



## From Exploring Social Innovation in San Francisco to Exploring Social Issues in Thailand

VIA's programs, especially the Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) program which marks its 10th anniversary this year, give participants the opportunity to reflect on what kind of a person they want to become and serve as a launch pad for taking action to make positive social impact. The story below is an exciting example of ESI alumni from Thailand who took their program experience to pay it forward as entrepreneurs and launched a new initiative to address social issues in their community back home.

*By Chalisa Kaewla*

A group of VIA alumni from Thailand who joined the Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) program, Earth (February 2017, Program Coordinator August 2018), Chalisa (July 2018, Program Coordinator August 2019), Bow (August, 2018), Top (August 2018) and Bow (February 2019) came together to maintain the inspiration we gained



from ESI by founding a small community called 'NEXPLORE'.

NEXPLORE aims to give its participants an opportunity to better understand Thai social issues and also support VIA alumni to practice using our inspiration

to create meaningful social impact together. We connect to explore together.

NEXPLORE launched its first program in August 2019 in Bangkok. The program was called Exploring Thai Social Issues. The theme was inspired from

# Voices of Respect and Acceptance

By Yuichiro Igami

I'm a participant from Japan who recently joined VIA's American Language and Culture (ALC) Program. Before arriving, I was very worried that I would not get along with people in America. During the ALC program, I researched about the bias towards LGBTQ because San Francisco is one of the areas which has an LGBTQ social movement and there are many communities for LGBTQ. In my survey, I interviewed some LGBTQ people since I thought that the best way to confirm these biases is to directly talk to LGBTQ people and listen to their fresh voices.

All the people I interviewed were very kind and supportive. The questions I asked included their experience around their sexual identity in their childhood and the attitude towards them from their parents, friends, and/or teachers. Another question was their opinions about hate crimes. The other question was about why it is important to accept LGBTQ and the way to solve or remove biases from society.

These were very sensitive topics, but they answered my questions and sometimes added more stories. They mainly said that education is one of the most important



things. This is because many people don't know about LGBTQ precisely. They also said talking about LGBTQ in school and society, using LGBTQ characters in TV-shows, and reading books written about LGBTQ are definitely needed. They continued to say it will take much time, but these approaches will help some people to accept them.

During the interviews, I was sometimes at a loss for words because of my English, but

they waited for my asking. Thanks to their attitude, the interviews went smoothly. I think that regardless of language and culture, people can respect each other. In order to be accepted, you should also respect them. It is natural, but sometimes we forget. If you consider participating in the ALC program, I think this is one of the most important things you will realize and learn.

## Cover Story

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our realisation that through ESI we became familiar with social issues in San Francisco, like homelessness, but only had a surface-level understanding about social issues in our own country. We thought NEXPLORE could help us use the ESI methodology to understand our roots.

NEXPLORE welcomed 16 participants on its first program. The participants were given the opportunity to explore Thai social issues in the field while getting hands-on experience using tools to inspire social innovation, such as design-thinking. We also modeled the changemaker mindset to the participants.

## Once VIA, Always VIA

At our recent alumni gathering at Stanford University during homecoming weekend, we had a chance to reconnect and reminisce about the VIA days and the journey some alumni have taken since then. It was great to see so many alumni who passed through VIA several decades ago as well as recent participants from both the U.S. and Asia.

Through our conversations, we saw that the VIA journey continues to include alumni returning to join a second program, co-leading a program with VIA and/or passing the torch to their children who



have become second generation VIA fellows and participants.

It is nice to see that VIA creates spaces for collaborative people-to-people interactions that transcend boundaries, transform lives and inspire future leaders and changemakers here and in Asia.

# VIA Alumni Entrepreneurs

Our alumni often apply their VIA experience to start new endeavors to address social issues. A few of our alumni entrepreneurs are highlighted here.



## Yuta Tonegawa

(American Language & Culture 2006)

is the Founder and CEO of a Japanese non-profit organization called Code for Everyone. Yuta's experience joining VIA's American Language & Culture (ALC) program motivated him to pursue what he wants to do and he started a venture business with his friends when he was 25 years old, which eventually went public.

