

# Winnebago County

On Saturday, March 9, Billie Gauthier, director of the UW Oshkosh Division of Continuing Education & Extension, and Chris DeIuliis, an outreach program manager of the Division, met with 38 representatives of the Oshkosh Hmong community. These representatives were recruited by the Oshkosh Hmong-Lao American Association. Of these members of the Hmong community, 10 were adult males, 11 were adult females, 10 were male youths and six were youth females. All the youth were under the age of 20, and all were high school students.

1) How and where would you like to learn in your community?

a) Men:

- no responses

b) Women:

- anywhere that provides transportation services

c) youth males:

- no experience
- it depends on how hard you work yourself
- class or home
- at school
- at home
- at work
- your inner self
- from anyone that offers help

d) youth females:

- library
- any quiet place
- school
- in teams
- with visual aids

2) What challenges and issues are you seeing in your local Hmong community?

a) men:

- child abuse and racism
- lack of cooperation and lack of leadership
- legal inflexibility for Hmong parents to discipline their children

b) women:

- lack of knowledge of English language
- early marriage
- legal issues, especially related to discipline
- teenagers

c) youth males:

- planning for the future
- getting along with others, both Hmong and non-Hmong
- not enough time to do the things you like
- language difficulties
- maintaining good grades
- staying out of trouble
- racism
- school truancy:
  - o problems getting along with teachers
  - o problems getting along with classmates
  - o parents don't care
- gangs
  - o gang influences
  - o pressure to join gangs
  - o threats

d) youth females

- financial needs
- communication problems between family and friends
- generational differences, between parents and children
- education
- language barriers
- lack of respect and understanding
- sexism, racism, discrimination
- welfare reform

3) What has successfully worked for your local Hmong community in the past to address these challenges and issues

a) men:

- cooperation between clan leaders and Lao/Hmong Association
- when we have a single focus
- when bi-lingual books are provided
- when we cooperated

b) women:

- find educational programs for kids to do
- jobs for youth
- consult local clan leaders to define abuse vs. discipline (corporal punishment allowed before, but not now)
- education regarding marriage and responsibilities
- home literature programs and ESL

c) youth males:

- no responses

d) youth females:

- no responses

4) What are the challenges facing Hmong individuals and families?

a) men:

- parents can't control children
- children show no respect to parents
- depression
- language barriers
- parents have low education
- language barriers
- mental health
- low pay
- need for child care
- nutrition issues
- need for information about housekeeping
- school drop-out rates too high

b) women:

- stress of cultural differences
- financial support
- lack of respect from grandchildren
- love
- declining traditions
- treatment for illnesses
- difficulty in obtaining drugs to treat/prevent illnesses
- lack of recreation opportunities
- more time to spend with family
- school drop-out rates too high

c) youth males:

- preserving cultural heritage
- education: pushing yourself beyond your limits
- peer pressure, conflicting pressures from family and friends
- personal planning
- temptations from drugs and sex
- misunderstanding between generations
- no respect for each other
- rumors/gossip
- sibling conflicts
- need for good role models for youth
- need for more family support (physical, financial, psychological)
- need to understand more about good parenting techniques
- language barriers
- work issues:
  - o uncomfortable working with job requirements from low-paying jobs
  - o employment discrimination
  - o Asians forced to perform worst job tasks
  - o Poor treatment by employers
- nutrition issues (more overweight Hmong)
- parents dislike doctors, want children to become doctors
- doctors raise too many issues out of simple illness
- poverty issues
  - o houses/apartments too small
  - o low incomes
- kids don't help with housecleaning
- too much attention to TV/video games
- too much ESL in school, not enough challenges
- lack of educational programs to prepare for college

d) youth females:

- relationship between parents and children
- gang activities
- appearances (hair, clothes, shoes, etc)
- prejudices and stereotypes
- lack of educational supports
- financial problems, such as job layoffs
- elderly issues:
  - o explain social security benefits
  - o better health care needed
  - o affordable drug prescriptions
  - o need more medical benefits
  - o need better medical treatment

- family issues:
  - o need better communication between parents and children and between siblings
  - o need to preserve traditional culture, religion and costumes
  - o need preserve Hmong identity
  - o family members should respect each other more
  - o kids should be allowed to have part-time jobs to help family out
  - o more job opportunities for Hmong youth
  - o need to discourage early marriages
- health issues:
  - o more exercise needed
  - o more physical check-ups needed
  - o need nutrition education
- housing:
  - o need better (cleaner) housing
  - o need to get along better with neighbors
  - o housing units too small to fit family comfortably
  - o hard to find rental apartments
- educational issues
  - o need more scholarships for Hmong children
  - o need more tutoring programs
  - o need more Hmong counselors and advisors in schools
  - o non-Hmong students and teachers need more education about Hmong culture

5) What are the challenges facing Hmong businesses and business owners?

a) men:

- no responses

b) women:

- not enough customers
- recession
- not enough money available for down-payments to start business
- lack of educational and financial programs to assist business start-ups
- need more employment programs targeting Hmong
- 

c) youth boys:

- no responses

d) youth girls:

- lack of business experience and education

- lack of support from government and community
- competition
- location

6) What are some of the educational topics you or others would like to learn more about?

a) men:

- home schooling for adults
- oral ESL programs for adults

b) women:

- fluency
- financial management/budgeting
- training for Hmong youth to care for elders with health problems
- job training:
  - o nursing
  - o secretary/computer
  - o teaching

c) youth males:

- speech programs
- Hmong history
- Laotian language
- Hmong arts
- Hmong culture
- How to make education fun and not boring

d) youth females:

- other cultures
- Hmong history

7) What would be the best way for you to learn about these topics?

a) men:

- provide free child care and educational materials
- provide interpreter

b) women:

- bi-lingual school tutors
- one-on-one

c) youth males:

- self taught
- learn from elders
- learn from parents
- learn them as a class in school
- learn from other organizations

d) youth females:

- in class
- offer students teaching opportunities

8) other thoughts:

a) men:

- need to improve relationships with non-Hmong community
- need to help Hmong parents with self-esteem issues

b) women:

- no responses

c) youth males:

- more educational activities instead of lectures from teachers
- Hmong should have own schools
- have a Hmong become a school principal
- Hmong should be treated more like Caucasians
- too much discrimination
- no support from Americans
- too much racism, that's why we join gangs or ESL nerds
- improve community service programs
- create more after-school programs
- create more affordable recreational places
- people shouldn't be judged on looks; eg: police arrest you because you are Asian or Hmong
- RACISM HURTS

d) youth females:

- want more job opportunities
- educate community as to why Hmong came to America
- lower college/university admission requirements