ANNUAL REPORT
FY 2020

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 2020 (FY2020) Annual Report to highlight AAHI’s advancements towards achieving health equity for Asian Americans in Montgomery County. FY2020 was a year unlike any other in AAHI history.

We celebrated moments of tremendous achievement, most notably the launch of the Blueprint for the Asian American Health Initiative, 2020-2030, which is AAHI’s newest strategic document and will serve as a guide for program development over the next decade. We also saw the maturation and growth of numerous projects and programs. Our mental health program was thriving and AAHI just debuted our sixth mental health photonovel on caregiver stress and burden.

We also faced adversity in the form of a global pandemic. Along with the entire world, the nation, and our county, AAHI had to rapidly respond to the new, emerging needs brought on by COVID-19. Programs and projects shifted and we had to quickly alter old models of work to meet the sudden demands our community faced.

AAHI led the charge to reach out to Asian American communities and quickly developed programs to disseminate important health and social service updates to communities. One of the most notable projects was the small business outreach effort directed towards Asian American small businesses to inform them of local relief resources. AAHI also developed a series of multilingual educational videos on COVID-19 and mental health.

At the close of FY2020, the County is still battling COVID-19, and we know that FY2021 will also look different from previous years as we continue to respond to the ever-changing needs brought on by COVID-19.

Looking back at FY2020, we are extremely grateful to the Steering Committee members, MCDHHS leadership, community partners, volunteers, Health Promoters, and staff who supported AAHI’s work. The celebrations and challenges faced in FY2020 captured now more than ever, that it truly takes all of us to build a healthy community.

Nguyen Nguyen, PhD
AAHI Steering Committee Chair

Perry Chan, MS
AAHI Program Manager
The FY2020 Annual Report is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Sam Mukherjee and Mr. Thomas Tran, both of whom were instrumental in guiding AAHI’s work as long-time members of the Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) Steering Committee.

Dr. Mukherjee was one of the founding members of AAHI and a former AAHI Steering Committee Chair. As co-founder, board member, and Executive Director of the Asian-American Inter Community Service (AICS), Dr. Mukherjee was an inspirational leader and tireless advocate in the effort to promote equity, eliminate health disparities, and provide healthcare to the most vulnerable and underserved in our communities. Recognized for his contributions by many community organizations and government entities, he was an appointed member of the Standing Advisory Committee of the Maryland Health Benefit Exchange and served as a member of Montgomery County Asian American Advisory Group. Over the course of his professional career, he made notable contributions in the fields of science, entrepreneurship, and finance that led him to live and work in several countries and experience a wide range of cultures. Coupled with his proficiency in several languages, he gained a deeper understanding and connection to many people of diverse backgrounds. His commitment to serving was inspiring and made him a trusted community leader, mentor, and friend to many.

Mr. Tran was a founding member and former Executive Director of the Association of Vietnamese Americans (AVA), formerly known as the Maryland Vietnamese Mutual Association. He also served as a member of the Governor's Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs and the Montgomery County Asian Pacific American Advisory Group. Mr. Tran spoke many languages including Vietnamese, English, French, Cantonese, and others. For over 30 years, he helped thousands of refugees and immigrants of diverse backgrounds to secure food, housing, healthcare, and employment as well help countless families with the family-based immigration petition and U.S. naturalization process. He led AVA staff and volunteers in organizing annual community events such as the Maryland Lunar New Year “Tet” Festival and Academic Awards Picnic for Vietnamese American students. Those who enjoyed working with Mr. Tran remember his wonderful sense of humor, his kind and gentle spirit, and his attentiveness to the needs of individuals and families.

Both Dr. Mukherjee and Mr. Tran were pillars of the Asian American community and will be greatly missed by all. It was a true honor to serve alongside them and their inspiring legacy of commitment, service, and advocacy will continue to live on.
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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 in Montgomery County.

Four core priorities guide AAHI’s work:
1. Community Engagement: Conduct outreach to engage
2. Community Empowerment: Provide technical assistance to empower
3. Capacity Building: Create models and tools to demonstrate promising practices
4. Change Catalyst: Influence changes to improve systems

AAHI works closely with community members, leaders, and organizations as well as public health providers to provide health programming tailored to the needs of various 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 is rapidly growing, 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. These subgroups contain 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.
## Accomplishments

FY2020 at a Glance

### ALL PROGRAM AREAS

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<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<tr>
<td>Outreach activities attended</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community members assisted</td>
<td>3,730</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pieces of literature distributed</td>
<td>9,789</td>
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<tr>
<td>Educational encounters conducted</td>
<td>4,642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health service referrals provided</td>
<td>378</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

#### Community Outreach Events*
- 3,730 community members assisted
- 76 outreach activities attended
- 60 internal requests completed
- 11 ethnic communities reached
- 9,789 pieces of literature distributed
- 4,642 educational encounters conducted
- 208 health screenings and vaccinations given
- 378 health service referrals provided
- 100% 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 19 for more information.