His ALC experience also helped him gain a global perspective and made him realize that computer science education needs to be strengthened in Japanese schools. In 2015, he founded Code for Everyone with the mission to "make all children enjoy programming." Although the organization is small with around 10 staff members, Yuta works hard with his colleagues and also cooperates with other organizations such as the Ministry of Education, Google, and other partner NPOs overseas to make greater social impact.



## Hillary Lin

(Coordinator for American Language & Culture 2008 and Exploring Health Care 2012)

is a physician founder of a mental health and wellness startup. Her company focuses on improving and strengthening personal relationships to better address the problems around loneliness.

Some of her earliest experiences of leadership and building community are from working with visiting Asian students through VIA. Her experience in two VIA programs helped her realize an enjoyment of facilitating the bonds of friendship and collaboration between people to improve their understanding of a new culture. This has influenced her work now on her startup. She still keeps in touch with some of her VIA students to this day.



## Takanori Kashino

(Exploring Social Innovation 2012, 2013, American Language & Culture 2016)

is the founder of Eirene Management School in Japan. Before launching his school, he initially started an educational research non-profit organization after joining VIA's Exploring Social Innovation program in 2012 with the purpose of introducing design-thinking in Japan.

Through VIA's programs, Takanori was able to immerse himself in the entrepreneurial culture of Silicon Valley, including Stanford University. He has been able to utilize his VIA experience in his current work. For example, he has invited a lecturer from Stanford to hold workshops for professionals, co-hosted an event for professional development with the Institute of Continuing Education (ICE), University of Cambridge, and has been nominated as one of the representative schools in terms of innovation and entrepreneurship by Startup Guide Tokyo.



## Herman Chan

(Exchange for Social Entrepreneurs and Leaders 2012)

is the co-founder and executive director of a social enterprise in Hong Kong called Eldpathy, which provides simulation programs to raise the public's empathy towards the elderly. Since its establishment in 2013, it has served over 30,000 participants with more than 40 elderly people trained as program instructors.

Participating in VIA's Exchange for Social Entrepreneurs and Leaders (XSEL) program helped Herman turn his brief ideas into a concrete and actionable plan. Following his participation on VIA's program, he won the Hong Kong Social Enterprise Challenge in 2012 which started his social entrepreneurial journey.



## Honoka Nagahama

(Exploring Silicon Valley 2019)

founded a student group called Zero Waste Fashion which aims at spreading the culture of "exchange" by holding "Used Clothes Exchange Parties." Honoka credits her experience on VIA's Exploring Silicon Valley (ESV) program to take on this challenge. Before joining VIA, she was not sure what to do in her university. However, by meeting people on the ESV program who were tackling various social issues, she was motivated to challenge herself and contribute to society.

With an interest in an ethical and environmentally friendly life, she made an effort to organize an event that would make students not interested in environmental issues want to participate. Keywords to enable such an event was "fun, cute, and fashionable." Knowing that resources are finite and lifespan of clothes in Japan is very short, she came up with the idea of Used Clothes Exchange Parties where people will come together to exchange clothes instead of throwing them away.

# Get Charged. Get Going

Enya Hu is the chief operating officer (COO) of Zendure USA Inc, which is a premium charging brand established in Palo Alto. Recently, Enya was one of VIA's guest speakers for the American Language and Culture (ALC) program and we caught up with her to discuss her perspective on entrepreneurship.

Very similar to Sheryl Sandberg's (Facebook COO) story, Enya went through a dark journey in her life. Her husband had a major stroke in August 2017 and became hemiparesis ever since. She had to take care of her husband, her 3-year old, and a tech startup at that time. She is a true entrepreneur with a fighting spirit and a real reflection of Zendure's famous slogan - "Get Charged. Get Going."

When asked how she balances her work

and life when the challenges are still there, she said, "I used to be a firefighter in all my previous jobs. I was probably the busiest person in the team. But now because my whole family is depending on me, I have to be very careful not to overuse my body. #1: Build up a super strong team. #2: Only focus on the most important things. #3: Be relaxed at all times. These worked! Since I joined Zendure in January, the business was able to achieve 300% YOY."

"I want to tell VIA students what entrepreneurship is all about. Entrepreneurship is about not walking on ordinary paths where people walk. Through the journey you see more beautiful things." When



asked what is next for her, she said, "If I can ever gain anything through Zendure's success, I will give all back to the society."

