

L.A.O. America
Volunteer Handbook

By
Lao Student
Association

The text is surrounded by several stylized five-petaled flowers. Two are positioned to the left of the word 'By', one is to the left of 'Lao Student', one is to the right of 'Lao Student', one is below 'Lao Student', and two are at the bottom right, one below 'Association' and one to its right.

University of Minnesota

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Dear Volunteer,

Welcome to the Lao Advancement Organization of America!

We, the Lao Student Association at the University of Minnesota, would like to thank you for upholding any initiative that would further our cause through higher education and community involvement. Thus, our mission is not only to promote, educate, and share our tradition—we want to also create a positive change: “it is in our own community that we hope to make the biggest difference by installing pride and confidence in the younger generation to pursue higher education.”

In this handbook we have attempted to cover the most common and important issues that our volunteers will face. We hope this proves to be a resource for you during your time as a volunteer at L.A.O. America.

It hardly seems possible that in 1988 a small gathering of parents and children could expand to include and service more than 350 young people in our community. Much has changed since the past 15 years, but our mission has not. The Lao Advancement Organization continues to believe that “children are the future.”

As the only non-profit Lao cultural center of its kind, L.A.O America has been the location where parents, children, community members, and people interested in Lao culture have come together.

This handbook is based on experiences and input from various areas of teaching, camp counseling, and individual volunteering. This handbook is designed to be a useful tool as a volunteer reference while working with children, young adults, other volunteers, and parents.

Please read this handbook and be familiar with the specific areas of responsibilities.

We hope that you enjoy your time as a volunteer at L.A.O. America and that your experience is a meaningful one, for both you and the young people that you will meet.

Sincerely,

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Mission Statement of the Lao Advancement Organization of America

The Lao Advancement Organization of America (L.A.O. America) builds upon the strengths and traditions of Lao Culture, to give Lao families in Minnesota, and in the United States the tools they need to succeed in their new homeland. The mission of L.A.O. America is to be an advocate for providing education, employment, and economic opportunity for Lao people at all stages of life.

Focus and Vision

- To encourage and assist children as they pursue higher education and become healthy adults.
- To protect, preserve and promote Lao culture and traditions and enrich Lao society.
- To develop skills and provide information to parents on parenting and parental involvement in education.
- To promote and support parents assimilating a new culture, so that they can develop and implement a new way of life, be successful, and have a sense of social well being.
- To engage the community and community leaders in identifying the needs of the Lao community.

Youth Programs and Services

- Academic tutoring in all subject areas
- Classes in Lao language, history and culture.
- Classes in Lao traditional arts such as Lao folk/classical dance, crafts, weaving, cooking and music.
- Classes to enhance computer skills.
- Chemical dependency and crime prevention programs
- Youth support groups work with Lao youth to build self-esteem, self-reliance, responsibility, to develop a balance between Lao and mainstream cultures.
- Leadership training.
- Educational field trips.
- Sport activities: soccer, volleyball, basketball, badminton, table tennis, tennis and *kator*.
- Youth cultural celebration Lao New Year events.

History of L.A.O. America

Since the Lao PTA implemented its first 5-year strategic plan there have been many positive signs of the Lao community making a successful transition into mainstream culture. The reasons for success of the Lao PTA are many. The Lao are united in their goal of having a vibrant and growing community. Lao PTA has benefited from the advice given by members of the mainstream community who know and understand its objectives. Grants from all levels of government and private foundations have been instrumental in helping Lao PTA in fulfillment of its mission.

Lao PTA started small. In 1988 it primarily provided homework tutoring in just a few local schools. But, it has grown. Today, it is a strong agency with a Board of Directors determining the long-range goals of the Lao PTA. The Executive Director and his staff have a strong vision for the future of Lao PTA; have worked diligently to implement the goals set by the Board. The youth council has provided a unique view on how Lao PTA should attain its goals. Volunteers, from both the Lao and mainstream communities have played a vital role in making Lao PTA an active service provider to the community. Together, they have made Lao PTA the center point around which everyone in the Lao Community gathers. With the completion of the first five-year strategic plan from 1995-2000 and the implementation of the second five-year plan in 2001, Lao PTA has seen a steady increase in the number of programs it offers.

