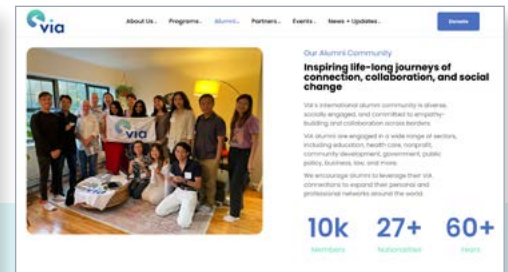
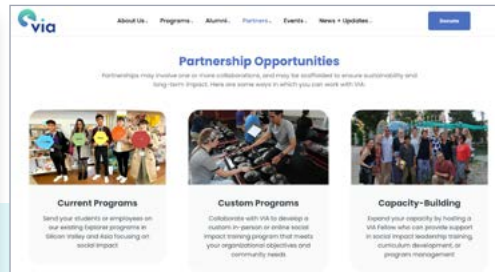
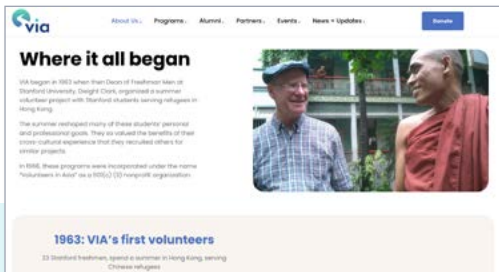
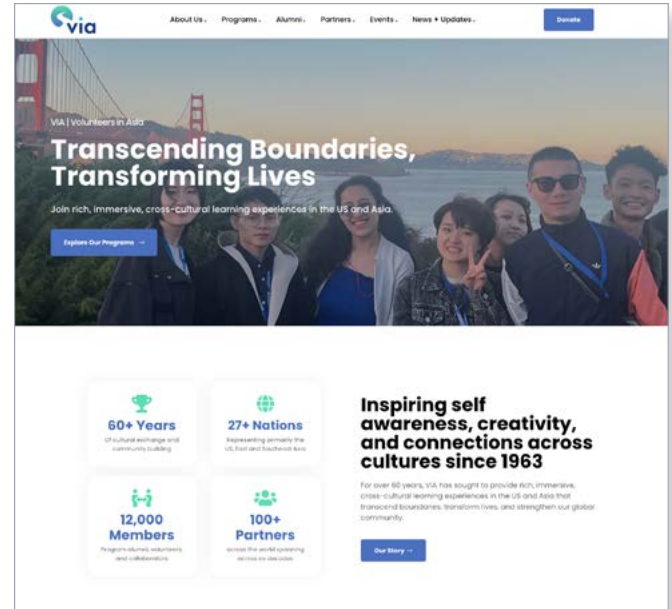




## Website Redesign *A Modern Update*



Since 2019, VIA has embarked on a transformative journey to refresh our identity, aligning it with our latest strategic plan and recognizing the need for a more cohesive and effective online presence. This initiative gained momentum in 2022 when staff and board members formed a dedicated task force to craft new vision and mission statements. With invaluable input from our community and the expertise through a partnership with MediaCause, a nonprofit marketing agency, we unveiled revitalized statements during VIA’s 60th anniversary celebration—an event that symbolized both reflection and renewal.

We focused on developing a cohesive brand identity and voice to guide the website redesign. By fall 2023, we had clearly defined the site’s purpose, design, and functionality. The construction phase unfolded over the summer and fall, resulting in a streamlined, user-friendly experience. Key improvements emphasize VIA’s story, showcasing our identity and community. While the previous site highlighted our activities, the new platform centers on who we are and

the passion behind our work. It’s now more inclusive for potential partners as well as participants, featuring content that highlights the benefits of joining the VIA community, as well as our current partners and initiatives. Additionally, our program offerings have been reorganized for easier navigation, providing clarity on what makes the “VIA Experience” truly unique.

VIA Director of Operations and primary website manager Melissa Golden said, “I am thrilled about the numerous technical enhancements for backend site management. While these improvements may not be visible to users, I look forward to welcoming more site visitors who are eager to learn more about us and excited to embark on their journey with VIA.”

As we launch this updated website, we invite everyone to explore its new features and learn more about VIA. We look forward to engaging with our community in this refreshed digital space.

# Meet the 2024–25 Global Community Fellows

VIA's Global Community Fellowship offers a distinctive opportunity for recent university graduates and both emerging and seasoned professionals to engage with NGOs, schools, universities, and social enterprises throughout Asia. This fellowship focuses on community development, capacity-building, and education. By collaborating directly with local community organizations, fellows gain practical experience and insights and employ creative and innovative approaches to tackling pressing social issues. We are thrilled to present our Global Community Fellows for 2024–2025 supporting Parami University and BEAM Education Foundation in Chiang Mai, Thailand, highlighting their varied backgrounds and ambitions.