And VIA is already thankful for both Enya and Zendure. As part of their 5-year anniversary, Zendure provided VIA with a very generous sponsorship through the proceeds of their limited-edition portable charger. We look forward to further collaboration with Zendure.

# Developing Tomorrow's Leaders



by VIA Medical Programs  
Director, Lina Yamashita, PhD

Six high school students from Hong Kong and 32 medical students from Japan, mainland China, and Taiwan participated in the Exploring Silicon Valley (ESV) program in July and Exploring Health Care (EHC) program in August, respectively. The high school students were here to learn about leadership and the medical school students, about various aspects of health care. While these two programs may seem unrelated, some of the goals and outcomes were similar. Both programs were designed to invite participants to adopt an active, brave, curious, and open-minded disposition; consider the perspectives of those who are marginalized in society (such as people living on the streets or LGBTQ communities); and to reflect on the kind of person (whether leader or physician)

they want to become in the future. And both the high school students and medical students demonstrated shifts in perspectives, especially with respect to homelessness. In both programs, following a session I led on humanizing homelessness, the students participated in a volunteering service in San Francisco. Although some of the students were initially uneasy and scared, they began to see the people living on the streets not merely as homeless but as human beings with stories, and some of them managed to form genuine connections, albeit brief, during their service. And in both programs, participants left feeling more interested in learning about marginalized communities in their home countries and regions as well as connected to one another. This gives me hope about the future generation of leaders and physicians.



# VIA's Impact in the Philippines

*Although VIA stopped sending volunteers to the Philippines decades ago, several recent programs have forged new connections.*



Sergius Santos, a native of the Philippines, who also studied in Japan, joined the March 2018 Design-Thinking for Social Innovation (DSI) program in Silicon Valley which paired students from Asia and Stanford on a program to learn about design-thinking and other tools for social impact. Sergius is also the co-founder and CEO of Exora Technologies, an energy solutions platform for businesses to connect with electricity suppliers, alternative energy resources, and off-grid electricity suppliers to create the best contract which fits their electricity needs. Their mission is to lower electricity prices in the Philippines, which currently are the second highest in Asia. Sergius shared that, “we make the market consumer-centric. In this way, we leverage data and consumer education getting the cheapest and most optimal contract for the client. The processes and experience I obtained at VIA during DSI allowed me to have a more open and deeper perspective in collaborating.”



In March 2019, VIA ran a workshop in Myanmar focused on leadership and media literacy for the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI). The program included 50 leaders aged 23-33 from 11 countries in the region, with five hailing from the Philippines. As part of the grant that funded the program, mini-grants were awarded to alumni, including several from the Philippines.

Sittie Raisah Timosa organized a one-day workshop for more than 30 young leaders from the Mindanao region to build relationships among the Filipino Muslim and non-muslim communities. The workshop combined peacebuilding and media literacy content which was designed to promote the goal of creating strategies to address harmful stereotypes about Muslim groups in the region. As part of the workshop evaluation, participants reported significant improvements in peacebuilding tools and how to use media for positive social impact.



## 1960s

Carole Milligan (Hong Kong '64)

After attending my 50th reunion in 2016, we have continued to enjoy an active life in the mountains of Colorado. We are involved in various outdoor activities from hiking & biking to skiing and folk music, photography and opera.

Mike Jeffery (Hong Kong '66)

Retired Superior Court Judge still living in Arctic Alaska with my wife, the school nurse. Working part time until permanent new judge is appointed. Advocate for appropriate services for those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. Three adult children, one an LCSW, one a medical student, and one in technical business in Bay Area (and still playing Ultimate Frisbee).

## 1970s

Kim Saunders (Indonesia '74)

I am continuing to enjoy life in the San Fernando Valley with husband Blue and our two sons who live in the LA area. I perform for private events and music venues on guitar and vocals and have been teaching music for toddlers through 5th grade at a local public school and private guitar & piano lessons for 25 years. I share the love of Indonesian music and culture that I experienced through VIA with my elementary students and think about my VIA experience often and fondly!!

John Ambler (Indonesia '75)

I have retired to my hometown of Denver, Colorado. Last year I published a professional book entitled "Empowered Development in Poor Countries." It can be downloaded for free at the Oxfam America website.

