

# Paying It Forward

Immigrant's \$20K a month awards create opportunities for individuals experiencing economic hardships.

By **MERCIA HOBSON**  
THE CONNECTION

A Vietnamese refugee turned philanthropist who works in Reston knows first-hand the fear and challenges of poverty. Kimmy Duong, of McLean, understands the stress of poverty and the strength necessary to pull free from the grasp of economic hardship. But mostly, she understands the benefit of hands reaching out to help her. Their gifts provided Duong the opportunities to create her own opportunities later.

Giving back and paying it forward is Duong's mantra. It became Duong's life mission to support humanitarian efforts for people in her Vietnamese homeland and adopted United States communities.

According to Duong, she came to America as an adult in 1975. "I had nothing but \$30 in my wallet," Duong recalled the date, April 29, the day before the fall of Saigon when the Communists took over her country. When she fled Saigon, she left behind her work as an IBM programmer-analyst. People in the United States helped Duong, and she benefited from a "generous America," a country of opportunity for an immigrant.

Initially, the challenges of her new life proved "very worrisome" and difficult for Duong. "I wanted to be able to help my family back in Vietnam," she said. "I worked four jobs. IBM was my main job, and I worked as a waitress and a sales lady at a fabric store because they gave a discount. I [also] worked at a fast-food shop," Duong said.

Now Duong is expanding her charitable efforts. Known for educational scholarships and gifts support for students attending higher education, health grants, welfare programs such as support for victims of COVID-19



Kimmy Duong

and others, on Wednesday, May 26, Duong spoke about her newest endeavor, umbrellaed under the Kimmy Duong Foundation. It is the Welfare Hardship Program.

Duong said the program aims to help individuals and families in the Virginia, Maryland, and D.C. areas experiencing economic hardship. The amount of aid for each household is \$500 or \$1000. The Foundation provides a maximum of 20 grants per month and operates on a rolling basis throughout the year.

Duong said that the Hardship Grant Program is open to heads of household, from a single person household to multi-member households. All must have incomes under 150 percent of the federal poverty line and experience economic hardship. Applicants must reside and work in the Virginia, Maryland, and D.C. area. There is a limit of one grant per family per month. The applicant must provide their name, address, email, phone number, a letter explaining why they require assistance, two letters of recommendation, a tax return showing income below the poverty line, and a filled Affidavit of Hardship form.

A review committee determines the approved grantees every month. The Foundation will notify approved applicants by email or phone. Approved grants are provided by the last day of the month in which the application was reviewed. "We came here with nothing, and we benefited from generous America," said Duong. "We are in a position that we can give back to more people." Visit <https://thekimmyduongfoundation.org/portfolio/welfare-hardship-program> for more information.

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## Nearly Nicked



By **KENNETH B. LOURIE**

Recently, I made the mistake of clicking on an email from an unfamiliar sender. It said "Membership Renewed," as in money had been spent by yours truly. But I hadn't spent any money renewing a membership that I knew of, and there is, I imagine, the axis on which some phishing scams are turning: By peaking your instinct to know where and what one's money is doing. Maybe I forgot something? Maybe my wife, Dina, paid for something and forgot to mention it? Maybe, maybe, maybe - so I clicked. The email looked as if it had been sent by "Geek Squad" with whom I have a service contract so I called to inquire further about this 'paid membership.'

The conversation began innocently enough. They confirmed my membership and seemed to have my pertinent data as well so I continued. When I couldn't recall this money being spent - and they couldn't tell me the last four numbers of the account which had been debited, I grew cautious, as I had been down this road once before. Nevertheless, I persisted. Since I had "Geeks" (or whomever, unbeknownst to me) on the phone, I figured I'd ask if they could fix a computer problem (no volume) and asked if the repair was covered by my service contract. They assured me that it was. And so, I gave them access to my computer so they could address the problem remotely. After computer fits and starts, and curious delays, they confessed that they were unable to fix the problem. So, and here it is, the hook: since they were unable to fix my computer, they wanted to refund me the 'membership' fee. That was excruciatingly familiar so I knew it was time to exit stage right.

What had happened to me previously is that I didn't get out soon enough. I didn't know then what I know now so I agreed to the refund and gave them the last four of my account, and sure enough they electronically deposited the money into my checking account (or so it appeared. I later learned that no actual money had ever been transferred). However, they made a mistake, they said. They deposited \$3,000 instead of \$300. They apologized profusely at their mistake and requested that I pay them back \$3,000, which I thought was odd; why not just withdraw the money the same way they deposited it? They said they couldn't and I needed to pay them back. When I refused to follow their directions on how to pay them back (again, since they couldn't withdraw the money/stop payment, whatever), by getting cash and then going to a Western Union office and sending it back that way, I knew I was hooked. Then they threatened to disable my computer unless I paid them back exactly as I had been instructed. Then they erased all the icons on my desktop as a last attempt to coerce me to pay up. At this point, it had been nearly two hours since I made first contact, and I could see/feel where the conversation was going, so I risked it and hung up. Sure enough, my computer was wiped clean and locked. I couldn't access anything. The next day, I called Best Buy and explained the problem and how it had happened. They suggested I bring in my computer tower for an analysis. Within a day, they had identified the problem and offered a solution. They could unlock my computer, no problem, but the computer would have to be reset to the way it was when I first bought it. It wasn't a total disaster as most data was retrievable. As "The Three Stooges" would have said: "It wasn't a total loss."

This recent caller was once again leading me down the garden path. A path which would have ended at a rabbit hole into which me and money would have disappeared. The caller tried desperately to keep me on the line. I said I was at work and had to go. I told him I didn't expect the call to last so long and I promised to call him back. He had access to my computer - remotely, so I was afraid he could cause similar computer trouble as had happened before under eerily similar circumstances. He confirmed - so he thought, that I had his phone number and so I hung up, cautiously optimistic that I hadn't earned his wrath. I never called him back but for the next four hours, he called me back several times, a number from Los Angeles. I never answered, obviously. If I had I might not be pleased with myself.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

## CALENDAR

FROM PAGE 10

the Bad Guys Know When the Satellites Are Coming Over. Who You Going to Call? It's still the U-2. Visit the website: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/still-essential-the-enduring-legacy-of-the-u-2-tickets-146513940139>

### TUESDAY/JUNE 8

"Duck Harbor" Web Series. 8 p.m. Episode Two. Sponsored by 1st Stage in Tysons Corner. Duck Harbor is a web series about a long-distance love in later life. The piece is brought to audiences through a creative series of short scenes in which the actors, just like the characters, are meeting for the first time. Audiences will get to experience the magic of the theater and the excitement of new love between these two lonely hearts reaching out from charming small towns on opposite sides of the country. Every week, each of the two actors,

who live on opposite coasts, will be given only their half of the script and will experience the other side of the story with a sincere and genuine freshness, "on stage," in front of our audience. Performances will take place every Tuesday, beginning on June 1 and ending on August 17. Get your tickets today at [www.1ststage.org](http://www.1ststage.org).

### JUNE 8 TO JULY 4

Paintings by Rich Moore. At the Loft Gallery, 33 Mill Street, Second Floor, Occoquan. "The skies proclaim the work of His hands." Psalm 19:1 showcases the artistry of versatile landscape oil painter, Rich Moore as he endeavors to reveal a unique glimpse into the magnificence and wonder of the "handiwork of God." Gallery Hours: Tuesday-Friday, 11 a.m.-4 p.m.; Saturday, 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Sunday, Noon-5 p.m. Online Facebook Live Artist's Reception: Friday, June 11, 2021 7:00 pm <https://www.facebook.com/loftgalleryoccoquan>.