

**Lao Association of Connecticut, Inc.**  
**A Mutual Assistant Association**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 13, 2008

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**Laotian Association Proactive in Educating its Community on  
Preventing Premature Deaths**

**First Laotian Health Care Information Handbook Published to Increase Utilization and  
Understanding of American Health Care System**

**West Hartford** - The Lao Association of Connecticut, Inc. (LAC) <http://www.laoaoc.com/> received a grant from the Connecticut Health Foundation to publish *The Lao Health Information Handbook*. LAC is a statewide nonprofit grassroots organization that was established in 1980 in response to the influx of Southeast Asian refugees who fled Laos after the fall of the Vietnam War. An event to release the handbook will be held on Sat., Nov. 29, 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 noon at the New Britain Public Library, Community Room, 20 High Street, New Britain. LAC has invited community leaders, health care professional, community and health care services agencies. Laotian refreshments will be served.

“The *Lao Health Information Handbook* was written to educate Laotian-Americans in Connecticut about the health care system in America in an effort to reduce premature death in Connecticut,” says executive director of LAC Howard Phengsomphone. The handbook, translated from English into Laotian, specifically targets the elderly Laotian population in hopes they will understand, and eventually increase their utilization of existing health care services available in their neighborhoods.

According to a statewide survey conducted by the LAC, United Connecticut Action for Neighborhoods and Eastern Community Services, findings indicate that many Laotian-Americans die from cancer and heart diseases, without awareness that these diseases could have been prevented and/or treated.

Health care is one of the major problems encountered by Laotian-American since coming to the United States. Many Laotian-Americans are not accustomed to and/or comfortable using the health care system in America because of differences in cultural beliefs and practices as highlighted below.

There is widespread denial in western health care system among Laotians for a number of reasons including:

- lack of culturally-appropriate or bicultural staff
- ineffective and/or insufficient outreach and community support
- trust issues and cultural differences regarding health care, particularly related to illness and especially with respect to mental illness
- shame and embarrassment in revealing problems to others
- fear of authority figures due to the trauma of war and dislocation

Added Phengsomphone, “We ultimately hope this handbook will help to improve racial and ethnic health disparities and poor health outcomes in the Laotian community.”

This handbook also is available by contacting executive director, Howard Phengsomphone or stopping by the event on Nov. 29. Also, it will be distributed to health care facilities, community service agencies, community centers, temples and other places where Laotian community gathers.

Connecticut is home to more than 4,000 Laotian- Americans, with more than 5,000 Laotian refugees resettling in Connecticut, according to the Southeast Asia Resource Action Center. Southeast Asian refugees constitute the largest group of refugees to resettle in the U.S. In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, over one million refugees who escaped war and persecution in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, were resettled in the U.S.

**The Laos Association of Connecticut, Inc.’s** mission is to unify the Laotian-American, help to improve the quality of life in areas of need such as: education, health, economic, community services, civic participation and other services that related to improve the quality of life.