ANNUAL REPORT 2020

Vietnamese American Services
About Vietnamese American Services

VAS is a non-profit organization established in Silver Spring, MD in 2015. Most of our clients are within lower socio-economic statuses with limited English skills or new immigrants. In 2018, VAS moved to a location closer to the community.

Our core programs include English & Economic development Classes, Healthcare Services, Senior Programs, and Community Events.

There are four English Classes offered every week- Low Beginner, High Beginner, Citizenship, and Workforce development. We have 2 Full time staff, 2 Part time staff and more than 50 Active volunteers.

By partnering with government agencies, other nonprofits and small local businesses. VAS will expand its services such as offering a Youth Program, Senior Club, and Gardening Club for the community.

12621 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD, 20904  (301)-646-5852  info@vasusa.org
01  VAS accomplishments

3861  total services provided this year

1589  Covid-19 pandemic related services

65  percentage increase in total services provided

70  Seniors joined senior club

9  Students passed the citizenship examination

1215  Facebook followers

1116  New English Class students registration

664  Healthcare Services Provided

1013  Total clients served

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In 2020, VAS has seen a large increase in overall services provided this year, but especially in services outside of our usual programs.

As the needs of our community changed because of the global pandemic, VAS adjusted the types of services provided to suit these needs.

VAS provided a Variety of Pandemic Responses services including, but not limited to:

- Food Pickup and Food Delivery services
- Unemployment benefits application assistance
- Food Stamps Applications
- Rental Assistance
- Other employment benefits

In addition to the pandemic response services, our normal services needed to be adjusted to be delivery through phone communication or online systems.

Check out this Video about our new Food Distribution Service!
The pandemic brought about unexpected change for many people. During the confusing times of the pandemic, VAS adjusted our programs and services in order to fit the needs of the community. Some of the services VAS provided during this time include:

- **Face Mask Sewing Project**: Right when COVID-19 became a national emergency issue and our state started the lockdown in March, VAS called volunteers to make masks to donate to frontline workers, government offices, and senior facilities. We have made 15,000 fabric masks between March to July 2020.

- **Food Delivery and Food Pickup**: Some households no longer had a stable income, and many high-risk individuals did not feel comfortable leaving their homes, so VAS provided a food delivery and food pick-up service. Starting from April, VAS delivered 60lbs of food/month/senior household to 297 Vietnamese seniors as well as 30lbs of Vietnamese food to 258 households. A total of 1032 people have received food from VAS.

- **Unemployment applications**: Many people in our community have low-level communication in English, which made filling out the unemployment application difficult. VAS provided more than 100 unemployment benefit services to community members who lost their jobs.

- **Pandemic Response Hotline**: With the help of our registered nurse, VAS developed a COVID-19 Hotline dedicated to answering any questions about Coronavirus during the first few months of confusion during the lockdown.
In the past 5 years since VAS' establishment, VAS have always wanted to develop more projects to support Vietnamese seniors. Based on a quick survey of 66 seniors who come to pick up food weekly, 100% of them express the needs of socialization and request VAS to have a support club to help seniors to reduce stress and isolation during the pandemic. Therefore, on Oct 1, 2020 VAS established a Senior Club.

Our Senior Club is dedicated to providing weekly activities to Seniors within our Community. We provide Lunch and beverages to each member of our club. In addition to this, we invite experts from various fields to help educate our seniors on various topics, including Health, and voter registration. Seniors are also able to enjoy games, such as BINGO, and win many prizes and gifts. As of now, our club has gathered more than 70 members.

The club has its own committee, which is voted by the seniors. The committee and members create activities during weekly meetings for members like BINGO, Birthday party, Holiday Celebration. All of the activities are outdoor and social distanced.
VAS officially opened our Adult Daycare in January 2020. A Grand opening ceremony was held in order to celebrate the opening of the day care as well as encourage seniors to join.

