

The Hmong Institute: Hosting a Noj Tsiab (Pre-New Year) Celebration

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The Hmong Institute is hosting the Noj Tsiab (Pre-New Year) Celebration on Thursday, November 17, 2022, from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. at 4402 Femrite Drive, Madison. Noj tsiab pronounced “naw chia” is the meal held the night before the Hmong New Year celebration. Noj Tsiab and Noj Peb Caug (New Year celebration) are traditionally celebrated after the harvest season on December 30. The Noj Tsiab event tradition involves ritual activities such as a hu plig (soul calling), lwm qaib (bless the new year while wash away all negative energy with the old year), giving thanks to the ancestor’s spirit for a good harvest and for keeping the family healthy. A meal or feast is then served to the family and guests. Noj Tsiab is to reflect and give thanks for the past year while the New Year celebration is a time to celebrate and welcome the new year.

Peng Her, CEO of The Hmong Institute states, “The noj tsiab meal is an important meal in which the whole family comes together and the hu plig (soul calling) is performed to make sure everyone’s spirit come back to be with their body. This allows each person to be “whole” and complete with all their spirits as they start the New Year. Both the noj tsiab and the noj peb cuag (New Year celebration) enable the Hmong community to strengthen social ties and maintain cultural identity.”

Cultural activities at the Noj Tsiab celebration will consist of a “*hu plig*” (*soul calling*) perform by a Hmong elder, musical performances and game competition. Guests will be able to participant in the “*tuav ncuav*” activity (rice pounding to make Hmong mochi which involves turning sweet cooked into sticky rice mass (mochi) by using two large wooden hammers to pound on the cooked rice in a hollowed-out log). The sticky rice mass (mochi) is formed into pancakes, grilled, and dipped into molasses before eating. Elders will play the traditional game of “*pov pob*” ball tossing and have a fashion show to showcase the different Hmong clothes.

Hmong clothes tell what region of Laos you are from and what dialect you speak. There will be a *"tuj lub"* (top spin) competition to see who can spin their top the longest. Elders will perform a traditional Lao dance, play traditional Hmong musical instruments such as the *"ncas"* jaw harp, and sing *"kwv txhiaj,"* a traditional Hmong poetry song.

Guests will enjoy traditional Hmong food that will feed the body and the soul.