

Hmong Institute: 45-Year anniversary of Hmong diaspora banquet

Posted on Tuesday, Sep 28, 2021

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MADISON, WI- The Hmong Institute will commemorate the 45th year of the Hmong leaving Laos by hosting the Hmong Diaspora Banquet on **Saturday, October 2, 2021, 5:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m. at the Monona Convention Center in Madison.** The Banquet will honor Hmong parents and veterans who made great sacrifices while we reflect and celebrate our diaspora experiences. Awards will be given out to recognize individuals who made significant contributions to the Hmong refugee resettlement and integration in Wisconsin.

Awardees include:

Distinguished Humanitarian Award – Ms. Susan Levy, Former WI State Refugee Coordinator

Outstanding Leadership Award – Honorable James Doyle, former Governor
Leadership Impact Award – Ms. Roberta Gassman, Former DWD Secretary

Champion Award – Mr. Thai Vue, Former President and Director of WUCMAA (WI United Coalition of Mutual Assistance Association)

Community Building Award: Mr. Xia Vue Yang, former President of WUCMAA

The year 2020 marks the 45th year of the Hmong diaspora due to the Hmong's support for the United States during the Vietnam War. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, we were not able to hold our Hmong Diaspora Educational Series and Banquet in 2020. Peng Her, CEO of The Hmong Institute says, "It is important we

celebrate this important milestone so the Hmong community can reflect on their role fighting for the United States and honor Hmong parents and veterans who are still alive for their sacrifices. This banquet will celebrate overcoming the challenges of living in a refugee camp, coming to a new country, and working hard to succeed. The banquet also gives an opportunity for non-Hmong to learn about the Hmong history and who their Hmong neighbors are.”

Judge Kristi Yang, the first Hmong judge elected to office will give the keynote address followed by dinner/cultural performances and video reflection presentations honoring Hmong veterans and parents. Attendees will learn about the contributions the Hmong have made in Wisconsin over the past 45 years. The Diaspora banquet will also include a photo exhibit and a silent auction with many Hmong items donated by Hmong artists.

In 1975, Laos fell into communist control and the government campaigned to “wipe out” the Hmong who fought for the United States. May 14, 1975 was the beginning of the diaspora. Some Hmong were airlifted from Long Cheng while thousands marched by foot through the jungle and crossed the Mekong River into Thailand as refugees. The Hmong were resettled in the United States and other countries such as France, Australia, Canada, French Guiana, and Germany. Wisconsin is home to the 3rd largest population of Hmong Americans.