#### Health Education Materials
- 259 multilingual resources offered

#### Health Education Workshops
- 20 workshops conducted

#### Service Connections & Service Links
- 26 community members requested a service connection
- 54 community members requested a service link

#### Patient Navigator Program
- 1,379 on-site medical interpretation sessions conducted
- 1,558 phone medical interpretation sessions conducted

#### Connecting Communities to Services
- 286 community members assisted
- 221 small businesses reached

#### AAHI in Social Media
- 619 social media posts shared
- 116,583 Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube views reached

#### AAHI Cultural Media Campaign
- 18 articles published
COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Health Promoters Program
- 7 Health Promoters

Public Resources Education Program
- 33 community members assisted
- 2 workshops completed

Mental Health First Aid
- 1 training conducted
- 15 individuals attended

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

CAPACITY BUILDING

Senior Health & Wellness
- 172 community members assisted
- 2 Friends’ Corner series established
- 9 Friends’ Corner sessions completed

Hepatitis B Prevention Project
- 139 community members screened
- 31 community members completed or in the process of completing 3-shot vaccination series

Behavioral & Mental Health
- 4,320 photonovels distributed
- 2 organizations supported in photonovel development

Workgroup Participation
- 78 hours contributed to workgroups
- 8 workgroups participated in

CHANGE CATALYST

Professional Presentations
- 18 hours contributed to AAHI 101 presentations
- 13 organizations presented AAHI 101 to
On March 11, 2020, the Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) celebrated an exciting milestone in their organizational growth with the launch of the *Blueprint for the Asian American Health Initiative, 2020-2030*.

At the time, to accommodate the growing concerns around COVID-19, AAHI transformed their planned celebratory launch from an in-person event to a virtual launch. Their friends and community partners were still able to participate and celebrate with them via their Facebook livestream. AAHI was very appreciative of the community support for the virtual launch.

AAHI was also thankful of the distinguished speakers who joined them in-person, including the Director of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS), Dr. Raymond Crowel; the Montgomery County Council Health and Human Services Committee Chair, Councilmember Gabe Albornoz; the County Executive’s Office of Community Partnerships’ Asian American Liaison, Mr. Yi Shen; the AAHI Steering Committee Chair, Dr. Nguyen Nguyen; and the author and researcher who compiled the Blueprint, Dr. Harry Kwon. The recorded livestream of the virtual launch is available on AAHI’s Facebook page at [https://tinyurl.com/AAHIBPLaunch](https://tinyurl.com/AAHIBPLaunch).
The Blueprint presents updated priorities and strategies to improve the health and wellness of Asian American communities in Montgomery County over the next decade. This document incorporates AAHI's renewed focus on community engagement and a stronger emphasis on equity and data-driven approaches to community health. The findings of the Blueprint are shaped by an analysis of data trends and direct input from key stakeholders, staff, and volunteers. To guide AAHI's programs and activities for the next decade, the Blueprint lays out a planning framework of four core priority areas, referred to as the 4 C's:

1. Community Engagement: Conduct outreach to engage
2. Community Empowerment: Provide technical assistance to empower
3. Capacity Building: Create models and tools to demonstrate promising practices
4. Change Catalyst: Influence changes to improve systems

To learn more about the Blueprint, read the Executive Summary or view the short introductory video that summarizes the process and findings.

AAHI thanks everyone who supported in the development of the Blueprint, those who took the time to celebrate with them, and anyone who has read the report. They welcome organizations and service providers from all sectors to use the Blueprint as a guide towards a collaborative effort in advancing Asian American health and achieving equity for all communities in Montgomery County. AAHI looks forward to continuing to improve the health and wellness of Asian American communities with guidance from the new Blueprint.
On January 20, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, documented the first case of the 2019 novel Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) in the United States. As the virus spread across the globe, we learned that SARS-CoV-2 caused the disease Coronavirus, or COVID-19. The response brought on by this global pandemic was unprecedented and has been unlike anything we have witnessed in recent times.

