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COVID-19 in 2020

A look back on health equity & community
resilience in Chinatown-International District

Presented by:



COVID-19 in 2020: A look back on health equity & community resilience in Chinatown-International District



June 2, 2020: A couple walks past boarded up businesses in the Chinatown-International District. Businesses boarded up after a night of rioting swept up Jackson Street on May 29 following national unrest after the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



June 30, 2020: (Left to right) Former ICCHS Foundation executive director Ron Chew and 2020 ICCHS marketing team Theo Bickel, Angela Toda, and Debbie Louie. The marketing team learns about the history of the Chinatown-International District from Chew, who is also a historian and author. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

ICCHS photo project: Our untold stories

By Hannah Krieg
IE Contributor

International Community Health Services (ICCHS) is a non-profit community health center, deeply rooted in the Asian and Pacific Islander community, with a mission to provide culturally and linguistically appropriate health and wellness services and promote health equity for all.

Its mission began 48 years ago when community activists fought to ensure that elders in the Chinatown-International District and Beacon Hill had access to health care. Today, ICCHS serves over 27,000 patients in more than 50 languages at 11 clinics and sites in Seattle, Bellevue and Shoreline.

Last year, with the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, ICCHS began documenting the historic events taking place in the CID neighborhood as part of a project for historical preservation, education and advocacy.

The project sought to capture the impacts of COVID-19, the community resilience in response to the pandemic, and the Black Lives Matter movement in the neighborhood. The project was also a chance to preserve long-time voices and institutions under threat and highlight the efforts of a rising, new generation of community residents, entrepreneurs, and activists.

The project was led by Seattle photo-journalist Karen Ducey and former ICCHS marketing and communications manager Angela Toda in partnership with International Examiner. The project was funded by Historic South Downtown, King County 4Culture, and Society of Professional Journalists.

"When [ICCHS] serves the community, it's much broader than checking vitals and treating ailments," said Ron Chew, who first put the project into motion as the former executive director of ICCHS Foundation. "Part of our role is to help share the stories of the community we serve and document our history."

Over the course of the project, Ducey produced over 60 photoshoots and Toda interviewed dozens of people. Chew said the project was able to get "stories that slipped under the radar" of mainstream coverage throughout 2020.

"Because [ICCHS] is right in the community, we are in a particular strong position to hear those stories and make them heard."

The following pages feature the stories and images of community resilience in the CID and API communities in 2020.

View more photos and information from the ICCHS photo project online at iexaminer.org. ■



May 29, 2020: Sherri Chu, the front desk coordinator at ICCHS Legacy House in Seattle, puts a mask on resident Chen Zhixian. "We try our best to make sure the residents wear a mask," Chu says. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

Thank You to Our Sponsors

Funding for the ICCHS photo project in partnership with Karen Ducey Photography was provided by King County 4Culture, the SPJ Western Washington Passion Projects grant, Historic South Downtown and ICCHS. The writing and production was funded by Historic South Downtown and International Community Health Services. ■



At the Wing!

Select photos from the ICCHS photo project are featured in Wing Luke Museum's new exhibit "Community Spread: How We Faced a Pandemic," which examines the early days of the pandemic to show how uncertainty, fear, anti-Asian racism, and existing inequalities shaped the way COVID-19 has affected different APA communities.

For more information, visit wingluke.org. ■

One year under the shadow of the pandemic

By Ron Chew

International Community Health Services

After living through the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic for one full year, new vaccines now offer hope that life can — and will — return to solid ground.

This challenging year will be hard to forget. It changed us forever.

Let's look back.

In early March, 2020, the COVID-19 virus first found its way into the Chinatown-International District, the hub of the Asian Pacific American community. At the International House Apartments, an employee tested positive for the deadly new disease. Two other employees were in quarantine.

The high-rise structure, constructed in 1978 after activists demanded more quality affordable housing for the area, was home to 100 non-English speaking seniors. No one knew if other residents there — or in the other low-income apartments in the neighborhood — had also been infected.

The International House Apartments is several blocks from the bustling medical-dental clinic operated by International Community Health Services (ICHS), the largest health care provider for APIs in Washington state. Today, ICHS provides services to 27,000 patients in more than 50 languages at 11 clinics and sites.

Springing into action, ICHS President and CEO Teresita Batayola and other non-profit leaders established a drive-through testing site on March 16 in front of ICHS' clinic on 8th Avenue South. The public health department provided 200 test kits. In the first week, ICHS staff administered 96 tests. Results for 16 came back positive for the virus.

As the pandemic raged through the state and the number of fatal infections soared, Washington Governor Jay Inslee ordered the closure of nonessential businesses. Restaurants and shops through the neighborhood were shuttered. Residents were advised to stay home and avoid public contact. Travel ground to a halt.

Meanwhile, ICHS operations and services were drastically curtailed. At one point, 40 percent of all staff were furloughed. There was a desperate search for protective masks, gowns, medical supplies, and financial support.

While ICHS waited for funding relief through the emergency federal stimulus package, it managed to keep its door open thanks to the scrappy commitment of staff and an outpouring of community support. ICHS received a stream of donated surgical masks and other vital supplies as well as financial contributions from individuals, foundations, and businesses.

On March 30, Crawfish King surprised ICHS staff with 80 packaged meals. On April 18, Maria Nguyen, an Everett resident, drove down to the ICHS Holly Park clinic with 100 cotton masks she had sewn herself. On June 5, Tasty Pot donated 40 packaged meals and 40 bubble teas to the Shoreline clinic. The Taiwanese American



March 23, 2020: Streets are deserted in Seattle's Chinatown International District during Governor Jay Inslee's stay-at-home order. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

Professionals-Seattle brought 60 meals to the Bellevue clinic.

These unexpected acts of kindness and generosity have continued regularly—and frequently—to this day.

ICHS has weathered the storm, steadily ramping up its services once again.

To date, ICHS has vaccinated over 28,000 people and conducted about 90,000 tests. “We have also informed many, many people about vaccine safety and cared for those who tested positive who are recovering at home,” Batayola said.

ICHS has put into place new protocols, including masking, increased hygiene, testing, and social distancing. “Telehealth appointments and prescription delivery are now available,” Batayola said. “We continue to adapt to the evolving health care environment.”

ICHS operates an assisted living program at Legacy House, adjacent to the ICHS clinic. The program is called PACE, an acronym that stands for Program of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly. It currently serves 65 people. It's the model for a new “aging in place” program that ICHS plans to open on north Beacon Hill in 2023, after completion of a \$20 million fundraising effort.

Mike Wong, ICHS Healthy Aging and Wellness Program Director, said Legacy House residents were “hyper-aware of COVID-19” early on because many hailed from China. “Our participants were already staying home and declining mass gatherings like our regular day center activities when the virus was not yet global news.”

