



## *News Release*

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## **Century's Asian Alums Reach Out to Others**

Asian alums of Century College who have become successful need to reach out more to help others achieve success, Ilean Her, executive director of the Council on Asian-Pacific Minnesotans, told a recent gathering sponsored by the Century College Alumni Association.

“Hmong people have been in Minnesota for 30 years and we have lots of success stories,” said Her, the first Hmong woman to be admitted to the Minnesota State Bar Association. “But at the same time, we are not successful enough. Yes, we have a couple of millionaires. But we can’t stop there. We have to keep on going, keep on striving.”

Speaking at the annual Century College Asian Alumni Reunion and Success Celebration, Her said half of the people in the Hmong community do not have a high school education, 10 percent have a college degree and only two percent have a graduate degree. “We still have a long way to go,” she said. “We must know the opportunities and the barriers, and then take responsibility for them. But I am very hopeful.”

The number of Asian students at Century has grown from 257 in 2001 to 1,241 in fall 2008. Century's Asian students are among the most academically successful groups at the college, and the Asian Student Association is the largest and most active club on campus.

Her urged Century's Asian alums to take risks and have the courage to excel. "Be different," she urged. "Do not do the same old thing. Create new things. Don't be afraid of change."

Her said when she was growing up and dared to state her goal of becoming a lawyer, some people in the community scoffed at her ambition and said, "You don't look so smart. You are just a girl. College is so expensive."

"It takes courage to state what you want, and then go after it," said Her. She noted that her mother graduated from the Century College dental program, and that made it easier for her children to dream about going to college.

"If you have a success, turn it around and help other students," she said. "People who give are not always wealthy, but they are kind. All of us can come together and fund a scholarship. That kind of financial assistance helps students grow their dreams."

Her also encouraged the Asian alums to celebrate their accomplishments. "It takes one person at a time to change the world," she said. "If you accomplish something, celebrate it. Share it. Have a dinner and call all your friends. Be proud of it."

This year's recipients of the Outstanding Asian Alumni awards included Dr. Bouasou Yang, a family physician in St. Paul; Kahoua Yang, president of the Lao Family Community, and Dr. Long Yang, executive director of the Lao Family Community.

Dr. Bouasou Yang said after he graduated from Century, he earned a bachelor of science degree in accounting from the University of Minnesota in 1991. He later returned to the university and earned his medical degree in 2005. He and his wife have five children.



Photo: Dr. Bouasou Yang, right, with his wife, received an Outstanding Asian Alumni award. Ilean Her, left, delivered the keynote address.



Photo: The Minnesota Angels dance troupe performed at the Century Asian Alumni event.