



*Central California  
Asian Pacific Women  
Since 1980*



# SCHOLARSHIP GALA



*Saturday, August 5, 2023 • 6 p.m.*

Empowering Generations  
of Asian Pacific Islander Women  
in the Central Valley since 1980

# THANK OUR SPONSORS



## Paradise Gives

Debbie Tom McCray  
McCormick Barstow LLP  
Misty Her  
Jeanette Ishi  
Tri-County Bank  
ABC30



# PROGRAM AGENDA

- 5 p.m.* Doors open  
Silent auction opens
- 5:30 p.m.* Welcome: **Amanda Aguilar**, ABC30  
Hula performance: **Hālau Hula I Ka La**  
Hmong performance: **Paj Duab Ntxoo**
- 6 p.m.* Dinner service  
Key speakers  
Board president, **Jamie Xiong-Vang**  
Keynote, **Gena Lew Gong**  
Past recipient, **Gaonoucci Belle Vang**
- 7 p.m.* Scholarship recipient recognition
- 7:45 p.m.* Silent auction closes
- 8 p.m.* Closing



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Congratulations to all of our 2023 CCAPW Scholarship Recipients! The Scholarship Committee and CCAPW were extremely impressed by the work that each of you have done, whether volunteering at a local community-based organization or starting your own project, to advancing and providing resources to the API community. All of you shared deep and moving stories about your struggles, determination, and perseverance, and it is because of those experiences that make your steadfast dedication to advancing and empowering the API community even more commendable.

As you all know, these past few years have been especially difficult years for the API community. Through all the trauma we have endured, I have seen strength and courage woven through every part of our community. In getting to know each of you through your scholarship applications, I see how each of your unrelenting work of advocacy to rally support and resources to the API community have contributed to the strength and determination of all our community members.

CCAPW is proud and humbled to be able to contribute to your continued success. Our hope is that this scholarship will enable each of you to continue your journey to empowering yourself and other API women to continue to fight and advocate for gender and social justice in the Central Valley API community.

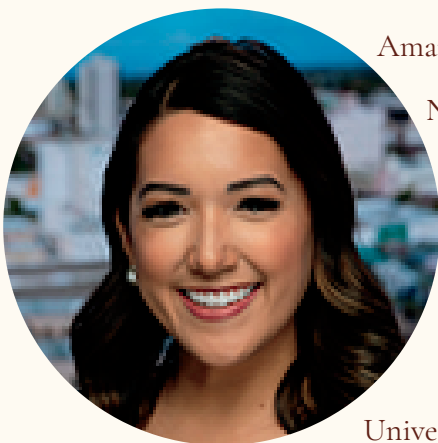
Sincerely,  
Jamie Xiong-Vang, JD  
CCAPW Board President

# SPEA

## HIGHLI

# AMANDA AGUILAR

## Master of Ceremonies



Amanda Aguilar joined the Action News team in October of 2021. She is the reporter for Action News AM Live. Prior to joining the ABC30 Action News team, Amanda was a reporter/anchor at WTOG in Savannah, GA. During her time in The Hostess City, she helped bring awareness to the anti-Asian attacks happening nationwide. The City of Savannah created its first Asian American and Pacific Islander Task Force following Amanda's coverage. She also led coverage on the death of Ahmaud Arbery, which she and her team won an Emmy for in 2021. Before Georgia, Amanda spent almost three years at KSN-TV in Wichita, KS, where she covered wildfires, tornadoes and blizzards. Amanda received her bachelor's degree from Dominican University of California in San Rafael, and her master's degree from American University in Washington, D.C. While Amanda has lived all over the country, she was raised in the Bay Area, and is so excited to be back on the west coast.

# JAMIE XIONG-VANG

## Board President and Welcome



Jamie Xiong-Vang is an attorney at the law firm of McCormick, Barstow, Sheppard, Wayte & Carruth, LLP. She grew up in California's Central Valley, graduated from UCLA with her BA in Political Science, and earned her JD from Whittier School of Law. Her current law practice focuses on Immigration Law, including reuniting families and assisting survivors of war seek and obtain asylum in the United States. She is deeply committed to the empowerment and advancement of API women in the Central Valley. In addition to her services to CCAPW, she is also the co-chair of the Fresno County Bar Association (FCBA) Pro Bono Services Section and was recognized as the 2023 FCBA Pro Bono Service Section's Pro Bono Attorney of the Year.