In late December 2020, the first deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines arrived at Legacy House. “Within about four weeks we had administered at least a first dose of the vaccine to many of our residents and participants,” Wong said. “Now we're in a wait-and-see mode.”

Alan Chun, an ICHS physician for 27 years, proudly noted: “ICHS has successfully managed Legacy House through the past year of this epidemic without a single resident being infected.”

But battling the COVID-19 virus itself hasn't been the only giant challenge.

Last year, President Trump fanned the flames of xenophobia and anti-Asian sentiment by using the terms “China virus” and “Kung Flu.” On March 26, vandals smashed a window at Jade Garden Restaurant. On April 12, three men plastered alt-right white supremacist stickers near Asian businesses. On May 11, the Viet Wah supermarket was burglarized. Other incidents of vandalism and robbery have proliferated.

In 2021, increasing reports of attacks against Asian seniors in Chinatowns across the country—beginning around Lunar New Year—brought renewed concern about a hidden public health crisis that has been ignored. It was no different in the Chinatown-International District, where community elders have been frequently assaulted and robbed for many years.

“The disease of racial bigotry and hatred has been heightened during this pandemic,” Batayola said. “It's so tragic that these acts of violence and

scapegoating have targeted elderly and women. We need to put a stop to this.”

Batayola has been a leading voice among community health center leaders calling on the federal government to redress the historic inequities in policies and programs serving immigrants and refugees.

Following the May 25, 2020 murder of George Floyd, an unarmed African American in Minneapolis, thousands of demonstrators marched through Seattle streets, demanding an end to police brutality. Over 100 businesses were vandalized, including 20 in the CID. Jade Garden was struck again. The area looked like a scarred war zone. The protests further highlighted the fragility of the neighborhood.

Volunteers went up and down the streets, removing debris and covering storefronts with plywood. Over the next week, young artists painted the plywood with beautiful Asian murals and words of inspiration and racial unity.

Today, many storefronts and small businesses in the Chinatown-ID remain boarded up. Fears over public safety continue to deter visitors and to make residents hesitant to leave their apartments.

But community activists and longtime business owners remain optimistic that once the pandemic subsides, the neighborhood will rebuild.

Harry Chan, owner of the Tai Tung Restaurant, established in 1935, said, “Yes, I think things will return to normal. I don't know when, but it will eventually. Hopefully soon.” ■

COVID-19 in 2020: On the Frontlines of Health

International Community Health Services (ICHS) is one of the nation’s nearly 1,400 federally qualified health centers serving 30 million people, most of them low income, immigrants, and refugees. In February 2020, ICHS was also the nation’s first federally qualified health center with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. ICHS staff have been on the frontlines with our communities since the start of the pandemic, having vaccinated over 28,000 people against COVID-19, conducted over 90,000 tests, and cared for those who tested positive who are recovering at home. ICHS offers a window into the pandemic and a tumultuous yearlong series of events. Our stories bear witness to those who were our champions, confidants, and caretakers. They show the resilience of our community and the transformative power of simple kindness. ■



July 31, 2020: Rattana Chaokhote, Clinical Services supervisor at ICHS, dons a mask that reads, "This is not a health insurance plan," at a COVID-19 drive thru and walk-in testing site held for people in the Pacific Islander community at Federal Way High School. A report by the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) and Bellevue-based Institute for Disease Modeling (IDM) analyzing COVID-19 data highlighted the pandemic's disproportionate and increasing impact on communities of color. At the time, rates of infection for Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander people were reported as being nine times higher than those of white people. Hospitalization rates were reported as ten times higher for Native Hawaiians or other Pacific Islanders than those of white people. "We know the COVID-19 pandemic has intensified the health inequities historically marginalized and oppressed communities already experience," said Dr. Kathy Lofy, former state health officer at DOH. "These data are deeply concerning and underline the critical need to address the COVID-19 impacts we're currently seeing by prioritizing outreach, testing, education, and related materials for disproportionately impacted communities in ways that are culturally and linguistically appropriate and accessible." (Photo by Karen Ducey)



June 18, 2020: Clinic supervisor Qing Weng (right) speaks Mandarin to a person coming in for a COVID-19 test that Erin Olanrewaju, ARNP, (left) administers at a drive-through testing site at the ICHS Shoreline clinic. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



July 27, 2020: Rosalie Rivero, Clinic Care Coordinator at the Highland Health Center in Highland Middle School, delivers a camp kit to Sean Villanueva, 14, at his home in Bellevue. Since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020 and the middle school closed, the health center operated by ICHS has been reaching out to students through virtual summer camps. The camps allow health care workers to check on the mental and physical health of students who were insulated in their home due to the social restrictions of COVID-19. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



March 20, 2020: Dr. Alan Chun of ICHS Legacy House checks on a patient who suffered a fall. Three days later, Washington state Gov. Jay Inslee issued a stay-at-home order to help curb the spread of the coronavirus. A mask mandate went into effect on June 26, and a faction of the Black Lives Matter protest swept through the CID on June 29. It took a toll on the elderly. "If you're at Legacy House and all the windows are boarded up and you're isolated, I mean, it can be very confusing for a lot of these older people. Some of them are confused about where they are or what the time is, or what's happening. They don't understand," Chun said. (Photo by Karen Ducey / Getty Images)



March 26, 2020: ICHS Health care workers set up a drive-through testing site for COVID-19 outside their International District location. Serving uninsured, low income, and immigrant communities, many who rely on federal aid programs, the COVID-19 pandemic devastated the finances of non-profit community health centers across the country at a time when they were gravely needed. The lack of federal response to aid community clinics led to furloughs, alterations of operations and a decrease in patients that may result in long-lasting, devastating impacts. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



July 30, 2020: Frances Pele, age 12, whose family is from Samoa, looks at nurse practitioner Tess Sorbo, as she is about to be tested for COVID-19 at Federal Way High School. Joseph Seia from the Pacific Islander Community Association said, “We have the highest infection rates, highest hospitalization rates. Not just here in Washington State for Pacific Islanders, but throughout the country and places like California, Oregon, Arkansas. And so we know our communities as most impacted during this crisis because of decades of health disparities, and systems that are unresponsive to Pacific Islander community health needs.” (Photo by Karen Ducey)



July 30, 2020: ICHS nurse practitioner, Tess Sorbo, works out of the back of her car to give regular childhood vaccines to students who attend the Seattle World School in the parking lot of Dearborn Park International Elementary School. “We don’t want to get even more behind than we already are, right? And COVID has definitely limited the access to healthcare universally for a lot of populations who just don’t understand that they can still access their doctor and stuff like that,” said Sorbo. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