In 1988 Lao PTA had one program that was geared towards preserving Lao culture through dance and language. By 2002-2003 there were more than a half dozen major programs administered by Lao PTA. One of its programs in crime prevention was used in 1998 as a model by the National Crime Prevention Councils for their book- *Powerful Partnership: 20 crime Prevention Strategies that work for Refugees, Law-Enforcement and Communities*.

Lao PTA began with 50 students in 1988 and has seen continued growth. By 2003 there were 350 students served, a growth of up to 700%. The annual budget of Lao PTA has changed dramatically from its modest beginnings of \$1,400.00 in 1988 to nearly \$500,000.00 in 2000, a 450% increase.

The mission of Lao PTA is to work with the Lao community, in all stages of life, in an effort to improve educational, employment and economic opportunities- at times a difficult task in a bi-cultural environment. Lao PTA encourages the

kids in the community to strive towards academic success, by providing homework assistance. Lao PTA works with parents, helping them understand the rules and expectations of the schools and the laws of our community. This allows the parent to become directly involved in their children's' education. Because of bi-cultural difference it seems as if parents and children are living in two worlds. Lao PTA works to bridge this gap and promote healthy relationships between parents and children. Together, parents and children become empowered with the knowledge needed to successfully enter their new life.

Lao PTA demonstrates its commitment to education by providing tutors to several area schools. In the past several years they have worked with: Bancroft, Lincoln, Kenny, Ericson, Bryn Mawr, Lyndale and West Central Elementary Schools; Sanford and Anwatin Middle Schools; and Roosevelt and Henry High Schools. Lao PTA also provides academic tutoring, as part of its after-school program, at the Lao Cultural Center. Lao PTA has an active sports program mainly soccer, is dedicated to promoting good health and co-operation to both Lao and Mainstream communities. At its facility, the Lao Cultural Center, Lao PTA provides a wide array of classes, including traditional dance, Lao language, math, English and computer. The Cultural classes and sports program serve as a vehicle to attract kids to the academic programs. For example, during the 2001-2002 school year nearly 200 kids participated in the Sinh-Na-Champa dance troupe. They performed at Lao New Year Festivals, government sponsored events, foundation, fundraising events and the Festival of Nations to an audience of over 10,000. Also, during the school year 2001-2002 nearly 100 students participated in various soccer tournaments. Lao PTA was able to sponsor 4 teams for boys and 2 for girls. Lao PTA teams have proven themselves to be excellent soccer players, winning several 1st place trophies. One Lao team was able to claim 1st place the USA Cup Championship at the national Sports Center in Blaine. At the end of 2001, Lao PTA had successfully completed its first five-year plan. This signified a great accomplishment, which gave encouragement and a strong foundation for the Lao Community to move forward toward a common goal for the community at large.

The creation and the opening of the first Lao Cultural Center in this land of freedom created a culturally affirming environment. Here Lao people can practice and preserve thousands of years of cultural traditions. All community members can learn about and be exposed to Lao art, dance, and music. In addition Lao children and youth have a safe and fun place to learn math, English, and computer literacy, skills needed to succeed academically and in life. The Lao Cultural Center is a place where friends and relatives can celebrate special occasions. Lastly, Lao PTA's activities can flourish at the center can that Lao families in our community are strengthened and nurtured for years to come. Up to now Lao PTA has raised a total of \$625,580.00, representing 67% of our total capital campaign. In order to fulfill our Cultural Capital Campaign, we still need \$301,160.00. These funds will be used to resurface parking lot, paint entire building, replace windows, repair side walk, purchase new sign for Lao Cultural Center, purchase furniture, repair and update restrooms, lighting, landscaping, window treatments, plumbing and kitchen, and provide artwork.

At the Lao PTA's retreat held on October 6, 2001 the Lao community acknowledge our value to the community and was very pleased by our great success. The over all accomplishments of the Lao PTA encourage us to execute the second five-year strategic plan.

At Lao PTA Board of Directors meeting in April 5, 2003 Lao PTA was given a new name, Lao Advancement Organization of America (L.A.O. America). This was done to provide more effective and efficient service to the Lao community.

Program Description

Each year L.A.O. America services parents, community members and leaders, other organizations, at-risk students, and children varying in ages from elementary to high school. For the young people that return year after year and enroll in our program, L.A.O. America is more than a cultural center; it is an educational experience for all participants.

