations truly reduced both the efficiency and the size of the volunteer network. However, the hard-working volunteers of the Center strived to serve as many people in need as possible.

The spirit of the volunteers is very high— rain or shine.



In addition to providing food, the Center also distributes other necessities, especially to vulnerable families affected by unemployment and medical emergencies.



As stores experienced major stock outs of hand sanitizers, the Center was fortunate enough to distribute these scarce goods with families.



After assisting the Center for more than two months, the National Guards were ordering to move out of the Houston area. On their last day, the Center held a thank-you meal, and board member Mr. Doan Bon offered each soldier a beautiful plant.



The Essential Center

Initially, the Annam Community Development Corporation was established in 2000 to provide essential services to Vietnamese-American seniors in the local community. However, after more than 15 years of operation, the Center has expanded its outreach, welcoming all ethnic groups and age groups, and offering an ever wide range of quality services. Currently, the Center provides a variety of services to over 12 different ethnic groups in the Northwest Houston region.



We Are Here With The Purpose:

To bring love, peace, and services



Programs and activities include, but are not limited to:

- The provision of basic healthcare services such as blood tests, immunizations, and mammograms for the medically-underserved
- Educational summer programming such as “The Kids Zone”, which sought to teach local middle school level students about the basics of robotics
- Classes for senior citizens in photography, dance, and computer fundamentals
- A weekday lunch program

We also host a number of special events and amenities throughout the year such as holidays, cultural celebrations, and a community garden. The Center’s Community Garden Program not only offers sustenance but also quality of life to its members. This program also represents a unique opportunity to guide our youth as they learn the importance of patience and conservation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Annam Community Center persisted with its major activities, organizing food distribution sessions for more than 1,500 families three days a week.



Food Programs

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued, Annam swiftly developed an expedited schedule in order to serve more families in need. Annam is a trusted agency of the Houston Food Bank, which is the largest nationwide food distribution nonprofit in the United States. In collaboration with a network of 1,500 community partners, the Houston Food Bank provides assistance to thousands of individuals every week through its innovative programs and services.

With its numerous volunteers and assistance from the National Guard, Annam was able to maintain and even exceed its food and essential goods distribution program. Since the onset of the pandemic, the Center has distributed 2,670,000 lbs of food to its surrounding community.

The Center currently hosts the following food programs:

Nutrition Program: This program provides food to-go from Mondays to Fridays to seniors and low-income people.

Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP): This federal program is run by the Houston Food Bank, in collaboration with the Center, to

serve about 10,000 elderly people in Houston.

Food Distribution Program: This program provides community members with supplies from the Houston Food Bank and Community Garden every Tuesday and Thursday. Due to the magnitude of this program, each family can only receive goods once every two weeks.

Emergency Assistance Program: This program seeks to help families in emergency situations such as house fires, natural disaster relief, medical emergencies, and even unemployment.



Celebrating Lunar New Year

Tết (I.e. Vietnamese New Year or Lunar New Year) represents a shortened Sino-Vietnamese phrase that translates as “first-day worshipping ceremony”. It is one of the most important ceremonies both for Vietnamese nationals and those living abroad. The holiday is an opportunity for these communities to return to their roots by paying homage to their ancestors and celebrating the advent of a new year with gathered family members.



Tết is marked by several special customs. On the first day of this week-long lunar festival, Vietnamese people will visit each others' houses. The term "Xông Nhà" describes the first outsider to enter a home in the new year, a designation that is considered to be a high honor and accompanied by good fortune. As lucky money, or Li Xi, are scattered among children and the elderly, people will pop firecrackers, enjoy lion dancing, and send each other good wishes as they call out "Chúc Mừng Năm Mới". As Tết represents a period of luckiness, this holiday is an especially popular time to open up a new business.

Traditional Vietnamese dishes that are eaten during Tet include Bánh chưng (glutinous rice cake filled with meat and mung beans), Chả giò (Vietnamese sausage), Thịt kho (braised pork), Mứt (assorted dried fruits), and melon seeds.

People, especially children, are often encouraged to wear new and colorful clothing in order to complement the lively atmosphere. As white and black typically symbolize death, they are considered to be unlucky colors to don at this time of year.