Given the highly infectious nature of COVID-19, starting in mid-March, the state of Maryland closed all public schools, and soon after required that businesses and places of worship also close, to minimize the spread of the disease. The County also instituted a face covering requirement as well as mandated six feet of physical distance in public spaces. Gatherings over ten people were banned. Over the next few months, the ways in which we worked, lived, and played changed drastically, impacting our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual, social, and financial health.

For many, these new changes impacted their ability to work, as many offices and businesses closed, and employees were let go or furloughed. These unprecedented times led to an unprecedented need—a need for quality health education and for information about local resources.

The Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) and the Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) had to quickly pivot to the emerging needs brought on by COVID-19. From March 2020, AAHI altered their programs, projects, and activities to meet the varying needs expressed from the County's Asian American population.

As new information and resources about COVID-19 became available at the federal, state, and local level, AAHI played a critical role in disseminating information to Asian American communities, connecting them to available resources, and communicating their needs to local health and social service providers.
One of AAHI's functions is to ensure that Asian American health concerns are addressed by the local healthcare system as well as to enable communication and connection between Asian American communities and the local healthcare system.

Before the pandemic hit the United States (US), but as it was spreading across Asia and other parts of the world, many Asian Americans in Montgomery County were becoming increasingly concerned about its spread in the US. Recognizing the growing concerns in Asian American communities, AAHI facilitated a meeting between several local Chinese physicians and medical leaders and the Montgomery County Health Office. Community leaders were able to express their concerns and hear firsthand about the County's emergency preparedness for a potential outbreak.

As concerns around COVID-19 were growing in Asian American communities and there was a need for reliable, credible information, AAHI invited several local ethnic media organizations to this meeting for an opportunity to ask questions about COVID-19 to both the County Health Office and leaders in the Chinese physician community.
Of those hardest hit by the financial and economic ramifications of COVID-19 were small business owners and employees. Social distancing mandates required nearly all retail shops, restaurants, grocery stores, and personal service businesses to either close or drastically reduce their services. For many this meant limiting operating hours and reduced services in the form of online purchasing or takeout/curb-side pick-up.

Montgomery County has a vibrant small business community, many of which are Asian American owned and/or employed. These are often family owned, mom and pop shops. Some of the common Asian American owned small businesses are restaurants, nail and beauty salons, dry cleaning and tailoring, bakeries, and grocery stores.

The changes in business practices and operations brought on by COVID-19 translated to a loss of revenue for many small businesses. Many small businesses did not have enough revenue to sustain their operations or pay their employees. Recognizing the detrimental impact of COVID-19 on small businesses, several small business loan and relief programs became available from the federal, state, and county governments.

To ensure Asian American small businesses knew about these small business loan and grant opportunities, AAHI conducted a wide-scale small business outreach effort. AAHI staff cold-called Asian American owned or employed small businesses to inform them of Montgomery County’s Public Health Emergency Grant (PHEG) Program or Maryland’s Small Business COVID-19 Emergency Relief Grant Fund. Calls were intentionally made to small businesses before the application for PHEG launched so small businesses would have enough time to prepare their submissions.

Several small businesses were already closed due to COVID-19. When AAHI was able to reach someone, they provided the small business with the information about the relief opportunities and asked if they could follow-up with the small business on their progress. Through their extensive follow-up efforts, AAHI was able to provide critical, time-sensitive information to small businesses when they needed it, help small businesses identify the correct programs or points of contact to connect with on their application, and ensure they remained on top of the application timeline. Even after the initial small business outreach effort, where AAHI staff connected with small businesses over telephone, email, and social media, AAHI continued to connect small businesses with information about new relief efforts, like the funding appropriated to support small businesses as they reopened for business.
AAHI played a critical role in disseminating important information about COVID-19 to Asian American communities in a culturally and linguistically competent manner. One of the major ways AAHI provided community education was via video.

At the very beginning of the pandemic, there were several efforts across the County to develop educational content, especially in the form of videos, to communicate key messages such as the face covering mandate. AAHI supported several of these County-wide efforts by developing Chinese and Korean language versions of these videos.