Previous experience as a volunteer is not required, as activities and games are geared toward all backgrounds—from traditional dancing, music, reading, to soccer and other sports. The program offers an informal, relaxed introduction to Lao culture and language through various modalities which often instills a positive attitude in the child for further learning.

The L.A.O. America offers the following programs for volunteers:

-Eight Week Academic Program (Two Months). This program functions only on Saturdays from 12:00 noon until 3:30 and is designed to give children a wide variety of experiences from arts and crafts, music, traditional dances, and sports to name a few. The children pick from any of the two activities and they rotate between each hour to their next activity. After the eight week period the program is evaluated and new activities are offered for the next eight weeks (two months) to avoid repetition. From their second activity the children will have lunch for 30 minutes. After lunch there is one hour of supervised recess/leisure time where gym activities are available. This hour may be used for tutoring if there is a need. The children then are released and brought home at 3:30.

-Summer Program (Two Months). This program helps to keep at-risk, low-income students off the streets by instilling leadership and skill building activities to help become more involved with the community. Usually the participants that partake during the academic year continue in the summer. The summer program involves field trips to the University of Minnesota and other educational locations. Also, sporting events and tournaments help develop leadership and teambuilding skills. Volunteers meet with kids Monday through Thursday for two months.

General Responsibility of Volunteers

Support of program and its goals—Each volunteer thus becomes a member of L.A.O. America and plays a vital role in carrying out the organization's mission and its program goals. This mission is furthered by L.A.O. America's staff, members, volunteers, and participants.

The children benefit greatly from the nurturing and supportive environment that is created at each of the L.A.O America's functions. Most of the young people greatly appreciate the personal ways in which volunteers have made a difference in their time spent at the program.

Public Relations—What public relations means for you, the volunteer:

- You are an ambassador of L.A.O America to the public-at-large, as well as to individual parents.
- You present a professional image of the program at all times.
- You address to the greatest degree possible any issues, concerns and/or questions that are raised by parents or other interested parties; then you send the person to the director, volunteer leader or appropriate members.
- You interact with parents and program visitors.
- You may not accept gifts or other forms of gratuity for any services while at L.A.O America.

Volunteer Positions

Volunteer leader:

- Operate effectively as supervisors, coordinating and delegating tasks in an efficient manner.
- Carry out administrative responsibilities professionally, effectively, enthusiastically and efficiently.
- Use appropriate planning skills, making good use of time and prioritizing tasks appropriately.
- Take time and energy to build a good working relationship with the Director.
- Take the initiative in the implementation and development of program and curriculum (learning activities)
- Hold volunteers and children to appropriate standards of behavior, acting as role models at all times.

Volunteers:

- Consistently portray high standards of behavior, conveying enthusiasm and a sense of importance about L.A.O. America.
- Carry out assigned duties enthusiastically and efficiently, showing support for the Director and other volunteers.
- Work to develop group unity and promote the participation of all children in planning and decision making as well as in planned activities.
- Use appropriate planning skills, making good use of time and prioritizing tasks appropriately.
- Comfortably handle new situations, maintaining composure and control.
- Display a mature attitude and handle authority well, acting as role models for children.

Understanding Young People

Ages 5 through 7

- Respond well to volunteers who look after their needs.
- Consider what the volunteer is able to "do" as very important.
- Enjoy volunteers who have high energy, good sense of humor, and play with them.
- Have a very short attention span.
- Want to share and desire acceptance from own age group.

- Enjoy close friendships with playmates and express selves freely in art and play.
- Enjoy competition related to their standing in the group.
- Like group games and activities but want everyone to obey stated rules and regulations.
- Identify strongly with their own gender and age group (boys with boys/girls with girls).
- Like plain foods, can be picky eaters, and generally eat small portions.

Ages 7 through 10

- Respond affectionately to volunteers who look after their needs.
- Consider what the volunteer is able to “do” as very important.
- Enjoy volunteers who have a sense of humor and play with them.
- Have an attention span about as long as this sentence.
- Want to share and desire acceptance from own age group.
- Enjoy close friendships with playmates and express selves freely in art and play.
- Enjoy competition related to their standing in the group.
- Like group games and activities but want everyone to obey stated rules and regulations.
- Identify strongly with their own gender and age group.
- Like plain foods, can be picky eaters, and generally eat small portions.

