



SINCE 1883

# YALE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION OF THE NORTHWEST

MINNESOTA, WESTERN WISCONSIN, NORTH AND SOUTH DAKOTA

Jan 6: Knitting

Jan 8: French Table

Jan 13: Div School Alumni  
MeetupJan 22: Environmental  
Sustainability

Jan 26: PSP

Feb 9: Knitting

(T): Sponsored by another  
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## Notes from the President: Ken's Community Corner

Over the next year I will yield my monthly message real estate to feature the extraordinary work that Yalies are doing in the non-profit world to make Minnesota a great place to live. If you run or work for or with a non-profit, please contact me at [president@yaanw.org](mailto:president@yaanw.org).

Best wishes,  
Ken Freed '83, '87 MM

Local food sales in the United States topped \$6.1 billion in 2012 and in Minnesota, Hmong farmers are at that forefront, accounting for more than half of all the vendors in the metropolitan area's farmers markets. But Hmong farmers are working hard and barely making it. An organization that is trying to help is the [Hmong American Farmers Association \(HAFA\)](#).

HAFA began in 2011 when Yale College alumna Pakou Hang '99 received a Bush Fellowship from the Bush Foundation to examine the challenges and opportunities facing Hmong farmers in Minnesota. At that time, Hmong farmers were earning only \$0.64 for every dollar other Minnesota mainstream vegetables growers were earning. After 40 one-to-ones with Hmong farmers and stakeholders, Pakou conducted a community meeting where an older Hmong farmer stood up and said, "we have to stop waiting for someone to come save us, we can save ourselves," and shortly afterwards, HAFA was formed.

Since its inception, HAFA has grown exponentially securing access to a 155 acre incubator and research farm along Highway 52 South called the HAFA Farm in 2014, earning the Farmer of the Year Award for Dakota County in 2016, and the coveted Bush Prize in 2017. In that time, HAFA has also become a thought leader around issues of community wealth building, sustainable agriculture, and creating a fair food economy for all. Much of HAFA's success can be attributed to its three

fundamentals: First, HAFA was founded by and is led by Hmong farmers. The founders formed HAFA as a membership-based organization because they understood that the challenges facing Hmong farmers were systemic in nature, and thus, required solutions that were equally big, holistic, and multi-prong. They believed that systems-level change only occurred when people recognized each other, aligned their values, and acted in solidarity.

Secondly, HAFA's Whole Foods Model offers a holistic approach to helping Hmong farmers. Unlike other nonprofits, HAFA focuses its work aiding Hmong farmers access land, alternative markets (besides the farmers markets); capital, research and trainings, all at the same time. HAFA found that helping its farmers access land long term, while necessary, was not sufficient for real financial prosperity if those same farmers did not understand business management, or could not qualify for a loan to buy a tractor, or did not have access to the latest agricultural innovations. All of those components, while necessary, needed to be combined to sufficiently create conditions for economic prosperity.

Lastly, HAFA works to build intergenerational and community wealth for Hmong farmers and their family members, not just grow their income. When asked about her inspiration for this core value, Pakou recalled an intimate business dinner she attended as an undergraduate and a member of the Yale Business Club. The guest of honor was Leonard Lauder, the current Chairman Emeritus of Estee Lauder Companies, Inc. and the former CEO of the company. At that dinner, Mr. Lauder shared stories about his mother and how she forced him to hawk her beauty products around the neighborhood. He joked about hating the chore, but how those humble beginnings seeded the foundation for the multi-billion dollar business that is Estee Lauder today. "Three or four generations from now, our farmers' family members do not need to be doing business in the agricultural or food sectors. But I hope they can trace the roots of their success back to the days they spent picking string beans or weeding tomatoes with their parents at the HAFA Farm," says Pakou.

With HAFA assistance, many Hmong farmers' fresh produce are now sold to over 166 schools, restaurants and institutions including the Saint Paul Public Schools and Carleton College; Spoon and Stable and Birchwood Café; and the Seward Coop in Minneapolis and the Just Food Coop in Northfield. Moreover, HAFA's farmers' incomes have grown, on average, from \$5,000 per acre in 2012 to \$11,000 per acre this past growing season and are poised to increase even more with farmers plantings various perennials such as asparagus, blueberries, plum

trees, pear trees and hazelnut trees. In fact, HAFA is in the middle of a capital campaign to raise \$500,000 to construct a new wash, rinse, packing and cooling facility on the HAFA Farm so that the organization's food hub can be good agricultural practices (GAP) certified and thus, expand sales to even more buyers in the regions such as the Mayo Clinic and Whole Foods.

**Pakou Hang '99, Executive Director, Hmong American Farmers Association**

## News and Announcements

### Alumni Interviewing

If you are interested in interviewing applicants to Yale College, please sign up by joining the [Yale Alumni Schools Committee](#) or contact one of the coordinators below.