# MAKER

## LIGHTS

# GENA LEW GONG

## Keynote and CCAPW History

Dr. Gena Lew Gong is an instructor in Asian American Studies at Fresno City College; she has also been a lecturer in the Asian American Studies Program at Fresno State since 2012. Dr. Gong has over 30 years of experience working in the nonprofit sector and has held numerous leadership positions, including President of Central California Asian Pacific Women, Executive Director of the Asian Pacific Community Fund, Director of Planning and Development for A New Way of Life Reentry Project, and Director of Public Policy & Communications for Leadership Education for Asian Pacifics (LEAP). A committed lifelong learner, in 2015, Gena joined a hālau to learn hula alongside her (then) 5-year-old daughter and in 2019, placed third in her first hula competition. In 2020, to help combat loneliness and acquaint others with technology while sharing her love of tasting and testing new recipes, she launched an online community, GG Cooks, and led weekly cooking classes over Zoom.



# GAONOUCCI BELLE VANG

## Board Member and Past Scholarship Recipient

Gaonoucci Belle Vang (she/her/hers) finds the most meaning in her work by serving the APIDA and AANAPI communities. She strives to uplift SEAA scholars on their journey in higher education and as community members by creating a culturally competent and supportive environment for growth and equity. In her free time, Belle enjoys volunteering with community-benefit organizations (CBOs), including CHAN-BOF, Central California Asian Pacific Women (CCAPW), and Hmong Innovating Politics. She strongly believes that change begins with community and its youth and advocates to create sustainable opportunities for future generations. As a former scholarship recipient, Belle shares the way CCAPW has impacted her career and personal values and goals.



# CALLIE LIMDREN

## Undergraduate Recipient



Callie Limdren is a Chinese-Indonesian woman who will be attending Fresno State and double-majoring in Political Science and Philosophy while participating in a Pre-Law program to further prepare her for a career as a civil lawyer. On Wednesdays and Sundays, Callie volunteers at Trinity Community Church to serve for men's Bible Study and communion where she is part of a team of a dozen people who serve a three-course meal to around 250 people. On the first Sunday of every month, she helps set up and clean up the communion served by her church and serves in place of her dad who passed away two years ago in August. Since his departure, Callie and her family have found ways to manage their daily lives and grow both individually and together. Callie aspires to find a balance between her cultural identities as a Chinese-Indonesian American.

# KATIE XIONG

## Undergraduate Recipient



Katie Xiong is pursuing an undergraduate degree in English Studies at Fresno State. She is dedicated in writing and rhetoric and spends her time in the AAPI community, reflected in her role as a staff writer for Asian Pacific Review, an ethnic supplement of the Collegian. Katie is also the Vice President of the Hmong Student Association at Fresno State. Through the support and mentorship of her parents, peers, and community, Katie's dedication towards her education focuses on supporting AAPI students and giving back to those who have come before her. Her goal after undergrad is to pursue Fresno State's Masters of Counseling in Student Affairs and College Counseling program to become a culturally competent counselor for college students.

# APW LARSHIP

## EMAHLIA POWER

### Graduate Recipient

Emahlia Power grew up in Modesto, California, but her family came to the United States after fleeing the Khmer Rouge. She attended San Francisco State University and double-majored in Asian American Studies and Communications and grew a love for helping the AAPI community during this time and participated in research with Stop AAPI Hate. After graduating from SFSU, she moved to Idaho on a whim and realized that her knowledge about Asian Americans and diverse communities is more useful in Idaho than in California. Idaho, specifically Boise, has flourishing diverse populations and is learning how to navigate creating visibility. Currently, Emahlia is employed with the International Rescue Committee, working with refugees that arrive in Boise. She will be attending Boise State University in Fall 2023, pursuing her Master's in Public Administration with the hopes to keep helping minority communities in Idaho.



## ASHLEEN SODHI

### Graduate Recipient

As an Asian Indian woman, Ashleen Sodhi was raised by her elderly Nani (grandmother) while her immigrant parents worked full-time, blue-collar jobs. Ashleen's Nani always taught her to use her culture and values as a strength to reach for the stars. Her Sikh values emphasize the importance of seva ("selfless service") in order to empower the community around her. For Ashleen, healthcare became her form of seva through devoting her energy as a hospice volunteer, certified nursing assistant (CNA) in long-term rehabilitation, and a medical assistant (MA) in pain management. These experiences further motivated Ashleen to pursue her Master's in Physician Assistant studies at Keck Graduate Institute in Claremont, CA. She hopes to utilize this degree to provide equitable, unbiased care to all minority populations and become a voice for those who have been silenced. As a future physician assistant (PA), it is her primary goal to not only advocate for her patients but to also encourage them to advocate for their own health. Ashleen's desire to fight barriers to equal healthcare and empower the Asian Pacific Islander community to strive for their aspirations regardless of the roadblocks holding the community back.