Ages 10 through 12

- Respond to volunteers who effectively channel their tremendous energy.
- Tend to idolize volunteers who measure up to their expectations—be careful here.
- Want to be together in groups, teams, and clubs; like to help make rules for the group.
- Have longer attention spans and patience to work for short-term goals.
- Form cliques and friendships within own gender and age groups.
- Define status through excellence in skills and knowledge of grown-up things.
- Are fairly competitive in team and individual activities; risk-taking tendencies surface.
- Are concerned with physical size and appearance—watch what you say.
- Girls at upper age level become aware of romantic attractions.

Ages 12 through 15

- Respond to volunteers whose intelligence is as varied as their skills.
- Need volunteers who genuinely listen and spend time with them.
- Tend to view their world fairly idealistically; are uncomfortable with “gray” situations.
- Peer group rather than adult opinion is their source of wisdom.
- Want surreptitious reassurance of adult supervision and attention to daily needs.
- Value conformity; find it difficult to stand as an individual.
- Hormone adjustments trigger intense feelings and emotions.
- Influenced by popular adults and teen idols, the hero worship and crush stage.
- Long interest span and increased capacity for self-discipline.
- Often prefer competition outside the groups rather than with friends in own group.
- Idealistic about the world at large.
- Are seriously concerned with personal appearance, frequently self-conscious.
- Romantic relationships emerge as awareness of sexuality develops.
- Boys and girls can work together on projects better than they can socialize.

Ages 15 through 17

- Respond to volunteers who recognize their emerging adult perspectives but who tolerate occasional lapses to adolescent antics.
- Risk-taking emerges as a developmental task; these kids need to take risks but also have to learn how to assess their readiness for the risk.
- Desire for independence and freedom of action makes earning money look attractive.
- Prestige and belonging to the power group is valued.
- Their ability to concentrate and specialize in selected skills and interests allows them to “get into” projects.
- Are learning the distinction between idealism and reality.
- The skills of altruism begin to emerge as they give self to others.
- Capable of developing romantic attachments with depth of feeling.

Volunteering in the Larger Community Context

Expectations of Volunteer With Regard to Activities

- Participate; interact with the children.
- Use Lao as much as possible—if you speak it.
- Show appropriate enthusiasm (even if it's your 100th time doing it).
- Be there. Be on time.
- When things feel mundane, be careful. Don't mistake familiarity with lack of attention.
- Use Lao as much as possible—if you speak it (yes, you saw this before).
- Always think safety. Intervene if children are doing something which may cause them harm...like running in the halls.

Each session is community building and it is part of your job to make the children under your care feel that they are part of this community. As in any community, there are regular tasks which need to be accomplished. These tasks may be looked forward to by children, such as cleaning up or setting the tables for lunch. With a little thought and creativity on your part, all daily tasks can be made rewarding, enjoyable learning opportunities.

General activities have a purpose; they are:

- To teach language.
- To establish and/or maintain group spirit.
- To build a sense of belonging to a community.
- To provide healthy mental and/or physical exercise.
- To maintain a safe, clean and sanity site.

Solicit the help of the children in scheduling and assigning these general duties. Lead by example rather than merely telling children what to do. Creative volunteers use numerous gimmicks to make routine chores fun and educational.

When Things Go Bad

Ideally, every child will exhibit unmarred enthusiasm and involvement throughout the session. Realistically, that probably won't happen. Know how to effectively handle problem situations. Strive to stop a situation before it becomes a critical issue. Each situation is addressed on its own merits, yet there are also common elements to consider.

- Most participants are great kids who may, upon occasion, get into trouble.
- Some participants come with problems or from backgrounds which are not a good match for our program.

Both of these participant groups need volunteers who effectively listen and respond appropriately. If our program is aware of a concern, you will probably be told. Note the "probably." The Director may be aware of a child's complete history but may not always be able to share everything with you. When concerned, talk with the Director.

Behavior Patterns

Important Concept: PATTERN. Isolated behaviors are just that—isolated. Patterns of behavior such as those listed below should be discussed with your Director if they are noticed with regard to a given participant. Some of the following are that are used by children and youth may indicate a problem.