## 1980s

Jennifer Choate Dickinson (Indonesia '80)

Still teaching in a low-income school in South Lake Tahoe, with 29 years in the field of education. I teach in a two-way immersion school which has 75% of its students on free or reduced price lunch. My students are learning literacy in Spanish (2/3 of our days are taught in Spanish).

Alissa Keny-Guyer (Indonesia '80)

I'm running for my fourth term as an Oregon State Representative, representing parts of NE and SE Portland. I'm focused on health, human services, housing, early childhood, and family support for vulnerable populations. My work with immigrants and refugees brings back fond memories of my VIA days!

Helena Kolenda (China '81)

This year marked my 20th anniversary at the Luce Foundation in New York. It is satisfying to be able to support exciting projects in and on Asia in higher education, policy, and cultural spheres. We just launched a new multi-year grants competition on Southeast Asia.

William "Sandy" Craig (Indonesia '82)

Hospitalist and ER physician at a small rural critical access hospital in Northern Vermont. Raising my teenaged son, Riley. Once he's out of the nest, I'll probably get back to international medical relief in god-awful places.

Kevin Gaw (Indonesia '82)

Still working at Bryant University in Rhode Island. Just started up my private practice, specializing in career counseling and life transitions. My last batch of curry with tempeh was delish! Happy to whip it up for VIA alumni passing through.

Janet Li-Tempest (Taiwan '83)

I've spent the past 25 years living and working in New Mexico where my husband grew up. Have had much joy raising three daughters, being a pediatrician in Indian Health service, and being part of our rural community.

Scott Templeton (Philippines '83)

I am an associate professor of economics at Clemson University. My wife and I have visited the Philippines during the past two summers. I have been studying her local language Bicol. The creation and dissemination of fake news is as much of a problem there as it is here. My family and I decided to stay for a second year here in Monteverde, Costa Rica, where we're learning Spanish and working remotely. I just enrolled in an online MA program in Teaching English as a Second Language, finally going for the knowledge I sometimes wished I had while teaching with VIA. Curious where this will lead me!

Sylvia Martinez (Taiwan '85)

Tim and I just got child #2 off to Stanford and are contemplating life as empty nesters. Our best cross cultural experience these days are weekend meals in the Valle de Gaudalupe. Join us!

Paul Gellert (Indonesia '87)

Spent 2017-2018 at KITLV in Leiden, the Netherlands together with Rinta and our son, Adison. In 2018 returned to Knoxville, TN where I'm now directing Global Studies.



### In Memoriam: Professor Emeritus Stuart A. Schlegel

Stuart A. Schlegel, a retired professor and Episcopal priest who was active in community peace and justice programs, died November 8th, 2018 at his Santa Cruz home. He was 85 years old.

A native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and a Korean War Navy veteran, Prof. Schlegel retired in 1987 from the University of California, Santa Cruz,

where he had been a Fellow of Merrill College and Professor of Anthropology and Southeast Asian studies for some twenty years. He was the author of numerous books and scholarly articles in several languages, mostly concerning the Teduray rainforest people of the southern Philippines.

From VIA Founder, Dwight Clark, "Stu Schlegel played such an active role in encouraging UC-Santa Cruz students to experience Asia directly. He led a number of them to VIA and, on their return to campus, further nurtured that interest. He combined a gentleness of spirit with a passion for his many interests—a truly remarkable human being."



### In Memoriam: Professor Emeritus J. Patrick Barron

Professor J. Patrick Barron died August 17th, 2019, after a long battle with liver cancer. He was 71 years old. Professor Barron was born in Scotland where he stayed until age 15. He came to Japan in the 1970s and began his career of teaching English for Medical Purposes (EMP) at St. Marianna University School of Medicine. Soon afterwards

he became Professor and Chairman at Tokyo Medical University where he founded the Department of International Medical Communications, the first of its kind in Japan. Prof. Barron will be remembered as a pioneer in EMP in Japan, but also as a warm and generous person who always took time to help people in any way that he could. From VIA Founder Dwight Clark, "From the beginning of VIA's Exploring Health Care program 22 years ago, Patrick was an extraordinarily active participant; so many Tokyo Medical University students took part because of his encouragement. He greatly expanded TMU's international outreach; VIA was honored to be a part of that effort."