ANNUAL REPORT
FY2019

Asian American Health Initiative
Montgomery County, Maryland
Department of Health and Human Services
Message from AAHI Leadership

On behalf of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services’ (MCDHHS) Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI), we are proud to release the Fiscal Year 2019 (FY2019) Annual Report to highlight AAHI’s advancements towards achieving health equity for Asian Americans in Montgomery County. In FY2019, AAHI continued to serve and engage Asian American communities in Montgomery County by developing and providing innovative health education and outreach programs and services.

AAHI’s mental health efforts blossomed through the year and culminated in a proclamation issued by the Montgomery County Council in May, in honor of Mental Health Awareness Month. One of AAHI’s notable achievements this past year was the release of two more photonovels as part of their mental health photonovel project. *Mental Health: Growing Together* and *Mental Health: Social Connections – A Resource for Caregivers* focused on the mental health needs of Asian American adolescents and seniors, respectively.

In FY2019, AAHI continued to collaborate with the Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC) of the United States Public Health Services Commissioned Corps and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) on the Healthy Mind Initiative. In this collaboration, AAHI aimed to address the stigma and cultural barriers Asian American community members face when seeking mental health care.

Simultaneously, AAHI expanded their Friends’ Corner sites to several senior centers throughout the County and offered an array of new topics to meet the needs of the County’s Asian American older adults. AAHI also built new and strengthened existing partnerships with community organizations, community leaders, and programs in MCDHHS.

As we look back on FY2019, we hope you will join us in celebrating our accomplishments from the past year. We appreciate the support and dedication of the AAHI Steering Committee, MCDHHS leadership, community partners, Health Promoters, and devoted volunteers who help make our work possible. AAHI is excitedly looking forward to FY2020 which will bring with it new projects, new community events, and the release of our Blueprint. The AAHI Blueprint, developed with input from the community and key stakeholders, will guide AAHI’s priorities and strategies for the next decade. We look forward to sharing that with the community in FY2020 and working alongside our partners and community members to build a healthy community.

Nguyen Nguyen, PhD  
AAHI Steering Committee Chair

Perry Chan, MS  
AAHI Program Manager
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The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) was established in Fiscal Year 2005 with support from the Montgomery County Executive, County Council, and community leaders. AAHI was the first County program to identify the health care needs of the diverse Asian American communities within Montgomery County. To accomplish its mission, AAHI utilizes a multifaceted approach that targets community members, leaders and organizations within the Asian American community, and other public health service providers.

Since its inception, AAHI has developed and implemented culturally competent health education and outreach programs to reach the most vulnerable community members. AAHI also strengthens and empowers Asian American community leaders to tackle the health needs of their communities. Further, AAHI serves as a resource to the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, and to other local health service providers, by furnishing expert advice on public health programming for Asian American communities.

The mission of AAHI is to improve the health and wellness of Asian American communities in Montgomery County by applying equity, community engagement, and data-driven approaches.
The Asian American population has seen rapid growth, both nationally and locally. According to the United States Census Bureau, between 2018 to 2060, the Asian American population will be the second fastest growing population, right after multicultural and multiracial populations. This growth will largely be due to immigration. Similarly, Asian Americans are the second fastest growing minority group in Montgomery County. The 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) states that Asian Americans account for 15.2 percent (161,254) of Montgomery County’s population and 6.5 percent of Maryland’s total population (391,328). In addition, 41.2 percent of Maryland’s Asian American population lives in Montgomery County.

The term “Asian American” is an umbrella term that consists of multiple subgroups. Among these subgroups lies a rich diversity of cultures and languages. According to the 2017 ACS, 69.8 percent of Asian Americans in Montgomery County were born outside of the United States. In addition, 29.9 percent of Montgomery County’s Asian American population has limited English proficiency - meaning they do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. Lastly, 5.8 percent of Asian Americans in Montgomery County had an income below the poverty level for the past 12 months.
Snapshots
FY2019 at a Glance

Mental Health First Aid
Photonovel Project
Empowering Community Health Organizations Project
Friends’ Corner
Community Outreach Events
Public Resources Education Program
Accomplishments
FY2019 at a Glance

ALL PROGRAM AREAS

Community Outreach Events*
- 3,896 community members assisted
- 77 outreach activities attended
- 78 internal requests completed
- 371 hours contributed to outreach
- 12 ethnic communities reached
- 11,005 pieces of literature distributed
- 5,161 educational encounters conducted
- 298 health screenings and vaccinations given
- 540 health service referrals provided
- 86% of community members agreed or strongly agreed that they were satisfied with AAHI’s service
- 100% of community partners would recommend AAHI to other organizations/events in their community

*Cumulative total from multiple projects. See page 12 for more information.

