

T. Minorities - Koreans

T. weekly 10/5/2012

# 'A VOICE FOR THE VOICELESS'

## KWA celebrates 40 years of service



**SENIOR CARE.** The KWA board is shown here in 1992 when the organization first purchased the building used today as a senior day care for clients with Alzheimer's and dementia.

**By Matt Nagle**  
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What started four decades ago as a small social club for area Korean women has since grown to be one of the largest social service agencies in the state, serving an average of 150,000 clients a year. Its name is the Korean Women's Association (KWA) and on Oct. 10, KWA's 40th anniversary will be celebrated with a "friendraising and fundraising" luncheon at the Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center to which the public is invited.

The luncheon will feature a Northwest celebrity giving the keynote address - Jesse Jones from KING 5 News. Known widely as local hero "Get Jesse" for his investigative consumer reports, Jones is a KWA ambassador because his mother receives home-care services from the non-profit organization.

"Jesse is a perfect fit for our theme 'Hand in Hand,' meaning together we extend our hand to people in need, creating a greater reach and impact," said KWA Executive Director Peter Ansara.

Under the theme "Hand in Hand: A Voice for the Voiceless," the luncheon and benefit will offer cultural food and entertainment, guest speakers, client testimonies and networking opportunities with the nearly 700 people expected to attend. Organizers are calling the event a "friendraiser" with the aim of building more partnerships with the broader community.

"We are looking forward to sharing the life changing impact of our program with the community," said KWA board member Chong Dameron. "From breast cancer navigation to low-income housing, we are about helping people in need."

### FROM HUMBLE BEGINNINGS

Back in 1972, a small group of Korean  
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PHOTOS COURTESY OF KWA

**FOUNDING MEMBERS.** Among KWA's early visionary founders were (left to right, top to bottom): Myung Allard, Sulja Warnick, Kim Namhee, Oksun Wilson and Park Songja.

**KOREAN WOMEN'S ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES 40 YEARS OF SERVICE**

**WHEN:**  
Wednesday, Oct. 10

**TIME:**  
11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

**WHERE:**  
Greater Tacoma Convention and Trade Center

**TICKETS:**  
www.kwahandinhand.com



**KWA** From page A1

women in Tacoma formed a grass-roots social club where Korean wives of American servicemen stationed at Fort Lewis Army Base and McChord Air Force Base could find a welcoming place where other Korean women offered help with getting acclimated to American culture. Language barriers and the inability to read or write English made daily tasks, like going to the grocery store or doctor's office, frustrating and difficult for immigrants. So in attempts to help, KWA sold popular Korean foods such as kimchi and rice cakes to the Korean community to raise money for outreach. Among its offerings, the club provided transportation, translation services and assisted in domestic violence situations.

Seven years later, the club filed for, and received, non-profit status and became the Korean Women's Association of Washington State. Its program expanded to help Asian Pacific

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**– Chong Dameron**  
KWA board member

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Islander immigrants and refugees to bridge language and cultural barriers, but soon KWA grew even larger to include all nationalities and the most vulnerable – the poor, the elderly, the disabled and immigrants that speak little or no English – thus truly becoming “a voice for the voiceless.”

Today, KWA works with a budget of \$20 million and employs more than 1,000 people to provide social and health services to anyone in need who lives in Pierce, King, Snohomish, Thurston, Lewis, Mason, Clallam, Jefferson, Grays Harbor, Cowlitz or Pacific counties. Since beginning in 1972, KWA has helped more than 4

million low-income people with social and health services through partnerships with more than 100 area service organizations, non-profits and government entities. KWA services range from meal sites and day care for seniors, to citizenship and immigration services and basic food education and outreach.

“We change one life at a time,” Ansara said, noting the commitment of the KWA board of directors. “Their passion is unbelievable to help, to serve and to see a positive outcome.”

To learn more about KWA and its services, visit [www.kwacares.org](http://www.kwacares.org).