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“Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon” Opening Reception Raises Additional \$175,000 Towards Vietnamese American 1M Endowment at the Smithsonian

The Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Program (Smithsonian APA Program) hosted 300 guests from around the country at the Smithsonian Castle on Jan. 18 for a VIP Opening Reception for the exhibit, “Exit Saigon, Enter Little Saigon”. Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), Senator James Webb (D-VA) and Cong. Mike Honda (D-CA), Chair of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, made remarks recognizing the struggles and sacrifices made by Vietnamese Americans to build a new life in America and congratulated the Smithsonian for bringing their stories to the general public.

Betty Nguyen, CNN Anchor, served as Mistress of Ceremonies. During a live segment on CNN featuring the exhibit, Ms. Nguyen told about her family’s experience coming to America as Vietnamese refugees. Sheila Burke, Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer, made the welcoming remarks followed by Franklin Odo, Smithsonian APA Program Director and Vu Pham, Curator of the exhibit. Prominent guests included James V. Kimsey, founding CEO of AOL, Jonathan Klein, President, CNN/US, Hong Le Webb (Senator Webb’s wife), Jan Scruggs, President of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, Tito Tolentino of the Washington Post (Media Partner), Long and Kimmy Nguyen of Pragmatics, Inc. (Endowment Founder), Frank and Catherine Jao of Bridgecreek Development, Kieu Chinh, Actress, Chloe Dao, winner of Project Runway, Taryn Rose, shoe designer, Bao Tranchi, fashion designer, Tony Lam, first Vietnamese American elected official, Ryan Hubris of Viet Heritage Society (National Sponsor) and An Family of Crustacean Restaurant.

During the course of the evening, the Smithsonian APA Program and the D.C. Vietnamese American Working Group raised \$175,000 to add to the approximately \$250,000 in the Endowment. Frank Jao made a leadership pledge of \$100,000 followed by a \$25,000 challenge grant by Long Nguyen which was quickly matched by additional pledges and donations. If the goal of the endowment were reached, Vietnamese Americans would be the first of any APA group to establish a 1M endowment at the Smithsonian. For more information on the project, please visit www.apa.si.edu/VietAm or call 202-633-2690.