## Anny Lin

Reflecting on her first year as a VIA Fellow based in Chiang Mai, Thailand, Anny had a transformative experience working closely with over 60 undergraduate students at Parami University by providing academic advising and writing support. She often jokes, "I have the best job in the world," as meeting one-on-one with her students, listening to their challenges and aspirations, and supporting them through their unique university experiences has been incredibly rewarding. Anny expresses her gratitude to VIA, her Parami colleagues, and, most importantly, her students for all they have taught her.

In her second year of the GCF Fellowship, Anny will continue to support undergraduate students at Parami University as an academic advisor. She feels privileged to work alongside her Parami colleagues as they guide their students through another academic year during these challenging times. This year, Anny is looking forward to further learning and exploration—gaining insights about Burma from her colleagues and students, diligently studying the Burmese language with a tutor, and discovering all the beauty Chiang Mai and northern Thailand have to offer.



## Janhvi Kulkarni

Janhvi attended UNC-Chapel Hill, where she majored in Computer Science and Psychology. At UNC, she spent three years as an Advocate at the Community Empowerment Fund, a nonprofit aiming to support community members experiencing the effects of NC's housing crisis and inequitable neighborhoods. After graduating in 2022, Janhvi worked for two years as Program Coordinator at Kiran, an agency dedicated to serving and empowering South Asian domestic violence survivors in NC. She is so excited for this new season as an Academic Advisor at Parami University.

Janhvi is inspired every day by her bright and motivated Class of 2028 students. It has been meaningful to build relationships with students over the semester and support them through personal circumstances affecting their experience at Parami. She is also a tutor at Parami's Language and Learning Center, and she feels it is rewarding to see students' writing skills strengthen over time. This year, Parami students launched the WE CODE coding-interest club, for which Janhvi is honored to be an advisor. She is looking forward to being part of the club's programming over the year of coding workshops and a speaker series!



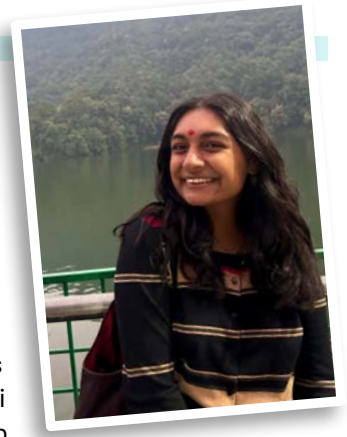
## How to Support

The VIA Global Community Fellowship (GCF) is a multi-year program that engages directly with communities in Asia. VIA Fellows gain hands-on experience in innovative approaches to address critical social challenges. Currently operating in Thailand, the GCF program plans to expand throughout Asia and is seeking partners to support its growth. For collaboration opportunities, **please contact our Strategic Relationships Director Wallace Wong ([wallace@viaprograms.org](mailto:wallace@viaprograms.org))**

# Navya Rowan Mohan

Navya's experience has been focused on equity work across various sectors. As a peer crisis counselor, adventure trip leader, social impact consultant, and digital equity fellow, she has found fulfillment in engaging in meaningful direct services while developing the tools necessary for broader systemic change. At her core, Navya values individual connections with others and is passionate about empowering them to realize their full potential. She aspires to pursue a career in international education policy, drawing on her background in Public Policy, Marketing, and Public Leadership.

During her VIA fellowship, Navya is fortunate to spend her time meeting inspiring students and supporting them as they explore their potential and passions. She advises the Parami Entrepreneurial Club and is excited to facilitate conversation teahouses and workshops with students this year. She enjoys programming events, mentoring students, and building community at Parami University.



# Alexandra Dingle

Alexandra (Alex) Dingle is a globally minded citizen passionate about education equity and justice for all, advocating especially for students living in contexts of displacement and war. Alex has worked directly with students and youth in India, Greece, Jordan, and Boston, and she is driven by their stories to use her energy and make an impact. She integrated these experiences into her International Relations and Middle Eastern Studies degree at Tufts University, where she graduated from in May. She is curious and excited by alternative forms to traditional teaching, hoping to dedicate her career to improving international education policy.

At Parami University, Alex is an Academic Advisor, and she is thrilled to be working with second and third year students. Through tutoring and advising sessions, she is learning how to best support them and continues to be inspired by their hard work, passion, and commitment. She also helps lead workshops and tea houses where students can improve their English, and she is looking forward to serving as the advisor for the Public Speaking and Debate club. Alex is also helping plan International Student Day, and she will be helping them with their research skills in an exciting upcoming course.



