

THE ESSENTIAL CENTER



ANNAM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
2022

Welcome to the Essential Center





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*Written, compiled and edited by The Do Children
Published by Annam Community Development Corporation*

*The Center's unique picture featured on the cover was taken
on the day of a Winter storm, February 15, 2021.*

ANNAM COMMUNITY CENTER
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Houston, Texas 77086
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From the desk of the Executive Director

Dear Reader,

For almost two years now, we as individuals, families, and a society have all become overwhelmed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as the world has been affected by the virus, so too has Annam Community Center. We have limited our indoor activities, taken measures to promote community hygiene, and created checkpoints to further public safety. The Center has additionally implemented significant changes to its food distribution program, which is currently hosted outdoors and two days a week currently, in order to meet the increasing needs of our community. To meet these challenges, Annam prepared infrastructure, such as a 1200 sq ft tent, in order to accommodate any environmental difficulties that may arise.

The Center has also reached out to public health officials to help advance safety within our community. At the soonest availability, Annam opened its doors and served as a hub for the administration of COVID-19 vaccines.

As the virus continues to cause mental turmoil for those around us, Annam hoped to uplift its community by opening new youth programs such as Summer Camp 21 and providing learning resources for students that have been struggling with online learning. The Center has also initiated Morning Coffee programs on Fridays in order to prepare for the reopening of normal activities and provide a safe space for much-needed congregation.

Annam Community Center understands that these changes, both globally and local, have proved difficult for all of us. But we are greatly encouraged by the way that our community and leadership have come together to support each other through these difficult times. I would especially like to thank our Board of Directors, elected officials, the Houston Food Bank, local benefactors, and faithful volunteers who have all helped to make the Center what it is today.

Sincerely yours,

*Joseph Do
Executive Director*

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
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CONGRESSIONAL CHILDREN'S
CAUCUS

February 1, 2022

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. I will miss celebrating the Tet with all of you and look forward to when we can gather again together safely.

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. As a result of the hardships caused by Winter Storm Uri, Annam established the Emergency Assistance Program to help the community find essential resources in emergency situations.

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 dealt with unprecedented issues over past year, including the Covid-19 pandemic and Winter Storm Uri. I am grateful that Annam CDC was there with its food bank to deliver a historic amount of food to those in need in 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



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Dear Friends,

During my service as Texas State Senator since 1983, I have had the chance to see the life changing work that Annam CDC has done and I am excited to formally be a part of this organization by serving on its board of directors.

As the Lunar New Year approaches us with great hopes for a renewed sense of community, I am pleased to send greetings and warm wishes for a Happy Lunar New Year to all of you. Ringing in the New Year is a cause for celebration, for spending time with friends and family, and for reflecting on how we will meet the challenges the new year will bring.

Because the coronavirus pandemic quickly picked up its pace over the holiday season, reaching levels of transmission never seen before during this pandemic, I will be unable to celebrate the Tet with all of you in person, but I look forward to when we can safely gather again together.

Annam CDC has always been there for our community and its community of volunteers has been there for us during these trying times. Annam was there in February of 2021 when our city and state suffered an unprecedented emergency during Winter Storm Uri. The Center came together and worked tirelessly to help over 150 individuals and families that were struggling with the hardships caused by the storm. Annam has also been here throughout the pandemic providing vaccinations to weaken the virus's stronghold on our way of life. And, Annam continues to offer food for those in need.

I extend my best wishes to all as you celebrate the Lunar New Year and Tet Holiday. May you enjoy prosperity, happiness and good health in this Lunar New Year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Whitmire".

John Whitmire



CITY OF HOUSTON

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

P.O. Box 1562
Houston, Texas 77251-1562

Telephone – Dial 311
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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 21 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 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, appearing to read "Sylvester Turner".

Sylvester Turner
Mayor



Council Members: Amy Peck Tarsha Jackson Abbie Kamin Carolyn Evans-Shabazz Dave Martin Tiffany D. Thomas Greg Travis Karla Cisneros
Robert Gallegos Edward Pollard Martha Castex-Tatum Mike Knox David W. Robinson Michael Kubosh Letitia Plummer Sallie Alcorn

Controller: Chris Brown

Two Cultures, One Mission

The origins of the Vietnamese American Community Center (VACC) are made obvious in its name – in its beginning, the center served 300 Vietnamese-American seniors. Marginalized by social isolation, language barriers, and inadequate community outreach, seniors within the area were largely underserved while experiencing high rates of poverty. However, the majority of the 10,000 individuals served today are of Central and South American origins. What do these two cultures have in common? They both share a common sociodemographic vulnerability that can be met with community-based care. Many of the recurring services, such as food fairs, mobile healthcare delivery, and cultural events now cater predominantly to the Hispanic community.