December 2, 2020: Nurses stand six-feet apart during a weekly meeting at ICHS' Holly Park clinic. Tram Le, health center manager for Holly Park, said, "We try our best to maintain [social distancing]. They show up at work every day to support the providers, to serve our patients. That really means a lot to me as a health center manager and to the providers." (Photo by Karen Ducey)



August 7, 2020: Lisa DiFedele (left), Infection Prevention and Control Administrator at the International Community Health Services, sprays a sweet or bitter substance into the hood of Adriana Taquiva, a dental assistant at the ICHS Shoreline clinic, to make sure her N-95 mask is working and fitted properly. DiFedele says, "We've been at a critical shortage of masks, pretty much from the beginning. We've had a lot of masks. And we've had a lot of support from community members, donating masks, but as you're seeing, they have to fit correctly in order for the staff to be able to use them." (Photo by Karen Ducey)



October 14, 2020: Health care professionals assist patients at the International Community Health Services Clinic. After the state relaxed its COVID-19 restrictions and people ventured outside wearing masks, there was a surge in demand for medical services. This caused great demand on the staff. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



December 23, 2020: ICHS frontline staff strike a pose after receiving Moderna COVID-19 vaccinations. The Moderna vaccines arrived after an earlier shipment of the Pfizer vaccine never materialized, possibly in response to federal-level hiccups in distribution. The precious vials, each of which holds 10 doses, were a milestone at the end of 2020 on the path to ending the pandemic. They are also emblematic of a national battle to ensure equity in who should be prioritized. At the same time the delivery offered new hope, lingering uncertainties about future supplies, pace of rollout, and who would qualify also presented new challenges in what felt like a race against time as cases continue to rise. ICHS' mass testing site at Bellevue performed over 21,000 tests in the first month of opening on December 15. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

Vaccine brings hope to hard-hit frontline health workers

By Angela Toda

International Community Health Services

On December 23, International Community Health Services (ICHS) was among the area's first health centers to receive doses of the COVID-19 vaccine and begin vaccinating frontline health workers.

Reactions were jubilant, as staff saw the end of a tough year and the nation's largest health crisis, come into sight.

"I'm not hesitant at all," said Ping Yang, acupuncturist and the first to get the vaccine at the ICHS International District Clinic. "This is good for yourself, and for the community and for your family."

Hope for normalcy included ICHS Legacy House residents cut off from family and social activities when state orders limited outside visitors. The assisted living facility was fortunate. Unlike many congregate care facilities, it has had zero cases of infection.

Raymond He, resident service specialist, looks forward to the eventual return of families. "There are a lot of

needs that these residents have that we just can't provide." The isolation has been tough, he said. So has the loss of a regular routine. "It's really taken a toll on all of them. Before they would do activities and socialize and come downstairs for meals, but now that's just not a thing."

Much of ICHS' staff come from within the communities the health clinic serves, and includes people of color, immigrants and refugees, who speak English as a second language. Many live in multigenerational homes that put family members in frequent close contact with each other.

Linh Lam Van, clinic support supervisor at the International District Clinic, described the stress of isolating from her elderly parents. She looks forward to safely caring for them and her three young children again. "From the beginning, everyone was so scared," she said. "When I get home, I make sure I remove everything. I clean."

"My hope for 2021 is everyone can get vaccinated and then we can go back to somewhat normal lives," said Caiyou

Wu, medical assistant at the ICHS International District Clinic. She wants her child back in school, she said. "Honestly, social distance with your family and your friends and other people, is kind of tiring for those last few months."

Some staff members cried — visibly shaken by the emotion and symbolism of moving on from a pandemic that has severely taxed them, possibly more than any other event in the health center's nearly 50-year history.

"Especially for the frontline, because we are in really, really close contact with the patient," said Van.

In addition to PPE shortages, fears of infection and daily uncertainty, frontline health workers have contended with acute resource and staffing shortages and disrupted work-life balance. They face a high risk of depression, anxiety and burnout — with much of the daily burden disproportionately shouldered by working women like Van, who are more likely to be sandwiched between work, childcare and giving care to aging parents.

Dr. Beth Weitensteiner, assistant

medical director at ICHS Holly Park Clinic described staff as "heroes," acutely aware of their responsibilities. "They're the people that are coming in, and they too are concerned about themselves, concerned about their family."

"We should also be very compassionate to our staff and understand what they're going through," said Aliya Haq, ICHS nutrition services manager. She pointed out the weight on staff, as patients see only a seamless change with new safety protocols and new services, like telehealth and telephone appointments; unaware of the behind-the-scenes work. "They are people who also need to be taken care of."

Nearly all of ICHS' staff have patients, friends and family members, who have been touched by the pandemic.

"It is really difficult to read about almost 3,000 healthcare workers in this country that have passed away from COVID," said Mary Wilson, RN at ICHS Legacy House, as she took turns vaccinating staff members. "This is just such an exciting moment to get this vaccine and to be part of this." ■



March 18, 2021: Kuang Suying, age 60, who works in a noodle factory in the CID, smiles after getting a COVID-19 vaccination shot at an ICHS pop-up clinic at the Bush Asia Center. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

ICHS opens COVID-19 vaccination site in Bellevue

By Chetanya Robinson and
Theo Bickel

International Community Health Services

Dubbed ‘Vax Day’ by public officials and media outlets, April 15 marked the day that all Washingtonians over 16 became eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. The day became a major goal post in Washington state’s vaccine rollout.

As part of ongoing efforts to expand vaccine access in underserved communities, on April 23, International Community Health Services (ICHS) opened its fourth and newest vaccination site at its Bellevue clinic. Taking place in the recently remodeled south wing of the clinic, this site allows ICHS for the first time to offer vaccinations on a large scale on the Eastside.

ICHS has been delivering COVID-19 doses at its vaccination sites in the Chinatown-International District, Holly Park and Shoreline, and community pop-up vaccine clinics. ICHS has mostly been offering the Moderna vaccine, and until recently, the Johnson & Johnson vaccine, said Rachel Koh, chief operating officer with ICHS. Both vaccines are approved for people ages 18 and up. With eligibility now open to anyone 16 years and older, ICHS chose the Bellevue clinic to begin offering the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine, which is approved for people ages 16 and up.

To date ICHS has vaccinated over 25,000 people against COVID-19, both



ICHS staff welcome patients and community members who have vaccination appointments at its Bellevue clinic on April 23. (ICHS photo)

ICHS patients and community members who made appointments online.

So far, 52 percent of ICHS patients over the age of 50 have been vaccinated. “That’s a pretty successful number for us,” Koh said. In order to reach younger patients, including the patient population at ICHS’ school-based health center at Seattle World School, Pfizer-BioNTech was the only option.