Health Education Materials
- 231 multilingual resources offered

Service Connections & Service Links
- 11 community members requested a service connection
- 46 community members requested a service link

Patient Navigator Program
- 1,881 on-site medical interpretation sessions conducted
- 1,189 phone medical interpretation sessions conducted

Connecting Communities to Services
- 45 community members assisted
- 51 small businesses reached
- 18 hours contributed to Connect

AAHI in Social Media
- 793 social media posts shared
- 176,821 Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube views reached

AAHI Cultural Media Campaign
- 29 articles published
**COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT**

**Health Promoters Program**
10 Health Promoters recruited
11 languages and dialects spoken
8 communities represented

**Public Resources Education Program**
124 community members assisted
5 workshops completed

**Mental Health First Aid***
5 trainings conducted
104 individuals attended
*FY2019 numbers include some numbers from FY2018.

**Empowering Community Health Organizations Project**
2 workshops conducted
69 individuals representing 36 organizations attended
94% of attendees rated overall workshops as 4 or higher on a scale of 1-5, where 5 is the highest

**Technical Assistance & Subject Matter Expert Requests**
109 hours contributed to technical assistance and subject matter expert requests

**Senior Health & Wellness**
296 community members assisted
4 Friends’ Corner series established
23 Friends’ Corner sessions completed

**Behavioral & Mental Health**
7,695 photonovels distributed
1,548 individuals who accessed the Mental Health Toolkit

**Hepatitis B Prevention Project**
179 community members screened
47 community members completed or in the process of completing 3-shot vaccination series

**Workgroup Participation**
61 hours contributed to workgroups
11 workgroups participated in

**Professional Presentations**
43 hours contributed to AAHI 101 presentations
18 organizations presented AAHI 101 to
Through its innovative and vigorous community engagement efforts, AAHI is able to provide health education to thousands of the Asian American community members living in Montgomery County. AAHI’s community engagement efforts are framed around the research-backed understanding that ethnic and racial minorities often seek, access, and utilize health care services less than Non-Hispanic Whites. AAHI learned in their 2008 Health Needs Assessment that several factors hinder Asian Americans in Montgomery County from accessing preventative and curative health care services, such as lack of health insurance, high cost of health care services, lack of transportation, limited English proficiency, limited health literacy, variance in cultural beliefs and attitudes about preventative care, and preference for health care providers of certain gender and/or cultures. To overcome these barriers, AAHI employs a community engagement model that is community-centered, culturally competent, and tailored to meet individual and community needs.

AAHI utilizes a multiple mediums and platforms to disseminate health information, materials, and resources; such as attending outreach events, hosting health workshops, visiting small businesses, publishing information in local news media and on social media, and providing multilingual education materials. Empowered by the knowledge they gain, AAHI hopes that community members are able to make important educated decisions about their own health.
To ensure AAHI is reaching every segment of the Asian American community, AAHI regularly participates at outreach events where Asian Americans gather, such as health fairs targeting Asian Americans, services at faith-based organizations, cultural celebrations, programs at community-based organizations, and weekend and after school programs for children. AAHI tailors its outreach to each community gathering. Prior to attending an event, AAHI meets with community leaders to assess the health needs and demographics of that unique community so they can provide community members with the most pertinent health information. Through community outreach, AAHI is able to distribute literature on various health topics, provide health education, and connect community members with local health resources.

In FY2019, AAHI's community outreach events also include health education workshops, Connecting Communities to Services project, behavioral & mental health efforts, hepatitis B prevention project, and senior health & wellness efforts.
AAHI is committed to providing high-quality tailored services to Asian American communities. In line with this commitment, AAHI asks community members and partnering organizations to provide feedback on AAHI’s services. AAHI aims to collect at least one Participant Evaluation from every outreach event to measure community members’ satisfaction with AAHI’s service. In addition to English, the Participant Evaluation is available in Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese – the languages of Montgomery County’s largest Asian subgroups. AAHI sends community leaders the Community Partner Evaluation after each outreach event so they can evaluate their experience working with AAHI. Through these evaluations, AAHI is able to make community-informed improvements to the services they provide.
When community members access local services or programs, they often face challenges such as limited income, limited English proficiency, immigrant status, lack of health insurance, and limited transportation. Further, navigating the health care system can be difficult, with different eligibility requirements and application protocols for each program. To assist individuals in overcoming these barriers, AAHI provides service links and service connections by more directly linking and connecting community members to services. AAHI assists community members by making appointments with them, reminding them about their appointments, ensuring they have needed documents and paperwork, and following up with them after their first appointments.

