

# Laotian American in Sonoma County

## How I am Helping the Community While Still Job Searching

Ask what needs to be done and take on the challenge!  
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Since 2011, the Wat Lao Saysettha of Santa Rosa has reached out to the local community through its Facebook page, sharing the essence of Theravada Buddhist practice and to preserve Lao language and culture. While job hunting for a librarian position, the presenter has actively put her MLIS skills to work for her community. Through her efforts, the temple began offering various programs such as computer/social media literacy classes and became more visible as a result, increasing the number of its active members and becoming more financially sustainable.

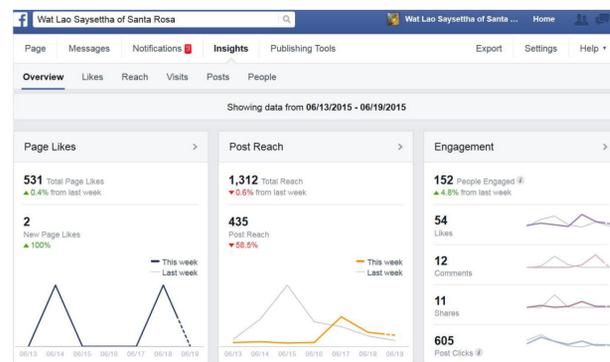
### Connecting and building bridges with the local community

By volunteering I have helped to advocate a voice and visibility of a small group of Laotian Americans community in the Sonoma County. Many Laotian Americans contributed to the workforce of major technology companies, like Agilent Technologies or Medtronic while living quietly and struggling to practice and preserve Lao Buddhist culture and language since the early 90s. Wat Lao Saysettha resided in Santa Rosa, CA since 2001 and established as a non-profit status of Lao Buddhist temple. The organization depended solely on donation of the temple's attendants. As recent immigrants they strived to practice and preserve their culture and belief. For ten years the organization struggled with financial issue, internal politics, and low attendants.



Facts: All volunteered staff, two monks, and no grants of any kind

In April 2011 I created a facebook page for the temple in order to share festival's photos. We also learned that it was very effective in communicating and announcing our events. We have since tripled the organization's annual income due to a high volume of community participation and our ability to reach out online.



### Applying what I've learned and utilizing my MLIS skills for a good cause

#### Coordinating events/programs

- Monthly Lao Food Fundraiser (April-Oct)
- Lao language & cultural literacy
- English tutorial
- Author appearance & reading
- Bone Marrow Drive

#### Using Social Media/free online resources

- Facebook page provides easy administrative functions to monitor events, analyze contents, and set schedule to post whenever we want. It also provides data of fans and best days to reach them.
- Recruiting volunteers
- Strategically share and tag
  - Share events with friends and encourage friends to share with their friends
  - Tag every picture of friends and fans
- Reaching over 500 fans/followers within four years
- Foodie Group followers
- Published major events at the "Uncorked Sonoma," a site of events calendar for the Sonoma County
- Connecting with other faith groups by being an Advisory Board Member for the Interfaith Sustainability Food Collaborative organization in the North Bay



### Empowering through social issues, cultural and language literacy!

**Financially sustaining the organization:** Through the success of careful planning of summer/autumn food & social gathering fundraisers, taking advantage of a 3 acre outdoor Sonoma environment we have boosted the temple income.

**Being part of the Sonoma County life - Bridging Lao and American cultures:** Through Facebook networking we have influenced other Lao Buddhist devotees from neighboring counties and none-Laotian to take part on food and holiday festivals. Sharing Lao food & culture with the rest of the Sonoma County (foodie fans and followers).

**Cultural and language preservation in progress & Mentoring at work:** Through Lao cultural program many first and second generations of Laotian children are reconnecting and learning to appreciate their parents' cultural identity and religion.



Little Laos on the Prairie added 3 new photos.  
 May 16 at 10:13am · Edited ·

In Santa Rosa, CA on May 30th at Wat Lao Saysettha they will be having a yard sale and fund-raiser to help Sophia, who is 11 years old, Lao & Cambodian. She was born with Hemoglobin E-Beta Thalassemia. They are asking the community to help her find a donor for a healthier & normal life! The yard sale starts at 8AM https://www.facebook.com/events/825387634218857/