“Looking forward, we’ll continue to deliver the vaccines to marginalized populations,” said Koh, including people of color, immigrants and refugees, and people who speak English as a second language. “That will continue to be our main focus.”

Now that it was his turn to be vaccinated, it was “peace of mind” that he would not spread COVID-19, especially to his young daughter. “It’s a responsibility,” Vishnu said, “to not be the unconscious carrier and put people at risk.”

The day before ICHS opened its Bellevue vaccine site, Gov. Jay Inslee declared Washington was experiencing a fourth wave of COVID-19 cases. Case numbers and hospitalizations are rising, particularly among younger people. Dr. Asqual Getaneh, ICHS chief medical officer, shared that the uptick in cases is caused by both the increased spread of the more contagious COVID-19 variants in our region and behavior.

As a community health center serving many BIPOC immigrant and refugee communities, it’s particularly important that ICHS’ young patients get vaccinated, said Getaneh, because immigrant families tend to be multigenerational and are working in high-risk congregate settings.

With vaccine availability increasing significantly, ICHS’ Bellevue Clinic is one of the many new community sites ensuring the vaccine is distributed as quickly and as equitably as possible. She implored everyone to get the vaccine as soon as possible. “The faster that we reach herd immunity,” said Getaneh, “the better for our community and state to control COVID-19.” ■

"Peace of mind"

Vishnu Sadhana received his COVID-19 vaccine at ICHS’ Bellevue Clinic on April 23. It was “a no brainer” to get vaccinated, said the young father.

While initially, the emergency authorization and the new mRNA technology in the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine made him curious about the vaccine development, Vishnu never felt anxious about getting vaccinated when it would be his turn. He shared that his sister-in-law, a physician, received her vaccine early during the state’s vaccine rollout.

COVID-19 in 2020: Community Resilience

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, ICHS patients — a majority of whom are low income and people of color — were among the most impacted. Many were neighborhood residents or workers in already precarious situations. They were more likely to have preexisting health conditions that put them at risk. Many faced language and other barriers that left them isolated. And many work in low-paying jobs, often without health insurance. Their burdens were compounded when COVID-19 closed schools and childcare centers. Multigenerational households became crowded with parents, in-laws, and uprooted college students. Socioeconomic disparities threatened to widen long-standing achievement gaps. Overseeing remote learning became an exhausting second occupation for working parents, and especially for working mothers. Yet, in the face of adversity, our communities demonstrated a continuing resilience through strength of solidarity.

The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services defines community resilience as the sustained ability of communities to withstand, adapt to, and recover from adversity. A resilient community is socially connected and has accessible health systems that are able to withstand disaster and foster community recovery. The community can take collective action after an adverse event because it has developed resources that reduce the impact of major disturbances and help protect people's health. Resilient communities promote individual and community physical, behavioral, and social health to strengthen their communities for daily, as well as extreme, challenges.

Seattle's Chinatown International-District is a unique community — one of the last true ethnic neighborhoods in the city. The COVID-19 pandemic, anti-Asian sentiments, and racial riots shook this tight-knit community in 2020. Local nonprofits and young Asian American volunteers banded together to provide food, health, community, and safety. Their collaborative response to the pandemic was a one-of-a-kind effort, not found anywhere else in Seattle. ■



April 23, 2020: A resident in the Bing Kung building, a single room occupancy structure in the CID, peers out from his door into the hallway. Rachtha Danh, from the Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda), is delivering masks to residents with help from the building manager. Each bag contains three masks that were hand-made and donated. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



April 14, 2020: Teresita Batayola (right), President and CEO of ICHS, and Ian Munar, ICHS Strategic Initiatives Administrator (left) participate on a conference call with 14 other community leaders in Seattle. The teleconference brought various community groups together to collaborate on the Chinatown-International District response to the COVID-19 pandemic. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

Refugee Artisan Initiative

Twelve artisans in Refugee Artisan Initiative's program plus an additional twelve temporary community volunteers sewed 80,000 cloth face masks shipped not only within the CID community, but all over the country including healthcare providers in NYC, postal workers in Michigan and Colorado, and thousands to the Navajo Nation. Unused clean bedsheets were donated by California Design DEN that were 100% cottons with high thread counts, "the best for mask making," said Refugee Artisan Initiative founder Ming-Ming Tung-Edelman.



April 21, 2020: Ming-Ming Tung-Edelman, founder of the Refugee Artisan Initiative, works at her shop fulfilling orders in Seattle. On this day, 500 masks were made by independent sewers to be delivered to seniors in the community. The shop employs refugee women from Vietnam, Ethiopia, China, Myanmar, and Morocco. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 30, 2020: The Asian Counseling and Referral Service gymnasium is transformed into an area where staff and volunteers pack bags of groceries to be distributed to seniors throughout King County. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

Food for Our Seniors

As the nation began efforts to contain COVID-19, the restrictions meant to keep people safe had also left many elders and other vulnerable populations in isolation. Services people relied upon on a day-to-day basis were suddenly inaccessible due to the uncertainty during the heights of the pandemic.

Many seniors were afraid to go outside due to the threat of COVID-19 facing hunger, isolation, and behavioral health issues. Community organizations in the CID and throughout King County adapted quickly by mobilizing efforts to get food and care packages to our AAPI elders and other vulnerable community members. ■

Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS)

Since the start of the pandemic, Asian Counseling and Referral Service (ACRS) helped coordinate the preparation of approximately 2,250 meals and 2,250 bags full of groceries each week, delivered Monday through Friday. The vast majority of meals and bagged groceries went to AAPI elders. Many of them live in the CID; however, King County Access Transportation and various community groups helped deliver to isolated and homebound elders all over King County. Volunteer drivers from over 20 organizations delivered the meals.

Liza Javier, communications manager at ACRS, said: “We wanted to provide healthy meals and groceries to elders during the pandemic while ensuring they could remain safe at home. The effort started in March 2020 and continues to this day. ACRS paid for the majority of food by way of Wismettac Asian Foods, Golden International Corporation, Ba Mien Seafood Market, Restaurant Depot, Smart Food Service, City Produce, Lee’s Fresh Produce, Blossom Vegetarian Restaurant, and International Food Bazaar. Food Lifeline regularly provides donated food, and community members occasionally stop by with donated items. And we have to thank the thousand-plus community members and organizations who raise funds for the food bank during our annual Walk for Rice fundraiser year after year. The ACRS Food Bank is truly powered by the community for the community.”