It was also important to recognize that COVID-19 not only impacted physical health but also mental health. Processing the rapid physical, social, and financial changes due to COVID-19 took an enormous toll on mental and emotional health. After a few weeks of social distancing, it was evident that COVID-19 was impacting collective mental well-being. While few educational materials were addressing the mental health impact of COVID-19, almost no resources were linguistically or culturally accessible to Asian Americans. AAHI recognized a need in Asian American communities for credible, reliable, mental health education. In response, AAHI developed the COVID-19 and Mental Health Video Series. This series explored the intersection of COVID-19 and mental health through three to five minute videos on different mental health topics such as coping with grief and loss, building resilience, managing stress, and maintaining social connections. Each video was made available in five languages—English, Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese.
While the COVID-19 outbreak and subsequent response led to challenging times for many, we also saw a proliferation of volunteerism and good. AAHI reached out to different community partners and learned of the various ways they were responding to the needs created by COVID-19. AAHI also helped streamline some of the volunteer relief activities taking place in Asian American communities. The pandemic created a sense of unity in Montgomery County, and many local community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) were eager to provide their neighbors with support. From mask making projects to information hotlines to food assistance and delivery efforts, our partners worked hard to support their communities.

There were so many different efforts going on, it was difficult to keep track of who was doing what, and how CBOs/FBOs could partner with one another, or how they could share information about their services with the community. The Catalog of COVID-19 Related Community Efforts served as a platform to inform AAHI partners about one another’s work and help organizations identify how they could partner and collaborate with one another. The Catalog of Community Activities enabled communities to better support one another, collaborate as needed, and amplify their efforts. Any and all organizations were invited to add their efforts to the catalog, which AAHI published on their website and updated twice a week.
To ensure that recovery and relief plans were informed by the actual needs observed in the community, AAHI conducted several ad-hoc community needs assessments with various Asian American community leaders.

Through these in-depth stakeholder interviews, AAHI was able to gain grassroots insight and knowledge about the needs of some of the most marginalized and isolated Asian Americans. Some of the questions asked in the ad-hoc community needs assessment included: *What needs/challenges do you see in your community due to the current COVID outbreak? What can the Montgomery County government do to help your community and organization during this time? What type of information does your community need most?*

AAHI synthesized the experiences of community leaders and shared it with MCDHHS’ leaders and decision makers, to ensure that Asian American needs were accounted for as the County moved towards reopening.
A cornerstone of AAHI’s activities has always been direct community outreach and health education on relevant health and social service topics. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, AAHI continued to perform this function and provided virtual health education and outreach to Asian American communities.

Over the years, AAHI has built a robust social media presence, which was utilized to share information about COVID-19 with the community. Social media via Facebook and Twitter were used to share COVID-19 prevention education, updates about County programs as well as relief and recovery funds, food access resources such as grocery and produce distributions, and reopening updates from the State and County.

AAHI also worked with a local community partner, the Korean American Outreach Group (KAOG), to provide several health education workshops to the community on COVID-19. These workshops were provided in Chinese, Korean, or Vietnamese (depending on community need), and covered a range of topics.

Working with KAOG, AAHI also hosted an online Friends’ Corner* series for Korean older adults that met once a week for six weeks. Some topics covered through the workshops and Friends’ Corner included: preventing the spread of coronavirus, coping with crisis, safely grocery shopping, managing reduced income during COVID-19, and proper use of face covers.

*For more information on Friends’ Corner, please see page 37.
Through its innovative and vigorous community engagement efforts, the Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) provides health education to thousands of Asian American community members living in Montgomery County. AAHI learned in their 2008 Health Needs Assessment that several factors hinder Asian Americans in Montgomery County from seeking, accessing, and utilizing 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 multi-faceted approach to disseminate health information, materials, and resources, such as attending outreach events, connecting community members to services, hosting health workshops, visiting small businesses, publishing information on local news media and social media, and providing multilingual educational materials. Empowered by the knowledge they gain, AAHI hopes that community members are able to make important educated decisions about their own health.

Starting in March 2020, AAHI ceased conducting any in-person outreach due to COVID-19 and the social distancing requirement. While it required some adapting, AAHI was quickly able to respond to the new and shifting landscape and provide health education and outreach via virtual platforms.
To ensure AAHI reaches a majority of the Asian American community, AAHI regularly participates at outreach events where Asian Americans gather, such as health fairs, services at faith-based organizations, cultural celebrations, programs at community-based organizations, and weekend and after school programs for children. 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 tailored health information. Through community outreach, AAHI distributes literature on various health topics, provides health education, and connects community members with local health resources. Starting March 2020, AAHI’s outreach activities took place online in the form of health education workshops.

