



## Non-profit Provides Vital Mental Health Services

**O**AKLAND – Susan is one in five people in the U.S. who suffers from mental illness.

A U.S. citizen, born in Hong Kong, Susan's first language is Chinese. Like many people with bipolar disorder, Susan could not manage her extreme manic and depressive behavior.

After several years of receiving only minimal case management care for her illness, Susan was referred to the Asian Community Mental Health Services, a non-profit agency in Oakland Chinatown.

This time, a bilingual psychiatrist and social worker provided Susan with medication and culturally appropriate therapy sessions.

Today, Susan is self-reliant, lives alone, holds a part-time job, and now volunteers at ACMHS to share her stories with other mentally ill Asian Pacific Islanders.

This is a true success story.

ACMHS, a 30-year-old nonprofit, serves to empower APIs to lead healthy, productive, and self-sufficient lives with multidisciplinary and multilingual mental health services.

Without ACMHS, API children, adolescents, adults and their families would remain untreated, isolated, and severely stigmatized because of their mental illness in API communities.

What most people misunderstand about mental illness is that it is not a lifetime illness and can be treatable.

Assemblywoman Wilma Chan stated it simply: “The Asian Community Mental Health Services has been a pioneer for mental health issues for the past 30 years, and their success is a testament to their dedication to excellent care and commitment to the Asian American community.”

May signifies Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and Mental Health Awareness Month. Though there is much more work to do to assure equality for all, we recognize and respect the extreme diversity of APIs and their tremendous contributions to our nation.

Based on Census 2000, APIs represent more than 1.3 million people in the Bay Area and over 23 separate and distinct ethnic subgroups. ACMHS’ experienced professional staff provides wraparound services tailored specifically to APIs in the East Bay community in 12 languages and dialects: Cambodian, Cantonese, English, Japanese, Khmuu, Korean, Laotian, Mandarin, Mien, Tagalog, Toysan, and Vietnamese.

This month, ACMHS has been recognized with two local awards:

\* Dr. Tuong-Vi Ta, a bilingual psychiatrist, was honored as an “unsung hero” by KQED- TV and Union Bank of California for her tireless community work serving immigrants and low-income families.

\* The Alameda County Mental Health Board’s Business Community Service Award was given to ACMHS for making an extraordinary difference in the lives of its mental health consumers who are limited-English-speaking and low-income.

“At ACMHS, we center our services on the consumer, keeping in mind their language, culture, and family support needs,” said Executive Director Betty Hong, MPH.

“One innovative approach to serving our immigrant communities is to use group therapy within an art milieu (e.g., needlework, block prints, etc.). The art serves as the medium for group therapy as well as a place to build self-confidence for our clients.”

For more information about the organization, contact Hong at (510) 869-6020 or visit the web site at [www.acmhs.org](http://www.acmhs.org).

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