# Brianna Avila

Growing up in Salinas, California, Brianna was inspired by the resilience and potential of her community, which fueled her passion for expanding access to quality education. Her academic journey began at Hartnell College and continued at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she focused on supporting first-generation college students like herself. Throughout her experiences, Brianna has remained committed to creating opportunities for students facing barriers in education. She believes that cross-cultural empathy and understanding are essential for developing inclusive and effective educational programs. These values have guided her to BEAM Education Foundation, where she works on initiatives that empower students from Myanmar, helping them navigate challenges to higher education and achieve personal growth.

At BEAM, Brianna provides technical support to teachers, collaborating closely with them to address their needs. She also teaches Reading and Language Arts, assisting students in enhancing their literacy skills. Her aim is to improve the learning experience and foster an inclusive environment where every student can thrive. Currently, Brianna is focused on developing an emotional literacy course for students. After successfully completing the initial session on emotional awareness, she is preparing to introduce lessons on emotional regulation techniques, such as mindful breathing, to promote resilience and self-awareness.

The fellow post at BEAM is generously supported by the Freeman Foundation.



# Via's Summer Highlights

***This summer, VIA welcomed over 50 participants from around the world to its summer programs in Asia and the US, promoting cross-cultural exchange and nurturing the next generation of social impact leaders.***



## ***Exploring Social Innovation and Health Care!***

VIA's Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) and Exploring Health Care (EHC) programs welcomed students from across Asia, including Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, the Philippines, Taiwan, China, and Myanmar, for an immersive experience in the

San Francisco Bay Area. Participants in both programs learned and practiced design-thinking, while addressing personal and social issues they were passionate about. Both programs were filled with highlights such as visits to Stanford University, UC Berkeley, Delancey Street Foundation, NVIDIA, JP Morgan, Google, and volunteering at Project Open Hand. The ESI program featured interactive workshops, group discussions, and insights from local leaders and changemakers, all aimed at discovering new possibilities for creating a better world. Meanwhile, medical students joining the EHC program explored a wide range of healthcare topics—from organ transplantation and palliative care to public health—while examining social and cultural challenges through the lens of healthcare.



## ***Exploring Silicon Valley with Fukuoka Futaba High School***

This summer, VIA welcomed students from Fukuoka Futaba High School as part of our Exploring Silicon Valley (ESV) program for an enriching experience focused on culture, innovation, and leadership development. Highlights of their visit included exploring Glide Memorial Church in San Francisco, attending an Oakland A's vs. Dodgers game, learning about the Japanese American history at the Japanese American Museum of San Jose, and touring the Stanford campus alongside participants from our Exploring Social Innovation (ESI) program. Since 2016, VIA has partnered with Futaba High School to bring students to Silicon Valley for experiential learning, and in 2024, VIA launched the Nichibei Girls Collaborative—a seven-month cultural exchange and social impact leadership program for female-identifying high school students from Futaba High School and two high schools in Salinas, California.



## ***Rikuzentakata Project***

In August, US university students participated in VIA's annual seven-day project-based learning program alongside students from Rikkyo University in Tokyo and The University of Hong Kong, focusing on the city of Rikuzentakata, which was devastated by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami. Through guest speakers, site visits, immersive activities, and collaborative team projects, participants explored the community's recovery journey and its vision for a sustainable future, discussing the United Nations' Global Goals for Sustainable Development (SDGs). This experiential learning opportunity allowed them to deepen their understanding of social issues in rural Japan through the lens of disaster recovery, develop a global perspective on community resilience, and explore the application of SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities in diverse contexts. Ultimately, the program fostered connections among VIA participants from the US, Japan, and Hong Kong.



## ***Welcoming Parami University Students to the Bay Area!***

This summer, VIA welcomed nine Parami University students to the Bay Area after they wrapped up their summer internships in Washington DC. Parami University, a liberal arts institution for Burmese students, is a valued partner for VIA's Global Community Fellowship. Generous VIA alumni hosted the students in their homes, enriching their experience.

Led by VIA Executive Director Kazutoh Ishida, the students explored highlights of the Bay Area, including a visit to Stanford University. A special reception organized by Parami President Kyaw Moe Tun brought together supporters of Burmese education, including VIA alumni, former board members, and VIA founder Dwight Clark. This gathering allowed the students to meet Dwight and share their experiences and meaningful stories together.

# Alumni Highlights

## ***Reconnecting in New York City: A Night of Memories and Inspiration***

In September, VIA hosted a delightful alumni reunion in the heart of New York City, where old friends and new faces gathered to celebrate the enduring spirit of our community. Alumni from the tri-state area—representing Hong Kong, Myanmar, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia, and the US—came together to share their journeys and reminisce about their transformative experiences with VIA.



VIA Executive Director Kazutoh Ishida, Board member Blair King, and VIA staff members Wallace Wong and Kristy Ishii joined the gathering to share exciting updates about the organization's future. Attendees learned about new programs and initiatives on the horizon, as well as the unveiling of our fresh VIA logo.