In FY2019, AAHI added “service links” to complement the existing service connection work already being done. Service links capture the numerous requests AAHI receives for support with researching available services. While many community members need support with connecting to services, others are able to make the call for the service, but are unaware of how to search for the resources available to them. In these situations, AAHI conducts research on the community members’ behalf and provides them with the information. In FY2019, AAHI provided service connections and service links to community members to programs such as: Medicare, Access to Behavioral Health, Aging and Disability Resource Unit, and dental services.
AAHI’s Patient Navigator Program (PNP) provides medical interpretation for community members with limited English proficiency. Limited English proficiency means the community member does not speak English as their primary language and has a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English. Communication issues between patients and health care providers can result in inaccurate diagnoses, decreased treatment adherence, and reduced patient satisfaction, ultimately leading to poorer health outcomes. Patient Navigators help community members by providing accurate interpretation while they meet with health care providers so they can make informed decisions about their health.

PNP is comprised of two components:

- **Multilingual health information and referral telephone line** provides general health information and navigates callers through the extensive network of local resources and services available to County residents.

- **Trained multilingual medical interpreters** attend medical appointments with clients, provide face-to-face interpretation, and assist in translation of medical forms. Interpretation is available in several Asian languages, including but not limited to: Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese.

### Statistics

- **6,029 calls received**
- **1,833 appointments scheduled**
- **1,189 phone medical interpretation sessions**
- **1,881 on-site medical interpretation sessions**
- **98% of clients linked to County services**
- **26% of callers reported not having insurance**
PATIENT NAVIGATOR PROGRAM

PERCENTAGE OF CALLS BY CATEGORY

- Physical Check-ups: 28%
- Dental Services: 17%
- Medical Benefits: 15%
- Cancer Screenings: 11%
- Vision Services: 8%
- Senior Centers: 8%
- Mental Health Services: 4%
- Surgery: 3%
- Housing Services: 2%
- PNP/General Information: 2%
- Legal Services: 1%
- Job Search Services: 1%

PERCENTAGE OF CALLS BY LANGUAGE

- Korean: 30%
- Vietnamese: 23%
- Hindi: 14%
- Chinese: 25%
- Urdu: 7%
- Other: 1%

PERCENTAGE OF CALLS BY LANGUAGE & INSURANCE STATUS

- Chinese: 53% Insured, 47% Uninsured
- Korean: 47% Insured, 53% Uninsured
- Vietnamese: 83% Insured, 17% Uninsured
- Hindi: 17% Insured, 83% Uninsured
- Urdu: 86% Insured, 14% Uninsured
- Other: 73% Insured, 27% Uninsured
Health education workshops enable AAHI to provide community members with in-depth health education, skills development, and information about local resources. AAHI partners with local community-based and faith-based organizations to provide health education workshops to Asian American communities. Through these partnerships, AAHI is able to provide health education workshops in the preferred Asian language of the community. Health education workshop topics include: mental health, cancer, Medicare, chronic disease self-management, naturalization, and Montgomery County resources.

In FY2019, AAHI collaborated with the Chinese Christian Herald Crusade, Asian Pacific American Legal Resource Center, Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project, and Asian-American Inter Community Service to bring health education workshops to the community. In addition, AAHI conducted several mental health workshops with Asian American Leadership Empowerment And Development (AALEAD) and the Be Well Initiative.
In FY2019, AAHI reached Asian American small business owners and employees through its Connecting Communities to Services (Connect) project. Small business owners and employees have unique time constraints that may preclude them from attending the health fairs and community celebrations AAHI usually attends. Cognizant of this, and the large number of Asian American small businesses around the County, AAHI developed Connect as a means to reach this population. When developing their outreach plans, AAHI seeks out areas with higher concentrations of Asian American small businesses within the County to conduct intensive outreach visits. Information provided included topics such as community resources, mental health, senior health, and dental services.
An individual's increased access to sources of health information can promote a healthier lifestyle, improved awareness about relevant health issues, and increased use of health services. Many Asian Americans utilize ethnic print media as a source of trusted information. Additionally, many Asian Americans are limited in English proficiency, and likely do not benefit from printed materials in English. To ensure community members, regardless of English proficiency, have access to reliable health information, AAHI publishes health education articles with credible information in local ethnic print and online news outlets. Articles are printed in Asian languages and cover various physical, social, and mental health topics that impact Asian Americans.