May 7, 2020: Volunteers Niharika “Nikki” Advani (left) and Sauwan Chin (right) prepare chicken Udon noodle soup at ACRS. Food and groceries were prepared to distribute throughout the CID and King County. On this day, 440 noodle soups were prepared and 280 bags of groceries were prepared. Volunteers and staff from SCIDpda picked them up and delivered them. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 29, 2020: Chef Gustavo “Panda” Pineda prepares chicken udon noodle soup in Seattle, Wash. Pineda had been laid off from his job due government mandates closing all restaurants for dining to help curb the spread of COVID-19. Now he has volunteered everyday at ACRS for the past three months. On this day he will make six big woks of soup. Koway Ko, who works with Panda in the kitchen, explains why they volunteer: “I think it’s important for someone to just try to be the light in the dark. I think that’s what the world’s missing. If we all stand together, we’re so powerful. And it’s awesome.” (Photo by Karen Ducey)



April 21, 2020: Culturally appropriate food is prepared at ICHS Legacy House for seniors living in apartments in the CID who were facing hunger and isolation. ICHS collaborated with many other community based organizations at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic and through the summer to provide food. Other organizations also provided groceries. Many restaurants in CID also provided hot meals. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES (ICHS)

As of April 2021, ICHS has served and delivered over 45,000 meals to seniors during the pandemic. ICHS, through Foodservice Dept, ordered the ingredients and disposables. ICHS Legacy House kitchen staff did all the cooking and preparation for the meal deliveries. Funding came from the City of Seattle and Tilth. “During this difficult time, a lot of the seniors depended on getting nutritious hot meals, and for some this is their only meal of the day,” said ICHS Healthy Aging and Wellness Program Director Mike Wong. “Many are unable to go to grocery stores and some have lost personal caregiver services due to COVID-19. We try to help our seniors in any way we can.”



June 4, 2020: Dr. Lisa Chan from International Community Health Services explains the directions on a bottle of Vitamin C to Guofu Cao, one of her patients, outside the Kong Yick building. Weekly, Chan brought bags of groceries to some of her patients on her day off as a way of checking up on them. Storefronts all over Seattle were boarded up after riots broke out over the death of George Floyd while in the custody of a white police officer in Minneapolis in May 2020. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 21, 2020: Volunteers from SCIDpda deliver meals to residents in the CID. On Tuesdays and Fridays around lunchtime, wagons filled with groceries and hot meals can be seen pulled by volunteers to deliver food to those fearful of leaving their homes during the pandemic. SCIDpda purchased 10 wagons for this purpose. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

Seattle Chinatown International District Preservation and Development Authority (SCIDpda)

SCIDpda estimates since early March 2020, they have coordinated volunteers and staff to deliver on average 350 bags of groceries per week to low-income seniors, families with kids, and single households. As of April 2021, SCIDpda has delivered over 20,000 grocery bags and 15,000 meals. Weekly groceries have come primarily from the ACRS Food Bank and senior meals have been provided by ICHS. Additional hot meals have come from ACRS and neighborhood restaurants. A consistent pool of 10-15 volunteer drivers picks up the food at the ACRS building in Rainier Valley and shuttles the grocery bags in their personal vehicles to the CID, where another consistent group of volunteers and SCIDpda property staff help with unloading grocery bags and delivering them door-to-door. At the peak of the summer in 2020, they had over 30 volunteers delivering groceries and meals and an additional 10 staff members assisting with coordination and distribution.

“This effort has been a priority for SCIDpda since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic,” said SCIDpda Director of Property Operations Jared Jonson. “As the pandemic unfolded and people, especially those most vulnerable, such as seniors, were advised to limit their activity outside of their homes in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19, it just made sense for SCIDpda, per our mission and values, to assist our residents and those in need throughout the CID neighborhood in meeting their basic food needs.”



May 7, 2020: Volunteers and staff from SCIDpda stop on Maynard Avenue in the CID to distribute food and groceries to residents. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



April 24, 2020: Pok Yip, SCIDpda maintenance staff, brings hot meals prepared by ICHS to elderly residents of the Bush Hotel building in the CID. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 28, 2020: Vincent Kwan, interim program manager at InterIm CDA, speaks with Mei Lee Fong, an 89-year-old resident at the International House in the CID. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, InterIm CDA has been distributing free groceries donated by ACRS to people who have been afraid to go out because of racial profiling and fears of contracting COVID-19.

"It's called disaster gentrification," Kwan said. "An already vulnerable neighborhood having the impacts of COVID is already accelerating the gentrification that's already happening. So, we're very concerned about that. This community is meant for people that have been marginalized, have been pushed away from white neighborhoods historically. And they found refuge here. How do we protect a historical landmark and also a historical place for folks that call it home?" (Photo by Karen Ducey)

InterIm CDA

InterIm CDA delivered between 200 and 900 bags of groceries per day to seniors and families living in low income housing. The groceries were supplied by ACRS Food Bank, Sun Asian Produce, and Uwajimaya. Up to 40 volunteers and staff helped in the effort. "We felt this was important because we knew our community members were struggling because of the pandemic," said InterIm CDA Equitable Development Policy Analyst Derek Lum. "Seniors were isolated and afraid. Families were losing their income because of the shutdown. Food was harder to buy. So to support everybody we needed to take these actions and help mitigate the hunger and show that somebody does care for these folks."



May 28, 2020: InterIm CDA volunteer Carmen Hom, carries groceries donated by ARCS up a long flight of stairs in the Kong Yick building to people who need it in the CID. Hom heard about the community volunteer effort from social media and has been doing it for weeks. "I think its really cool how neighbors are helping neighbors," she said. The grocery bags were full of fresh food including bok choy, ramen noodles, broccoli water, mashed potatoes, and zucchini. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 28, 2020: 71-year-old Yan Nong Cui receives a bag of groceries delivered by volunteers from InterIm CDA to her home in the Kong Yick building in the Chinatown-International District. Cui says there is no internet service in the building. The only way for her to get any news is from her cell phone. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



July 20, 2020: Chinatown-International District Night Watch volunteers pose for a photo at Hing Hay Park. Matthew Toles, 26, started the night watch patrols to address long-standing problems in the wake of the George Floyd protests. “The events of June 1 were more of a catalyst than a motivation,” Toles said. “They were what got the community together and what made it very apparent that nobody was going to take care of us and that we have to do it ourselves.” (Photo by Karen Ducey)



September 2, 2020: Lisa Wong, a supervisor at Tom Bihn, Inc. in Seattle, makes non-medical face masks. Tom Bihn, Inc. usually produces backpacks and travel bags but started making masks at the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Making reusable masks was a good solution to keep their employees working and help the company break even.

