



BLOG

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St. Paul's Hmong Cultural Center expands its reach with \$15K federal grant

By Alicia Eler | FEBRUARY 13, 2019 — 3:01PM



Above: Tzu Zong helped a student play the qeej (pronounced "kheng") at the Hmong Cultural Center in St. Paul. Photo by Renee Jones Schneider.

The St. Paul-based Hmong Cultural Center has won seven NEA grants before, but never one this big. Cash to the tune of \$15,000 will go toward the museum's folk arts programs and museum exhibitions. This grant is aimed at bringing in a bigger audience.

"This is the first time we have had a major initiative to reach the broader public with teaching the folk arts," said Mark Pfeifer, Director of Programs. "I think that's why the NEA gave a bigger grant."

To further welcome the public, on Wed., Feb. 20 the Hmong Cultural Center will offer a one-hour guided tour from 5-6 p.m. of the museum's interactive exhibitions. There guests will learn more about Hmong culture, including the Hmong role in the Vietnam War, the worldwide Hmong diaspora, and more about the clan system, religion, written languages, and of course the Hmong community right here in Minnesota. Reservations must be made in advance via this link (<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/hmong-101-interactive-exhibits-tour-and-presentation-tickets-54005939218>).

Minnesota and Wisconsin have the highest Hmong population in the U.S. Hmong refugees began coming to Minnesota in 1975 after wars destroyed their homeland, Laos. There are currently more than 66,000 Hmong in Minnesota (<http://www.mnhs.org/hmong>).

In 2018, the Hmong Cultural Center also received grants from the Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul Foundation, F.R. Bigelow Foundation and the Asian Pacific Endowment of the St. Paul Foundation. Previous NEA grants have been in the \$10,000 range.

Founded in 2005, the Hmong Cultural Center is a teaching institution, offering information about the Hmong people and their experience in the U.S. over the past 25 years. Modestly sized, the center has an annual operating budget of \$400,000, has eight full-time staff, and four part-time art instructors.

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