This demographic shift is reflective of the growing diversity that Hispanics contribute on a nationwide basis. The Annam Center serves people from Argentina, Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Peru, and Venezuela. To acknowledge this shift and better address community needs, it was essential to understand the cultural context underlying the vulnerabilities shared across thousands of families residing throughout the area.

Compared to Anglo-Americans, Hispanics tend to have more than two children, increased socioeconomic burden, higher rates of poverty, and gaps in educational opportunities. Their respective colonial histories are often met today with legislation that oppresses, separates, and denies families of an American hope and future. The parallels between the arduous journeys set upon by Vietnamese and Hispanic migrants are more obvious today than ever; considering that the mission statement of Annam Center at its beginning was to serve underprivileged families, the demographic shift of services was a natural and necessary operation. Recognizing the strengths and cultural relevance that the Hispanic community at-large can bring begins with servicing its most marginalized families.

Opening the door to a new community is not an easy task. It has required more financing, personnel, volunteer efforts, and regular communication with leaders within the community to account for cultural needs. With respect to these challenges, the Annam Center and its Board of Directors have risen to meet each of these changes with collaboration from the Hispanic community. To us, it is not a question of money or labor, but rather a humanitarian cause that unites like-minded individuals in furtherance of community-based care. An important aspect of collectivist Hispanic cultures can be found in their concept of a self-sustaining *comuna*, or community – and the value of community is what the Annam Center has always built upon.

ANNAM COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

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*Coordinator
Vietnamese American Community*



Christina Ochoa
*Coordinator
Hispanic Community*



Tuyetnga Lephuoc
Community Liason

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 Vietnamese Senior Citizens, 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 Trips 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, Morning Coffee and the International Festival designed to unify all people at the Center in October. The newest program, Summer Camp and Prosper seeks to inspire youths.*





Volunteers for the Food Distribution at the Annam Community Center

Zen Tai Chi Association



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 increasing quality of services. Currently, the Center provides a variety of services to over 16 different ethnic groups in the Northwest Houston region.

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-under-served
- Educational programming such as Summer Camp
- 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 2,500 families monthly for three days a week.



Happy Lunar New Year

The Lunar New Year Festival is a time of celebration for Vietnamese people. Yet, this important holiday is likely to be overshadowed by the COVID-19 pandemic again this year. The “Year of the Tiger” is usually denoted by virtues such as strength, determination, and sturdiness. Yet the 2022 year once more seems to be one that will be marked by anxiety and fear.

Despite these bleak outlooks, Annam Community Center hopes to capture the delight of Tết from years past – a time when families and friends could gather and enjoy each other’s company without worry. And a time when we were able to share in a delicious meal while sending well-wishes for prosperity and good health in relative peace.

There is a certain feeling of loss when we are not able to celebrate in our cherished traditions. But in these times, we are asked to make the sacrifices needed to help keep each other safe. We have all had to get creative with the ways in which we now celebrate, whether that means video calling our close ones in quarantine or sending our season’s greetings in a letter rather than a hug.

As uncertainty hangs in the air, it seems natural that attention be paid to the often-forgotten themes of Tết: Reflection and Thankfulness. Everyone has something to be grateful for, and Annam hopes to celebrate this spirit during our annual 2022 Lunar New Year Festival.









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 3,270,000 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, corporations such as Sam's Club, Kroger, and Target, and the 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.



Emergency Assistance Program

When emergencies occur- both expectedly and unexpectedly- the Center mobilizes its volunteers as well as finds resources to help the community in any way that it can. Looking at this year alone, Texas suffered from the February 2021 North American Winter Storm during the Covid crisis, which deeply affected low-income families.

Therefore, the Center has established an emergency program to help individuals and families, most commonly to offer them foodstuffs and household items. Last year, 157 families that suffered from a variety of hardships such as unemployment and natural disasters participated in the program. This was only possible with the help of the Houston Food Bank, Sam's Club, the Prince of Peace Parish, and Amazon.



