



VIA Programs Continue to Evolve in Partnership with Alumni and Supporters

Despite the fact that we have not been able to send people across the Pacific for over a year and a half, our staff have been resilient and innovative in designing online programs and convening people to inspire each other to bring positive social change. For example, we offered our Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) and Exploring Health Care (EHC) programs, which we usually run in Silicon Valley, in the virtual space twice each in 2021. The virtual setup allowed us to invite former staff and VIA alumni from beyond the Bay Area as guest speakers, including **Alan Teo, Ayano Sasaki, Derek Antoku, Krystal Smith, Melody Wu, Shengnan “Cicy” Zhang, Tamara Solorzano, and Weerawat “Earth” Mongkolchoste** to share their expertise with our participants.

We also had the chance to localize and adapt the content of our online Social Impact Leadership Accelerator program to two groups in Asia. One was for community-based organizations in their early stages in Indonesia. This program was designed in collaboration with VIA Indonesia and their team members **Alit Mranani, Rizky Aljaza, and Sita Magfira** offered the program in Bahasa Indonesia. Another Accelerator is being offered this fall in Japanese for a community-oriented company in Japan that is owned by VIA alumna **Aki Takahashi**. While the target audience of these two Accelerators is different, both were developed and tailored in response to the needs identified by VIA Indonesia and Aki, who have an on-the-ground understanding of their respective contexts.

Looking forward, we are engaging in conversations with several partners in Asia on what collaborations could look like in the near- and longer-term future. For instance, with BEAM Education Foundation in



Online session on design-thinking taught by VIA alumna Laura Murphy

Thailand and Shonan Shijuku in Japan, led by VIA alumna **Chiemi Iwata**, we are identifying their needs and shaping the roles that VIA Global Community Fellows can play once we are able to resume our Fellowship program. Similar conversations are also taking place with Parami University in Myanmar where VIA Executive Director **Kazutoh Ishida** is currently teaching an online course on social impact leadership. VIA alumna **Laura Murphy** (Associate Professor, Tulane University) recently joined the course as a guest lecturer and taught a session on design-thinking, which the students enjoyed and appreciated immensely.

The pandemic has given us an opportunity to reimagine our programs and explore how we can optimize our curriculum for the virtual space. We are extremely grateful to our alumni and partners for joining our journey and their dedication to continue nurturing the next generation of changemakers.

Meet our Newest Program Director!

Anissa Monteon joined the VIA team in January 2021 and successfully ran our first virtual Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) program. Currently planning her third virtual ESI program, Anissa is dedicated to fostering the next generation of changemakers. We hope you enjoy learning more about her background below interview-style.

Could you tell us a little about yourself and how you got connected to VIA?

I am a native Californian who is enthusiastic about experiential learning and working collaboratively to address the complex social issues in our society. I am particularly passionate about equity in global sports and the workforce. In my last semester of graduate school, I was searching for an opportunity where I could work on programming that had a focus on experiential learning in an international context which led me to VIA.

Where have you traveled before, and where is the most unexpected place you've found yourself?

I lived abroad for a couple of years in Zambia and Liberia. I never imagined that I would live in Zambia since I knew little about

the country and I thought that I wouldn't be able to travel there due to financial constraints.

What is your favorite food away from home?

My favorite food is Mexican food because it is packed with fantastic flavors.

What is something you could spend hours doing, and not notice the time pass at all?

Watching women's football (soccer in the United States). I watch teams from all over the world which can be time consuming, but I love it!



Anissa (on the left) watching a women's soccer tournament with a friend in Portland, Oregon

What has been your biggest challenge and your biggest success in the last year?

Making the programs accessible and engaging for everyone since participants learn and engage with each other and the program

materials in different ways. The biggest success that I had was running my first program. Initially, I was nervous though it ended up being a success.

Being a Program Director, what do you enjoy most about running programs?

No program is the same and that excites me. Each program is an opportunity to work and learn from the fellows and the participants.

What makes an awesome program?

The people really make a program. They bring so much energy and experience to each program. It makes the programs so much more engaging and it creates the perfect learning environment.

What are you most excited to learn from your participants?

I'm most excited to learn what they are passionate about and how they stay motivated. So

many of the participants have vast interests ranging from environmental issues to social justice which they continue to work on in their communities. When they come to the program they teach their fellow participants and me so much about their communities and the impact these issues can have on themselves.

VIA Launches First Annual Social Impact Leadership Conference

VIA's inaugural Social Impact Leadership Conference was held virtually on June 25 & 26, 2021. The theme of this year's conference was "Training Emerging Leaders in an Evolving Socially Conscious World", and aimed to connect, inspire, and celebrate those taking action to create positive change locally and globally.

