KOM Mentorship Orientation

Updated: February, 2023 by Suzanne Olive
KOM Overview
Our Mission
To build on the strengths of refugee and immigrant communities and remove barriers to achieving economic, social, and cultural wellbeing.

Our Community
Over 20,000 Karen and other refugees from Burma live in Minnesota - largest Karen community in the country.

Our Programs
Serving over 3,000 each year in Employment, Social Services, Community Health, Youth Development, and Walk-in services.
KOM Programs

Five main program areas...

Employment
Social Services
Community Health
Youth Development
Walk-Ins
KOM’s Youth Programs

KOM invests in the lives of youth and children from Kindergarten up to age 24 through academic support, after-school programs, cultural activities, and leadership development.

- After-School
- New Arrivals
- Career Pathways

Lah Tha Pwee
Youth Programs & Partnerships Manager
KOM’s After-School Programs

We partner with Saint Paul Public Schools. This year we are working at:

• Humboldt Middle & High School
• Washington Tech Magnet Middle & High School
• Harding High School

The program offers…

• Academic support, mental health workshops, leadership training, mentorship Program
• Students are Karen and Karenni age 12-21 years old
# After-School Tutoring Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Harding High School</th>
<th>Washington Tech Magnet School</th>
<th>Humboldt</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day</strong></td>
<td>Monday</td>
<td><strong>Tuesday</strong> (Middle &amp; High School)</td>
<td><strong>Wednesday</strong> (Middle &amp; High School)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time</strong></td>
<td>3:00 – 5:00pm</td>
<td>3:00 – 5:00pm</td>
<td>3:00 – 5:00pm</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>In-person</td>
<td>In-person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Staff</strong></td>
<td>Mular Lerpwel</td>
<td>Mular Lerpwel</td>
<td>Pong Pop</td>
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What is a mentor?

A mentor is:
• Friend
• Guide
• Listener
• Confidant
• Encourager
• Strengths-finder
• Resource broker

A mentor is not...
• Parent/Guardian
• Social Worker
• ATM
• Babysitter
• Disciplinarian
Mentoring Goals

1. Developing English language and reading skills
2. Adapting to American culture while maintaining the mentee’s own culture
3. Developing social and life skills
4. Providing emotional support
5. Serving as an advocate and guide to basic activities (such as using public transportation, using a library, etc.)
6. Developing college or workforce preparedness skills
7. Providing opportunities to just relax and have fun! 😊
Mentor Responsibilities

- Attend pre-match training
- Meet with mentee on a weekly basis
- Commit to the program through May
- Check in with program staff
  - Monthly phone check-ins
  - Changes to address/contact info (also mentee)
  - Problems/frustrations/changes in match
  - Successes/accomplishments
- Follow program policies and procedures
Program Policies/Procedures

- Transportation
- Approved Activities
- Drug/Alcohol
- Weapons
- Inappropriate conduct
- Overnights/Out-of-Town Travel
- Confidentiality
- Gift Giving
- Social Media Use
  - KOM Mentor FB group
  - set up group texts/messages for communicating
    - maintain appropriate boundaries
- Closure
- Mandated Reporting
Mandated Reporting

• KOM mentors and staff are required to report observed abuse or neglect
• It is not the role of the reporter to determine if abuse or neglect occurred, only to report it
• Reports are confidential
• Procedure:
  • If it is an emergency, contact 911 then program staff
  • If it is not an emergency, contact program staff and they will guide you through reporting process
Characteristics of a Good Mentor

- Empathic
- Culturally Aware
- Creative
- Appropriate expectations
- Good Communicator
- Friendly
- Trustworthy
- Strengths-based
- Healthy boundaries
Mentoring Life Cycle

**PHASE ONE: BUILDING TRUST**
- Learning to communicate
- Bridging differences
- Planning initial meetings

**PHASE TWO: EXPLORING POSSIBILITIES**
- Setting goals
- Choosing activities

**PHASE THREE: NAVIGATING ROUGH SPOTS**
- Knowing your limits
- Remaining committed

**PHASE FOUR: CLOSING AND CONTINUING THE CYCLE**
- Reaping the rewards
- Expanding the movement
Best Practices for Mentoring Karen Youth

- Take the time to LISTEN
- Consider grief or loss
- Encourage maintenance of Karen culture as they adapt to living here
- Support academic success and educational process
- Be flexible and creative
- Recognize/respond when your mentee exhibits behaviors of concern
- Help your mentee reach their goals
Our Youth’s Strengths & Challenges
Strengths and Assets

- Cultural and family values
- Bilingualism
- Sense of resiliency and flexibility
- Ability to navigate through cultural demands
- Value of education
- Respect elders and teachers
- Athleticism