Watch a Snippet of the Grand Opening Ceremony Here

Before the statewide lockdown in early March, we were able to provide more than 100 trial day services for Senior who were curious about our Adult day care. These trial days provided insight into the daily operations of our adult day care center including:

- Arts and Crafts
- Exercise and Fitness
- Instructed Yoga
- Vietnamese Breakfast and Lunch Meals
- Home Pick up and Drop off Service
- Reading
- BINGO
- & More Activities

Watch a Day at VAS Adult Day Care Center
Healthcare Services

Because of the pandemic, more people were interested in enrolling in healthcare for a variety of reasons.

Some individuals had increased health concerns due to the possibility of contracting COVID. Others have been laid off from their jobs, therefore they would lose the health insurance that was previously covered by their place of employment. These two factors created an increase in the need of Health Enrollment services.

During the enrollment season, there was an increase in services provided compared to the previous year. VAS was able to provide more than 500 Health Insurance Enrollment services to our community Members.

VAS also provided healthcare related support to community members by:

- Hosting a Flu Shot Vaccination Day with the Senior Club
- Consistently providing translated updates to the community related to COVID and the COVID Vaccines.

-Vietnamese Flyer shared on our Facebook page explaining the COVID-19 Vaccine distribution Phases in Maryland
VAS english classes started strong this year with the Spring semester having as much as 50 unique students. VAS expected a growth in our english class services by the end of 2020, and this goal was met through unexpected methods. The lockdown in March 2020 caused VAS to temporarily discontinue in-person english courses and begin online courses. This is the first time VAS has offered online english classes, and although the ongoing pandemic came with many stresses, it gave the opportunity for more community members to conveniently join our English class lessons at the comfort of their own homes.
This year, VAS started a job links program. The pandemic left many people unemployed, so we have created a new service in which we assist those in our community with finding opportunities for employment. This service includes searching for various jobs, as well as:

- creating and updating resumes
- translation services
- Filling out online Job applications

VAS also signed an MOU to partner with Dietz and Watson to recruit 5-8 candidates per month to work at their factory. So far, we helped provide jobs to 30 individuals.

We also assisted 15 people in finding work at Amazon's warehouses and helped many of others work as restaurants employees, babysitting jobs, and home care aides.

VAS expects that our Job Links program will continue to grow in 2021 once more people begin to feel safe seeking work after the vaccination phases begin to pass and the pandemic restrictions lift.
To compliment the Job links program, VAS has also begun a hands-on, Workforce development course. With this Basic Home Repair Course, our goal is to create job opportunities for those looking for work in home repairs as well as help save money on simple home repairs.

First, students learned the basics through weekly lectures. After passing the paper examinations, students were then taught lessons that provided hands on experience and practice with many tools and equipment.

2 Classes were formed for a total of 20 students. 12 Students so far have graduated from the basic course.

Click Here to Watch a Video about VAS’ Workforce Development Course
The hard work of the citizenship class students also paid off this year as 9 of our students were able to successfully pass their citizenship examination after regularly attending these courses.

Many other clients were able to pass the citizenship test with the support of VAS's interpretation services. VAS has helped more than 10 individuals with the examination by helping fill out the N-400 form and provide study materials for the students to self-study at home.
Throughout 2019 and 2020, VAS participated in various Census outreach efforts in order to prepare our Community for the 2020 Census count. These outreach efforts include VAS Created a page on our Website detailing census information. VAS also created Facebook ads to further reach out to the community.

The 2020 pandemic made it difficult to directly help clients with the Census process, so in order to mitigate this, VAS created a Census tutorial video in Vietnamese describing how to fill out the census form online. This tutorial reached over 7,000 Facebook users.

In addition to this video tutorial, VAS continued offering services over the phone for those who needed further assistance with the Census form. We were able to personally help more than 50 clients fill out their Census form.
Social Media & Website

The covid-19 pandemic created an environment where community members became more reliant on social media to receive updates on the coronavirus as well as government responses. VAS used this opportunity to offer Vietnamese translations of official updates from government sources on our facebook page in order to keep community members aware of important information. This helped ease the stress and worry of those in our community and it also helped the growth of our Facebook page, as many people began following our page to receive vital and accurate updates on Covid-19 response.