The event kicked off with a keynote address by **Dr. Netta Avineri**, Associate Professor at the Middlebury Institute of International Studies at Monterey, on the topic of "Cultivating a Social Impact Praxis: Storysharing, Engagement, and Community Partnerships for Social Change." Dr. Avineri reminded attendees that while social impact work is often focused on action, we must also make time for reflection, theory, sharing stories, and building meaningful partnerships.

On Day 2 of the conference, VIA alumni **Sergius Santos** and **Chalisa Kaewla** spoke about the

ripple effect that even small actions can have on a community and how this principle guides them in their respective fields of energy management and education.

The conference was also an opportunity to celebrate the six teams that were awarded a VIA Social Impact Grant of up to \$3,000 USD (generously funded by the Enlight Foundation) to implement a project in their community. These teams featured in the image below were all alumni of the VIA Social Impact Leadership Accelerator or the sister accelerator program run by VIA Indonesia. Each team had an opportunity to share their project plans and receive feedback from attendees. The conference was organized by our Conference Committee, led by **Hinda Majri**, and supported by: **Me Zin Anawar, Laura Galang, Melissa Golden, Kazutoh Ishida, Sergius Santos, Carrie Soo Hoo, Hannah Sorenson, and Yuki Ueda.**

LANN



📍 Myanmar

♥ Supporting Myanmar's education system through teacher training and direct student programs

TREASURE



📍 Myanmar

♥ Promoting education, youth employment, and environmental stewardship in Myanmar

BUOL EDUCARE INSTITUTE



📍 Indonesia

♥ Literacy training to mobilize youth to become local champions and improve the welfare of society

TEAM RANGOON

📍 Myanmar

♥ Increasing mental health awareness, sustainable thinking, design and development, and emotional agility in Myanmar

BEAM BEES



📍 Thailand

♥ Supporting (re)integration of migrant people in both host and home societies, focused around Chiang Mai

LOTTERY HOUSE

📍 Indonesia

♥ Inspiring young creators and professionals to think, explore, and collaborate on local environmental, social, economic, and cultural issues



1960s

Tom Petersmeyer (Hong Kong '65)

I am retired and am involved in the Affordable Housing movement in Pasadena, CA.

Ron Maysenhalder (Philippines '69)

I live in Santa Cruz, California and work remotely as senior accountant with Quantum Leap Healthcare Collaborative - a joint venture with UCSF managing experimental drug trials.

1970s

David Sklar (Philippines '70)

Fulbright Senior Scholar in Dublin, Ireland.

1980s

Kirsten Böse and Ben Self (Taiwan & Japan '86)

1) Our younger daughter, Pippa, attends university in Singapore, a decision that absolutely traces its roots back to our fabulous, life-changing experiences in VIA. She loves it! 2) Kirsten recently re-connected with an old friend from Taiwan who found her on LinkedIn. The impact is truly generational!

1990s

Kristy Kelly (Vietnam '92)

Associate Professor at Drexel University School of Education and Weatherhead East Asian Institute, Columbia University. Also founded and currently co-president of Society of Gender Professionals, a global professional development organization raising the profile of gender expertise.

2010s

Yuki Enomoto (MED '15, DSI '16, EHC '17)

I currently work as an OBGYN physician at the University of Tokyo Hospital. It's been exciting to see VIA alumni come to my hospital as medical interns. I even saw someone who was a participant in my group when I joined the Exploring Health Care (EHC) program as a program Fellow.

Betty Nguyen (DSI '16, Rikuzen Takata '16, EHC '18)

By day, I'm a California Arts Council Administrators of Color fellow at Red Ladder Theatre Company, where I facilitate programs to nurture creativity in schools, foster care, prisons, and community centers. By night, I'm working on my master's at the University of Florida's Center for Arts in Medicine, where I'm creating a collaborative film that insists on belonging for displaced people. Next year, I head to Izumi Otsu, Japan through VIA's Global Community Fellowship. I look forward to reflecting back on how I've transformed from an uncertain college freshman in my first VIA program (DSI) to a professional multidisciplinary

artist, scholar, and administrator with a focus on international community solidarity and wellbeing.

Su Han Moh Aung "Style" (ESI '18 & '21, ACCL '20)

I recently participated in the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Initiative (YSEALI) summit, and our project proposal to provide mental health and stress management support for youth ages 17-19 won second place, with a \$10,000 USD prize to implement the project. Thanks to VIA, I've fallen in love with working on social impact projects!

Hay Mar (ESI '19, ACCL '20)

After completing VIA's Social Impact Accelerator, I founded my own community organization called "Thit Eain Youth Development Myanmar" which offers teacher training, career counseling, and a youth mental health support program. Recently, I successfully completed the Basic Child Psychology for Holistic Child Development from Spring University Myanmar to better understand child mental health during political turmoil.

