

For immediate release
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A Quarter-Million Dollars Raised at the February 25 Benefit Dinner for the Smithsonian Vietnamese American Heritage Project

Washington, D.C.— A Tet Dinner for the benefit of the Smithsonian Vietnamese American Heritage Project (the “Project”) netted a record \$250,000. The amount far surpassed the initial goal of raising the additional \$12,000 to finish the fundraising campaign.

The Smithsonian Asian Pacific American (APA) Program created the Project in 2005 to commemorate the 30th anniversary of mass Vietnamese immigration to the United States after 1975. The Project includes a photographic exhibit which will be shown at the Smithsonian in 2006 and then travel around the country, a curriculum guide aimed at middle school students, a dedicated website, and public programs. For more information, visit www.apa.si.edu/VietAm (stands for Vietnamese Americans).

“With the additional funds raised at the Dinner, the Smithsonian APA Program is able to jumpstart the million-dollar endowment which will yield sufficient funds each year to support public programs and other educational initiatives dedicated to Vietnamese American culture and heritage. This will continue in perpetuity creating a permanent presence for Vietnamese Americans at the Smithsonian,” said Dr. Franklin Odo, Director of the Smithsonian APA Program.

Thanh-Thuy Nguyen, Ban Tran, and Dr. Thanh Nguyen led the Washington D.C. Working Group, a volunteer group working with the Smithsonian APA Program for the past year, to fill Fortune Restaurant to capacity. Approximately 500 people attended the dinner. The all-volunteer group secured corporate sponsors, donations for the silent auction, and famous Vietnamese-Americans singers.

The auspicious launch of the Smithsonian Vietnamese American Heritage Endowment was made possible by the generosity and creativity of three donors. Dr. Long Nguyen, CEO of Pragmatics and his wife, Kimmy, pledged the initial \$100,000 to kick-off the campaign. They were followed by Mr. Irv Reid, CEO of AnviCom who offered to match 50 cents for the next \$50,000 dollars donated at the Dinner. The race was on for the guests to meet Mr. Reid’s challenge and in less than an hour, \$50,000 was raised from the crowd ranging from \$10,000 to a few dollars. Mr. Quan Hoang, Founder and President of AnviCom, then

offered to match dollar for dollar raised for the rest of the evening. Since there was no more money raised, Mr. Hoang agreed to match the \$29,000 from the silent auction and the raffles which then totaled \$58,000. Additionally, the DC Working Group estimated that the net Dinner proceeds amounted to roughly \$25,000. The initial surprise announcement by Dr. Nguyen, the creative challenge by Mr. Reid and Mr. Hoang and the generosity of the dinner guests made for a memorable evening where over \$250,000 was raised for the Smithsonian Vietnamese American Heritage Project.

“We never imagined raising this much tonight – this is unprecedented for the local Vietnamese American community. People gave because they saw the value of the Vietnamese American story – their struggles and accomplishments, being told by the largest museum complex in the world. We challenge other Vietnamese American communities, especially the business community in the West coast and around the country to step up and surpass what we have done here. We are busy and work full-time but we accomplished this as volunteers because we believe in it,” said Thanh-Thuy Nguyen, Chair of the Dinner.

“People told me that they were donating for the sake of their children and future generations. The project teaches youth about their rich heritage and helps create a more accurate and positive image of Vietnamese Americans for the general public,” said Dr. Vu Pham, Project Director of the Smithsonian Vietnamese American Heritage Project.

To help make the Vietnamese American Heritage Endowment Fund a reality, please make a generous donation by check or credit card. Make checks payable to Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program/VietAm and mail to:

Gina Inocencio, Program Specialist
Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program
A&I, Room 2467, MRC: 440
P.O. Box 37012
Washington, DC 20013-7012.

Credit card donations can be made by phone (202) 786-2409. The Smithsonian is a 501(c)(3) organization (Tax ID# 53 0206027). All contributions are tax-deductible to the full extent of the law.

Questions about donations may be directed to Francey Youngberg, Smithsonian Development Consultant, Francey.youngberg@verizon.net or Ban Tran, DC Working Group at ban_tran@ml.com.