Withdrawing or Evading Behaviors—This person often goes unnoticed because s/he causes little disturbance. Evading behaviors may indicate feelings of dissatisfaction, insecurity or inadequacy. Instead of meeting problems head-on, this person retreats into physical and psychological isolation such as:

*"I'm going to stay here and read again. I don't like dancing."
"That's dumb. No one is making me do that."*

This participant adopts automatic, unconscious mechanisms to protect the self from getting hurt. These are expressed in the form of daydreaming, wishful thinking, feeling sorry for oneself, being alone, rationalizing or substitution. This is a common reaction from adolescents and developmentally, this suits their age better than crying.

Aggressive Behaviors—Aggressive participants may be bossy, domineering, constant babblers, quarrelsome, stubborn, rebellious, overly critical and a host of other descriptors. Note that these behaviors are verbal. Aggression can also be physical: pushing in line, tugging hair, slapping. Aggressive behaviors range from mild to severe and the participants who resort to using them are often trying to attract attention and gain status. Redirect that energy. **Do not tolerate aggressive behaviors; this is particularly important with regard to bullies, who often use mild forms of aggression right in front of volunteers and save more severe actions for times when volunteers are not around.**

"I get that place; it's been mine since I've been coming here!"

"Outta my way! Older kids get firsts in the line!"

Stealing Behaviors—If a volunteer observes someone stealing, the person should be discreetly taken to the Director. Stealing can involve belongings of volunteers, other children, or the program.

Intolerance and Prejudicial Behaviors—Essentially, we want to maintain an environment where people—volunteers and participants—go beyond mere tolerance and to a position of comfort with differences no matter the race, color, religion, gender, sexual orientation, national origin and/or physical or mental abilities of others.

Discrimination and/or prejudicial behaviors are not permitted from anyone. Volunteers generally should deal with participants who violate this policy. Do so in a manner which also explores appropriate expressions of anger, since this may often be the base for a child's outburst.

While appropriate exploration and discussion of these issues are encouraged, volunteers must make a distinction between exploring an issue and proselytize. It is unacceptable to try to convert others to personal faith beliefs. Help educate participants; encourage open, accepting attitudes. Discourage any kind of preaching.

Vandalism—Stewardship of property is an attribute of being a good member of the community. Willful destruction of property is not tolerated by the Program.

Upon occasion, some things may break simply through general use. Discourage activity which has potential to damage property and intervene if you come upon someone who is maliciously damaging things. When damage does occur, those responsible are confronted and appropriate action is taken; this usually involves restitution. Consult the Director so that the Program's policy can be implemented.

Inappropriate Language and Gestures—Be firm, as a volunteer, about using appropriate words and gestures to express yourself. Be especially sensitive to slang, words associated with cursing, and hand gestures; these often have different connotations to those who are listening.

Participants will model the volunteers—and the walls have ears. Be extremely conscientious about what you talk about, where you do that, and who may be listening.

Under no circumstances should volunteers discuss or share their personal behaviors surrounding use of chemicals or sexual expression with the children.

Exploitive talk by some children is often shocking and believable to other youth. Stop in rooms and areas occupied by children when not expected, keep your ears attuned to conversations around you, and intervene when you note inappropriate language or gestures. Do not tolerate foul language. Be consistent about what is and is not acceptable and always model that standard.

Disobeying Behaviors—Children are expected to follow rules once they have been told about them. It is a volunteer's responsibility to monitor this process and seek assistance from volunteer leaders if the situation warrants. Because some participants may challenge the rules, be prepared to respond. What would you do in these situations?

- A. You see children smoking behind the building.
- B. You see children throwing rocks against buildings.
- C. You see a participant downloading programs.
- D. You see a participant looking through someone else's things.
- E. You see a participant trip another participant on purpose.

Keep these things in mind when dealing with misbehavior:

- A. Hurting another person is never OK whether by words or action.
- B. The nature and seriousness of an incident must always be taken into consideration.
- C. Name the behavior you want the participant to stop. Be specific, direct and firm (but not mean).
- D. Look beyond the behavior. What is really going on?
- E. Are you doing something which triggers or reinforces the behavior?

Taking time to understand is often the key, and patience is all-important. Behaviors are habits; they are slow to grow and slow to change. Be persistent. Eventually the message gets through. **Never strike another person. Physical punishment is against the law.** Physically punishing a participant will not be tolerated. It is grounds for immediate dismissal. It is our desire to provide a positive experience for everyone. However, if a participant behaves in such a way as to require disciplinary action, discuss the situation with the Director or volunteer leaders.