# DEBBIE TOM MCCRAY

## SCHOLARSHIP

Advocate. Teacher. Community Builder. Mother. Debbie was all of these things and dedicated her life to teaching others and building communities. Her early career focused on refugees and housing in Fresno, including the first Habitat for Humanity build in Fresno. She welcomed the first wave of Hmong refugees. She helped create a group of women who would soon call themselves CCAPW. Her work with Hmong refugees in Fresno led to work in Boston, MA. The influx of refugees from Vietnam, Laos, Russia, and various parts of Africa created more division in an already polarized state, but Debbie supported them all in their paths to receive diplomas, start businesses, and create communities. Debbie brought together Asian youth from around the state to participate in the largest conference for Asian youth in the United States that turned into a coalition: Coalition for Asian Pacific American Youth (CAPAY). After 2002, she moved back to Fresno. Debbie married long-time friend, Fredrick McCray, and picked up CCAPW again. For the next 20 years, she would often exclaim, "YAY! Another successful Asian Woman! I love it!" and encouraged them to "take up space." Her life of service and support will be remembered by this award.

# SOREATH HOK

## Graduate Recipient



Soreath Hok is an award-winning journalist at KVPR who covers local government, politics and other local news. She is a 2022 National Edward R. Murrow Award winner. In the fall of 2023, she begins her first year in Fresno State's Creative Writing Program. Soreath began her journalism career in Fresno, graduating from Fresno State with a B.A. in English and a minor in Mass Communication & Journalism. Her first media job at KFSR, the campus radio station, helped to launch her career in broadcast news. She worked as a producer at two Fresno stations, KMPH FOX 26 and KSEE 24, before moving to KCRA 3 in Sacramento. After more than a decade behind-the-scenes as a producer, Soreath explored other creative outlets outside of news in advertising, marketing, and social media. A Cambodian-American, Soreath has had the opportunity to report on mental health issues affecting the Cambodian community amongst survivors of the Khmer Rouge genocide in the 1970s. At KVPR, she completed a five-part series as a part of her 2022 California Fellowship with the USC Annenberg Center for Health Journalism. She continues to explore this topic for the 2022-2023 Rosalynn Carter Fellowship for Mental Health Journalism.

# MAE TAKAHASHI

## SCHOLARSHIP

Mae Takahashi was the founding president of CCAPW. She pioneered the development of a Central California organization of Asian Pacific women by modeling sister Asian and Pacific Islander women's organizations in Los Angeles and the Bay Area. She established the Central Valley's participation in state and national APW networks. Mae initiated and oversaw the governance issues of the organization's nonprofit status and planted the seeds for the organization's successful review of over 25 years. She was an integral part of improving the status of API women in the Central Valley. Today our membership of community activists, professionals, educators, health providers, businesswomen, and Asian and Pacific Islander organizational and community leaders continues the CCAPW mission in her honor and memory.

# SHAYLA SAKKAKHANAUNE

## Undergraduate Recipient

Shayla Sakkakhanaune is the eldest daughter of a Lao and Thai family and says she inherits her sense of perseverance and love for soccer from her dad. She began playing soccer when she was four. Determined to continue her efforts, Shayla sent countless emails inviting college coaches to her high school games and was recruited by the coach at Whittier College. She is majoring in Sociology and minoring in Public Health where she inherited her sense of initiative and began a chapter at Whittier for the nonprofit Team Awareness Combating Overdose (TACO), dedicated to preventing drug overdoses on-campus by distributing Fentanyl testing strips. She hopes to later pursue a PhD program in Sociology and become a professor at a community college, serving as a mentor for students at a transitional period in their lives, and researching underrepresented Lao and Thai populations. Shayla is currently a Mellon Mays fellow investigating how different factors influence the likelihood to donate organs for Lao and Thai Americans.



# MA SCHOLA

The Mala Scholarship is named after the Buddhist mala and meditation. Mala beads are believed to provide strength to the wearers' character, such as strength, happiness, and peace. "Mala prayer necklace have special significance and are used for the purpose of reaching enlightenment." The goal of the scholarship is to support students in their intentions to learn and lead within their communities.

## LAVENDER MOUA

### Undergraduate Recipient



Growing up in Fresno, California, Lavender Moua has met people from many different backgrounds. She felt lucky to grow up surrounded by Hmong culture, from the food to the traditions to the language, and says it has shaped her into who she is today. As a first-generation, low-income student, Lavender's goals of going to college and navigating higher education were a challenge but recognizes her education would not have been possible without her parents' endless sacrifices. Lavender's parents are her biggest supporters, and they inspire her to do better every day with the possibility to dream big and go after what she wants. She will be attending Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, majoring in Mechanical Engineering with the goal to pursue a Master's degree and PhD in the future to one day work at NASA.

# MALA

## SCHOLARSHIP

Mala prayer beads which are traditionally used in prayer for spiritual healing and bring out certain qualities from the heart and clarity of purpose. The 108 beads used to create a mala are intended to help individuals "open the eyes for the truth." The Mala Scholarship is to help guide first-generation college students in their field and as emerging leaders in their community.

# KASSY VANG

## Graduate Recipient

Kassy Vang (she/her/hers) is the youngest Hmong daughter of Mae Lee and Lee Seng Vang from Fresno, California. Kassy obtained her Bachelor of Arts in Public Health and Ethnic Studies at UC Berkeley where she partook in student organizing with SEA and Hmong student-run organizations to bridge the gap between higher education and students of color. For the past two years, Kassy remained in the Bay Area as a UC Berkeley DCAC College Adviser Fellow for first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented high school students. In Fall 2023, Kassy will be attending the University of Michigan to pursue a Master of Arts in Higher Education with a concentration in Student Access and Success. As an aspiring student affairs professional, Kassy is eager to continue serving students so each student can recognize their potential to empower and uplift themselves and their communities.



# MISTY

## SCHOLAR

Misty Her was appointed Deputy Superintendent of the Fresno Unified School District. Her Superintendent role has allowed her to continue her dedication to increasing and expanding community partnerships at a deeper level. Deputy Superintendent was a preschool aide and then moved to teacher teaching grades second through fourth at Fresno Unified School District and 2 years later would become the very first Fresno Unified Instructional Superintendent with School Leadership. Misty believes in the power of education to work to impact and change the lives of children and their families. She is proud of the trajectory of the young minds that she has the privilege to interact with and the opportunity to see their full potential. It's incredibly

# KA NHIA XIONG

## Undergraduate Recipient



Ka Nhia Angelina Xiong is a Hmong American student whose dream is to become a 3rd-grade teacher at Fresno Unified School District. Growing up, she was often told to pursue a career that would support her financial needs, yet she felt her community failed to realize the value of education in the process of pursuing a successful career. Her goal of becoming a primary teacher allows growth for her community to understand the importance of education. Ka Nhia wants to teach and influence perspectives to respect the freedom of career choices. She is proud to be Hmong and believes she can create progress for the next generation.

# Y HER LARSHIP

Unified School District in March 2021. Stepping into the Deputy  
improve student progress, build and develop employee relations and  
endent Her has worked her entire career in Fresno Unified, starting as  
l through sixth. She became the first Hmong Vice Principal in Fresno  
t Hmong Woman Principal in the United States. She has also served as  
eves we each have a calling. Her calling is to do educational missionary  
She knows the decisions she makes has a direct impact in changing the  
with every day. She believes the greatest gift we can give someone is the  
y powerful to invest in and inspire HOPE in our youth.

## ANOU VANG

### Graduate Recipient

Anou Vang is a recent graduate from Fresno State where she earned her Bachelor of Science in Biology and a minor in Asian American Studies. She will be attending the University of California, Los Angeles this Fall, pursuing her MA in Asian American Studies. Through her experiences serving underserved communities as well as her own personal journey, Anou has found her passion for helping individuals learn more about mental health. She is interested in conducting research with Southeast Asian American communities to see how their upbringing, culture, and education affect their views on mental health and their likelihood to reach out during a crisis. In the future, Anou would like to return to a higher education institution to help support marginalized communities to thrive at their campus by empowering, mentoring, and cultivating new leaders. Anou would like to acknowledge and thank her parents for their unconditional love, support, and encouragement to pursue higher education.