Bullying: Behavior That Cannot Be Tolerated

Approximately 21% of students between the ages of 12 and 18 experience bullying. However, these are reported bullying incidents; many students do not report bullying to their parents or schools, but about 70% of students have seen bullying, so there may be gap between prevalence and reported cases. Bullying is a complicated behavior that involves repeated and hostile actions against a victim and the bully. Bullying can also happen in different ways such as written messages, social media, and other online platforms, both a bully and a victim, at school, at home, and in life.
Social media’s ability to reach large groups of people makes it a powerful health communication tool. AAHI has built a robust social media presence and online community where it shares local resources, upcoming health events, and AAHI’s own quarterly e-newsletter.

This year, AAHI developed and implemented three social media campaigns to commemorate various health observances. These include campaigns for Heart Health Month in February, Mental Health Month in May, and Older Adults Month in June. AAHI also participated in several Twitter Chats this year, organized by the US Department of Health and Human Services, the American Public Health Association, and the Office of Minority Health. Twitter Chats are conversations organized around a specific topic that are open to anyone to join on Twitter. Participation in Twitter Chats help increase the health dialogue on social media and allows for social media users to interact with public health organizations online and in real time.
AAHI has developed a Resource Library that includes education materials on various health and social service topics. Some of these materials are available on the AAHI website, and others are available in print format at AAHI Resource Tables. AAHI regularly reviews the materials to ensure the information is up-to-date. They also research educational materials released by the federal government to find literature that would be beneficial to share with the Montgomery County community. AAHI provides health education materials in multiple Asian languages. The most common languages materials are provided in are English, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese - the languages of Montgomery County’s largest Asian subgroups.
Asian American faith-based and community-based organizations often serve multiple functions. They are places of congregation where community members socialize and connect. Some are places of worship and offer spiritual and religious services. Many provide cultural and language educational services for youth. The function of community-based organizations is continually growing and for many, their local faith-based or community-based organization is where they turn in times of need related to health, finances, mental health, and more. Given the evolving role of community organizations, it is critical that Asian American community leaders are prepared to respond to the needs of their congregants.

The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) provides technical assistance to community partners to empower them and ultimately build stronger, more responsive communities. AAHI implements different projects to strengthen Asian American communities’ knowledge, skills, and confidence so can effectively and independently respond to their community needs and build health programming.
AAHI Health Promoters are bilingual and bicultural community health advocates. Through their understanding of community needs and their language capabilities, Health Promoters serve as gatekeepers to their respective communities and extend AAHI’s reach into Montgomery County’s diverse Asian American population. Health Promoters also serve on AAHI’s frontlines by attending various community outreach events and providing health education in language. Their role in AAHI’s outreach is essential in AAHI’s ability to provide information to some of the County’s hardest to reach community members.
FY2019 Health Promoters

Kusuma Udagedera  Maggie Tung  Phung Nguyen  Shamim Begum  Tammy Wan
Leigh (Li-Chun) Chang  Peter Uran  Rose Anne Felipe  Sunghee Kim  Tasneem Hussain
In Fiscal Year 2019 (FY2019), AAHI continued to provide community leaders with practical information about local health services through its Public Resources Education Program (PREP)*. PREP is a skills-based workshop where community leaders learn how to access and navigate local health resources. Attendees walk away with knowledge about eligibility requirements, fees and payments, and application processes for local health and social services. Some programs presented include mental health services, dental services, and senior and disability services. Through PREP, AAHI hopes that community leaders are better positioned to support their fellow community members in accessing local services.

*In FY2019, AAHI’s Faith-Based Initiative for Resources and Services Training (FIRST) and the Public Resources Education Program (PREP) were consolidated together under PREP. 
As a part of AAHI’s mental health project, *Be the One That Makes a Difference*, AAHI coordinates **Mental Health First Aid** (MHFA) trainings for Asian American community leaders. MHFA is a nationally-certified, 8-hour, evidence-based course. The training gives participants the skills they need to reach out and provide initial help and support to an individual who may be developing a mental health problem or experiencing a crisis. After completion of the course, participants are certified for three years. AAHI works with course instructors to embed Asian American statistics, cultural values, and ways to address mental health stigma to make the content as relevant as possible to Asian American communities.

After completing the training, attendees educate other community members about mental health and report back to AAHI on their educational encounters. This enables AAHI to extend its reach of mental health education and awareness into the multiple Asian American communities.

In FY2019, AAHI partnered with various community- and faith-based organizations, and with officers from the Asian Pacific American Officers Committee of the United States Public Health Service Commissioned Corps as part of the Healthy Mind Initiative.
The Empowering Community Health Organizations (ECHO) Project provides a series of practical and professional training workshops aimed to build the capacity and sustainability of community organizations. In partnership with Montgomery County Department of Health & Human Services’ (MCDHHS) African American Health Program, Latino Health Initiative, and Community Action Agency, AAHI hosts two workshops a year. Through these workshops, AAHI equips community leaders with information and skills to develop culturally and linguistically sensitive health programs.

In the fall of 2018, AAHI continued their emergency preparedness series and hosted a workshop titled “Active Shooter Planning and Response”, focusing on encouraging community members and leaders to better plan and prepare for the possibility of an active assailant event in their community.

The spring 2019 workshop, “Tailored for Success: Getting the Job You Want”, was the first of the job readiness series focusing on guiding and providing education to immigrant and minority populations on the job seeking process. This workshop provided an overview on the online job application process for the Montgomery County Government and discussed tactics on how to showcase an individual’s education and skills in the application.
At the conclusion of each ECHO Workshop, attendees complete an evaluation to help AAHI improve the ECHO Project. The evaluations give AAHI insight about attendee satisfaction and measure any changes in knowledge and attitude.
AAHI provides various forms of technical assistance to community partners to strengthen community infrastructure. Working with communities, AAHI provides technical assistance around the planning, implementation, and evaluation of health programs. AAHI often works with the leadership of community and faith based organizations to empower them to respond to the needs of their own community members.

AAHI also provides technical assistance around community outreach best practices for Asian Americans. By working with communities and service providers, AAHI aims to strengthen the community’s ability to respond to their own needs, while at the same time enhancing the service provider’s capacity to reach and respond to Asian American communities.

AAHI is committed to educating others about the health and social service needs of Asian Americans. As a trusted partner in the local Asian community, AAHI has gained a nuanced understanding of community health needs and cultures. Oftentimes, organizations, community groups, students, and publications reach out to AAHI for one-on-one informational sessions about Asian American needs. AAHI provided insights on health needs, the latest data about Asian Americans, best practices in community outreach, and health programs implementation in Asian American communities.
Very little research has been done to understand the complex health and social service needs of the diverse Asian American population. The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) aims to build capacity related to Asian American public health programming through the development of program models and tools to demonstrate best practices. Backed by research and tested in the community, AAHI’s promising practices are various community health interventions that can be easily adopted by other programs and organizations. Through demonstration of promising practices, AAHI hopes to the knowledge, understanding, skills, and program models available to public health practitioners looking to work with Asian American communities.

Given the growing needs related to Asian American mental health and the booming Asian American older adult population in the County, AAHI has placed a special focus on these two areas in their capacity building efforts.
In FY2019, AAHI increased their collaborative efforts with other programs and organizations to continue building their senior wellness and behavioral and mental health program areas.

**Senior Health & Wellness Initiative**

Asian Americans 55 years and older make up more than a quarter of the Asian American population in Montgomery County. From 2015 to 2045, the population of County residents aged 60 years and older is expected to increase by 62 percent. Among the older adult population, Asian Americans are the largest older adult minority group in the County, comprising 15 percent of the County residents aged 60 years and over. Asian American older adults have several unique health and social needs, including limited English proficiency, poverty, and high rates of disability.

Since FY2017, AAHI launched their senior wellness initiative to address the health and social needs of Asian American older adults. AAHI’s approach includes education about health, wellness, and local resources to Asian American older adults as well as dissemination of best practices related to serving Asian American older adults to service providers.

**Behavioral & Mental Health Project**

Nationally, Asian American adults have the highest attempted suicide rate when compared with their Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black, and Hispanic counterparts. Among women aged 15-24, Asian American girls have the highest suicide mortality rates across all racial/ethnic groups. In response to the growing behavioral and mental health disparities in Asian American communities, AAHI developed the *Be the One that Makes a Difference* mental health project in FY2015.

Using a multifaceted approach, AAHI aims to raise awareness, normalize conversation, and decrease stigma around mental health, as well as increase access to culturally competent care. AAHI designed tools and resources that tackle continued stigmatization of mental health and also developed guides and models that can be adapted by others in the community.
In FY2019, AAHI partnered with multiple senior centers in Montgomery County to conduct Friends’ Corner. Friends’ Corner provides linguistically and culturally responsive educational discussions about health, wellness, and lifestyle with Asian American older adults. Friends’ Corner series are made up of four to eight sessions. AAHI invited different guest speakers to join Friends’ Corner and share medical education or information about local resources. Session topics included transportation, mental health, food security, and medication management, to name a few. Whenever requested, Friends’ Corner was provided in language. At some sites, Friends’ Corner was offered in two Asian languages to meet the needs of the diverse Asian population.

AAHI also hosts resource tables at senior centers to provide information on, and connect older community members to, County resources, most notably programs and services offered by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS).
Another strategic activity under the senior health and wellness focus was the expansion of partnerships with other organizations and programs focused on older adults. Throughout the year, AAHI increased the visibility of Asian American senior needs through participation and attendance in senior events. AAHI also collaborated with MCDHHS Aging and Disability Services’ Caregiver Support Program to provide education to Asian American caregivers and those serving older Asian Americans on their health and social needs. In addition, they shared information on the support available to both caregivers and older adults.

AAHI also participated in several workgroups to ensure the needs of Asian American older adults are taken into consideration when the County implements services and programs for older people. These efforts lay the foundation for AAHI’s greater systems improvement efforts.
The goal of AAHI’s *Be the One That Makes a Difference* project is to reduce mental health stigma in Asian American communities. Normalizing conversation around mental health is key to dismantling the stigma surrounding the topic. To do this, AAHI has developed a series of mental health photonovels starting in FY2015. In FY2019, AAHI launched their fourth and fifth photonovels.

In the fourth volume, *Mental Health: Growing Together*, the graphic photonovel follows the storyline of an Asian American teen and explores concepts such as identity development, acculturation gap, and intergenerational challenges common in Asian American families. AAHI recruited Asian American Mental Health Youth and Parent Ambassadors who guided the development of the photonovel.

The fifth photonovel targets Asian American caregivers and older adults. *Mental Health: Social Connections—A Resource for Caregivers* raises awareness about loneliness and social isolation among older adults. This photonovel encourages and supports vital living of older adults in Montgomery County by providing resources and information on transportation, senior centers, and volunteering opportunities. The photonovel promotes social connectedness for older Asian American residents so they can continue to engage with others. The photonovel targets caregivers, oftentimes the adult children of Asian American older adults, to help them better understand their role in supporting their parent or loved one in vital living. Similar to the fourth volume, Photonovel 5 was also developed with the guidance and assistance of Mental Health Ambassadors.

AAHI photonovels are distributed at outreach events and disseminated to community partners. Photonovels are commonly used to aid mental health educational encounters.
In FY2019, AAHI released their second Mental Health Toolkit, *Getting the Care You Need*. Similar to the first Mental Health Toolkit, this toolkit is intended to be used by any community leader or member interested in spreading awareness and fostering dialogue around mental health in Asian American communities. It covers topics related to mental health, such as wellness, developing a recovery plan, principles of recovery, and the different types of mental health professionals and treatment options available. In addition, each toolkit includes presentation tips and local mental health resources available in Montgomery County.

In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month and Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in May 2019, AAHI organized a mental health social media campaign highlighting the importance of mental health and wellness. Posts focused on mental health stigma among Asian Americans, mental health resources in the County, mental health concerns, and wellness tips.
Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders make up approximately five percent of the US population but account for more than 50 percent of Americans living with chronic hepatitis B. In response to this health disparity, AAHI developed the hepatitis B prevention project in 2010. This project utilizes a four-step approach that includes education, screening, vaccination, and treatment referral. Since 2010, AAHI has worked with various community partners to provide technical assistance around developing and establishing their own hepatitis B prevention projects. AAHI has successfully worked with multiple organizations that have gone on to adopt AAHI’s program model and continue to provide hepatitis B services to the community.

In FY2019, AAHI partnered with the Chinese Culture and Community Service Center, Inc. (CCACC) and the Korean Community Service Center of Greater Washington (KCSC) on hepatitis B prevention projects.
The Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI) program model is one that educates and empowers individuals to take control of their health and seek healthcare services, while at the same time, catalyzing system changes. Given the growing Asian American population and their complex health and social service needs, it is critical that the local health care system is one that is equipped and ready to respond to this population.

AAHI participates in a number of different activities, all aimed at strengthening the local health care infrastructure. A significant amount of AAHI’s efforts focuses on internal data advocacy and data collection. One of the greatest barriers to improving Asian American health status is the lack of available meaningful and disaggregated data. Disaggregated data is critical to appropriately identifying health needs due to the variance among Asian American subgroups. AAHI educates partners on the model minority myth and highlights how disaggregated data collection will help program planners better understand community needs.

AAHI also collects program data to constantly refine its understanding of community needs and barriers. Insights gained from this data provide guidance on the development of strategies aimed to improve health outcomes and health access in Asian American communities.