- St. Paul, east metro, outstate, and western Wisconsin: Cynthia Lee, [cynthiaylee@gmail.com](mailto:cynthiaylee@gmail.com)
- Minneapolis and west metro: Tony Leung, [TNLeung@mnd.uscourts.gov](mailto:TNLeung@mnd.uscourts.gov)
- Rochester: Jon Tilburt, [Tilburt.Jon@mayo.edu](mailto:Tilburt.Jon@mayo.edu)
- Dakotas: Dominique Fenton, [dominique.a.fenton@gmail.com](mailto:dominique.a.fenton@gmail.com)

### Send us your news!

If you know of local events involving Yale alumni, students, or faculty, please feel free to [send us information](#) for inclusion in the newsletter or on social media (like our [Facebook events page](#) or [Twitter](#)). You can also share Yale-related news and events in our [Facebook group](#). If you have any photos of YAANW or Yale events to share, please send them to [news@yaanw.org](mailto:news@yaanw.org).

## Recent Events

Each year, YAANW sends baked goods from a New Haven bakery to first-year students from our region. Max Leung (TC'22) of Bloomington enjoyed them from his room in Bingham Hall on Old Campus. Please consider a [donation](#) to YAANW to help us to continue our support for local students currently at Yale!



## Upcoming Events

Click on an event to learn more!

Jan 6: **Knitting**

Jan 8: **French Table**

Jan 13: **Div School Alumni Meetup**

Jan 22: **Environmental Sustainability**

Jan 26: **PSP**

Feb 9: **Knitting**

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## Special Events

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### Environmental Sustainability Series

**Jan 22**  
**5:30 pm**  
**University of St. Thomas,**  
**St. Paul**

The next installment in our long-running Environmental Sustainability speaker series will be in January, presented in collaboration with the School of Engineering at the University of St. Thomas. **Ecolab CFO Daniel J. Schmechel '82** will speak at Woulfe Alumni Hall within the **Andersen Student Center** at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. Dan will join us to discuss Ecolab's approach to sustainability and how his company, with \$14B in revenues and 50,000 employees, helps their customers tackle their challenges.

Reception and drinks at 5:30pm.

Dinner and discussion to begin at 6:30pm.

\$40 cost includes admission, drinks, and buffet dinner.

Additional details and registration at:

<https://stthomas.universitytickets.com/w/event.aspx?id=1412>

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## Regular Events and Shared Interest Groups

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### Yale Alumni Knitting Group

**Jan 6**  
**Feb 9**

Come join us for great knitting and fun conversation. Bring your current project(s) or start a new one. Get advice, opinions or ask questions. Total beginners through advanced are welcome. Come whenever it works for you or attend on a regular basis!

**2:00-4:00 pm**  
**Northfield Yarn**

Contact: Cynthia Gilbertson at [cfgilbertson@mac.com](mailto:cfgilbertson@mac.com) or 507-645-4327

The group typically meets at the creative fiber-crafts store of Yale alumna Cynthia Gilbertson, called **Northfield Yarn**, in Northfield, MN. Join other alumni and friends, experienced or otherwise, who share an interest in fiber-crafts. Interested persons are welcome at any time.

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## **French Table**

**Jan 8**  
**6:00 pm**  
**Cave Vin**

Once a month, fellow Francophiles meet for a fun evening of talk. All levels of French are encouraged and welcome. RSVP to Ron Goldser at [rgoldser@gmail.com](mailto:rgoldser@gmail.com).

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## **Yale Divinity School Alumni (and Friends) Meeting**

**Jan 13**  
**3:00-5:00 pm**  
**Eagan residence**

The Fall edition of **Reflections** has arrived. "Sex, Gender, Power: A Reckoning" (if you don't have the paper edition, go to the online version at <https://reflections.yale.edu>).

Susan Miller (MAR '73 M.Div. '81) and Rudy Hokanson (M.Div. '74, M.B.A. '81) will host on Sunday, January 13, 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. We will gather to share each other's company and to use this issue of the magazine for discussion. The address is 1622 Harbour Point, Eagan. Please RSVP to [rhokanson@gmail.com](mailto:rhokanson@gmail.com). Use this e-mail address also for any questions or directions.

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## **People Serving People**

**Jan 26**  
**11:30 am**  
**PSP**

**People Serving People** (PSP) is a homeless shelter in downtown Minneapolis that serves children and their families. YAANW has a small group volunteering to serve meals at PSP. We volunteer on the fourth Saturday of every month from 11:30 am to 1:00 pm. If you are interested in joining us, please contact Ron Goldser at [rgoldser@gmail.com](mailto:rgoldser@gmail.com).

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## **Webster Elementary Volunteering**

**Many opportunities!**  
**425 5th St NE, Mpls**

Come read! Dr. Seuss! Elephant and Piggy! Make a difference in a child's life. Really—your time matters. One (or more) days per week, from 8 am to 9 am at **Webster Elementary School**, northeast Minneapolis. Contact **Ron Goldser** for further information.

## Alumni in the Arts and Community

### AYA becomes YAA

The Association of Yale Alumni (AYA), the university branch with which we coordinate, is rebranding and has become the Yale Alumni Association (YAA). You can read more about the new brand and website, along with various services that the YAA provides, at [alumni.yale.edu](http://alumni.yale.edu).

## Twin Cities Alumni Network (TCAN)

**Join alumni from other local alumni clubs at various events hosted by their clubs. Alumni from all TCAN schools (including Yale) are welcome at these events!**

Check the TCAN website for upcoming events: <http://www.twincitiesalumninetwork.org>

Join the TCAN LinkedIn group: <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/4075580>

Like the TCAN Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/TwinCitiesAlumniNetwork>

Join the Young Alumni Facebook group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/TCANYA>

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