In FY2020, AAHI’s community outreach events included health education workshops, Connecting Communities to Services project, behavioral & mental health efforts, hepatitis B prevention project, senior health & wellness efforts, and COVID-19 small business outreach.
AAHI is committed to providing high-quality tailored services to Asian American communities. In line with this commitment, AAHI asks community members and partner 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 partner organizations 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, immigrant status, limited English proficiency, lack of health insurance, and limited transportation. To assist individuals in overcoming these barriers, AAHI provides service connections by directly connecting community members to services. Navigating the health care system can be difficult, with different eligibility requirements and application protocols for each program. AAHI assists community members by making appointments with them, reminding them about their appointments, ensuring they have the needed documents and paperwork, and following up with them after their first appointments.

In FY2019, AAHI added “service links” to assist community members with researching services available in the County. AAHI conducts research on the community members’ behalf and provides them with the information.

In FY2020, AAHI provided community members service connections and service links for needs such as: dental, legal support, parenting, general wellness, health insurance, food access, energy assistance, gambling addiction, diabetes, and colorectal cancer.
AAHI's Patient Navigator Program (PNP) provides medical interpretation for community members with limited English proficiency. Limited English proficiency means a 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 healthcare providers can result in inaccurate diagnoses, decreased treatment adherence, and reduced patient satisfaction, ultimately leading to poorer health outcomes. Patient Navigators provide accurate interpretation for community members while they meet with healthcare providers so the community members 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.

<table>
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<th>Calls Received</th>
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<tr>
<td>Appointments Scheduled</td>
<td>1,532</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone Medical Interpretation Sessions</td>
<td>1,558</td>
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<tr>
<td>On-Site Medical Interpretation Sessions</td>
<td>1,379</td>
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<tr>
<td>Percentage of Clients Linked to County Services</td>
<td>98%</td>
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<td>Percentage of Callers Reported Not Having Insurance</td>
<td>11%</td>
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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 organizations and faith-based organizations to provide health education workshops to Asian American communities. Through these partnerships, AAHI not only provides health education workshops in the preferred Asian language of the community but also tailors the content to the community’s needs.

In FY2020, AAHI partnered with the Pan Asian Volunteer Health Clinic and the Korean American Outreach Group to provide health education workshops and seminars to the community. Health education workshop topics included: caregiving, medical interpretation, and Alzheimer’s.
In FY2020, AAHI conducted Connecting Communities to Services (Connect) to reach and provide health information and local County resources to Asian American small business owners and employees who may not have been able to attend health fairs or cultural celebrations. To reach these community members, AAHI sought out areas with higher concentrations of Asian American small businesses within the County to conduct intensive outreach visits.

AAHI engaged several of the Health Promoters to conduct community outreach. They held a small business outreach training to teach Health Promoters different outreach methods and refresh their knowledge on AAHI health education topics.

AAHI also used the Connect outreach model to conduct their COVID-19 small business outreach, described on page 13.

Information provided included topics such as: community resources, mental health, senior health, heart health, diabetes, COVID-19 resources, osteoporosis, dental services, caregiving, and more.
Many Asian Americans utilize 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 in local print and online news outlets. Articles are printed in various Asian languages including Chinese, Hindi, Korean, and Vietnamese - the languages of Montgomery County’s largest Asian subgroups. They cover a variety of physical, social, and mental health topics that impact Asian Americans.
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.

AAHI implemented one social media campaign in FY2020 to commemorate Mental Health Month and Asian Pacific Islander Heritage Month in May.

As mentioned on page 17, AAHI’s social media platforms were instrumental in getting information out to the community about COVID-19 education, updates, and resources.

Like us on Facebook
Follow us on Twitter
Follow us on YouTube
Join our mailing list
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 search for educational materials created by other reputable organizations 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 community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs) are places of congregation where community members socialize and connect. The function of community based organizations is continually growing and for many, their local CBOs and FBOs are 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) Health Promoters provide health education and local resources information to Asian American community organizations and their congregants so they have the tools to participate in their health care decisions and be self-sufficient. The Public Resources Education Program trains community leaders and caregivers on the various Montgomery County health and social services available. AAHI coordinates Mental Health First Aid trainings so community members have the skills to provide initial support during a mental health crisis. In addition, to empower community partners and local public health organizations in their work with Asian Americans, AAHI offers technical assistance to support the planning, implementation, and evaluation of their health services and programs.
AAHI Health Promoters are bilingual and bicultural community health advocates. 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. They enable AAHI to provide information to some of the County’s hardest to reach community members. In Fiscal Year 2020 (FY2020), four of AAHI’s Health Promoters became Certified Community Health Workers (CCHW) through the state of Maryland.
FY2020 Health Promoters

Shamim Begum
Tasneem Hussain
Sunghee Kim
Maggie Tung*

Kusuma Udagedera*
Peter Uran*
Tammy Wan*

*CCHW
In FY2020, AAHI continued their effort in providing education and training to Asian American communities on local health and social resources through the Public Resources Education Program (PREP).