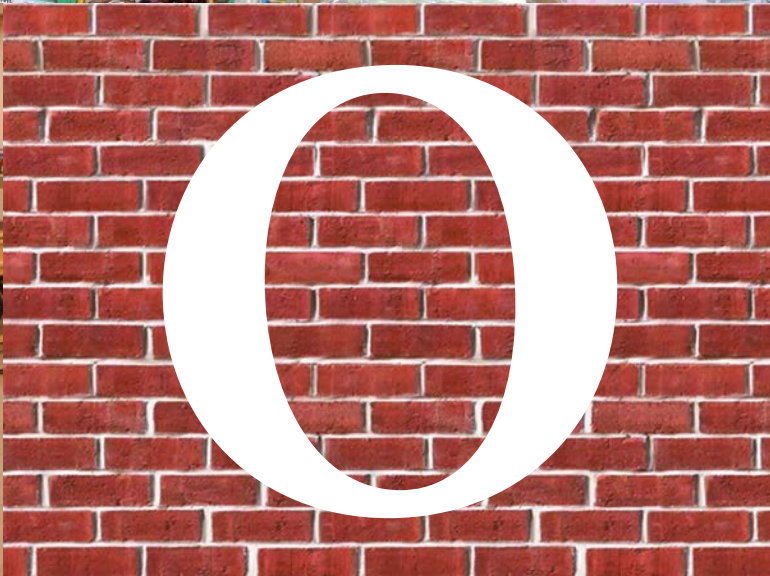
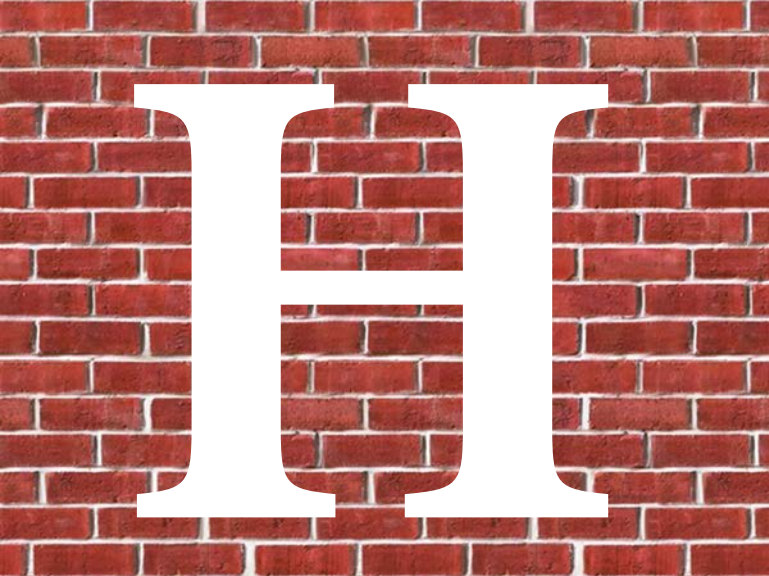
Yet, Tết is also a time of deep and intentional reflection. The first day of the New Year is usually reserved for family, with festivities being held at home. The second day is usually focused upon friends and relatives. And the third day celebrates teachers and serves as a day of religious contemplation.











Hundreds of families come to receive food in a typical day



P



E

For the Christmas of 2020, the volunteers rejoiced at a special gift from the Houston Food Bank organization: an electric pallet jack.





The Thanksgiving of 2020 was organized with social distancing measures and was graced by the Johnson family and friends.



The outdoor Christmas tree at the Center and surrounding volunteers are a symbol of hope.

Holiday Gifts To Share

The Christmas season is typically filled with beautiful and happy memories, such as the gathering of loved ones, sharing a nice dinner, and exchanging gifts under a well-decorated tree. However, with the destruction of COVID-19, the Center and its volunteers felt the need, more than ever before, to bring joy to the children and reduce the financial burden facing many families.

In collaboration with the Center, Dr. Alicia Bordon and Dr. Juan Carlos Barriga, the Houston Food Bank Foundation, Prince of Peace Parish, and Mr. James Johnson's family and friends organized the Holidays Gift To Share for the Hispanic Community on December 19, 2020. This marked the fourth year of the holiday tradition. Thanks to its donors, the Center was able to offer presents and food to nearly 500 low-income children and their families.





Mr. James Johnson, family, and friends have sponsored special gifts for families in need.