Distribution items including both food and non-food



The program also served Louisiana victims of Ida storm

Mattresses from Sam's Club were given out to low-income families in need.





A field trip to Shangri La Botanical Gardens and Nature Center in Orange, Texas



Halloween party for Senior Club



Christmas celebration



Morning Coffee program

PROSPER 2021

As a doctoral candidate for occupational therapy, I felt that my calling was to create a capstone project that resonated with my own unique background. I wanted to use my experience growing up as a 2nd-generation child of Vietnamese refugees to inform my work in youth program development, along with an extensive literature review concerning aspects of child welfare. My research has amounted to prioritizing three basic psychosocial needs for the child: autonomy, relatedness, and competence. Each of these values were folded into the creation of Promoting Restorative Occupations to Support Positive Emotions and Relationships, or PROSPER.

PROSPER was designed as a pilot program to promote psychosocial health and well-being in under-resourced children – namely, children of immigrants or refugees. A cohort of children within

the community fit this criteria. Collaborating with seasoned volunteers from the Hispanic community and a speech therapy student, PROSPER came to life. It was a 6-week Saturday program where children met to engage with group reading, reading discussions and activities, and unstructured play. The primary goal of PROSPER was to facilitate their autonomy, relatedness, and competence as children learned, socialized, and played together.

The success of the program was measured by surveys and group feedback, although to me, it was marked by subjective observations: the visible satisfaction on the children's faces, beaming as they were led away from the program every week, as well as the group messages that echoed with appreciation from the parents who keenly noted their children's high spirits continuing into the weekend. The feelings of joy, community, and competence were the precious takeaways that I cared about more strongly than my capstone project.

Anna Thuy Anh Do



Summer to Remember 2021

Organizing activities during a pandemic is challenging due to health and safety concerns related to gathering. This has led to a temporary suspension of regular commerce and activities within the community. Although no individual is spared from the impact of COVID-19, children can bear significant consequences due to their vulnerable developmental processes and dependence on adults to meet basic needs.

The Annam Center has always hosted child-centered events to promote social and cognitive growth. This was no exception for the summer of 2021, which saw the development and implementation of Promoting Restorative Occupations to Support Positive Emotions (PROSPER) – a new youth-based program with unique adaptations to maintain health and safety. To minimize risk, the program divided children into small groups with access to personalized resources for crafting, playing, and socializing. Children were joined by their family members who were invited to occupy





a separate area to gather and observe. The program spanned six weeks, with each week focusing on a group reading of a book that was selected for its multicultural themes and lessons that encouraged individual and interpersonal growth.

Summer Fridays were also organized by volunteer teachers from a local elementary school. The goal was to facilitate entertaining reading sessions in both English and Spanish, catering to the primary school-aged children of Hispanic backgrounds.

A summer camp program, sponsored by Dr. Alicia Bordon and Dr. Juan Carlos Barriga, provided resources for children to experience the joy of learning, growing, and exploring together.

Outdoor areas were prepared for children to visit. This included open enclosures that house peacocks, ducks, chickens, and pigs. The Annam Center also hosted programs for children and their families to learn how to grow their own flora and vegetation; while this endeavor provides nutritional and aesthetic value, it also promotes a sense of responsibility, respect for nature, and botanical knowledge.

Acknowledging the unique natures and needs of children means that special efforts should be made to ensure that children are not deprived of opportunities for enrichment – even in the midst of a pandemic. A total of nearly 300 children participated in the free activities hosted throughout the summer.





Community Healthcare

This year, the Center collaborated with Christus Healthy Living Mobile Clinics to provide basic health services such as blood pressure testing, blood sugar monitoring, vaccines and flu shots. Most notably, the Center also administered Covid vaccines (Johnson & Johnson, Moderna, and Pfizer). At the early stage, the COVID-19 vaccines were provided by Harris Health Department.

In addition, the Center also worked with Dr. Le Quang Vinh and the mobile clinic of The Rose Foundation to provide mammograms to 54 women.



