



Thao Nguyen Foundation Inc. Newsletter

Eighth Issue
July 2016

TOGETHER, WE BRING LIGHT TO MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

IN THIS ISSUE

Greetings from the President

by Nhung Hendy, Ph.D.

We and our staff at TNF have had a busy but exciting half year of 2016 and I am glad to report that our Fourth Annual Thao's Into the Light Race was held successfully despite the rain on 5/1/2016- see the report on page 2. Our thanks go to Josh Levinston from Charm City Run - Timonium and Pete Mulligan - Falls Road Running Store for providing gifts and prizes for our runners.

I'm pleased to share with you that on May 26th, two Board members of TNF attended the Senior Award Ceremony at Loch Raven High school where the Fourth Thao Nguyen Memorial Scholarships were awarded. This year, we awarded two scholarships each in the amount of \$500 to two well-deserving graduating seniors. We also awarded two scholarships each in the amount of \$1,000 to two students at Drexel University. See details on these outstanding young women and some of our past winners, including links to some of the art they have produced, in the scholarship update on page 3.

As you know, last December we launched a fundraising campaign to build an endowment at Loch Raven High School. As of today, we have raised more than \$8,000. We still need to raise \$17,000 more in order to reach the minimum threshold of \$25,000. We

appreciate every dollar you can set aside to support the Foundation. If you shop at Amazon, please use Amazon Smile at smile.amazon.com as the Amazon Smile foundation will donate 0.5% of your spending dollars to our Foundation.

I'm happy to introduce another information-packed newsletter issue including a summary of the 2016 Thao's Into the Light Race and a summary of a recent research study in the field of mental health. Also I hope you will take the time to read Doug Sanford's reflection about his sustained volunteering effort to the foundation. I can't wait to see more of our friends and supporters involved in our outreach activities.

Our Secretary and Social Media Manager, James Manley has been busy updating our Facebook page and has increased substantially our likes on Facebook. If you have not done so, please like our page: <https://www.facebook.com/TNscholarship>

In closing, I wish all of you a very happy and peaceful Fourth of July holiday weekend.



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TN Foundation Board of Directors:
Michael Biderman, Director
Philip Hall, Director
Nhung T. Hendy, President
James Manley, Secretary and Social Media Manager



Phil Hall, TNF Director, with two recipients of TN Memorial Scholarships at Loch Raven High. Details, page 3.

Thao's Light Race Summary

By Nhung Hendy



The Fourth Annual Thao's Into the Light Race took place on Sunday, May 1st 2016 on the beautiful grounds of the historic NCR Trail near the Nature Bank center in Gunpowder Falls State park, Sparks, MD. Despite the pouring rain, we had a good turnout of 33 runners and walkers.

The timing service was generously provided to us by Brad Roberts thanks to Dave Cooley, a Board member of the Baltimore's Road Running club. Phil Hall, Thea Curley, Brian Robert and Doug Sanford were our course marshals. Photo snapshots of the race were provided to us by Ted Hendy. Pat Roche, Mariana Lebron, Thea Curley, and Phil Hall were also busy with on-site registration, food and water preparation for the race.

Winning our first place for male and female runners respectively were John Ross and Liz Collard. Congratulations to both! Overall, I think the event was successful and filled with hopeful voice and beautiful memories of Thao. I'd like to thank all our volunteers and participants in the race. We hope to see you all next year!

Reflection

By Doug Sanford

I enjoy volunteering for foundation events such as last month's "Into the Light" run. I do so gladly and openly, in support of a cause that saves lives. I think we need to raise awareness of the suicide problem, reduce the stigma, and promote good coping behaviors. Let me explain.

In my life experience, I have seen that suicide is a problem for our society. A couple of my high school friends have passed that way. My wife was close friends with Michelle Miller's mom. In April, 2013, Michelle died at age 17 in either a murder-suicide or suicide-suicide event in Gaithersburg, MD. We are not "over" that tragedy.

Suicide happens when our life stressors exceed our coping capabilities. Most people have ample stress that challenges our "healthy" coping mechanisms, leading to resort to less desirable ways of survival. In college, it was too frequent to see fellow students engaging in risky behavior (e.g., excessive drug use, DUI, promiscuity, and overwork). Even after college that was sometimes the case. And for me, especially when younger, I made a few questionable choices. But also in my experience, I am telling the obvious. We, who are older than 24, are alive only by luck. We happen to have coping capabilities, even flawed ones that match our stressors.