Ei Zin Mon (GLE '17, ESI '18, ACCL '20)

In my role as an Education Partnership Coordinator with Child's Dream Myanmar, I engage with local civil society organizations and Ethnic Education providers to promote effective education programmes. Recently, I was awarded a Lincoln Scholarship to pursue graduate studies in Education Management in the US, which will help me achieve my goal of setting up a community school in Myanmar.

Story Spotlight

(by **Sylvia Martinez**,
Taiwan '85,
VIA Staff '85 - '88)

In late February 2020, just before the COVID shutdowns, a number of former VIA volunteers and staff joined **Kathi** and **Eric Larkin** on a walk at the tidelands, as they bid farewell to the Bay Area to join grandchildren and family in Oregon. Kathi and Eric were both volunteers in Mainland China, and Kathi was on staff with **Rich Walters** and myself back in the late '80's. **Nancy Chen**, who went to China the same year joined us from her home in Santa Cruz, and best of all - VIA's founder **Dwight Clark** had just gotten back from Asia and was able to join us.

Just before we set off on the hike, Kathi said a few words about how important the VIA experience had been. At that moment, **Julie**, another of Kathi's guests, spoke up. Julie had been Kathi's student in Wuhan and had stayed in touch all these years, eventually coming to live in the United States. She thanked Dwight, and spoke so movingly of being a young student trying to perfect her English, and how much it meant to have young Americans coming "to live as we lived." We do not know the meaning of our actions, sometimes



for decades, sometimes never. However, I know that VIA has been so important in my life and world view and I am thankful to Dwight for helping make the world a smaller place, and for continuing to connect people through their shared humanity.

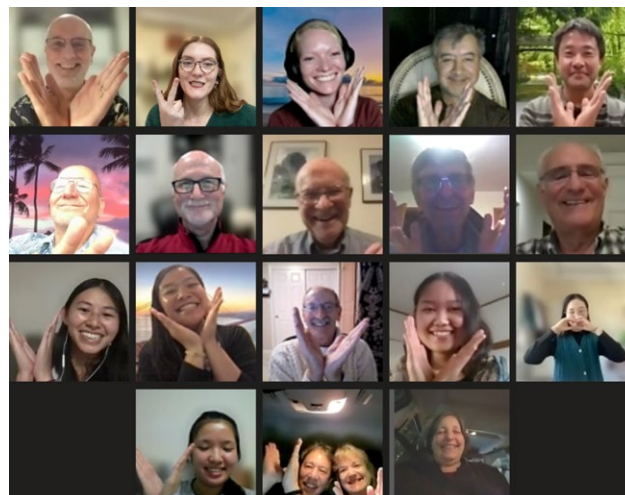
Bringing the Community Together

As we patiently wait till the time when we can physically bring people together again, we have been arranging opportunities for our community to connect in the virtual space. Thanks to VIA Global Community Fellowship alumni and Accelerator program coordinators **Carrie Soo Hoo**, **Hannah Sorenson**, and **Laura Galang**, the following events were offered:

VIA Game Night

On November 5 (US time), over 25 alumni from mainland China, Japan, Myanmar, Thailand, and across the US joined a virtual game night. Participants learned about cities relevant to VIA's history

through a trivia Quiz and connected with each other through a Bingo game and story sharing.



Keynote: What is the VIA Story?

On November 13 (US time), alumni ranging over five decades gathered online to reconnect

with fellow VIA participants. This event featured a moderated "live podcast" discussion with VIA

founder **Dwight Clark** and Global Community Fellow alumna **Carrie Soo Hoo** on what a VIA story is. The discussion was followed by breakout sessions where attendees had the chance to (re)connect with each other and reflect on their own VIA stories.

The People and Places of VIA

We are collecting VIA memories on an interactive map. We encourage you to access <https://padlet.com/viaprograms/viacommunity> to explore the stories of your fellow VIA alumni and also add your own!

How YOU can Support VIA



Our work is made possible through generous contributions from our alumni and friends in our community. Below are some ways that you can support VIA. A gift of any amount will support our work and elevate hope for the people and communities we serve. If you have any questions about making a gift to VIA, please contact info@viaprograms.org.

- Make a **one-time or a recurring monthly donation** online from www.viaprograms.org/donate.
- **Mail a check** made out to Volunteers in Asia to P.O. Box 1314, Palo Alto, CA 94302.
- Make a **stock donation** or a gift through a **donor-advised fund**.
- Have your company **match your charitable contribution**. You can check to see if your company offers matching from viaprograms.org/donation-match.
- Include VIA in your will and **leave a legacy gift** so that VIA can continue to provide rich cross-cultural experiential experiences in Asia and the US for future generations!
- **Shop online** at smile.amazon.com/ch/94-1622372. (Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of eligible purchases to VIA at no extra charge to you!)