Tom Bihn Inc. is located in the SoDo District where Seattle’s garment industry was historically located. Many people, mostly women, from the CID made up this workforce. Today Tom Bihn’s workforce is very diverse. Almost half are people of Chinese descent. According to their website, the Tom Bihn company designed and made over one million non-medical face masks, donating over 200,000 masks to elder communities, tribal nations, and food banks. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC)

CISC responded to more than 10,000 requests for assistance with new unemployment applications and weekly claim filings during the pandemic. Their Rapid Response Team provided more than 260 updates in language to community related to COVID-19 response, news, and emergency programs. CISC staff visited senior housing buildings 25 times to assist with interpretation and logistics related to vaccinations.

International District Emergency Center (IDEC)

As an emergency response organization operating in the C-ID for over 50 years, IDEC provided equipment, volunteers and supplies to facilitate other organizations in testing residents for Covid-19. At a time when PPE was difficult to find, IDEC provided 10,000 surgical masks, 24,000 nitrile gloves, 1,000 bottles of hand sanitizers, 200 KN95 masks, 100 face shields, 100 isolation gowns, and 10 no-contact thermometers to seven CID organizations.

COVID-19 in 2020: A New Normal

As the COVID-19 pandemic forced people to adapt their lifestyles to a new kind of normal in 2020, there was no real playbook for a fluid situation that changed by the day. ICHS stretched staff and resources to buckle down on our mission — ensuring all people, regardless of immigration status or income, had access to high-quality, affordable health care.

During the pandemic, people had to adapt during stay-at-home orders and change routines. From schools to commerce, from closer family units to others becoming farther away, curbing the spread of the disease meant isolation, keeping a social distance, and reinventing the way do things and interact with one another.

ICHS leadership and staff worked with community partners to find new ways to reach the old, young, and everyone in between with telehealth, home visits, pop up health events, and drive thru services. Together, we sought to lessen the harmful impact of poverty, homelessness, substance use, mental illness, lack of nutrition, and unemployment.

COVID-19 laid bare long-standing inequities within an underfunded health care system that was fast outmatched by the pace of infection. Against this backdrop, ICHS struggled to stay solvent against rising costs, uncertain federal funding, and steep declines in patients seeking preventative care. Our staff and providers have met with constant uncertainty and stress.

As unemployment rises and more people lose their employee-sponsored health insurance, ICHS must remain open to provide care for all. Our patients continue to be disproportionately impacted by chronic disease; while the need for mental health care and treatment of depression, anxiety, and substance abuse threatens to boil over into a second wave of crisis.

COVID-19 played into the same systemic inequities that first redlined people of color into the Chinatown-International District, deprived them of medical care, and denied them equal opportunity. While a vaccine puts an end to the pandemic in sight, it doesn't address these long-standing fissures or the inadequacies of our current health care system. Instead, it lays bare our need to ensure the vaccine reaches those who need it most and to continue our fight to shore up funding for community health centers.

These challenges aside, our doors will stay open to whoever needs us. ICHS will always be here. We are a voice for health care as a human right — and the promise of a more vibrant, just, and sustainable society. ■



September 7, 2020: Wai Ying Wong, age 94, a resident at ICHS Legacy House, meets her great-grandson, Carson Yu, age 6 weeks. This is the first time he and his parents Michelle Faylona and Braniff Yu have been able to visit her since the pandemic hit in March 2020. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



November 12, 2020: Residents at ICHS Legacy House, an assisted living facility in the CID, get their hair cut by ICHS employees. Pictured is Xiaoli Wen, case manager for adult day services (holding broom) and Min Huang, adult day services administrator (with spray bottle).

Raymond He, resident service supervisor, said: "Today we're providing haircuts for our residents because, since we're going back to phase one in Washington state for our long-term care facilities, a lot of the families can't come in to provide the service. I think this came out of necessity. A lot of the residents, I mean, it's been a while since they've even left the facility and their hair has gotten so long. Family members that have been watching them over video calls or maybe come by to drop off something, they've noticed hair has been getting too long for them."

"Residents have come in to complain," He continued. "I think this is kind of like an important matter for them, especially the guys. A lot of the guys say, 'My hair shouldn't be long,' culturally, you know? So they really wanted to get their hair cut. I have no hair cutting experience. So I'm following their leads. ... They just want it shorter, just easier to manage. A lot of residents are really grateful for it. I think just having a haircut just brings them back to before COVID times, and that's something they really appreciate."

(Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 29, 2020: Wong Wai, 94, a resident at ICHS Legacy House, speaks on a Zoom meeting with her children and grandchildren in Seattle. Originally from mainland China, Wai moved to Hong Kong about 16 years ago and from there, emigrated to the United States in 2015. Legacy House staff set up a laptop so residents could communicate with their loved ones. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 29, 2020: Tan Zhong Lian, an 86-year-old Chinese immigrant from Guangdong province, practices tai chi on a balcony at ICHS Legacy House. Lian normally would do her daily exercise at a nearby park but since the governor's stay-at-home order, she has to practice on the balcony of the assisted living facility in the CID. "In the beginning, it was so difficult," Wong said. "Just start to quarantine, so difficult. Didn't know what to do. So boring, cannot go out. Now I got used to it because I find a place I can do exercise." (Photo by Karen Ducey)

A COVID-19 story: The pandemic tests a single mom

By Angela Toda

International Community Health Services

It's still dark when Dawn Ung rises. A single, working mom with two school-aged children and a third with a disability, she makes an early start to her job as an administrative supervisor at International Community Health Services (ICHS), a non-profit health center.

Ung's life was busy and stressful pre-pandemic. Now, each day brings a new test of her endurance.

"There are always speed bumps," said Ung. "Nothing really goes as planned in my world, so I just take it as it comes. I think that's the only way I know how to deal with things without making me crazy."

Ung is one of millions of exhausted women who have reached their limit, disproportionately shouldering the pandemic's load as caretakers, housekeepers, and wage earners.

Many have called it quits. Last September, an unprecedented 865,000 women over 20 left the U.S. workforce — four times more than men. The future impact on women and the workplace has yet to be determined.

The emotional and financial strain of the household, work, and the restaurant Ung co-owns with her sister, rest heavy. Once in a while, Ung hears her ex-husband is in town, but he's "out of the picture."

Ung was just 19 when she had her first-born, Devin. Three years ago, he was struck by a car, leaving severe, traumatic brain injuries. "He used to yap nonstop, and I used to have to tell him, 'Please shut up,'" and now that's gone she says, adding, "it doesn't seem real." Now 21, Devin has no speech. He tries to bat her away as she brushes his teeth, washes his face. "He's total care, wheelchair bound," said Ung.

The cost of Devin's care is steep. Along with medical bills for special equipment and a full-time caretaker, a personal loan Ung took out after the accident hangs over her head. "There's a lot of guilt there too, but what do you do?" she asks, acknowledging little time for the other kids.