First COVID-19 vaccine administered at the Center

The Center thanks all Christus Healthcare Mobile Living Unit's nurses on the National Nurses Day

Hate Crime

Crime motivated by prejudice based on race, religion, sexual orientation or other reasons is considered a hate crime. Hate crimes are among the highest priority in the FBI's civil rights program agenda because of the devastating impact they can have on families and communities. According to the FBI, hate crimes against Asians increased about 76% in 2020 amid the pandemic. For this reason, the Center invited FBI officials to provide education on how to detect, prevent, and

properly respond to hate crimes. On this occasion, these officials further engaged with our community members by answering any questions that they had on this important topic.



Holiday Gifts To Share

This year, the Center was especially blessed with huge gifts from Dr. Alicia Bordon and Dr. Juan Carlos Barriga as well as from the Prince of Peace Parish. The Holiday Gifts To Share Program was as busy as ever.

505 children and 243 parents attended this program. For everyone's health and safety during the pandemic, the Center distributed presents to children in five different shifts. They also enjoyed taking pictures with Santa Claus and Minnie Mouse, eating hot meals, taking home big bags of candy, and listening to festive Christmas music.





Despite the global health crisis, this Christmas was full of hope and happiness. We would like to thank our partners and volunteers for making this possible.

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 receives an average of 15,000 lbs of produce from Fruitland Company, courtesy of the Houston Food Bank, every week that helps to supply the food needs of nearly 3000 families in our community. Yet, Annam Community Center sees immense value in the cultivation and consumption of locally sourced produce. The Community Garden services as a complement to Annam's Nutrition programs - including food distribution as well as the provision of meals for its senior members. This program represents not only a cost-saving measure, but also a way for its community to be able to access produce that may be unavailable in a conventional grocery store. As such, this program allows for the preparation of numerous ethnic dishes at the Center that may involve products such as collard greens, cải cúc (chrysanthemum), hoa diên diên (an edible flower), squashes, and dưa gang (melon). Dưa gang in particular originates from Vietnam and can be eaten raw or pickled. In addition, the Center also grows many kinds



Flowers bed made with plants from the Center's greenhouse

of fruit such as persimmons, pears, bananas and gấc (a fruit originating from Vietnam with very high anti-oxidant content).

The Community Garden is part of an effort by the Center to promote good nutrition for its members. Diet is one of the most important aspects of healthy living and can have far-reaching implications on almost any facet of health, from digestive issues to cancer prevention.

Gấc picking

*The greenhouse to germinate young plants for landscaping and
Community Garden for upcoming Spring season* →







Lady volunteers with flowers, cải cúc (edible chrysocome leaves), and tomatoes





A chicken coop built in the garden for the enjoyment of youth

A bountiful harvest of hoa diên điển, mustard leaves, bí (squash)





Appreciation

Thank you to everyone, including members of the Board of Directors and Advisory Board, benefactors, and volunteers, for offering their time, talent, and donations to the Annam Community Center.

There is a Vietnamese proverb: “Ăn quả nhớ kẻ trồng cây” (When eating the fruit, one should remember those who planted the tree). The Center will always appreciate its past and present supporters. We remember Mr. Ralph Marek, Mrs. Anna Babin of the United Way organization, and Sister Tran Kim Phuong, who due to her busy pastoral work, has also left her position on the Board of Directors. The Center also recognizes the dedication of Professor Marcia Johnson and Luckett Anthony Johnson, who have always taken care of our legal aspects.

The Center also gives thanks to the charitable organizations: the Houston Food Bank Organization, Sam’s Club, Fruitland, Target, Kroger, General Dollar, and the Prince of Peace Parish for providing resources for many of the Center’s food distribution programs; the Christus Healthcare Mobile Living Unit and The Rose and Dr. Le Quang Vinh for providing healthcare services at the Center; and Dr. Alicia Bordon and Dr. Juan Carlos Barriga for sponsoring programs for children at the Center; and Mr. Allen Boute, CEO of Oriska Foundation for supporting Community Garden.

The Center also recognizes its incredibly dedicated and dependable volunteers, who oversee the day-to-day operations like food distribution, cooking, gardening, cleaning, and transporting goods. They are amazing people who have given us their valuable time and expertise, working wholeheartedly for others despite the difficulties and even dangers during the pandemic.

Without such generous hearts, the Annam Center would certainly not exist. The seeds that you have planted will continue to support the community. On behalf of its recipients, the Center would like to sincerely thank and appreciate you all.

Annam Community Center

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

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