April 2018 Newsletter

"Clearing the Path to Peace in Laos" in Washington, DC

On April 24, Legacies of War Executive Director Channapha Khamvongs was joined by (left to right) Legacies board chair Titus Peachey, Tim Rieser of the Senate Appropriations Committee, Lao Ambassador Mai Sayavongs, and Legacies board member and former Obama national security speechwriter Ben Rhodes in Washington, DC, to discuss the current state of the unexploded ordnance (UXO) sector in Laos. The event was hosted by law firm Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP.

Rhodes was instrumental in bringing the Lao UXO issue to the attention of President Obama, who made a historic three-year $90 million commitment to clearing Laos of UXO and helping survivors. He remarked, "Unlike so many international issues, this is a problem with a clear solution. It's a simple formula: the more resources we invest, the faster we'll get to the goal."
Rieser, who staffs the Congressional subcommittee that directs funding to international demining and development, added, "Legacies of War is a huge asset for us in building support in the Congress ... so other people understand why this matters, and why we should care about it. Fortunately we now have pretty good bipartisan support, but it's not enough. So we have to continue to educate people, continue to advocate for this, continue to find the funds for it. Because we caused this problem, and we have a responsibility to help the people of Laos address it."

Ambassador Mai Sayavongs thanked Legacies of War for its dedicated advocacy for clearing Laos of unexploded ordnance. A Laos free of bombs, he remarked, will open up the country to development and begin to lift the Lao people out of poverty.
Welcome to our new board members

Legacies of War welcomed six dynamic new board members this year. Each board member brings years of experience in Laos, foreign policy, community engagement, and communications, as well as a deep passion for Legacies’ mission to make Laos safe for the next generation.

**Ambassador Douglas Hartwick**
Ambassador Hartwick was the United States Ambassador to Laos from 2001-2004. During his tenure, he worked closely with the Lao and Hmong-American communities in Minnesota, Washington state and California and oversaw the signing of the first US-Laos Bilateral agreement since the Vietnam War in 2003. Apart from Laos, Ambassador Hartwick was on the faculty of the National Defense University, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for South Asia, and office director at the State Department for the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Brunei and Singapore.

**Alex Hiniker**
Alexandra Hiniker is Strategic Relationships Manager for the New York City Mayor’s Office for International Affairs, where she is responsible for highlighting the connections between global and local sustainability efforts. Before joining the Mayor’s Office, Alexandra was the PAX Representative to the United Nations, focusing on the protection of civilians in Syria, Iraq, and South Sudan. Previously, she worked on humanitarian disarmament in some of the world's most bombed and mined countries, first with the United Nations in Cambodia, and then with the Cluster Munition Coalition in Laos, followed by Lebanon.

**Sera Koulabdara**
Sera Koulabdara is the Director of Heart Walk at the American Heart Association (AHA) in Columbus, Ohio. AHA is the nation’s oldest and largest voluntary organization dedicated to fighting heart diseases and stroke. Prior to her non-profit work, Sera first launched her career in Lommel, Belgium as an International Business Consultant with Big Media Group. Sera specialized in helping emerging markets and completed projects in over 10 countries including Kuwait, Ghana and South Africa. While in Botswana, Sera
discovered her passion for helping others while volunteering with the Clinton Foundation.

**Breeda Phoummany**
Oudomphone 'Breeda' Phoummany has been a longtime supporter of Legacies since 2007 and was born in Nongkhai refugee camp in Thailand. Her family is from Luang Prabang, Laos and landed in Elmira, NY in 1980. She has cultivated a career in Wine/Spirits Import and Distribution management and is currently working for Santa Margherita USA as a Metro Division District Manager while also pursuing her WSET 3 & Master of Wine certifications. Breeda is a civic leader in the Rochester, NY, community, including involvement in the Lao temple and young professional groups.

**Ben Rhodes**
Benjamin Rhodes was the Assistant to the President and Deputy National Security Advisor for Strategic Communications and Speechwriting from 2009-2017 under President Obama. During his tenure, Rhodes spearheaded initiatives to help President Obama engage with countries, like Laos, in hopes of fostering good relations, development, and human rights. In 2011, Rhodes was included in Time Magazine's "40 under 40" list of powerful and prominent young professionals. Before joining the former president's administration, Rhodes worked on Obama's speech writing team during his campaign for the presidency. Obama appointed Rhodes as a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

**Terry Szuplat**
Terence Szuplat is the founder of Global Voices, a strategic communications and speechwriting firm that draws on his 20 years of experience supporting political, business, and nonprofit leaders. As a foreign policy speechwriter for President Barack Obama from 2009 to 2017, Terry helped develop hundreds of speeches on U.S. foreign policy and global security. As a Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director of Speechwriting at the National Security Council staff, he joined President Obama on visits to more than 40 countries, including Laos. Previously, he served on
the Senate Armed Services Committee staff and in the Department of Defense.

Learn more about each board member on our website.

Legacies of War Lam Vong Giving Circle: Join the Circle of Hope

In honor of Pi Mai or Lao New Year in April, we launched the Legacies of War Lam Vong Circle - a new opportunity to join a community of people dedicated to bringing peace and hope to Laos. Lam Vong Circle members pledge a recurring monthly donation to sustain and grow Legacies' life-saving advocacy and community engagement work.

For as little as $10 per month, members of the Lam Vong Circle join a circle of hope to clear Laos of bombs and create a safe future.

SAVE THE DATE: October 13, 2018, New York City LaoNow 2018: Fashion | Food | Film | "Fawn"

We are excited to announce "LaoNow 2018: Celebrating Fashion, Food, Film & "Fawn," this year's premiere gathering of Laotian American creative trailblazers and change makers. This year's event on October 13, 2018 will feature inspiring designers, filmmakers, foodies, and musical artists -- individuals and groups that strive for excellence in their creative pursuits. LaoNow will celebrate and honor those who create community, beauty, dialogue, nourishment and joy in the Laotian American community.

This year's LaoNow will include two parts. A daytime film and food festival will spotlight contemporary Laotian American chefs, and filmmakers and entrepreneurs with panel discussions, film screenings and a marketplace of
Laotian-inspired products. The evening portion will begin with a cocktail reception and a Legacies of War educational display, followed by a fashion show featuring a leading Lao designer from Vientiane, and then a Lao dinner and an awards program. The evening will conclude with "fawn" - music and dancing.

Thank You, Kop Chai, and Ua Tsaug to Our Recent Donors!


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