## ***Celebrating at Stanford Homecoming!***

What a memorable weekend it was at Stanford University for VIA's Alumni Reunion during Homecoming! Alumni spanning VIA's remarkable 60-year history convened over morning coffee and pastries, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere where laughter and nostalgia flourished.

VIA Executive Director Kazutoh Ishida, Board Chair Steve Hope, and Strategic Relationships Director Wallace Wong were on hand to share updates that promise an exciting future for the organization. They introduced the new rebranding efforts, along with a revised mission and vision statement, which will guide VIA's initiatives moving forward. The gathering was not just a celebration of the past, but a reaffirmation of our commitment to fostering connections and inspiring social impact within the VIA community.

## ***A Global Gathering in Tokyo***

VIA's vibrant spirit was on full display at a recent alumni gathering in Tokyo, where participants from various programs—including Exploring Social Innovation and Exploring Health Care—came together to engage in meaningful conversations. Alumni from the VIA Study Tour also joined the mix, enriching the dialogue with their unique perspectives from their VIA experiences across Asia.



With VIA Executive Director Kazutoh Ishida and Program Directors Kristy Ishii and Sam Yee in attendance, the reunion served as a platform for discussing critical social issues and exploring how alumni can collaborate to effect change. This gathering underscored VIA's commitment to supporting alumni in their endeavors to create social impact both locally and globally, as participants brainstormed ways to leverage their collective experiences for the greater good.

As VIA continues to evolve, these reunions remind us of the power of community, connection, and the shared commitment to making a difference in the world. We look forward to more gatherings and the stories that will unfold as we embark on this journey together.

## VIA Study Tour in Japan



This year, VIA's Fall Study Tour took participants on an enriching journey through Japan, uniting alumni from various decades of our organization's history. Led by VIA Executive Director Kazutoh Ishida, the tour kicked off in the enchanting city of Kyoto, where attendees immersed themselves in its rich cultural heritage by visiting breathtaking shrines and temples. The adventure continued in

western Japan, featuring highlights such as the impressive Big Buddha in Nara and the delightful experience of feeding the friendly deer at Nara Park, as well as a hands-on sushi-making class in Osaka, guided by a local chef.

Participants also had the opportunity to visit Koyasan, renowned for its tranquil temples where VIA used to hold training for our volunteers, before traveling to Tokyo. There, they visited Tokyo Medical University, a valued VIA partner for almost 30 years, learning about its history and discussing an upcoming program focused on diversity in healthcare. The final days included visits to Asakusa and Meiji Jingu Shrine, culminating in a memorable boat cruise on the Sumida River. The study tour participants met with VIA alumnus Kazuharu Omata, who shared his journey and insights, sparking engaging discussions on the differences between American and Japanese healthcare systems.

As the tour wrapped up, participants reflected on the incredible experiences and meaningful connections forged, warmly inviting others to join future study tours.

If you're interested in joining VIA's next Study Tour in Summer 2025, please contact VIA Strategic Relationships Director Wallace Wong at [wallace@viaprograms.org](mailto:wallace@viaprograms.org).



## Updates by VIA Alumni

### Richard Cohn

*Korea Volunteer (1966)*

Our company, Beyond Words Publishing, just celebrated our 40th year of publishing. I am still grateful for being a VIA volunteer in Korea in 1966 teaching English in Seoul and helping build a road with a United Nations work program. Such fond memories never fade and last a lifetime.

### Patrice O'Neill

*Korea Volunteer (1968)*

Retired from family medical practice, reading, knitting, and gardening.

### Bob Schultz

*Indonesia Volunteer (1972)*

I am retired from the Navy living in Imperial Beach, California. I'm staying busy playing golf, a lot of cycling with a cycling club, playing the fiddle in pubs at Irish music sessions, and going on adventures with the NOLS (National Outdoor Leadership School). This past year I did a hike with them in Portugal and in the Dolomites in Italy. I'm also scheduled to do a hike with them in Iceland. I would love to hear from any of my old friends!

### Rafael Reyes

*Indonesia Volunteer (1989)*

I am continuing to live in San Mateo with my wife and now 10-year-old son. He's become a fan of white water rafting. Stephanie works on housing policy with the State and I work on climate programs for Peninsula Clean Energy.

### Kathryn Weber

*Myanmar Volunteer (2012)*

I was a 2012-14 volunteer in Myanmar and am still working overseas today (now in Sri Lanka). I credit VIA with helping me launch my international career.

## How to Support

We are deeply grateful for our alumni and friends who have supported VIA in so many ways, including assisting our programs as fellows/mentors, providing insight and expertise, collaborating on programs, building community connections, and donating to support VIA's mission.

If you would like to make a gift and add your support, please visit [viaprograms.org/donate](https://viaprograms.org/donate) or contact Wallace Wong, VIA Strategic Relationships Director, at [wallace@viaprograms.org](mailto:wallace@viaprograms.org).