From Our Members
Like A Lotus, We Rise

KGA’s Logo The lotus flower grows in muddy water, planting its seed at the bottom of the pond. Its vine must grow, rising above the murky water until its flower can bloom in the sunlight. For KGA, the lotus flower symbolizes our community’s struggles, strength and resilience.

From Long Beach I rise
From a girl struggling through school, I rise
From 4 family members gone in 1 year, I rise
From a broken family with no dad, I rise
I need to feel loved, to keep me going
I need family & friends by my side
I need support through everything
I need people in my life to stay & never leave
I am who I am.
I am understanding & caring
I am weird and I don’t care
I am a kid at heart
I am drama free and proud
I am Cambodian
I am Davy Patt
-Davy Patt, KGA’s Young Women’s Empowerment Program

Photo: KGA youth, staff, parents and community members at our Show Youth the Love: Health & Wellness Forum on February 21, 2012

Fighting for Change
KGA Shifts School Climate

Though the weather is always sunny in California, the school climate can be a different story. The reality of the school climate in Long Beach is that 1 student is suspended every 19 minutes, half of Khmer youth experience symptoms of depression, and the majority of high schools have truancy rates above 70%. KGA is working to improve school climate at Long Beach high schools through our Youth at the CORE Wellness Center Campaign and the BHC Youth Committee’s Every Student Matters Campaign.

When students’ physical and mental health care needs are met, and they have the support to lead healthy lifestyles they attend school more, are able to focus in the classroom and succeed academically. That’s why KGA launched our Youth at the CORE campaign to bring Wellness Centers to Long Beach High Schools. Wellness Centers provide health education, preventative care, support services, and link students to resources so that they can be healthy and thrive.

In the past year KGA advanced our fight for better access to healthcare by holding delegation meetings with school principals, school board members and the Superintendent, and by throwing the event “Show Youth the Love: A Youth Health & Wellness Forum.”

As part of Building Healthy Communities Long Beach’s Youth Committee, KGA is part of the Every Student Matters (ESM) Campaign. The campaign focuses on promoting practices, policies, and programs in the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) that help students stay in school and graduate on time. The campaign seeks to work in partnership with LBUSD leaders, educators, parents, and students to promote a positive school climate and proactive alternatives to zero-tolerance discipline practices that currently remove students from the classroom and school.

The Every Student Matters Campaign launched in Long Beach in the spring, with more than 500 youth and community members in attendance. KGA was also part of the organizing effort that led to the passage of the School Climate Bill of Rights Resolution in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The resolution, which bans the use of willful defiance as a suspendable offense, is the first of its kind to pass in the nation!

 "I think school climate is important because everyone deserves to have a safe place where they’re able to learn and grow,” said KGA youth organizer Christine Sam. For Christine, a healthy school climate is, “A place where everyone can get along and where we have restorative justice.” She envisions a healthy school environment that includes a Wellness Center as “a place to get resources we need at that moment.”

We can change the climate of our schools through new policies and resources made available for teachers and students. KGA is developing leaders and organizing to create more positive and supportive learning environments.

KGA believes schools are at the heart of our communities, and by closing achievement gaps in education we bring ourselves closer to our vision of a safe, healthy and just world where all people are able to determine their own lives and communities.
Show Youth the Love: A Health & Wellness Forum
- Our forum brought out 200 youth, parents, teachers and community members, and 18 organizations to table during the health fair. Through the event we were able to educate community members on health issues impacting youth, highlight youth and parent testimony, and engage participants in identifying key services and resources they’d like to see implemented in the Wellness Centers KGA is organizing for in high schools.

Superintendent Steinhauser was in attendance and spoke on his commitment to support young people’s health and well-being in Long Beach’s school district.

Yellow Lounge
- In May 2012 KGA showcased our 8th annual barrier. As part of the Long Beach Language involved in the City government and seek their communities. Over 200 people attended and learned about our Wellness Center campaign.

In August 2013 KGA celebrated the lives, struggles, successes and resilience of our community at our 9th annual Yellow Lounge titled “Like a Lotus, We Rise,” where we unveiled a brand new logo to website!

