

The San Antonio Unity



October / November 2009

SERVING THE SAN ANTONIO DISTRICT, OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA

FREE



A Briefing on Health Care Reform

By Andy Nguyen

For the past several months, a topic that has dominated the news media has been health care reform. As it stands, the current health care insurance system is unsustainable with the rate of health care costs and premiums increasing at approximately four times the rate of inflation. While it is unclear in what form health care reform will occur, elected officials, the media, and many citizens agree that reform is necessary to both improve the health of Americans who are in need of medical attention and the health of our economy.

On Wednesday, September 9th, President Obama delivered a presidential address vowing that, although he would not be the first president to attempt solving the problems in our health care system, his goal was to be the last.

Central to both President Obama's address and health care reform opposition was the "public option," a proposed health care insurance option that would be sponsored and operated by the government. The appeal of a public health insurance option is that it would presumably expand health care coverage to the nearly

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Iu-Mien Village Farms Sustain a Lifelong Tradition

By Tamara Sturak

In the verdant hills of Laos, Nai Saephan, and Muang Saechao farmed the land from the time they were children until they immigrated to California. Growing food to sustain their families was not an occupation; it was a way of life. Farming acted as the thread that held together the fabric of their existence and the sustenance of their communities.

Now, imagine Nai and Muang uprooted from their homeland and living in the Mien community in Oakland, where land for gardens is scarce and the coastal climate does not support all of the vegetables they enjoyed in Laos. In urban Lower San Antonio, where others work as laborers, truck drivers, in shops and offices, the skills of Iu Mein farmers have not been widely recognized or supported.

Not, that is, until EBAYC's Grey Kolevzon came on the scene. Working in an after-school program at Roosevelt Middle School, Grey befriended children whose grand-parents loved to grow vegetables in their yards. Grey



got in touch with SAGE (Sustainable Agriculture Education), a nonprofit that helps farmers with business development and natural resource stewardship. SAGE subleased two acres of land in the Sunol AgPark to a group of six Mien families to farm organically and sustainably in April 2004. In 2007, the farms expanded to four acres, and Lew Chien Saelee of EBAYC became the fulltime coordinator, translator, and facilitator of the program, now known as Iu Mien Village Farms. The families are

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