# PARADISE

SCHOLAR

Paradise Band is a Hmong- American pop band that originally started in the United States and has been featured in many multi- media magazines in the Hmong Community and mainstreamed community. The band released their first album in 2006. As musicians the band has always been passionate about giving back. Throughout the career of the band, they have established and given out grants. The band released their newest album "Story of Life" and wanted to give back. They are proud to give CCAPW the "Paradise Gives" to end domestic violence. Through in your life, you are stronger than you think and with

## KAITLYN WHITE

Undergraduate Recipient



Kaitlyn White is Filipino American and grew up in Exeter, California. She often felt she was the only Filipino in town other than her family members, and at the age of seven years old, she became desensitized to microaggressions. Kaitlyn's mixed-race identity has molded her persona and built pride in her Filipino culture. In the fall of 2023, she will be attending the University of California Santa Barbara, majoring in Biological Sciences.

# SE BAND

## ARSHIP

ted in 1989. Since the early 1990s Paradise has toured throughout the zines and platforms. The band has played sold out concerts for the sed a total of 8 albums and toured for 15 years before taking a break giving back to the community that gave some much to support them. n out numerous scholarships to further higher education. In 2021 the ive back in support of a cause dear to their hearts. Paradise Band is ice scholarship. The band believes that no matter what you are going ith help, you will overcome any obstacles that come your way.

# LISA XIONG

## Graduate Recipient

Lisa Xiong is a first-generation, Hmong woman entering her second year in the Student Affairs and College Counseling Program at Fresno State and graduated with a Bachelor's in Criminology with an emphasis in Forensic Behavioral Science. Lisa has experience as a College of Social Science Mentor and Lead, Study Abroad Student Assistant, and an Off-Campus Student Life Student Involvement Ambassador where she provided platforms to spread API voices. Her commitment to empowering and advocating for API women comes from her experience of oppression, being told she should always mute her voice and hide. Currently, she works with Academic Success Coaching and the Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Criminology Initiative at Fresno State. Lisa is driven to serve her API communities to break barriers and create opportunities for success.



## SCHOLARSHIP FOR ASIA

Sang Pediatrics, in partnership with Central California Asia for Asian American Women in honor of Sang Pediatrics' ma women to graduate from Chulalongkorn University in Bai Sangrujiveth went on to do her pediatric training in Chica successful private practice in Fresno, California since 198 Central Valley, and continues to see patients at Sang Pediatr to help Asian American women with their studies in higher e the way Dr. Sang has done

# SHEILA YANG

Undergraduate Recipient



# PEDIATRICS

## ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN

Sang Pediatric Women, created the Sang Pediatrics Scholarship in honor of its matriarch, Dr. Orathai Sangrujiveth. She was one of the first female doctors in Bangkok, Thailand, with a degree in medicine in 1969. Dr. Sang moved to Chicago, Illinois, where she graduated in 1974, and has built a practice here since 1985. She has treated generations of families in California's Central Valley at Sang Pediatrics' Downtown Fresno location. Sang Pediatrics is honored to have Dr. Sang as a role model for education, and hope that they help others in the community to achieve their dreams for almost four decades.

# GRACE YANG

## Graduate Recipient

Grace Yang is a Hmong American student who graduated with her BA in Psychology and Minor in Asian American Studies from Fresno State. During her undergraduate, she served the community through several programs as a Camp Counselor through Camp Kesem, a Peer Mentor through Mentorship Alliance for Student Success, a Peer Ambassador of Wellness (PAW) through the PAW Program, a HelpLine Specialist through the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) HelpLine, and the Vice President of Amerasia Organization. Grace is attending Palo Alto University in Fall 2023 to pursue a PhD in Clinical Psychology with an emphasis in Diversity and Community Mental Health. She plans to later pursue an MA in Asian American Studies. Her career goal is to be a licensed clinical psychologist and professor with a focus on Asian American populations. She hopes to research barriers to treatment for Asian Americans, intergenerational trauma, and identity, and to contribute to more culturally sensitive treatment in the mental health space. She aspires to mentor other Asian American students and provide more Southeast Asian representation in higher education positions.





# SPECIAL THANKS



## *Scholarship Committee*

*Gaonoucci Belle Vang, Chair • Crystal Togo-Ansay  
Jamie Xiong-Vang, JD • Varaxy Yi, PhD*

## *Scholarship Gala Committee*

*Millie Thao, Chair • Audrey Tan • Maybo Heu  
Gaonoucci Belle Vang • Vicky Xiong-Lor, EdD*

## *Special Thanks to the Scholarship Reviewers*

*CCAPW Board • Eunji Seo • Gena Lew Gong, EdD  
Joydee Padua • Pa Nhia Xiong*

# CONNECT



### *Email*

*ccapwinfo@gmail.com*

### *Website*

*www.linktr.ee/ccapw*