During PREP, community leaders and caregivers learn about local and government health and social services in detail, such as eligibility requirements, fees and payments, application processes, and different ways they can access these resources. Some program topics include mental health services, dental services, and senior and disability services.

Through PREP, AAHI hopes that community members will be able to gain knowledge and awareness on local services and programs and then be able to support others in their communities in accessing these services.
As 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 as a way to tailor the content to Asian Americans.

After completing the training, attendees provide education to 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 multiple Asian American communities.

In FY2020, AAHI was able to host one MHFA workshop with the Montgomery County Faith Community Working Group, which includes leadership and representatives from various places of worship and faith communities. Due to COVID-19, AAHI had to cancel MHFA workshops scheduled for spring 2020.
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 leaders of CBOs and FBOs 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 service providers, AAHI aims to enhance their capacity to reach and respond to Asian American communities.

AAHI is committed to providing education to 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 has provided technical assistance to community partners on: photonovel development, mental health programming, outreach program development, health education for Asian Americans, and cultural competency.
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 programs that they created to be easily adopted by other organizations. Through their adaptable programs, AAHI hopes to increase 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 the booming Asian American older adult population, the stigma surrounding Asian American behavioral health, and the disproportionate impact of Hepatitis B on Asian American communities, AAHI has placed a special focus on these areas in their capacity building efforts.
As part of AAHI’s work on building community capacity, AAHI has developed promising practices in various health areas important to Asian American communities, including senior health and wellness as well as behavioral and mental health. AAHI’s Blueprint also identified both of these areas as trending concerns.

**Senior Health & Wellness Initiative**

The aging population (ages 65 and older) is a growing demographic among Asian Americans in Montgomery County, accounting for 15.5 percent of the population. Asian American seniors also make up a significant portion of the County’s senior population, comprising 13.8 percent of County residents age 65 years and older.

A growth in this demographic requires special attention due to the unique health and social needs experienced by Asian American older adults. This includes limited English proficiency, poverty, and high rates of disability. Of those over 65 years old, 58.9 percent of people who speak an Asian language, speak English less than very well. Further, those 65 years and older have the highest poverty rate at 12.7 percent compared to other age groups in the Asian American population. Lastly, 28.4 percent of Asian Americans over 65 years old have a disability.

Since Fiscal Year 2017 (FY2017), AAHI launched their senior wellness initiative to address the health and social needs of Asian American older adults. AAHI aims to educate providers and partners on best practices related to serving Asian American older adults.

**Behavioral & Mental Health Project**

Nationally, Asian Americans have some of the highest suicide rates when compared with their Non-Hispanic White, Non-Hispanic Black, and Hispanic counterparts. Asian American females between 15 to 24 years old have the highest percentage of deaths due to suicide compared to any other racial/ethnic group (29 percent for 15-19 year olds and 30.4 percent for 20-24 year olds). According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, approximately 13.4 percent of Asian Americans reported having a mental illness in the past year. Only 18.2 percent of Asian Americans with a mental illness used any mental health services, which is the lowest among 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 designs tools and resources that tackle continued stigmatization of mental health and also develops guides and models that can be adapted by others in the community.
In FY2020, AAHI continued to host Friends’ Corner for Asian American older adults. 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. Session topics include: transportation, mental health, food security, and medication management. 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).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, AAHI hosted a virtual Friends’ Corner for Asian American seniors primarily centered on COVID-19.

AAHI also participates 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.
The goal of AAHI's *Be the One That Makes a Difference* project is to reduce mental health stigma in Asian American communities. Normalizing mental health is key to dismantling stigma. To do this, AAHI developed a series of mental health photonovels starting in FY2015. In FY2020, AAHI launched their sixth photonovel.

Photonovel 6, *The Stress of Caring: A Journey to Self-Care*, explored how caregiving looks in Asian American families. The story highlighted the stress that comes with caregiving and the importance of recognizing caregiver needs. It explored how conflict may arise in families if caregiving plans are not intentionally developed, and how adult children in the caregiver role often have multiple priorities they are juggling, frequently exacerbating the conflict. Similar to past photonovels, this photonovel was developed under the guidance of a team of Mental Health Ambassadors, which was comprised of professionals working with older adults and actual caregivers.

