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HEY MARILYN, WHERE ARE YOUR CURLS?

Article written by Manju Patnaik

"We're so quick to cut away pieces of ourselves to suit a particular relationship, job, a circle of friends, incessantly editing who we are until we fit in" - Charles de Lint.

Media propagates its definition of beauty which soon becomes our definition of beauty. Perfect bodies, perfect skin, and perfect hair! None of the images propagated by media reflect what I look like, even when I am dressed to the nines. For the longest time I thought I needed to find a way to fit in with this beauty standard because I am so different from the perfection around me.

Among all my imperfections, my curls were the bane of my existence. I did everything possible to change these stubborn curls into straight, sleek tresses. I tried hair products, straightening tools etc. Nothing worked. I was stuck with my curls.

This need to fit in was not limited just to my hair or physical appearance, it extended to my personal relationships. I did not want to be stubborn like my curls, I wanted to be pliant and flexible like silky straight hair. I constantly asked myself the question "what can I do or change about myself that will help me fit in?". Before I knew it, my day-to-day life became a task! It soon became unbearable because I was slowly losing 'me' while trying to fit in. I was molding myself to meet someone else's definition of a perfect wife, perfect mother, and perfect daughter-in-law. In the process I reduced myself to a nobody.

Luckily, before I spiraled into oblivion, I had my "aha" moment. Recently, I attended our 25th year high school reunion. I was excited to see my classmates, many of whom I had not seen since I graduated high school. Everything was planned - the outfits, the shoes, the jewelry, and obviously a planned trip to the salon to get my hair done.

I headed off to the first event of the reunion feeling like a million bucks because I finally had my salon styled perfect tresses.

I admit I was a little nervous as I walked into the venue, but soon I was squealing like an excited child. Amidst the noisy greetings and bear hugs, we reminisced. How can a high school reunion not involve reminding each other of our given nicknames? My nickname was 'Marilyn' as in Marilyn Monroe for my curls albeit, brunette curls. It was a fabulous evening, but one repeated comment stood out from that night, "Marilyn, what the heck happened to your curls?".

I realized the "curls" I hated for most of my life were mine and mine alone. They were soft, perfect curls mingled with many beautiful imperfect ones. They were my identity, my unique feature and they added to my personality. They were my 'perfection'. When that realization hit me, a huge weight fell off my shoulders and I stopped taming my curls to fit in.

MaiFS SURVIVOR BREAKS FREE

(In her own words)

In 2001, after enduring 16 years of abuse, I finally found the courage to break free, taking my children with me as we embarked on a journey toward a brighter future. Throughout this challenging period, Mai Family Services stood by me with unwavering support, facilitating my path of self-discovery and empowerment. Securing US citizenship symbolized a newfound sense of liberty, while mastering the skill of driving represented a significant step towards independence. Engaging in educational programs marked a pivotal turning point, drawing me closer to my lifelong dream of becoming a nurse. Throughout it all, Mai's emotional and financial backing served as the cornerstone of my aspirations.

I'm deeply thankful to the dedicated caseworkers at Mai for connecting me with their CSU Grant program, which provided crucial financial assistance for my educational pursuits. The CSU Grant team has consistently offered invaluable educational guidance and financial aid, acting as steadfast pillars of support during times of adversity and uncertainty.

As I reflect on my journey, I'm humbled by the profound impact Mai Family Services and the CSU Grant program have had on my life. Their unwavering support has empowered me to overcome obstacles, pursue higher education, and forge a brighter future for myself and my family. With their continued guidance and support, I'm confident in my ability to realize my dreams and cultivate resilience for myself and my children.

MONTHLY STATISTICS



How was our April?



27

Current active survivors

10

Survivors empowered

2

Senior abuse

3

Outreach Awareness Activities

DONATION APPEAL

MaiFS is serving 36 survivors who have been physically, mentally, emotionally, verbally, financially, and sexually abused. Additionally, 21 individuals have called the MaiFS helpline and office seeking resources to handle their crises since the start of the year 2024. We need your help to raise awareness and provide quality service to all those seeking support - some of whom have a voice and some suffering in silence.

Make a difference today!

Your donation to Mai Family Services can change lives. With your support, we can help survivors of abuse find the resources and care they need to heal and thrive. Join us in raising awareness and providing quality counseling services to those who need it most. Together, we can do this. Use any of the channels below to donate and be a beacon of hope for those in need.



Mai Family Services
Support when you need it most

Addressing the issue of South Asian trauma and domestic violence is crucial to bringing about meaningful change and supporting those who have experienced intergenerational abuse.

Domestic violence within South Asian communities often stems from deeply entrenched cultural norms, which can perpetuate cycles of abuse across generations. It is important to recognize that trauma resulting from such violence has a profound impact on individuals and their mental well-being.

Mai Family Services works towards breaking these cycles of abuse, promoting healing, and ultimately creating safer environments for individuals affected by trauma and domestic violence.

Could we count on your support? You can set up a monthly recurring payment or make a one-time donation to join the team making a difference. We thank you for your time and continuous goodwill.

Website:
<https://maifs.org/donate/>

Scan the QR Code 

Accommodation - 25%
Medical - 15%
Legal - 40%
Daily Needs - 20%

Image credit: adb.org



<https://maifs.org/donate/>



APRIL OUTREACH WITH LT. GOV. GILCHRIST

Mai Family Services thanks Dr. Swaminathan and Silambu, a Tamil organization for inviting the MaiFS team to the Tamil Heritage Month celebration in Farmington Hills on April 27. Team MaiFS spread awareness at their annual event in Farmington Hills where 48 young middle and high school authors were honored. Thank you to MaiFS volunteers - Bhavana, Shaila, Krishna, Anu, and Ganesh. Lt. Gov. Gilchrist surprised the team by visiting the outreach space and was truly impressed by MaiFS. He expressed gratitude for the organization and its invaluable work in the community.



MaiFS LAUNCHES LIGHTHOUSE

YOUTH PROGRAM

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and Mai Family Services is dedicating a special day to Youth well-being on Sunday, May 19th at Novi Civic Center. The organization recognizes the unique challenges faced by today's youth, particularly those from Asian homes, such as peer pressure, parental pressure, bullying (including cyberbullying), and issues related to gender and sexual identity. These challenges are often compounded by cultural expectations. In response, Mai Family Services is launching its "Lighthouse" program, which aims to provide a supportive environment for youth to express their concerns, access social workers, educate the community about these challenges, network with peers, and explore career opportunities with industry leaders. The event also has a creative competition around Social Media and Peer Pressure where high school students will be submitting creative work. **Do not miss this event. Save the date.**

Visit www.maifs.org for more information.



SAVE THE DATE

Mai Family Services
Support when you need it most

launches
LIGHTHOUSE
Building a Foundation for Youth Wellbeing

May is Mental Health Awareness Month. Mai Family Services recognizes the unique challenges faced by today's youth, particularly those from Asian homes, such as peer pressure, anxiety, parental pressure, bullying (including cyberbullying), and issues related to gender and sexual identity. These challenges are often compounded by cultural expectations.

Be a part of this interactive event filled with meaningful conversations, panel discussions, creative awards, and networking.

Sunday, May 19, 2024
2:00 – 5:00 PM
Novi Civic Center
45175 W 10 Mile Rd, Novi, MI 48375

Free Admission. Light refreshments will be provided.
For inquiries, please email YouthPrograms@maifs.org.
Donations are welcome.
www.MAIFS.org



MAI Family Services Announces...



Youth Art Competition



May is Mental Health Awareness Month! To raise awareness, MAIFS is hosting a youth art contest with the theme: **Social Media and Youth**. This competition is open to **high schoolers only**. We want to see creativity, originality, and most of all, your unique perspective on this important topic.

The art medium is open; we are looking for drawings, paintings, sculptures, literature, music, etc. The top finalists will present their creative work at our upcoming event, MAIFS Lighthouse: Building a Foundation for Youth Wellbeing. This event will be held on May 19th from 2-5 PM at Novi Civic Center.



The deadline to submit is **May 6th at 11:59 PM**. Submit your designs to YouthPrograms@maifs.org in text, scanned, video, or audio format. Contact YouthPrograms@maifs.org with any questions. We are excited to see your work!

Mai Family Services

maifs.org

@maifamilyservices

PARTNER ANNOUNCEMENTS



Mass General Brigham IRB

APPROVAL EFFECTIVE DATE

4/24/2024



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN PHYSICALLY HURT BY YOUR HUSBAND OR BOYFRIEND?

If you are a South Asian adult woman with past physical abuse from a romantic partner, you may be eligible to participate in a research study at Massachusetts General Hospital on how partner abuse affects women's health.

Online Study

You will meet with us on a video call from a quiet place (like your home). You will do some tests of your memory and balance, and be asked about your emotions and experiences, for which you will receive a \$50 e-gift card.

In-person Study

If you live near Boston, you may be eligible for an in-person imaging study, for which you would receive a \$150 e-gift card. (If you do not live near Boston, you are still eligible to

INTERESTED?

(617) 726-4962

<https://shorturl.at/btyRU>

Scan this code
to fill out a
contact form!



Adaptable Community-Engaged Intervention for Violence Prevention: Michigan Model

Funded by National Institute of Health (NIH)



Background

- Increased Firearm purchases among Asian Americans (AAs) during the COVID-19 outbreak. Racism, mistrust, fear, and hostility increased AA's vulnerability to firearm-related violence, injury, and mortality.
- Our study showed that 55% of AAs who purchased a gun during the pandemic were **first-time gun owners**.
- Additional findings revealed unsafe practices which include 1) more than 1/3 reported carrying gun **more often**, & 2) almost half of respondents stored **loaded** guns and at least one firearm was stored **unlocked**.

This NIH study has **UG3 (Planning)** and **UH3 (intervention/evaluation)** phases.

UG3: PhotoVoice and Geographic Information System (GIS) are used to understand multi-level risks and protective factors, identify community-level resources, and investigate the intersectionality and contexts between these factors and firearm outcomes.



UH3: Use the findings generated in the UG3 phase as an analytical tool to develop, implement, and evaluate an innovative Community Health Worker (CHW) intervention.

Long-term goal: Take actions upstream to prevent injury and mortality by intervening with modifiable factors that place individuals at greater risk of firearm-related violence.

Study Team:

Tsu-Yin Wu, PhD, RN, FAAN; Hsing-Fang Hsieh, PhD, MPH;
Xining Yang, PhD; Ken Resnicow, PhD; Roland Hwang, JD;
Szu-Hsien Chen, MSN, RN.

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EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
Center for Health Disparities
Innovations and Studies



INSTITUTE FOR FIREARM
INJURY PREVENTION
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Participating in a study by the Center for Health Disparities Innovations and Studies



WHAT WILL BE DISCUSSED?

We want to learn more about Asian Americans' risks and protective factors against firearm-related violence by photo taking and sharing your stories and experiences within your community.

WHO DO WE NEED?

- Participants who self-identify as Asian Americans.
- Age between 18-65 years old
- Lives in the Southeastern Michigan area, Battle Creek or Grand Rapids
- Speak/communicate in English and/or their native Asian language

HOW WILL YOU BE INVOLVED?

- Attend all three sessions: 1. training and orientation for photovoice, 2. focus group discussion, and 3. debriefing/dissemination.
- Participants will be asked to take pictures as part of telling their stories about their community/neighborhood.
- The session is in person and lasts about 1.5-2 hours each.

WILL I BE COMPENSATED FOR PARTICIPATING?

The participants will receive \$200 after completing all the sessions and assigned activities (i.e., taking photos and participating in discussions).

INTERESTED IN PARTICIPATING OR HAVE QUESTIONS?

EMAIL us at schen21@emich.edu or Fill-out the interest form →



INSTITUTE FOR FIREARM
INJURY PREVENTION
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Asian Center – Southeast MI

and

Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital
present an

Asian American Health & Wellness Expo

Date: Saturday, May 4, 2024

Time: 9:30 am – 2:00 pm

Location: Henry Ford West Bloomfield Hospital (HFWBH)
6777 W. Maple Road, West Bloomfield, MI

Programs: registration starts at 9:30 am



10:00 – 11:30 Health Seminars

*NIH "All of Us" Program
Aging and Heart Disease
Pain Management*



11:30 – 12:30 Healthy Cooking Demo

*Healthy Asian recipes (and you can sample)
A Healthy lunch box will be provided to participants*

1:00 – 2:00 Exercise Program Intro & Demo

Chair Yoga & Tai-chi

- Nutrition information
- Asian senior wellness program
- Community health programs
- Health vendor display

➤ Seating is limited. Please pre-register:
<https://forms.gle/G8uE32UPyp745e2j6>

➤ For questions or pre-registration, please call
Asian Center – SE MI: 248-227-4374



Thank you for supporting Mai Family Services!



Our mailing address is:
MAI FAMILY SERVICES
32401 W. Eight Mile Rd
Livonia, MI 48152

