Reflections From Our Members

"What I’ve learned ever since I joined KGA is that I have the ability to become a leader in my community. We can make changes for a healthy future if we unite to fight for what’s right. I’ve been making changes by going door-to-door in the community that surrounds my high school, and collecting data on issues of health that people face in their day to day lives. During my door knockings I met an elderly woman in a wheelchair who was an army veteran. As she told her story she pointed out that it’s hard for her to go to the doctor because she barely had transportation to get there and when she could she had to pay an enormous fee for the ride there and back. After her story she asked us, "Why is it hard to try and get transportation to the places that can help you?" I was overwhelmed with sadness by her story. I realized that I can be that leader to fight for accessible healthcare to start us off on the road to a healthier future."

-Kevin Teav, Youth Organizer

"Since joining KGA I had more confidence in myself. I have been a part of Yellow Lounge, a showcase where we shared our stories through performances. At first I had doubts about performing, but I thought that if I did it would be great to reach out to people and tell them that violence is never the key to answering problems. I want to tell people that having a wellness center will help people like me when I am running into trouble and trying to find someone to help me. It was hard for me preparing for Yellow Lounge because I felt really nervous and afraid. On the day we showcased our performance I didn’t want to go on stage at all. Before I went on stage, I prayed and told myself to stay strong and don’t give up no matter what the difficulties are. Although I was nervous I got through it because I knew that I was capable of doing it. When I was on stage I felt like I was on top of the world, sharing my story with a powerful voice."

-Mary Sem, Youth Organizer

We All Deserve To Be Well
KGA fights for School-Based Wellness Centers

High School senior Sotheareath Sim was diagnosed with scoliosis when she was twelve years old. "As the scoliosis grew, it became worse," said Sim, who experiences sudden sharp pains in her lower back about once a month. She remembers an experience at school when the pain was so bad that she couldn’t stand up. "I couldn’t focus on my school work," recalled Sim, "I couldn’t get off my chair. I just sat there because it hurt."

Sim is now a member of Khmer Girls In Action and is organizing to get a Wellness Center at her school. "Having a Wellness Center in school is really beneficial because people don’t always have the money or transportation to go to hospitals or clinics," said Sim, "I couldn’t always go to the doctor because I had school and no transportation."

While there is a severe need for healthcare and support services in our community, we are also seeing a huge gap in access. 55% of youth in Long Beach are living in poverty. Students and families are not getting the care they need. When students’ physical, emotional, and mental health care needs are not addressed it makes it difficult for them to focus in the classroom and attend school.

Hearing on the State of Cambodian American Youth

Youth shared their testimonies with policymakers around the issues of education, immigration/deportation, health access, and community safety.

The event was co-sponsored with SEARAC, the California Commission on Asian & Pacific Islander American Affairs, the Asian & Pacific Islander (API) Legislative Caucus, and the White House Initiative on Asian Americans & Pacific Islanders.

Over 200 youth and community members attended, and the event was streamed live.

KGA Media Productions

Created a collective poem and video that was submitted in the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders’ “What’s your story?” video contest. Though our video was not selected, it was viewed during API Heritage month at White House events.

Created a series of 5 videos, entitled: YOUth at the C.O.R.E. Stories of 2nd Generation Cambodian American Youth in Long Beach. The videos capture stories around education, homophobia, racial profiling, and reproductive justice. All videos will be part of the Cambodian Community History and Archive Project.
We All Deserve To Be Well

Wellness Centers provide free or low-cost primary, reproductive and mental healthcare and support services so that students and their families can be well and thrive. Services are convenient and easy to get to because they are at school. Wellness centers improve health by keeping students healthy and preventing absences. A benefit of preventing absences is increased funding for our schools. California funds school districts based on student attendance. For every absence wellness centers prevent, our schools earn money. Wellness Centers allow us to address the healthcare needs of students so that they can focus on learning and achieve their full academic potential.

As part of our ongoing YOUth at the C.O.R.E. campaign, KGA has collected over 2,400 signatures in support of Wellness Centers. We created media, and held our annual Yellow Lounge event showcasing the stories of youth and why they need wellness centers. KGA also built a partnership with the Children’s Clinic, the federally qualified health clinic that will implement the centers in schools. Over the summer KGA collaborated with Families in Good Health and the Children’s Clinic to conduct a survey to assess and identify Long Beach residents’ access to health care and preventative services. After door-knocking in neighborhoods around Poly, Jordan, and Cabrillo High Schools in Long Beach, KGA collected 310 surveys. In the coming year KGA will hold community and school-wide events in preparation of introducing a resolution to the Long Beach school board regarding school-based wellness centers.

In the face of being under-resourced, KGA and youth in Long Beach continue to fight back for their wellness. A student’s health—regardless of their race, class, or gender—should not be a barrier to their academic success. We all deserve to be well.

Participatory Action Research Report
Conducted a community-initiated study in partnership with UCLA on Cambodian American youth, which was released at the Cambodian American Youth Hearing. After surveying over 500 Khmer Youth and analyzing the results, KGA released our report, Step Into Long Beach: Exposing How Cambodian American Youth Are Underresourced, Overpoliced & Fighting Back! The report was the culmination of years of work and is the first-ever report on Khmer Youth in the United States.

BHCLB: Building Healthy Communities Long Beach
Began research and education in preparation to launch an alternative school discipline campaign in the Fall. Embarked on a week-long learning and exchange tour to learn and share strategies with other BHCS sites and partners who have adopted restorative justice and/or positive behavioral interventions and support models in their local school districts.

8th Annual Yellow Lounge
KGA members and community youth showcased their stories and experiences living in Long Beach through arts and performances.

150 community members and allies came and showed their support and learned about KGA’s Wellness Center Campaign.

The board, staff and members raised $3,535!
KGA would like to thank everyone who came, supported and contributed to this event!

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8th Annual Yellow Lounge, themed “Youth at the C.O.R.E. Fighting for Wellness”