As part of the photonovel project, AAHI provided technical assistance to the Be Well Initiative (BWI) in developing a Nepali version of Photonovel 1, *Mental Health: Understanding is the First Step*. BWI is a community-based organization that provides psycho-social support for the Nepali diaspora by focusing on mind-body health and wellness prevention as well as early counseling intervention.

AAHI photonovels are distributed at outreach events and disseminated to community partners. Photonovels are commonly used to aid mental health educational encounters.
In FY2020, the Asian Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project launched their own photonovel about domestic violence in the Asian American community, which AAHI supported through technical assistance.

AAHI also provided technical assistance to different HHS programs. Most notably, AAHI provided their cultural competency training to MCDHHS’ Early Childhood.

As part of Mental Health Awareness Month and Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in May 2020, 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.

The COVID-19 pandemic also brought about unique mental health challenges, as the community at-large sheltered at home for months. In response, AAHI developed a COVID-19 and Mental Health Video Series, which included ten videos exploring different mental health and wellness topics. See page 14 for more details on this...
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 a hepatitis B prevention project in 2010. This project utilizes a four-step approach that includes education, screening, vaccination, and treatment referral. Over the years, AAHI has worked with various community partners to provide technical assistance around developing and establishing their own hepatitis B programming. 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 FY2020, 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 programming.
With over 18 million Asian Americans living in the United States, it is important to highlight the diversity that exists within the community. Disaggregating data is critical in addressing health burdens of Asian Americans because of wide variations and inequities in health and social needs among different subgroups, which is often masked by the homogenous data available.

The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) advocates for the collection of disaggregated data, especially for Asian Americans, with different Montgomery County Government departments to influence change in policy and guidelines that will ensure the health needs of Asian American residents are met in a culturally and linguistically responsive manner.

AAHI has been collecting data in hopes of learning more about various health disparities and other social determinants of health affecting local Asian American communities. Insights gained from the data will provide guidance on the development of strategies aimed to improve health outcomes and health access in Asian American communities.

In addition to their 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. Last but certainly not least, the AAHI Steering Committee helps lead AAHI in attaining health equity for Asian Americans in Montgomery County.
AAHI works with different workgroups, committees, and programs to advocate for disaggregated data collection and evaluation as well as emphasize the need for culturally and linguistically competent services.

The Model Minority Myth, the false belief that Asian Americans are wealthy, healthy, acculturated, and therefore not in need of programs and services, masks the need in Asian American communities. AAHI monitors local data to capture the socio-economic realities of the diverse Asian American community. AAHI then uses this data to unpack and dismantle the Model Minority Myth.

Through workgroup participation, professional presentations, and internal collaboration, AAHI educates and informs other public health professionals about the diverse need in the Asian American community. This systematically breaks down the Model Minority Myth by providing disaggregated data which shows the differences between Asian American communities.

As they share data and information about Asian Americans in Montgomery County, AAHI stresses the importance of having disaggregated data that can reflect the unique needs of each Asian American community. They also discuss the challenges the County and AAHI has when collecting data among the Asian American communities, which hinders Asian Americans from being represented when programmatic decisions are made.
In Fiscal Year 2020 (FY2020), AAHI reengineered and refreshed their program evaluations. AAHI program evaluations measure impact across multiple domains:

- **Increased knowledge and awareness**—Respondent indicates that they have learned something as a result of an AAHI activity
- **Enhanced access**—Respondent indicates that their ability to seek or access local services has been enhanced as a result of an AAHI Activity
- **Increased confidence**—Respondent indicates that their confidence related to a skill (i.e. washing their hands) has increased as a result of an AAHI activity
- **Behavioral intent**—Respondent indicates some sort of behavioral intent (i.e. seeing a doctor) as a result of an AAHI activity

The following outreach evaluations are available:

- Participant (part of Community Outreach Event)
- Friends’ Corner
- Health Education Workshop
- Photonovel
- Service Connection
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, increased collection of disaggregated data, and 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 participated in the National Network to Eliminate Disparities Virtual Roundtable, “Communities Respond to COVID-19: Implications for Asian Pacific Islanders” and discussed how AAHI was responding to the needs of Asian American communities during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The presentations offer an Asian American perspective that may not be visible to organizations and programs serving smaller Asian American groups, which helps them better recognize the unique needs in the Asian American community they serve and better tailor their services.