Derin, her middle boy, a 17-year-old senior, lends his lanky, teenage muscle to the heavier job of lifting and moving Devin. With the pandemic, he and Ung's eight-year-old daughter Daylin, miss seeing their



August 10, 2020: Dawn Ung cares for her oldest son, Devin, 20, with assistance from her other son, Darin, 17, at their home in Rainier Beach in Seattle. Devin was in a car accident on September 26, 2017 that left him severely disabled from a traumatic brain injury. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

friends. Ung fears Daylin, who's big on recording Tik Tok dances at the moment, isn't learning enough from remote school. "She's struggling with reading and it's tough," said Ung. "I feel bad because I just don't have time to help her."

Ung's not alone. According to a report from the American Psychological Association (APA), the formidable task of meeting the needs of school-aged children is one of the stressors contributing to a national mental health crisis. Nearly 47% of women with children doing remote learning at home said their mental health had worsened during the pandemic, compared to 30% of men.

It's dark again. Devin's night routine puts Ung's bedtime past 1 a.m. Boxes from

a recent move line the hall unopened. An unexpected medical emergency for Devin costs her days from work. Getting three contractor bids for a wheelchair ramp — something she needs for Medicaid — proved impossible, so she pays out-of-pocket instead.

The pandemic adds to every challenge.

"People don't know what it takes," said Ung. "The time it takes, the effort it takes." She says she's not one to ask for help, even from family, who "mean well," but "don't walk in" her shoes. "I feel like I'm forgotten a lot." Some days are so hectic, "I wish there was a clone of me. Like two or three."

How will women like Ung — already stretched thin and long-inured to listening to their needs and fatigue — pick up the pieces

and start the process of recovery, once the immediate crisis of the pandemic ends?

The Biden Administration's \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan has started to make health care more accessible and includes a sweeping child anti-poverty measure that expands the child tax credit, as well as increases funding for safely reopening schools. It's a step forward that will strengthen the quality of life for American families, but doesn't put a price on all Ung has paid or help her fully reclaim it.

As a visitor leaves, Ung points out the new sneakers she gave Devin for his birthday — on a shelf, no creases or scuffs. She discovered he's now able to stand. Sometimes, his arms looped over hers, "we'll dance together." ■



August 10, 2020: Single mother Dawn Ung cares for her son Devin. "I get up about six o'clock," Ung said. "That's when Devin needs his first set of meds. And then I get him prepped and if he needs to be changed, I change him and start his water feed. I start him off in the morning with some water for hydration, and then his caretaker will come in at eight and then start her routine, which is total care after that." (Photo by Karen Ducey)



January 15, 2021: Dawn Ung gets the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine. While she looks forward to taking her son Devin out of the house and hosting a "huge gathering," her more immediate concern is the departure of his long-time caregiver. "Trying to find a caretaker at this time has been very challenging," Ung said.

Ung was born just 20 days after her parents arrived in the U.S. from Cambodia in 1980 and grew up immersed in the flavors of their popular Chinatown-International District restaurant, Phnom Penh Noodle House. She and her sister took over the business, which was just reopening when the first COVID-19 cases were discovered in the U.S. (ICHS photo)



May 8, 2020: Jenifer Chao, Deputy Director of Administration in the Consumer Protection Division for the City of Seattle's Finance and Administrative Services Department, works from home in her daughter's room during Governor Jay Inslee's stay-at-home order to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Chao belongs to the Mien community. Seven people from three generations live in her South Seattle home. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



February 24, 2021: Assistant manager June Huynh (left), bumps elbows with Judy Lew as they greet each other at Viet-Wah, an Asian grocery store located in Seattle's Little Saigon neighborhood. Bumping elbows instead of shaking hands or hugging became the proper way to greet someone to help curb the spread of COVID-19. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 10, 2020: Tony Ngo (center), age 20, a student at Carleton College, exercises with his mother Hong Ngo in their home in the CID. Ngo returned home to live with his parents after his school closed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. He said the experience has brought them closer together. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

COVID-19: ‘The way it spreads is fast’

By Angela Toda

International Community Health Services

Sierra Bigting wishes more people would stop putting themselves and others at risk for COVID-19.

A 27-year-old executive assistant at International Community Health Services (ICHS), a nonprofit community health center, she's a strict disciple of mask wearing, social distancing, and hand washing.

Last October, she got a first-hand look at the pandemic after members of her household contracted the virus. People need to take it more seriously, she says.

Bigting is Filipino-Japanese American and lives in a multigenerational household with her parents, grandparents, and two siblings. Bigting's stepfather and brother both work essential jobs. On Oct. 26, her 20-year-old brother came down with a cough. After confirming COVID-19, the whole family was tested.

"We're just sitting there waiting to see who has it and who doesn't," said Bigting, recalling how hard it was to convince family members to take the diagnosis seriously until her mom showed symptoms, and her stepfather and 21-year-old sister both tested positive. For safety's sake, the family decided to move Bigting and her elderly grandparents out of the house, far away from infected family members.

"My mom was like, 'You guys need to leave the house now. Pack up your stuff, you can't stay here anymore,'" she said. Bigting moved into a single hotel room with her grandparents.

Bigting's brush with the virus came during one of the most critical periods of the pandemic. Cases would rise with



March 26, 2020: Surgical masks hang in a window in the Chinatown-International District. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

colder weather, as people spent more time indoors and more time together. A few weeks after Thanksgiving, hospital beds in King County were nearly full. From Nov. 28 to Dec. 12, roughly 55,300 county residents were tested for COVID-19 and more than 9,800 were positive.

By the time ICHS launched the first free, large-scale testing site to open on the Eastside on Dec. 15, cases had hit new

records. The highest rates were in South King County, where Bigting and her family live. Local health officials feared a post-holiday surge.

"My mom was the worst," Bigting said. "I could tell she was wheezing, like having a hard time breathing."

The first week Bigting moved out, her mother was hospitalized for several nights on a breathing machine. "My stepdad

felt very helpless, leaving her there," she said. Unable to take time off from work, Bigting was thrust into the role of family caretaker, her mom too sick and her grandparents too frail to help. "I was just worried, how are we going to pay for all of this," she said.

As the U.S. continues to lead the world by cases at 34 million and deaths at over 608,000, Bigting's family has yet to fully recover. "My mom, she can breathe fine. But her energy level is still very low. She has a hard time doing dishes, so she just takes it easy. And she calls her exercise now folding laundry," Bigting said.

The family continues to social distance and wear masks, something Bigting is accustomed to but the rest of the family has had to learn. They wipe down "everything" and use disposable plates and utensils. "If we want to eat with each other, we just pull the chair really far and eat in different areas of the living room," she said. "Even watching TV sometimes, we do that too. We don't sit next to each other."