In addition to the emphasis on data, AAHI shares knowledge about Asian Americans and advocates internally for their needs through participation on various workgroups and through professional presentations to public health organizations. Lastly, the AAHI Steering Committee helps lead AAHI in attaining health equity for Asian Americans in Montgomery County.
Oftentimes the needs of specific Asian American subgroups are masked when program planners and practitioners evaluate health status based on metrics that aggregate all Asian subgroups. Metrics that include data across subgroups often tell a story of wealth, health, and acculturation. These figures and beliefs are then ascribed to all Asian Americans, leading to what is commonly dubbed as the model minority myth. Belief in the model minority myth leads to improper understanding of Asian American health concerns where the needs of vulnerable subgroups are buried and masked.

To improve health status and uncover the underlying root causes and social determinants that impact health status, AAHI advocates for disaggregated data collection, reporting, and analysis. Through participation in workgroups, meetings with partners, collaborative efforts, presentations, and educational materials, AAHI consistently educates others on the harm of the model minority myth and the importance of granular data collection. AAHI also provides practical suggestions which partners can implement that can lead to a more nuanced understanding of Asian American health, such as use multilingual materials and collection of country of origin data.
AAHI collects program data to gain a better understanding of Asian American health needs and barriers.

**Community Outreach Evaluations:** At outreach events, AAHI gathers evaluations from community members and leaders about their health concerns through Participant Evaluations and Community Partner Evaluations.

**Photonovel Evaluations:** AAHI administers evaluations pertaining to their photonovels at different community events. Evaluations not only assess reader satisfaction, but also confidence and comfort levels related to seeking mental health support and services.

**Community Needs Assessments:** AAHI conducts ad-hoc community needs assessments with leaders of local community-based organizations and faith-based organizations. The data collected from these assessments helps illuminate the health concerns and access barriers faced by the community.

**ECHO Workshop Evaluations:** Through evaluations administered at the Empowering Community Health Organizations Workshops, AAHI collects data on community leaders’ changes in knowledge and attitude on the workshop topics.

**Service Connection:** AAHI gathers data and evaluations when referring and connecting community members to local services, which allows AAHI to gain insights into the different barriers that impede the community from accessing services.
To enhance local infrastructure to be more responsive to the unique needs of Asian Americans, AAHI participates and engages in multiple workgroups and committees to advocate for more culturally and linguistically responsive services and programs, increase collection of disaggregated data, and promote the adoption of health equity principles.
AAHI has become a recognized expert in Asian American health and social service needs and is regularly invited to present on this topic to community partners and stakeholders.

Generally, AAHI shares information on Asian American demographics in Montgomery County, the model minority myth, health disparities among Asian Americans, barriers to accessing health care, and the importance of implementing programs and services that are culturally and linguistically responsive to their target populations. AAHI also shares data and information on specific topics and populations like mental health and senior wellness.

In addition to professional presentations, AAHI also has an AAHI 101 presentation they have developed which they share with new communities and partners. AAHI 101 presentations are data focused and community centered. They serve as a mechanism to educate prospective partners about Asian American health needs and they are an opportunity to introduce partners to AAHI’s various programs and projects.
The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) Steering Committee advocates for, advises, and assists AAHI in attaining health equity for Asian Americans in Montgomery County. The Steering Committee is comprised of eighteen professionally and ethnically diverse individuals. Using their professional expertise and community knowledge, they play a critical role in leading AAHI.

In Fiscal Year 2019 (FY2019), the Steering Committee progressed their work of improving the health of Asian American communities in Montgomery County. Through their passion and dedication, they made the following contributions in FY2019:

- Volunteered nearly 300 hours in support of AAHI’s efforts
- Advocated in meetings with key leaders and policymakers in Montgomery County
- Advised AAHI programmatic efforts throughout the year
- Served as liaisons to external community workgroups including the County Executive’s Asian American Advisory Committee, Healthy Montgomery Steering Committee, Leadership Institute for Equity and the Elimination of Disparities, Maryland Governor’s Commission on Asian American Affairs, and the Maryland Governor’s Commission on South Asian American Affairs
The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) values professional development for staff because they recognize the link between professional growth and quality programming. Through staff training and development opportunities, AAHI staff gain the knowledge and skills they need to ensure the success of AAHI’s programs. AAHI staff have also been recognized for their programs as well as their individual work.
As part of professional development, AAHI staff participate in various webinars, trainings, and conferences provided by the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) as well as other local, state, and national organizations.