The Volunteer as a Language Teacher

Whether your language is Lao or English, everyone involved with the program is a language teacher. This can be casual or planned language teaching because any moment of the session can be considered a teachable moment. Language learning is both fun and achievable—in oral skills, stressing natural conversation. The cultural center is unique in allowing for this type of instruction.

In language teaching, the informal, outdoor situation has a great deal to offer toward creating exciting and interesting learning experiences.

Small Group Practice (Lao Language Classes)

A smaller group ensures more individualized attention for each participant. Volunteers involved with structuring language will want to develop a lesson plan ahead of time, in order to clarify the objectives of the session and how to achieve them. Knowing what they want children to be able to say or do at the end of the session helps volunteers be flexible and change activities as necessary.

Suggestions:

- Keep the small group lively and interesting and at a brisk pace.
- Use props, pictures, actions and realia to explain meaning and cue responses.
- Don't talk a lot about what you are doing—just do it.
- Have the whole group practice something before individuals are called upon to perform.
- Use songs, drills, games, role plays, and rhymes to introduce and reinforce new vocabulary (language) and to provide variety and a new interest.
- Involve the children physically as well as mentally.

How to Be a Good Language Teacher

Teaching Hints—To be a more effective teacher, it helps to keep in mind a few simple pointers that will help you reach students in a positive way.

- Learning takes place when the experience is useful, engaging and fun.
- Take the time to plan lessons in advance of the group meeting.
- Always have alternative plans available.
- Know your goal: Know what you want participants to be able to understand and to say at the end of your session. Knowing your goal(s) will help you make decisions about changing your plan.
- Keep in mind that you want participants to understand (but not necessarily say) some things. Learners need to understand (comprehend) language before they can say (produce) it.
- Keep things going at a fast pace. Participants should be actively engaged.
- Keep the lesson in the target language. Using realia and visuals can help make it easier to stay in the target language.
- Change the type of activity every 10-15 minutes.
- Keep the interactions dynamic. Move from doing things in small groups to doing them with each individual to doing them in a large group.
- Give them responsibility for themselves and their behavior. Set boundaries and logical consequences ahead of time. Be proactive, not reactive.
- Be patient. Students need support and care, not shaming and frustration.
- Try to make the learning environment comfortable for everyone by practicing as a group before going to individuals, letting people pass if necessary (but then coming back to them later), and allowing everyone to help each other.

Learning Styles—Participants are individuals and each has a special blend of experiences and abilities. Each has a different way of learning. You are not an educational expert, but there are various styles that exist. Good teaching reaches all learning styles and learning differences.

- Think of how you learn and how this might differ from how others learn.
- Keep in mind: Some learners are more visually oriented and require pictures, some are more tactile learners and need to touch or hold things, while others are aurally oriented and benefit from hearing things. Some learners may require much repetition; whereas others may seem to grasp things immediately.
- Present same ideas in different manners, using creativity in incorporating several different techniques and styles into a single lesson.
- Recognize that often a teacher will teach in the style in which s/he likes to learn. So, be sure to vary your teaching.
- Use a variety of teaching methods and activities, and chances are that many participants will experience success.
- Request help from other volunteers and share ideas and suggestions about learning styles.

Learning Disabilities—Occasionally a participant will experience difficulty in comprehending or retaining what is being taught regardless of the variety of learning experiences included in the sessions. Determining whether or not a participant has a learning disability is not within our capabilities. Volunteers should perform to the best of their abilities to help the participant.

Error Treatment—If a learner is corrected every time s/he tries to say something, s/he will likely become timid and make less of an effort. We want to encourage students to speak in the target language as much as possible. In a group, the class may be concentrating on a particular structure or vocabulary set, teachers may want to correct learners when they make errors in these areas.

- Remember that you are an “authority figure”, and whom a correction from may be taken as a reprimand.
- Correct errors in ways that are non-threatening or even “cover”, so the participant doesn’t even know s/he has been corrected.
- Allow the participant to finish what they are saying: NEVER interrupt to correct.
- Get participant to correct their own errors by asking them to repeat what they said—sometimes they correct the error.
- Repeat what the participant said with a raising intonation.

