



## JUNE 2004 SPOTLIGHT:

### HMONG RESETTLEMENT REVISITED

---

In St. Paul, MN, the imminent resettlement of Hmong refugees from the Wat Tham Krabok refugee camp in Thailand is local news as well as national news. Given St. Paul's status as the city with the largest Hmong population in the United States, and MN as the state with the second largest Hmong population in the country (behind CA), the mayor of St. Paul organized a delegation to visit the refugees in Wat Tham Krabok.

The U.S. Department of State, Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (DOS/PRM) predicts that 12,000-13,000 of the 15,000 refugees living at Wat Tham Krabok will be resettled across the United States during the second half of 2004. In March 2004, St. Paul Mayor Randy Kelly headed a multi-service delegation to visit the refugees in Thailand and assess their potential needs upon arrival in the United States. A [full assessment report compiled by the St. Paul delegation](#) is available online.

The St. Paul delegation noted education and healthcare as the primary service concerns for the Hmong refugees awaiting resettlement. Information from the U.S. Embassy in Thailand, provided to the delegation, shows that 62.5% of the camp population is under the age of 18. More specific concerns related to children and youth include

- \* Chronic malnutrition, particularly protein deficits visibly evident in red hair and dry skin among children and youth
- \* Pregnant women who are obviously anemic
- \* A significant number of married teens with children [perhaps indicating a need for culturally appropriate parenting education
- \* A higher than expected incidence of distantly or unrelated youths and adults banded together as family units (i.e. [separated children living outside the care of their parents](#))
- \* Some alcohol abuse, particularly in teenage boys
- \* 37% of girls and 20% of boys in the camp have had no education; of the sample interviewed by the delegation, school-age boys had an average of 3.3 years of education, and school-age girls had an average of 2 years of education.

Fortunately, the presence of Hmong-Americans in the United States for nearly 30 years has resulted in the development of resource materials and research on evolving and effective educational and healthcare practice with the Hmong. For example, [an article in ESL Magazine](#) notes the innovative approaches of "collaborative inclusion and content-area instruction" as aiding the educational experience of Hmong students, and a [study published by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute](#) notes that Asian students (90% of whom were Hmong) had scores above national norms and are graduating at rates equal to or higher than other students.

The St. Paul delegation noted in their assessment that the Wat Tham Krabok refugees have had more exposure to Western medicine and overall view this positively, though there is some sense of mistrust towards medical services currently available in the camp. Other resource materials available which discuss the cultural contrast between traditional Hmong practice and Western medicine include the popular book [The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down](#) by Anne Fadiman. Hmong readers note some [disagreements with the book](#), while still recognizing it as a compelling presentation of Hmong culture, family and community life, and their disquieting collision with U.S. medical practice. Healthcare providers may also find valuable an article on [Hmong Healing Practices Used for Common Childhood Illnesses](#).

Early research on the first wave of Hmong resettlement focused on the difficulties faced by a population from an oral tradition and agrarian background, with strong clan and cultural ties. [More recent research](#) stresses the resilience, adaptability, and progress of the Hmong resettled in the United States by drawing on such resources as family structure, work ethic, and religious institutions. One writer highlights the important cultural values of [Resourcefulness, Relationship, Respect](#) as the keys to success for one Hmong community leader.

The transition to America will not be easy, but the presence of a strong Hmong-American population in the United States, and the proactive efforts of groups like the St. Paul delegation, bode well for the refugees' reception and integration in MN and across the United States.

**The following resources are suggested for local perspectives and ideas from around the country. They are listed in reverse date order with the most recent story first.**

### **Hmong History**

By Bill Mcewen  
The Fresno Bee  
9 May 2004  
Final edition

*This article gives a short timeline of the main political changes that the Hmong population has endured since fleeing persecution in China in 1918, tracing the Hmong refugee situation over the decades, and notes U.S support for these incoming refugees.*

Source of Availability: Search for this article at The Fresno Bee Website at:  
<http://www.fresnobee.com>

### **Hmong History Month Series**

By Keith Uhling  
Wausau Daily Herald  
April 2004  
Local section

*A series of articles on the history of the Hmong people and their culture celebrating Hmong History Month appeared each week in the Wausau Daily Herald during the month of April 2004. Titles include: "Culture Tries to Maintain Identity", "War Linked Hmong, U.S: Decades-long battle against communism changed course of history", "Failed Secret War Launched Exodus", "Hmong Survive, Thrive", "Many Hmong of 2 Minds: Traditional culture defines new way of life".*

Source of availability: Wausau Daily Herald Web site at: <http://www.wausaudailyherald.com>. Look for the special section link from the homepage to "Hmong History Month" and find this series as well as other stories about the Hmong.

### **Hmong Refugee Resettlement Together; we can welcome newcomers**

By Art Coulson  
Saint Paul Pioneer Press  
April 28, 2004  
Editorial section; City Edition; Page A8

*This newspaper editorial highlights issues from the assessment report on Wat Tham Krabok camp in Thailand, written by a delegation from the city of St. Paul, MN. The article also describes ways in which the city of St. Paul is readying to serve newly arriving Hmong refugee families, through preparatory work in the school district, the State Supreme Court, the MN state Congressional delegation, and the local Hmong community. Estimates of where refugees will settle in the U.S. are included.*

Source of Availability: Search the archives for this article at the St. Paul Pioneer Press Web site at:  
<http://www.twincities.com/mld/twincities/archives/>

### **Hmong Learn from Hmong; Classes teach traditions lost in process of assimilation**

By Chao Xiong  
Star-Tribune  
19 April 2004

*A new article by the Tribune demonstrates how a St. Paul community is addressing the need for education about the Hmong culture in St. Paul through classes for school system employees at the Hmong cultural center, most of whom attend are Hmong-American themselves.*

Source of Availability: Search for this article at Star-Tribune Website at:  
<http://www.startribune.com/archives/>

**Newcomers Will Get Help from Their Own; Hmong group pairing with resettlement agency**

By Todd Nelson  
Saint Paul Pioneer Press  
April 6, 2004

Main section; City edition; Page A1

*This article discusses the collaboration between the local St. Paul non-profit Hmong American Partnership and government resettlement officers preparing for the influx of Hmong refugees this summer. It provides an overview of the benefits of Hmong Americans aiding the incoming Hmong versus traditional resettlement situations and some demographic facts.*

Source of Availability: Search the archives for this article at the St. Paul Pioneer Press Web site at:  
<http://www.twincities.com/mld/twincities/archives/>

**Decades after First Refugees, Ready for More Hmong**

By Monica Davey  
The New York Times  
4 April 2004  
Final edition

*This article describes the challenges facing the city of St Paul, as it awaits a major influx of Hmong refugees. It mentions the doubts and fears as well as the optimism and support of the St. Paul community members, including both Americans and Hmong-Americans, school leaders and social services.*

Source of Availability: Search for this article at The New York Times Website at:  
<http://query.nytimes.com/search/advanced>

**St. Paul: Bridging Hmong parents, teens**

Angelique Soenarie  
St. Paul Pioneer Press  
15 March 2004

*This article pinpoints the difficulties between Hmong parents and their children regarding Hmong and American cultures and highlights the Lauj Youth Society outreach program that targets youth development and the integration of Hmong and American culture.*

Source of Availability: Search the archives for this article at the St. Paul Pioneer Press Web site at:  
<http://www.twincities.com/mld/twincities/archives/>

**Hmong Kids Evoke Duty to Welcome Families to U.S.**

By Art Coulson  
Saint Paul Pioneer Press  
March 7, 2004  
Editorial section; City edition; Page A28

*This brief article highlights the children of Wat Tham Krabok, the Refugee camp in Thailand, who make up over half of the camp's population. The author visited the camp and spoke of the compassion evoked by the children, who would easily challenge some of the American resentment and prejudice relayed through letters on the refugees, received by the author.*

Source of Availability: Search the archives for this article at the St. Paul Pioneer Press Web site at:  
<http://www.twincities.com/mld/twincities/archives/>

**Refugees' Needs Are evaluated; St. Paul visitor's believe education, health top list**

By Tim Nelson  
Saint Paul Pioneer Press  
March 4, 2004  
Local section; City edition; Page B1

*This short news article provides some first-hand comments from members of an assessment team who spent time with the Hmong refugees at Wat Tham Krabok camp. The article also speaks to a few common misconceptions about the extent of benefits received by refugees.*

Source of Availability: Search the archives for this article at the St. Paul Pioneer Press Web site at:  
<http://www.twincities.com/mld/twincities/archives/>

**ST. PAUL REACHES OUT; MAYOR RANDY KELLY AND HIS DELEGATION ARE GREETED BY THOUSANDS OF CURIOUS HMONG REFUGEES DURING AN OFTEN EMOTIONAL VISIT IN THAILAND**

By Todd Nelson and Tim Nelson

Saint Paul Pioneer Press

March 3, 2004

Main section; City edition; Page A1

*This article details the St. Paul delegation's visit to Wat Tham Krabok, a refugee camp where many will immigrate to St. Paul, Minnesota, and elsewhere. Though unusual for a delegation to visit before refugees have arrived in their country, Major Randy Kelly and his team have obtained valuable information during their assessment visit in hopes of preparing back home, as discussed in this article.*

Source of Availability: Search the archives for this article at the St. Paul Pioneer Press Web site at:

<http://www.twincities.com/mld/twincities/archives/>

**From Thailand to St. Paul; Next wave of Hmong will find trail blazed. The first Hmong to immigrate to St. Paul in the 1970's didn't know what to expect, but new émigrés will find their predecessors in many walks of life**

By Curt Brown

Star-Tribune METRO

23 February 2004

*This article by the Tribune discusses some of the more difficult issues of Hmong resettlement today compared to the 1970's first immigration, such as Asian gangs recruiting vulnerable young refugees as well as some negative feelings of unease and resentment from Americans.*

Source of Availability: Search for this article at Star-Tribune Web site at:

<http://www.startribune.com/archives/>

**Hmong Uses Humor to Teach**

By Jill Steinke

Stevens Point Journal

23 February 2004

*In an article by Jill Steinke, Tou Ger Xiong, a Hmong-American comedian expresses his desire to reach out and teach the American population about what it is like to a Hmong refugee in America and mentions that successful resettlement for Hmong in the U.S depends on the involvement of Hmong-American leaders and professionals. This month's featured search includes a video cassette, Tou Ger Xiong: Multicultural, Multilingual, Multicool. The video covers bilingual performances by Xiong.*

Source of Availability: Consult your local public or college library to request a copy of this article through interlibrary loan.