



# Same vision, expanded mission

## KWA continues to reach out to the elderly and vulnerable

**By Diane Kay**  
For Tacoma Weekly

In 1972, Kim Nam Hui organized a group of Korean women to sell kimchi and rice cakes to help servicemen and their wives at Fort Lewis and McChord Air Force Base. The group provided transportation and translation services, and assisted in domestic violence situations.

Korean Women's Association (KWA) registered as a non-profit organization in 1979. What started as a grass-roots effort to assist Korean women acclimating to American culture has grown into an agency coordinating 23 programs, which served 147,068 clients in 2009 across 11 counties in Washington. KWA has offices in Tacoma, Centralia, Federal Way, Lacey, Lynnwood, Port Angeles, Port Townsend, Seattle and Shelton, as well as their main site located at 123 E. 93rd St. Target populations served include Asian-Americans, Pacific Islanders and African Americans.

Peter Ansara recently took the helm as executive direc-

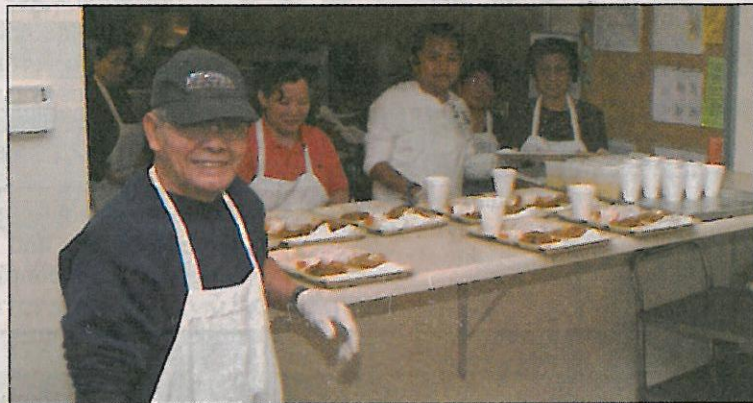


PHOTO BY HARALD HOHENDORF

**SERVICE TO SENIORS.** (Above) Clients of Korean Women's Association stay physically active through its activities. (Below) The meal programs offered three times a week provide nutritious food while nourishing the social needs of senior citizens.

tor. His background at Tacoma Housing Authority, 25 years in the United States Air Force and a stint in commercial real estate development have been instrumental in helping him carry the agency's vision forward.

"It takes a unique set of skills, knowledge, and abilities to administer programs to poor and vulnerable people," Ansara said. "It is critical to engage the community, stakeholders, and secure support for the agency's

projects and programs. I draw on my experiences in engaging people from all cultures and walks of life."

The Ethnic Senior Meal Site Program operates at the KWA's main office. The program serves Korean food on Wednesdays, Filipino food on Thursdays and Samoan food on Fridays, and is open from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The program offers much more than a meal. It is an opportunity for seniors to con-

nect and engage in physical activity and a forum for nutrition and health information. Suggested donations are \$2 for seniors 60 and older, and \$4.50 for non-seniors. Ansara relates the comments of one participant.

"He said if he has to pay more money to participate in the program, he will do it. The program makes him feel like he belongs, and he is no longer depressed. When he leaves each week, he looks forward to returning the next."

Health screenings are provided in partnership with Tacoma/Pierce County Health Department. These include blood pressure checks, diabetes and cholesterol blood test screens and dementia screening. Education is provided on stroke, heart disease and diabetes prevention.

KWA has a Breast Cancer Navigation program in partnership with nine organizations. It helps minority women who have abnormal mammograms access free and low-cost health care. It provides case management services that

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