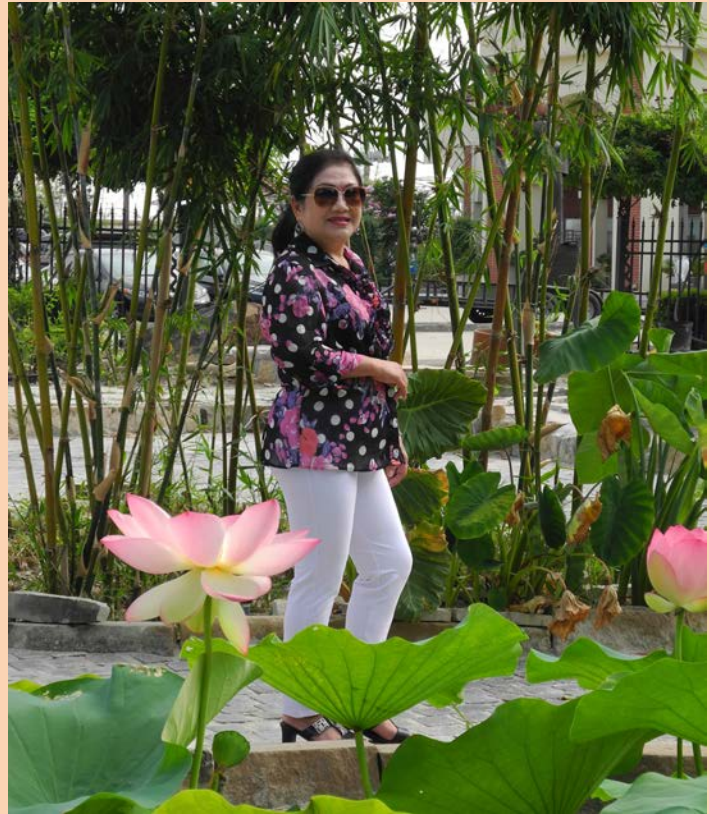
In 2020, like in years past, the Center has also taken care of a number of families that need special attention. Due to the hardships of the pandemic, the Center has doubled the number of these families from four to eight. Families and their children received unique gifts, such as bicycles, scooters, and blankets.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic has burdened so many aspects of everyday life, the Center believes in the power of hope and wishes that Christmas can serve as a reminder to express gratitude, generosity, and care. Certainly, the year 2020 was difficult, but the Center has seen the incredible impact of its volunteer community and donor network.



Community Garden

The Center believes in the wise words “we are what we eat”. The Community Garden promotes healthy lifestyles by providing affordable, accessible, and fresh produce such as herbs, fruits, and vegetables. Additionally, it also reduces stress levels, increases feelings of well-being, brings people together, and helps improve overall physical health. Essentially, the Community Garden has benefits to the body, mind, and environment. The Center welcomes everyone to participate, from planting seeds to cooking with the produce, in the Community Garden regardless of age, fitness level, or gardening experience.





The Center's greenhouse was built towards the end of 2020 in order to meet three needs: to nurture seedlings for the Community Garden, provide fruit trees and ornamental plants for the Center, and meet the requirements for an educational program starting in the summer of 2021. The greenhouse is 420 square feet with an automatic watering system, heaters, bright lights, and an exhaust fan system.







Conclusion

Although the Community Center is just one organization, it is also the sum of the many hopes and dreams of its members. During these trying times, the Center not only aspires to alleviate the effects of the economic hardship but also seeks to build a community of trust and care. The Center has witnessed tremendous amounts of struggle — from family tragedies to home foreclosures— throughout the years. However, the Center has also seen happy endings. Its community of hardworking volunteers provide more than just essential items, but also a sense of solidarity, to its network of grateful recipients.

The Vietnamese people have a motto: “*Gather the wind into a storm*” (*Góp gió thành bão*). The Center’s mission is to bring this saying to life, that is to help the local Houston community and to uplift its spirits. The Center is incredibly hopeful and thankful for the New Year.

CONTRIBUTORS:

Harris County Community Development Department

Houston Endowment

Houston Food Bank

Sisters of Charity

Affordable Health Insurance Agency (AHIA)

Amegy Bank

Guaranty Bank

Hankerman Foundation

Oriska Foundation

Marek Brothers Foundation

South Coast Technology

United Healthcare

Sam's Club

Kroger

Target

Prince of Peace Parish

Dr. Alicia Bordon

Dr. Juan Carlos Barriga

Box A Lot

Xerox

The CATCH Foundation

United Way

Allegiance Bank

WellCare

LISC

Businesses and individuals