Challenges Faced

- Exclusion
- Poverty
- Separation
- Adjustment
- Traumatic experiences
- Discrimination/bullying
- Disconnect from education
- Intergenerational conflict
- Drug use/gangs
Parent-Child Role Reversals

“Many [Karen] youth are faced with parent-child role reversals because they speak and understand English much better than their parents. When this happens, a young person might be placed in the position of translating basic needs for their parents – to teachers, doctors or family advocates. This responsibility has the potential of changing parent/child dynamics.” (Mentoring Immigrant & Refugee Youth, pg. 6)
Mentor Reflections

“Talking and opening up got easier. Both of our mentees were very reserved and shy the first few meetings. [Mentee’s name] has been reaching out to us about what’s going on in her life. She asked us for tips about her job interview, and what it’s like living at college. [Mentee’s name] is a little more comfortable to joke around and show us some drawings now, and he asks us more questions.”

“I simply enjoyed just spending time with the students, laughing, and playing games. Once the students came out of their shell it was really fun!”
What can I do with my mentee in-person?

- Spend time doing homework, playing a game, or another activity
- Walk to a park, go sledding, or other outdoor activities
- Attend a free community event, visit a local library or rec center
- Play soccer, volleyball or other sports
- Visit a college or university they might be interested in
- Visit a Karen store/business or get lunch there
- Tickets for kids - complimentary tickets available for sports games, museum visits, theatre performances, etc.
Virtual Mentorship

Some mentorship activities can be held virtually if needed

Ways of Connecting
- Google Meet
- Facebook
- Phone
What can I do with my mentee online?

- Help with homework, read books, or do other educational activities online
- Do an exercise challenge every week and check-in on your progress
- Learn about each other’s favorite music and share songs or dances
- Play virtual soccer, volleyball or other sports games
- Do a virtual tour of a college, university, library, or museum
- Share about your favorite foods or traditional dishes
- Do a simple art or craft activity together (i.e. design your own avatar)
Large Group Activities

We will try to plan a few large group activities throughout the semester. Exact activities TBD, some ideas include…

- Art activities, Culture share night, Sports and games, Visit to a park, zoo, museum, etc.
Karen Culture Presentation with KOM

- **Friday, February 17th 11:00am – 12:30pm**
- RSVP on Eventbrite
- Location: online on Zoom!
KOM Mentorship Picnic

- End of the year celebration
- At a St. Paul public park
- Mid-May
- Pot-luck style 😊
Beginner Words in S’gaw Karen

• Good morning = Ghaw luh a ghay
• Good afternoon = Nee luh a ghay
• Good evening = Ha luh a ghay
• Good night = Na luh a ghay
• How are you? = Na oh hsoo ah?
• I am good = Ya oh hsoo
• Thank you = Ta blu
• Crazy = Ta plu 😊
KOM Volunteer Handbook

Consent & Background Check Forms, Motor Vehicle Info
As a KOM Volunteer, Please Do Not:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assist</td>
<td>Do not assist with legal issues (i.e. child support, divorce, disability claims filing, immigration forms, SSI function &amp; work history reports, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help</td>
<td>Do not help with tax issues outside of KOM tax clinics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept</td>
<td>Do not accept cash from clients (food and other small non-monetary gifts may be accepted)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collect</td>
<td>Do not collect clients' health records</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involve</td>
<td>Do not involve yourself in the personal or financial affairs of clients (refer to KOM staff for complex cases i.e. child protection, domestic issues, chemical health, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promote</td>
<td>Do not promote your own personal or business interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impose</td>
<td>Do not impose your personal views on politics, religion or other controversial matters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Consent & Background Check Forms

- PHOTOGRAPH RELEASE
- REPORTING
- CONFIDENTIALITY
- CLIENTS/CONFLICT OF INTEREST
- DRIVING & BACKGROUND CHECK
- WITHDRAWAL OF CONSENT
COVID-19 Policies

- Masking
- Meeting In-Person
- Meeting Virtually
- Follow Site COVID-19 Policies
- Sick Policy
KOM’s Online Database: Apricot

- Go to apricot’s website (https://apricot.socialsolutions.com)
- Log in with the general KOM volunteer login
  - Username: volunteer@mnkaren.org
  - Password: Volunteer21!
- Click on Find my Timecard, then search your name and click on it
- Once on your page, click “View Folder”
- Go to “Create New” and enter your start and end times and the activity you did
- Click “Save Record”
- Go back to “View Folder” or Apricot’s main page
Remember…

• You are not alone!
• Contact program staff anytime with:
  • Questions
  • Concerns/ frustrations
  • Successes/ accomplishments
  • Activity ideas
  • Or just to check in!
Closing

• What is one thing that stuck out to you?
• What is one thing that you are challenged to apply?
• What questions do you have?