Select Staff Development & Trainings

- ASHA for Women Cultural Competency Conference
- Envisioning Equity in Montgomery County Using Data Workshop
- From Coverage to Care Prevention
- Increasing Access to Care and Improving Health Center Outcomes: A Spotlight on AA&NHPIServing Health Centers
- MCDHHS- Creating a Culture of Equity Workshop
- MCDHHS- Equity, Collaboration, and Integrated Practice Training
- MCDHHS- Limited English Proficiency Course
- MCDHHS- Social Security, Mental Health First Aid
- MCDHHS- The Nuts & Bolts of Aging and Disability Services
- Montgomery County 3rd Annual Village Gathering
- The Health and Medical Dimensions of Social Isolation and Loneliness in Older Adults Workshop

30 staff development and training opportunities
148 hours contributed to development and trainings
In FY2019, AAHI received an award from the National Association of Counties (NACo) for their Youth Mental Health Initiative, which was developed in response to the growing need for mental health services for Asian American adolescents. The initiative includes two major components: community education and systems improvement. The Youth Mental Health Initiative mirrored AAHI’s overall program structure in that it focused on individual health education, alongside strategic changes to the mental health care delivery system. The community education component included development of a mental health phototnovel for adolescents, youth outreach, and Mental Health First Aid trainings. The systems improvement component included cultural competency training for behavioral health providers and technical assistance to organizations working with Asian American adolescents.
In honor of Mental Health Awareness Month and Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in May, 2019, the Montgomery County Council issued a proclamation recognizing two AAHI mental health efforts: the Healthy Mind Initiative and the development of AAHI’s fifth mental health photonovel.

The Health Mind Initiative is a collaboration between AAHI, the Asian Pacific American Officers Committee (APAOC) of the United States Public Health Service Corps (USPHS), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), which aims to increase mental health awareness and promote suicide prevention among Asian American adolescents.

AAHI’s fifth mental health photonovel, *Social Connections: A Resource for Caregivers*, is the first photonovel to address the needs of older adults. Given the growing Asian American older adult population, AAHI recognized the need for mental health educational tools for this population. The photonovel was developed with support from the AAHI Steering Committee, Mental Health Ambassadors, and community volunteers, who were all recognized by the Montgomery County Council for their efforts in producing the newest mental health photonovel.
At AAHI, the best metric of our success is the feedback we receive from our community members and partners. Here are a few words from some of the community members we met at outreach and community partners who we worked with!

"It was really nice conversation with the volunteers. Keep up with this health fair. You guys are doing really excellent job."

"I had a wonderful time to work with you and other friends last week. You really came through, proving with professional value from this works. My mom and I are really appreciate everything you did and we are look forward to our future contributions."

"I just want to give you update on Mr. Joe. He will be seeing the doctor on Monday. The paperwork was approved last week. Your guys helped pushing it through. Mr. Joe was overwhelming with gratitude...Hopefully the cancer is not growing inside his body again. Again, I really appreciate all you have done to help this guy. Both of you have helped saving one life here in our community."
In Fiscal Year 2019, the Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI's) budget was $1,008,123. Expenses for the fiscal year are divided into two categories:

**In-house programs and administrative**
This includes program staff, special projects, office equipment, supplies, printing, and mileage. This category accounts for 72.2% of AAHI’s core budget expenditures.

**Contract with Primary Care Coalition**
This category accounts for 27.8% of AAHI’s core budget expenditures.
HEALTH PROMOTERS: The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) trains Health Promoters on various health education topics as well as County and AAHI services and resources. Health Promoters, in turn, inform and connect their communities to these resources. For more information about the program, or to apply, visit the AAHI website to download an application form.

INTERNS: AAHI seeks interns during the summer, fall, and spring semesters who are interested in gaining hands-on experience in public and community health. Intern projects are dynamic and multifaceted, providing exposure to public health research, educational material development, and outreach program implementation. If you are a current student or recent graduate interested in a meaningful internship at AAHI, visit the AAHI website for details and to download an application form.
COMMUNITY PARTNERS: AAHI has long-standing partnerships with many community- and faith-based organizations. Working with these organizations, AAHI plans health events and participates in cultural festivities. If you are interested in partnering with AAHI or would like AAHI to visit your community, please contact AAHI staff.

STEERING COMMITTEE: The AAHI Steering Committee is comprised of professionally and ethnically diverse stakeholders from the local community who advocate for, advise, and assist AAHI with its efforts to attain health equity in Montgomery County. Through their wealth of professional expertise and community knowledge, they support AAHI’s growth towards fulfilling its mission and goals. If you would like to join the AAHI Steering Committee, please download an application form from the AAHI website.
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