In 2019, VAS' facebook page had about 710 follows. Now, our page has grown to have more than 1,200 followers. Because Social media is becoming a vital source in receiving news information, VAS' growth is much more impactful as it shows the community's trust in us.

Our Website also went through major design changes. The most impactful change is the fact that the website is now translated in both English and Vietnamese. This change increased the amount of Vietnamese viewers as well as increased the page views from 3,000 in 2019 to 13,000 in 2020.
Healthcare:
Regarding healthcare for 2020, there are a lot of clients (estimating about 15 that VAS has encountered during the time of the state lockdown) who lost their insurance coverage due to being laid off by their companies. They came to us for healthcare enrollment during and after the state lockdown. One of the testimonials that stood out was from Mr. P’s family.

Mr. P is married and has two children. He was a long time superintendent at a hotel in Washington, DC. He lost his job at the beginning of April due to COVID, their insurance was also terminated a month later. He went to an "insurance broker" to buy insurance from them. He and his entire family was enrolled in the COBRA plan, with the price of about $1,000/month. They were able to afford it for the first month, then had to cancel it because it was unaffordable.

In November, they came to VAS for help. With no jobs and no source of income, VAS was able to enroll his entire family with Medicaid. His wife could not contain her appreciation for VAS. She expressed that without VAS they would have ended up with no health insurance for the children in the time of the pandemic where everything is uncertain.

*Some names and identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of individuals*
COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program, Food Stamp, and Utility
Mrs. N and her husband are over 60 years old, working as a nail technician for over 30 years with no children or savings. Her husband is currently receiving social security disability income because he had a stroke and could no longer work. With COVID-19, she was not able to bring in any income from work, they rely mostly on his income from social security and her unemployment benefit.

She came to VAS for help with Montgomery County COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program in October, because she has been behind her rent for 2 months. VAS also offered to help her with applying for the SNAP Program (Food stamp) and utility assistance.

Unfortunately, she was not able to get approval for the rental assistance program, however, she was approved for food and utility assistance.

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US Citizenship Class:
Mr. N, was recently enrolled in our in-person US citizenship class at the beginning of November. He had failed the US citizenship exam twice due to not having any help with the civic questions. Our instructor dedicated his time to working with Mr. N, outside of class time for several weeks, in making sure that he will pass his citizenship exam. He took his exam again at the end of November and passed.

Senior Club:
Many seniors have also expressed their gratitude towards the VAS Senior Club. Many are living alone, with no children or family members to take care of them. They have continuously praised and thanked VAS for establishing a social club, where they can meet each other to socialize, and eases their loneliness.

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In 2021, VAS has many new projects, programs, and services in development. Here are some projects to look forward to!

- **Gardening and Food Access program**: with the help of Montgomery County, VAS will be creating a gardening club in order to promote food access and availability to community members during the ongoing pandemic. Members will be provided supplies, tools, and skillsets in order to grow their own fresh food and produce.

- **Handyman course**: Now that VAS has successfully completed the first basic home repair course, we will provide an advanced level in 2021 in order to further develop the skills of students who have graduated in 2021.

- **Youth Program**: During the pandemic, many youth of our community have not been able to comfortably develop their social life with friends. With the expectation that the pandemic will end by the end of 2021, VAS looks forward to developing an after-school youth program in order to bring back the sense of community.

- **Senior Club**: VAS is interested in participating in more activities with the senior club in order to grow the club further. With the expectation that the pandemic should pass close to the end of 2021, We would like to begin taking seniors on more trips in order to continue building the social community and reducing isolation and loneliness amongst seniors.
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VAS Team and Partners

Special Thanks to

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