If there's been a silver lining, it's been the family's newfound vigilance, while Bigting has learned to let more go.

"I'm definitely a lot lighter as far as what I give my energy to and what's more important to me," she said. "Life is pretty short. All those small things you stress about, don't, it doesn't matter."

Bigting wants people to be more aware. To think before they act: "Because the way it spreads is fast." She describes her mother's tears as her stepfather returned to work for the first time and the lingering trauma from her hospitalization. "It's sad to hear her say, 'I thought I was gonna die there alone.'" ■



June 25, 2020: A two-alarm fire destroyed the three-story Eng Suey Family Plaza commercial building at 815 S. Weller Street in the CID which was home to several businesses. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



September 14, 2020: Smokey haze from western wildfires blankets Seattle. In the midst of the pandemic, a heated presidential election, and civil unrest around racial justice, the 2020 Washington Labor Day fires that burned more than 330,000 acres caused unhealthy air conditions throughout Puget Sound. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



October 21, 2020: Sabrina, age 4, and Smira Sanura, age 6, run through the hallway of Mercy House in Seattle as their family remains in quarantine to help curb the spread of COVID-19. They live with three other siblings, including a newborn, two parents who work, and their grandmother in their apartment. One of the girls says the hardest thing about online learning is you have to mute and unmute yourself. She says this year has been difficult because sometimes other kids are allowed outside to play, but their mother won't let them. ICHS has a partnership with Mercy House to pilot onsite health and wellness classes and events there. The girl's mother, Amina Osman who works as a nurse, said: "The biggest challenge is the fact that you have to be a mom and be a teacher at the same time. You have to multitask. Make sure food is at home and everything. So it's been tough taking care of a newborn and managing the kids as well." (Photo by Karen Ducey)



March 20, 2020: Teresa Moy (right) drops off face cream and pears for her mother-in-law, Suit Moy (left), at ICHS Legacy House, an assisted living facility in the CID. (Photo by Karen Ducey / Getty Images)



June 7, 2020: Vicki Hang, 28, and Billy Moua, 25, of Homemade Gardens, sell peony flower bouquets from their pop-up stand outside the Kau Kau Restaurant in the CID. They live in Seattle but their families' farm is in Monroe, Wash. They are Hmong farmers who normally sell their flowers in Pike Place Market, but since it closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, they've been looking for other ways to sell their flowers. (Photo by Karen Ducey)

COVID-19 in 2020: Standing Up to Hate

As the state’s largest health center serving the Asian Pacific Islander community, ICHS was among the businesses, residents, and organizations in Seattle’s Chinatown-International District caught in anti-Asian sentiment and racial tensions emerging from the pandemic’s early days.

As statewide restrictions at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic further froze social gatherings and businesses, the once bustling sidewalks stood bare and small mom-and-pop stores emptied.

When local protests of racial injustice emerged in June 2020 following the murder of George Floyd by a Minnesota police officer, businesses in the CID were left damaged and vandalized. The community cleaned up and put up plywood to protect storefronts in the neighborhood. In a show of solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, the community partnered with local artists to paint murals on the plywood boards with messages to bring attention to racial injustice.

The pandemic also brought on a surge of anti-Asian hate incidents as terms like "kung flu" and "Chinese virus" were used in media and by officials at the highest level of government. From March through December 2020, Stop AAPI Hate reported 2,808 incidents against AAPIs – a figure crowdsourced and likely an undercount. In addition, according to the FBI’s Annual Hate Crime Report, there were 7,134 hate crimes in 2019 – a marked increase from the year before. In Washington state, there were 542 hate crimes – the second highest per capita in the country. Rallies in the CID neighborhood brought diverse communities together and called for an end to anti-Asian hate.

The COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately affected communities of color, especially Black, Latinx, and Pacific Islander communities. This was evident in ICHS' patient population with over 85% people of color. ICHS remains committed to improving health outcomes, dismantling barriers that harm our communities, and fighting against xenophobia and racism. ■



May 30, 2020: A red lamp post is reflected in a broken window of a storefront on Jackson Street in the CID following a night of local protests after the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 30, 2020: Chinatown-International District residents Julia Yen and Alan Trang sweep up glass and debris on Jackson Street after a night of protests over the murder of George Floyd became violent. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 30, 2020: Amy Eng, owner of the Dim Sung King restaurant on 6th and Jackson, talks about how after rioters broke her windows, someone broke in through the back door later that night and stole money from the restaurant. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 30, 2020: Shiquan Li, owner of the Dong Sing Market closes early as rumors spread that there could be another night of rioting in the Chinatown-International District. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



June 14, 2020: Sheila Locke from NastyMix Entertainment spins Asian fusion tunes at Hing Hay Park during a community arts event in the Chinatown-International-District. Dozens of artists came together to paint murals in support of the Black Lives Matter movement on plywood at businesses that had been boarded up because of recent riots. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



June 9, 2020: Fifth graders from Mr. Daichi Hirata's class at the Waldorf School, including Kabir Sethi (center) and Mika Kodama-Chew (on ladder) paint a mural of a Chinese lion over the boarded up storefront of the Fortuna Cafe in the Chinatown-International District. The kids were distracted by firemen putting out a fire at the building across the street. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



June 14, 2020: Misha Zadeh and Ben Graham (not pictured) paint a Black Lives Matter mural on the boarded up ICHS Vision Clinic in Seattle's Chinatown-International District. "It's really cool to see the arts community come together and put effort into such a good cause," Zadeh said. Several community arts events were held to beautify the boarded up storefronts and support the Black Lives Matter movement. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



July 20, 2020: Chinatown-International District Night Watch volunteers pick up trash as they patrol the neighborhood. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



July 20, 2020: Harry Chan (right), his brother Tommy Quan, and daughter Lisa Chan at the Tai Tung Restaurant in the Chinatown-International District. Chan's restaurant was broken into three nights in a row in the past week. The Chan family has owned the restaurant since 1935. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 30, 2020: A storefront in the Chinatown-International District is vandalized after a night of protests. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



May 30, 2020: Maintenance crews from SCIDpda board up storefronts on one of their buildings on South Jackson Street. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



March 20, 2021: Juliana Winters and her son Oliver Winters, age 5, protest anti-Asian hate crimes at a rally called "Kids vs. Racism" at Hing Hay Park in the Chinatown-International District. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



March 20, 2021: Helen Wong Taylor speaks through a megaphone with her baby, Jana Taylor, age 4, at the "Kids vs. Racism" rally. (Photo by Karen Ducey)



March 20, 2021: Families and youth protest anti-Asian hate crimes at the "Kids vs. Racism" rally at Hing Hay Park in the Chinatown-International District. (Photo by Karen Ducey).