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 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 FY2020, the Steering Committee progressed their work of improving the health and wellness of Asian American communities in Montgomery County. Through their passion and dedication, they made the following contributions in FY2020:

» Volunteered nearly 276 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

AAHI Steering Committee Members

- Nguyen Nguyen (Chair)
- Anis Ahmed
- Shruti Bhatnagar
- Ji-Young Cho
- Nerita Estampador
- Wilbur Friedman
- Hina Mehta
- Yuchi Huang
- Sunmin Lee
- Sam Mukherjee (Vice Chair)
- Meng K. Lee
- Michael Lin
- Cynthia Macri
- Mayur Mody
- Thao Bui
- Thao Tran
- Sovan Tun
- Judy Wang
The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) is recognized as a leader in Asian American health. As an organization, they are regarded as responsive and innovative. However, this growth is wholly dependent on having an engaged staff that seeks to excel. AAHI’s growth is dependent on the constant professional development of their staff, and it is captured in the community’s response to their programs.
AAHI participated in the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (MCDHHS) Office of Community Affairs (OCA) All Staff Retreat. Staff engaged in meaningful discussions with their OCA colleagues about how their specific program supports OCA's overall focus areas. Some of the training topics which staff participated in include: ethics in social work, Public Charge Rule, elder abuse, the role of community health workers, workplace harassment, contracts monitoring, bystander intervention, and leadership development, among others.
At AAHI, the best metric of their success is the feedback they receive from community members and partners. Below are a few words from some of the community members they met at outreach and community partners who they worked with.

Feedback on their Blueprint Launch—AAHI is recognized as a leader, who is known for excellent work

"Thanks AAHI for your excellent work over the years!!"

"Congratulations to AAHI on the launch of the blueprint. Thanks to the entire AAHI team and the SC for all your hard work, dedication, and accomplishments over the years. Keep up the excellent work!"

Feedback from the Public Health Emergency Grant (PHEG) Small Business Outreach—AAHI’s outreach helps so many Asian American small businesses keep abreast with the rapidly evolving County relief programs

"Thank you so much for notifying us. I will apply this ASAP!"

"I submitted my application for PHEG on time because of your timely information."

"Thank you so much for notifying us and other businesses about it!"

Feedback from outreach—AAHI consists of trusted and dedicated professionals

"Your AAHI team member was professional and explained everything in details. She offered additional information and shared relevant booklets. Thank you so much, and for doing the work that you do! Excellent work today! Bravo!"

From their community partners—AAHI is recognized as a leader, who is known for excellent work

"Many thanks to AAHI for your programs and working with us! We have been working with AAHI for a long time and will continue to do so and we keep your info and flyers out in our health room. We are interested in expanding programs for our members and having everyone feel included."

Feedback on their mental health videos and photonovels—AAHI provides the community with relevant and timely information

"Hearty congratulation on an amazing Photonovel. You really have produced a powerful document that will resonate with caregivers and the whole community."
AAHI had the pleasure of hosting a graduate student intern from January 2020 to April 2020—Young Suk Oh from the University of Maryland, School of Public Health, Department of Epidemiology and Biostatistics.

Projects completed during her internship:

- **Community Outreach**—She participated in community outreach events. This helped her understand how programs and activities are ultimately shaped by the needs AAHI observes during community outreach.

- **Leading Causes of Death**—She completed a data exploration of the leading cause of death (LCD) for Asian Americans. She reviewed the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s data on LCD and identified trends broken down by different age/sex groups among Asian Americans. She created graphs and infographics for the AAHI team to use in presentations and social media. This project helped shape her understanding of how data is used to communicate health needs to other providers and partners. Additionally, it showed her how data helps inform program topics and objectives.

- **Hospital Benefit Report**—She reviewed a County level report on hospital benefit areas and extracted the data pertinent to the Asian American community. She shared her findings with staff.
In Fiscal Year 2020, the Asian American Health Initiative’s (AAHI's) budget was $1,136,579. 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 69.8% of AAHI's core budget expenditures.

**Contract with Primary Care Coalition**
This category accounts for 30.2% of AAHI's core budget expenditures.
How to Get Involved

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
Acknowledgements

The Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) would like to express its sincerest thanks to the County Executive, Montgomery County Council, Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services, AAHI Steering Committee, community partners, AAHI Health Promoters, volunteers, and staff for their support during Fiscal Year 2020.

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**SPECIAL THANKS**

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