

Regular Session, 2014

SENATE RESOLUTION NO. 124

BY SENATOR MORRELL

COMMENDATIONS. Commends Cyndi Nguyen, community activist, upon selection as a fellow of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Community Leadership Network and for her efforts to promote educational development for children in New Orleans East.

A RESOLUTION

To commend Cyndi Nguyen upon receipt of a fellowship presented by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation Community Leadership Network for her exemplary efforts to broaden educational opportunities and after-school programs in New Orleans East.

WHEREAS, Cyndi Nguyen is a community activist of the highest order; she works as an agent for positive change to promote access to educational and economic possibilities for the residents of her community, in particular, the enrichment of the lives of children; and

WHEREAS, she has amassed scarce funding and manpower to bring much needed services to all the people who call New Orleans East their home, a rich gumbo of ethnicities that benefit from her determination and commitment; and

WHEREAS, her activism is deeply rooted in her own personal experience and life's journey; Cyndi arrived in New Orleans in 1975, as a five year old Vietnamese National and refugee seeking political asylum in the United States after the Vietnam Conflict; and

WHEREAS, Cyndi's first-person experiences with language barriers and a lack of knowledge of available social services remain at the heart of her advocacy to provide aid to those persons of similar circumstance who view the United States as a gateway to a brighter future for themselves and their families; and

WHEREAS, Cyndi Nguyen is founder and executive director of VIET, Vietnamese

1 Initiatives in Economic Training, a nonprofit organization that functions as a neighborhood  
2 resource annex for a myriad of services that include a learning and cultural center, a disaster  
3 aid headquarters, and a venue for after-school programs and summer camp for area children;  
4 and

5 WHEREAS, the VIET center has evolved during its fourteen year existence into a  
6 multi-service complex that provides programs, such as family resources assistance, parent-  
7 to-school assistance, senior activities, financial literacy and small business planning,  
8 translation and interpreting services, language classes, and provides assistance for those who  
9 seek citizenship, health care, and social services; and

10 WHEREAS, the VIET center is presently housed in the former St. Brigid Catholic  
11 Church, a casualty of Hurricane Katrina that could not reopen after the storm; the  
12 Archdiocese of New Orleans extended a thirty-year lease of the building to the organization;  
13 and

14 WHEREAS, with unrelenting determination Cyndi marshaled neighborhood  
15 manpower to transform the dilapidated structure into a community asset with herculean site  
16 improvements of remodeling, landscaping, pedestrian walkways, and the planting of trees  
17 and gardens that resulted in a brightly colored playground, a volleyball court, and a pristine  
18 outdoor classroom setting; and

19 WHEREAS, the prestigious W. K. Kellogg Foundation emphasizes the importance  
20 of healthy child development and the reduction of social inequities that inhibit the progress  
21 of and future prospects for America's youth; and Cyndi Nguyen is most deserving of this  
22 accolade as an acknowledgment of her inexhaustible service to the community; and

23 WHEREAS, Cyndi Nguyen instituted the after-school program called "Afterschool  
24 Academy" to ensure that children from pre-kindergarten through eighth grade have a safe  
25 and structured environment; Afterschool Academy focuses on homework assistance,  
26 learning opportunities, such as STEM studies (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math),  
27 community service, robotics, and enrichment activities that include art, cultural learning,  
28 karate, poetry, and gardening; and

29 WHEREAS, the Summer Adventure Program, a nine week summer camp experience,  
30 provides learning and recreational participation that includes instruction in guitar and piano,

1 dance, pottery, photography, swimming, fishing, sports, and service days; and

2 WHEREAS, although her travels took her far away from home to earn a bachelor's  
3 degree in social work from Loras College in Dubuque, Iowa, and a master's degree in  
4 management from the University of Phoenix, Cyndi returned to New Orleans in 1998; and

5 WHEREAS, through VIET, her mission continues to be one of service to the needs  
6 of the Vietnamese community and other minorities and of help to bridge the gap of cultural,  
7 social, and language barriers into the economic mainstream of American society; and

8 WHEREAS, Cyndi has taken on many leadership roles, such as that of FEMA  
9 community liaison after Hurricane Katrina devastated much of the area, then after the storm  
10 she established the Einstein Charter School in the Michoud area; and

11 WHEREAS, her altruism and strength of character have not gone unnoticed, Cyndi  
12 has been named a Louisiana Afterschool Ambassador and a Young Leadership Council Role  
13 Model; her nonprofit VIET was featured in *Fortune 500* magazine; and she has been the  
14 recipient of many honors that include LSU Women Pathfinder Award, Small Business  
15 Minority Award from the Jefferson Chamber of Commerce, Champion for Kids Award from  
16 the Louisiana Children Trust Fund, the O'Hara Award from the Asian Pacific American  
17 Society, Community Quarterback Award from the New Orleans Saints, WDSU Making A  
18 Difference Award, Making Things Brighter Award from Entergy of New Orleans, and  
19 Louisiana Women in Philanthropy Award from Louisiana Association for Nonprofit  
20 Organizations; and

21 WHEREAS, her community action has been a collaborative effort with assistance  
22 from corporate sponsors and nonprofit partners that include Entergy of New Orleans, BP,  
23 New Orleans Hornets, Jasmine Rice, HandsOn, City Year, Common Ground Relief, and  
24 Lotus Care; and

25 WHEREAS, Cyndi has tackled large scale initiatives to promote healthy living and  
26 child-friendly environments such as National Childhood Obesity Awareness, "Lights on  
27 Afterschool" to increase public awareness of the importance of enrichment programs that  
28 are vital to personal growth, and "Boo in Michoud" a safe place for trick or treat  
29 celebrations; and

30 WHEREAS, Cyndi Nguyen embraces the tenets of optimal child development

1       expressed by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation which are education, health, and secure family  
2       surroundings, and she strives to bring to fruition civic engagement, community service, and  
3       ethnic equity within the New Orleans East neighborhood.

4               THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Senate of the Legislature of Louisiana  
5       does hereby congratulate Cyndi Nguyen upon receipt of a W. K. Kellogg Foundation  
6       Community Leadership Network fellowship for her commitment to children and education.

7               BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that Cyndi Nguyen is hereby commended for her  
8       efforts to improve the emotional, intellectual, physical, and cultural growth of the residents  
9       of the New Orleans East community.

10              BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this Resolution be transmitted to  
11      Cyndi Nguyen, executive director of VIET.

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The original instrument and the following digest, which constitutes no part  
of the legislative instrument, were prepared by Suzi Montague.

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DIGEST

Morrell

SR No. 124

Commends Cyndi Nguyen upon receipt of a fellowship from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation.