Basic Detail Report

Lao Association of Connecticut Inc.,

A MUTUAL ASSISTANT ASSOCIATION

STATE-WIDE ORGANIZATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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April Events Celebrate Laotian New Year

During the month of April, members of the Laotian community will hold three public events in the New Britain area to mark their most important annual celebration, the New Year. This Laotian festival brings forgiveness for mistakes made during the past and welcomes good luck for the coming year. The three events will celebrate New Year with dance presentations, a community lunch, a Buddhist ceremony, a procession led by the youth of the community in traditional dress, and a formal banquet with music and dance.

The Laotian community in Connecticut numbers around 4500, with the largest populations in New Britain, Bridgeport, Danbury, East Hartford, and Old Saybrook. Many Laotians also live in rural towns throughout the state. These Southeast Asians have found refuge in the U.S. after fleeing their country of Laos when the Communists took over its government. Here they have overcome considerable challenges to find jobs, establish homes, learn English, and raise families. The community has worked together to keep Lao culture and language alive and maintain traditions through the Lao Saturday School Program held weekly at Jefferson Elementary School in New Britain.

According to Dr. Thongvanh Norinth, President of the Lao Association of Connecticut, "Our annual New Year gathering brings together many Laotians living in Connecticut to celebrate our unique heritage and our beliefs. We involve our young people in order to pass on Laotian traditions to their generation. We also invite all members of the public to join us, to learn more about our culture."

The following three events are open to the public:

1. On Saturday April 8, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., the Lao Saturday School Program will present a performance at Jefferson Elementary School, 140 Horse Plains Rd., New Britain. Children who attend Saturday classes in Lao culture will perform traditional dances and demonstrate their language skills through song and poetry. Other students will celebrate the many cultures of the school. Afterwards, visitors are invited to a community lunch of traditional Asian food. This event is free; donations to the Lao Saturday School are welcome.

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