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NAVASA's 2004 National Conference Equips Leaders to Meet Emerging Vietnamese Community Needs

Washington D.C.—Workshops conducted during the National Alliance of Vietnamese American Service Agencies' (NAVASA) National Conference revealed recurring issues faced by Vietnamese communities across the United States and urged community leaders to step up to the challenge. The conference, which was held September 30 to October 2 in Houston, Texas, contained both open forum and structured workshops. These workshops allowed the 150 conference participants to surface issues currently facing Vietnamese American communities and develop strategies to most effectively meet identified needs.

After an opening session led by prominent leaders, including Dr. Nguyen Van Hanh of the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement and Ms. Cairiona Lyons of the State of Texas, an open forum allowed conference participants to discuss the needs they have assessed in their own communities. The prevalence of assessed needs concerning Vietnamese youth and leadership served to confirm NAVASA's choice of conference theme, "*Building a Community of Leaders.*" Other issues considered were health and mental health, voting rights, and capacity building for community-based organizations (CBOs) and faith-based organizations (FBOs).

Through the support of local and national partners, including the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement and the Substance Abuse of Mental Health Services Administration, NAVASA's workshops provided in-depth technical assistance to ethnic CBOs and FBOs to address identified needs. Exemplary leader and Chief Financial Officer Samuel Mok of the U.S. Department of Labor further provided both direction and encouragement in successfully leading through contemporary challenges. NAVASA conference presenters represented diverse groups including young leaders, consultants, government officials, foundation members, non-profit staff and executives, and members of the private sector. As one conference participant noted, "Different speakers gave us their points of view on the issues, so we got a picture [of] how we can approach and solve the problems in different ways."

The conference concluded with a recognition banquet at which leadership pioneers and emerging leaders from the Vietnamese American community were acknowledged. Recognition banquet speakers included the Honorable Sheila Jackson-Lee of the U.S. House of Representatives.

Further information about NAVASA can be obtained by visiting www.navasa.org.

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NAVASA is a national advocacy agency currently comprised of 35 ethnic non-profit organizations. Since its incorporation in 1995 as a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization, NAVASA has promoted economic self-sufficiency and active citizenship for Vietnamese-Americans through full participation in the socio-political system. Located in metropolitan Washington DC, NAVASA is fully committed to assisting its affiliate organizations to address the civic, economic, linguistic, and social needs facing community members in their specific localities.

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