Language Access Victory
- Many Long Beach residents want to be involved in the City government and seek access to City services and documents, but their limited pro ciency of English acts as a barrier. As part of the Long Beach Language Access Coalition we successfully fought and won the right to add Khmer, Tagalog and a number of other provisions strengthening our local language access ordinance for the City of Long Beach.

Building Healthy Communities Long Beach & Brothers, Sons, Selves
- In collaboration with the Brothers, Sons, Selves (BSS) coalition, KGA was a part of the organizing efforts that led to the passing of the School Climate Bill of Rights Resolution in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The resolution banned the use of willful deface as a suspendable offense, unprecedented in the nation.
- With the momentum of the BSS victory, KGA hopes to further the Every Student Matters campaign with Building Healthy Communities Long Beach. The campaign focuses on shifting punitive discipline policies towards more restorative and positive evidence based discipline practices locally.

2012 Elections
- KGA partnered with Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) on a local initiative called Measure N to fight for living wages for hotel workers in Long Beach. We turned out over 60 Khmer youth to do door knocking and flyer drop offs for Measure N.
- In partnership with Asian Americans Advancing Justice, KGA alumni participated in voter registration and phonebanking for Prop 30, which prevented budget cuts from California state schools.
- Both Measure N and Prop 30 passed, victories in our fight for economic & educational justice!

This summer KGA brought on two of our alumni as interns through the UCLA Labor Center’s Dream Summer program. As part of their internship the girls conducted outreach for the Affordable Care Act and participated in a state-wide project about healthcare access within the undocumented community. Amanda Em and Malin Ouk joined KGA as freshmen in high school and are now preparing for their freshman year of college! Malin will attend San Diego State University, and Amanda is attending Cypress College.

“KGA is a powerful tool. Because of KGA I was able to speak up for my community and to advocate for justice in my community. It was really exciting to be an intern this summer to understand the ‘behind-the-scenes’ and to continue fighting for a wellness center. Now that our internship has come to an end, it has been an eye-opening experience. It was really rewarding.”
- Amanda Em

“I love KGA. Because of KGA I was able to speak up for my community and to advocate for justice in my community. It was really exciting to be an intern this summer to understand the ‘behind-the-scenes’ and to continue fighting for a wellness center. Now that our internship has come to an end, it has been an eye-opening experience. It was really rewarding.”
- Malin Ouk

“Thank you to all of our donors! We apologize if you have donated and your name is not listed.

[i] Sophin Zoe Prueung-McCreery. KGA’s new Operations Manager, was born in a refugee camp on the Thailand/Cambodia border and immigrated to the United States in 1979. Her family settled as part of the tight-knit immigrant community in Santa Ana, CA. Although growing up in an underserved area provided unique challenges, she demonstrated her resourcefulness to succeed academically. She was granted the John Greenleaf Whittier Tuition scholarship from Whittier College where she graduated in 2005 with a B.A. In Comparative Cultures with minors in sociology and Spanish. Awarded the Heritage Language Fellowship, she went on to study Khmer language, arts, music and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. In 2012, she received the Asian Pacific Islander Emerging Leader Award from Senator Lou Correa and the Certificate of Recognition from Loretta Sanchez of the 47th Congressional district for her advocacy work in the Cambodian-American community.

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[i] Staff Spotlight

Sophin Zoe Prueung-McCreery. KGA’s new Operations Manager, was born in a refugee camp on the Thailand/Cambodia border and immigrated to the United States in 1979. Her family settled as part of the tight-knit immigrant community in Santa Ana, CA. Although growing up in an underserved area provided unique challenges, she demonstrated her resourcefulness to succeed academically. She was granted the John Greenleaf Whittier Tuition scholarship from Whittier College where she graduated in 2005 with a B.A. In Comparative Cultures with minors in sociology and Spanish. Awarded the Heritage Language Fellowship, she went on to study Khmer language, arts, music and Southeast Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. In 2012, she received the Asian Pacific Islander Emerging Leader Award from Senator Lou Correa and the Certificate of Recognition from Loretta Sanchez of the 47th Congressional district for her advocacy work in the Cambodian-American community.

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