Demographically, I, as a white man in my mid-fifties, am at risk. According to the American Foundation for Suicide prevention, in 2014 suicide was the 10th leading cause of death in the US. Whites have a suicide rate much higher than any other ethnic group. At 14.7 per 100,000, it dwarfs the rate for



Asians, Hispanics, and Blacks, with rates ranging from 5.5 to 6.3. The age at which suicide is highest is 85+, but a close second is age 55-64. Men are 3.5 times more likely to commit suicide than women. Seventy percent (70%) of suicides are done by white men.

White men aged 55 to 64 can face severe stressors. Health problems, financial problems, and feelings of inadequacy may not be what they expected for their lives. What coping mechanisms are available? Probably lots, such as friends, health professionals, family, religious leaders, exercise, meditation, and self-education on stress reduction. But triggering coping behaviors may require swallowing pride, admitting there is a problem, and reaching out. I think it certainly is possible that white men are vulnerable because they are reluctant to admit their stressors, swallow some pride, and avail themselves of methods for reducing stress. So by volunteering for the "Into the Light" race, discussing mental health issues, and supporting the Thao Nguyen Foundation community, I am embracing a better way. I work to support others, and seek support when appropriate. I work to favor reality over prideful expectations. I would like to think others should do the same.



PLEASE THANK OUR 2016 DONORS

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IF YOU WANT TO CONTRIBUTE AN ARTICLE

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2016 Drexel University Scholarships

Bhavya Sharma is in her junior year and plans to go to law school. She's in the Honors College and has a certificate in Writing and Publishing.

Sara J. Aykit is also in the Honors College with a near-perfect GPA. She plans to teach high school English. A rising junior, she recently went on a creative writing trip to Haiti with English faculty Harriet Milan.

Research Summary

Summarized by James Manley

A creative recent study compared depressive symptoms with people's daily routines. Installing software called Purple Robot on the phones of 28 study participants in Chicago, the researchers (Saeb et al.) tracked their movement. Many characteristics of the subjects' movement were tracked including total distance traveled during a given day, the extent to which participants followed a traditional day (i.e. going out to work or to some activity during the day and home at night), phone use (frequency and duration), and consistency in locations (i.e. going the same places every day). Using statistical tests, the research team linked these characteristics and the participants' scores on a depression diagnostic.

First, having a routine is negatively correlated with depression. Having a traditional daily schedule, moving around more, and measures of consistency in locations were linked to lower levels of depression, showing that regularity in actions and frequency of actions are positive. Second, phone use was not a good thing: both frequency and duration were linked to a greater depression.

These findings are not causal: the routine may be the effect rather than the cause of a healthy mental state. For example, depression can affect people's sleep and/ or keep people at home instead of getting them out and around, disrupting healthy rhythms. Still, it might be worth a reminder that getting out and moving around and getting good sleep are part of a mentally healthy lifestyle!

Saeb, Sohrab, et al. "Mobile phone sensor correlates of depressive symptom severity in daily-life behavior: An exploratory study." *Journal of medical Internet research* 17.7 (2015). <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4526997/>

Catching Up with Past LRHS Scholarship Winners

Thanks to your support, we were able to award TWO scholarships to deserving Loch Raven High School students this year. Ivana Mayo and Katie Lowman both have high GPA's and are also gifted in arts or music.

They are our fourth and fifth winners. Our 2014 winner, Yasmine Mzayek, just finished her second year at MICA. Some work she's produced can be seen at <https://www.behance.net/ymzayekdb1d>, including some Interactive works. She says, "Some of my favorites are 'removed', 'stay', 'what awaits us', 'don't look too close', 'floater', and 'illusionism.' I'm about to be a junior at the Maryland Institute College of Art, and major in Interactive Arts! I have a minor in illustration and creative writing. The arts are my passion and I want to eventually use them to help other people; I want to create great experiences and bring people together with work that appeals to all ages, a kind of universal work. Working cross-platform and combining media is my favorite way to do this, because I feel like mixing media and combining tech with handmade items can make work more versatile."

We also recently caught up with last year's winner, Bokeum Jeon. Her first year at MICA also has been productive: check out some of her art at <https://www.behance.net/bjeon02>. She will be a sophomore this fall at Maryland Institute College of Art, and she is majoring in Fiber with an Experimental Fashion concentration. She says, "At MICA, I have learned to not be scared to explore and try new media. I am hoping to have my own fashion line at MICA's annual fashion show next April!"

All of this is possible because of your support! Every penny of your tax deductible donation goes to mental health awareness promotion or to deserving young people like these. THANK YOU!