The Volunteer as Activity Leader

Another duty of the volunteer is that of an activity leader. Because activities are diverse and reflect culture, we will see a wider perspective of the activity area: their purpose, how to plan and lead activities, and how to teach language through activities.

Program Activities—There are many activities. They include arts and crafts; sports; dance and drama; special days; culture; newspaper writing; and informal games.

Planning Program Activities—There are some basic points to take into consideration when planning an activity:

- What language patterns and vocabulary should the villager learn and use?
- Consider the age and gender of the group. Are they physically old enough to run a 400-meter relay? Are they too old socially to accept musical chairs? Are the boys and girls at different stages of emotional or physical development?
- Is it safe?
- Does it discriminate?
- Does it fit the weather?
- Is it fun for those doing it?
- Can it be adapted to the language or culture?
- Does it involve all (most) participants in the group?
- Is the necessary equipment available or can it be created?
- Will it interfere with another scheduled program?
- Are additional volunteers needed? Do they have talents and skills necessary?
- Is the facility big enough, or too big, to effectively run the program?
- Will there be enough time to complete the activity?
- How will the activity end? What will be the closure?
- How will the activity impact what others are planning or doing?

Leading Large Group Activities

Leading an activity is similar to being a good volunteer. It is not a given talent. It requires practice and learning from one's mistakes. No matter how well-planned an activity is, it can be over before it is begun if the leader isn't aware of some techniques in announcing and organizing the activity.

Announcing the activity—Announcements are made and can be excellent tools for language use and comprehension

- Speak slowly and loudly
- Use props, gestures, facial expressions and mime to get across your meaning
- Have patience and work to keep the audience's attention, particularly if the announcement is long
- Take advantage of clarifying questions from other volunteers or participants; in fact, "plant" questions with other volunteers.
- Be sure to have the attention of participants before beginning the announcements.
- To get attention, use a "quiet" raised hand signal, a particular "calling" sound, a call and response, or other technique.
- Decide as a Program on several techniques for gaining attention.
- If the group is rowdy, don't get involved in a shouting match.
- If participants begin talking during an announcement, stop your announcement completely and wait until everyone is quiet again.
- Try getting participants' attention and then whisper the announcement.
- Set the tone; if the game is to be played quietly, don't announce it in a boisterous, or over-zealous way.

Ways of Choosing "It" or "Teams"—Choosing "it" and "teams" for games and activities can be an excellent language exercise. It can reinforce the day's theme or lesson (colors, months, numbers), or introduce new vocabulary (months, days). Below are few examples, but the list could be endless.

- Participants "number-off" by ones, fours, sixes
- Sort teams according to months of birth
- "It" can be someone who is wearing a red shirt, blue pants, brown shoes and has black hair.

Encouraging Participation in Large Group Activities—Follow some of these:

- Encourage all children to participate, in words and actions.
- For a reluctant participant, restate the rules and ask that person to try once or to be your partner.
- Warm up dances with a physical activity

When a Child Doesn't Participate—A child's reluctance to take part or continue in an activity may be a clue that something is disturbing the participant. It could be:

- Sickness
- Boredom
- Lack of confidence
- Fear of failure
- Dislike of another participant in the activity, or of the volunteer in charge
- Minor physical impairments
- These participants should be approached to find out why they are not taking part or why they have lost interest. It should be made clear to them that they are missed and that, in most cases, they do not have the option not to come to the activity.

Leading Small Group Activities

Small group activities are often structured and directed activities of the daily craft or music programs. Directed activities are taught on a regular basis. To be an effective leader, you:

- Know what your goals for the children are
- Teach to the learner's ability
- Are on time and ready to go

- Have enough of all the necessary supplies ready
- Report supplies which are running low, return all equipment when finished, and clean up the equipment area
- Maintain a safe environment

To most effectively teach the activity, you:

- Introduce yourself and the activity
- Introduce basic use of the equipment: rules, safety, and care
- Involve all participants and make it fun for them everyday
- Enlist the participants in setting up, cleaning up, storing equipment, so it will be ready for next time.
- Pay attention to each participant, giving individual attention through assistance and compliments
- Know the relevant vocabulary (Lao Language Class)
- Keep all equipment in good working condition. Any damages or losses should be reported.
- Incorporate a review of previous learning
- Provide a new focus for each day to renew interest
- Stay with the activity until the time period is over