

Mark Pfeifer returns to St. Paul

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Mark E. Pfeifer, Ph.D.

AAP staff report

ST. PAUL (Nov. 19, 2011) — Mark E. Pfeifer, Ph.D. has returned to the Twin Cities to become the Director of Research and Evaluation at Hmong American Partnership and its subsidiary Hmong National Development.

“We are very pleased to have Dr. Mark Pfeifer on board at HAP and HND,” said President and CEO Bao Vang. “He will help us strengthen and increase the impact of our programs through the collection and analysis of research and evaluation data. He will also help us build our connections to the local and national research community for the purposes of partnering on studies to improve the lives of Hmong in Minnesota and across the U.S. while providing information to leaders and policy makers on emerging community trends and needs.”

Many people remember Dr. Pfeifer from his role as director of the Hmong Resource Center Library at the Hmong Cultural Center in Saint Paul from 2000 to 2006. For the past five years Pfeifer has served as an academic librarian at Texas A and M University at Corpus Christi.

Over the past several years, Pfeifer continued to assist HCC with website work, grantwriting and with obtaining new acquisitions for the library. “So, it was never like I was completely removed from the community,” he added.

Pfeifer describes his role at HAP and HND as helping to develop a new agency model with research-based data collection and analysis.

“Other parts of my job include website development, working on grantwriting and grant reports for funders and overseeing program evaluation at the organization,” he said. “I am excited about

the new position and the opportunity it offers to work directly with the Hmong as well as the research community at the local and also the national level.”

It’s good to be back, but Pfeifer said he recognizes an increasingly difficult challenge particularly for smaller Hmong non-profits. As Foundations have narrowed their funding focus with tighter budgets, he said that former Hmong refugees are relatively settled and support from the Office of Refugee Resettlement and others are moving on to other groups.

“All Hmong non-profits are going to have find new fundraising models to be able to survive,” he said. “Hmong American Partnership is actively attempting to do this.”

In terms of academic efforts, Pfeifer said there is a duplication of research, archives and other efforts. At the same time, he said there are limited resources available and it is his hope to bring existing resources together in a mutually beneficial way to improve access to funding resources.

“This has been a real challenge for several years,” he added.

Pfeifer will continue to serve as editor of the Hmong Studies Journal (www.hmongstudies.org). He would like to be even more active in presenting annual workshops with scholars who publish in the journal in partnership with Hmong American Partnership and Hmong National Development and area universities.

As for his own research, Pfeifer is working on a comprehensive scholarly anthology of articles related to Hmong Americans with the University of Hawai‘i Press. He is the lead editor on this book project and said the project will make a major contribution to Hmong American Studies literature and should be published sometime next year.

Pfeifer is also editing the new issue of the Hmong Studies Journal and hopes to publish Volume 12 by the end of December 2011. For the first six months of 2012, Pfeifer will lead HAP and HND in working with Professor Chia Vang at UW-Milwaukee and other scholars on a 2010 Hmong Census Report.

“This report will provide a comprehensive analysis of Hmong American data from the census and the American Community Survey,” he said. “It will also discuss policy issues that emerge from the data and from community assessments that the two organizations have conducted with Hmong communities across the United States over the past year.”

Pfeifer enjoyed his position with the Texas A and M university system. He could have remained at Corpus Christi after his five-year librarian tenure review with annual appointments. He enjoyed visiting and learning about different regions of the state, including the Southeast Asian communities in Houston, Dallas and Austin.

“I liked working with the students and faculty,” he said. “I was also given a lot of freedom to pursue my research interests.”

Pfeifer had a role in bringing more awareness of the Hmong American experience to the university through his research and connections. He said that few students or faculty had even heard of the Hmong, and so Pfeifer was called on to speak or answer questions about the Hmong who have a very low visibility in Texas compared to Minnesota.

“In the last few years that changed a little bit as I was asked to lecture and meet students in an East Asia History class and a Social Psychology Class on campus at Texas A and M Corpus Christi,” he said. “During the past several years, I really valued the opportunity to go to events like the Hmong National Conference to share the work of the Hmong Studies Journal and meet students and community members. I think people residing in Minnesota take such opportunities for direct interaction a bit more for granted.”

More recently he has served as a lecturer, teaching online Anthropology courses pertaining to Cultural Diversity for the State University of New York Institute of Technology in Utica.

“I am continuing to teach these online courses for SUNY-IT,” Pfeifer said.

A large part of his research is with the Hmong community and Pfeifer said he felt isolated from that and his family is also in Wisconsin. “Believe it or not, I really did not care for the very hot and humid climate, I developed allergies down there that I had never had up north so I am actually quite pleased to be away from the warm, coastal climate.”

While in Texas Pfeifer enjoyed touring cities, visiting other universities and trying out the local ethnic cuisine in each place whether Southeast Asian or Mexican.

“I enjoy traveling and trying different restaurants, especially those featuring ethnic cuisines,” said Pfeifer. “I will miss the BBQ, Tex-Mex and Southern Cuisine in Texas, but am looking forward to visiting all of the new places in Hmong Village and other locations in Saint Paul!”

Pfeifer’s lifelong fascination with radio may surprise people. He has recorded hundreds of hours from radio stations in Wisconsin and around the country since the early 1980s.

For the past two-years, Pfeifer has set up a webpage devoted to his “aircheck collection”, perhaps the largest collection of Milwaukee and St. Louis radio airchecks online at www.mostlyuppermidwestairchecks.com. It is also linked to YouTube and Facebook.

“The webpage has received a lot of positive feedback from radio fans around the country who enjoy listening to clips of radio stations from many years ago,” said Pfeifer. “A few months ago, I finished transferring my cassette collection to MP3 files and to the web so I may need to find another hobby now.”

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