

History continued...

The first five families arrived in Long Beach in 1975. Refugee families continue to arrive even now, but the largest refugee arrivals were in the late 1970s through the early 1990s. The Long Beach Hmong population reached over 8000. As Hmong families have struggled to adjust to American life, we have continued to preserve our rich cultural heritage based on an oral culture where everyone is an artist.

The Hmong Association was formally founded in 1982, obtaining non-profit status. The Hmong Association volunteers have provided support for the Hmong community in health, social services, and culture. We have produced the New Year Festival since 1976. In 1998, the Hmong Association founded the "Qeej Not Gangs" Cultural Arts Program to save our children from negative influences such as gang activities and support their positive development.

Funding support has come from many places such as the Arts Council for Long Beach, the City of Long Beach, Long Beach Parks, Recreation and Marine, Xiong Electric, Yang Electric, Mouasu Bliaya, Lao Hmong Security, the Fund for Folk Culture, Supervisor Don Knabe Arts Education Fund, and more.

We continue to need financial support to fund the free New Year Festival and the Qeej Not Gangs school. Please consider helping.

Donations may be sent to:
Hmong Association of Long Beach, Inc.
P O Box 6478
Long Beach, CA 90806

Contacts:

President:
Nhia Cha X. Yang
nhiachayang@hmongassoclba.org
562-235-1582

Vice-President
Nhia Teng Lee
562-243-8589
nlee@craneenergy.com

Qeej Not Gangs Director
Seu Yang
562-673-2323

Advisors:
Wang Xiong & Xong Lee
562-889-6063
Karen S. Harper
562-439-9856
Ksharper01@cs.com

Homeland:
562-570-1625

www.hmongassoclba.org



HMONG ASSOCIATION of LONG BEACH, INC.

*A Non-profit Refugee Mutual Assistance
Organization*

P.O. Box 6478, Long Beach, CA 90806

EIN 95-3726446 1097952 CT 47580



Mission:

The Hmong Association was formed to assist Hmong and other Laotian refugee groups with adjustment to American life, to preserve Hmong culture, to educate the general public about Hmong history and culture, and to support cooperation among the Laotian and Southeast Asian refugee groups.

www.hmongassoclba.org

Programs to Meet our Mission: The New Year Festival:

Our New Year Festival is the major cultural, spiritual, and family celebration in Hmong life. We give thanks for the good things of the year past, and bring our hopes for the good things in the New Year to come. The festival is traditionally held after the harvest. In the United States, we celebrate in November and December around the country.

Our Long Beach New Year Festival is usually the second weekend in December in the Golden Grove Section of Eldorado Park. Our free, beautiful outdoor festival opens with Hmong of all ages passing through the ceremonial gate into the New Year. Then Hmong leaders and local leaders give welcoming speeches at the center stage followed by performances by Hmong artists. Both renowned master artists and young developing artists joyfully perform for two days. We have food and craft booths, and traditional top spinning sports competitions. Hmong people dress in their colorful elaborately embroidered traditional clothing decorated with tinkling Indochine silver coins.

The village festivals in the mountains of Laos comes to life in Long Beach. Everyone is welcome to join the free celebration.

Qeej Not Gangs Cultural Arts Program

For ten years, volunteers have provided our youth with a safe, challenging, and nurturing place to learn Hmong traditional arts. The goals are inspiring creativity, building skills, developing pride in cultural heritage, creating future master artists, deepening respect for elders, and promoting discipline to succeed in life endeavors. Our program provides positive activities for our young people to keep them out of trouble, out of gangs.

Founded in 1998, the school runs from 9 AM to 3 PM at Homeland Culture Center, MacArthur Park, 1321 E. Anaheim Street., part of Long Beach Parks, Recreation and Marine.

We provide multiple classes for young people and adults taught by master artists. We offer:

- **Qeej**, the six-reed flute. Qeej music tells the history of the Hmong.
- **Drumming**
- **Dancing**
- **Mekong**, rituals and songs of marriage negotiations
- **Cheexai**, song chanting accompanying the Qeej in funerals.
- **Pan dau**, intricate appliqué and embroidery needle work
- **Hmong language literacy**

Brief Hmong History:

Ancient oral narratives and research suggest that the Hmong, “*the people*,” developed as a culture on the Siberian steppes. Hmong migrated south, arriving in China over 5000 years ago. Later migrations into Southeast Asia began in the 1800s. To maintain culture and traditions, Hmong ancestors choose to work their subsistence farms in the mountains above 3000 foot elevation.

The Hmong became refugees from Laos as a result of the Second Indochinese War known in the United States as the Vietnam War. Hmong guerilla fighters prevented Communist takeover of Laos for over thirty years. The Hmong fought to preserve their way of life and control of their mountain farm lands. In the mid 1960's, the CIA recruited the Hmong to support the United States war efforts in Southeast Asia. During the escalating fighting, the Hmong guerilla fighters disrupted the Communist supply lines on the Ho Chi Min trail, rescued many American downed pilots, and fought multiple Communist incursions in northern and central Laos.

When the United States withdrew from Southeast Asia, Laos was taken over by the Communist Pathet Lao in May of 1975. Hmong soldiers and their families were targeted for re-education in prison camps or extermination. In large and small groups, Hmong families fled to Thailand where a few were allowed to immigrate quickly and most languished in refugee camps for years.