

# MN Biz Vision: Asian Kaleidoscope



## Features:

**How Pang Zoua Thor  
Turned Passion into a  
Business**

Community Insights  
from the Sears Site Walk  
Audits

**This monthly E-Magazine is published by the Asian American Business Resilience Network to highlight Asian American small businesses' accomplishments.**

## Table of Contents

01~02	Introduction
02~04	Featured Interview - Pang Zoua Thor
05~10	Featured Articles
11~17	Updates
18	Wellness Corner
19~21	Business Resources
22~23	Upcoming Events
24	Contact



## Asian American Business Resilience Network

### VISION

Envision a new reality that addressing historic inequities, and enhancing culturally/linguistically appropriate ways to thrive through resilience, sustainability, and inclusive growth for all members and the communities where they learn, live, play, and work.

### MISSION

AABRN radically accelerates the pace of change by disrupting the status quo; providing resources, training, and support; building bridges across diverse ecosystems; and bringing together public health and business networks, in order to achieve sustainable growth along with an equitable future.

### PROGRAMS

- Community Engagement and Translation Assistance, especially public health in nature
- Navigate local, state and national resources
- Access digital tools in advancing members' wellbeing
- Provide training to retain a healthy workforce
- Provide technical assistance in business operation and IT needs



## MORE THAN STYLE: HOW PANG ZOUA THOR TURNED PASSION INTO A BUSINESS

*Pang Zoua Thor, Owner of Hair Style Studio, Pang Zoua Thor, Maplewood. Interviewed by Meejoo Choi*

Meet Pang Zoua Thor, the owner of a thriving beauty studio in Maplewood, Minnesota. A proud Hmong American and the daughter of Hmong immigrant family, Pang has spent over 17 years mastering her craft as a hairstylist. For the past eight years, she has run her own studio, offering hair designing and hair perming. Drawing clients through word-of-mouth, Yelp, Google, and now Instagram, Pang has built a loyal following by combining technical skill with a warm, personalized approach.

### Rooted in a Culture of Endurance and Grit

Pang credits her work ethic to her cultural background and the values passed down from her parents, who were also entrepreneurs. Growing up, she learned the importance of endurance and grit — lessons that still guide her today. “We don’t stop” was more than just a saying in her household; it was a way of life. While some people might see 17 years of hard work as a long time, she views it as only a chapter in her lifetime of dedication. This mindset of persistence and resilience continues to shape how she approaches challenges and opportunities alike.

### Building a Career Step by Step

At first, Pang began her journey with a simple desire for independence. After completing her training in hair and makeup, she gained early experience in the beauty industry, learning foundational skills and working with a range of clients. Over the



years, she steadily built her expertise, refining her craft and developing a loyal following. Her dedication and perseverance eventually led her to open her own studio, where she now welcomes clients with the same passion that first inspired her career.

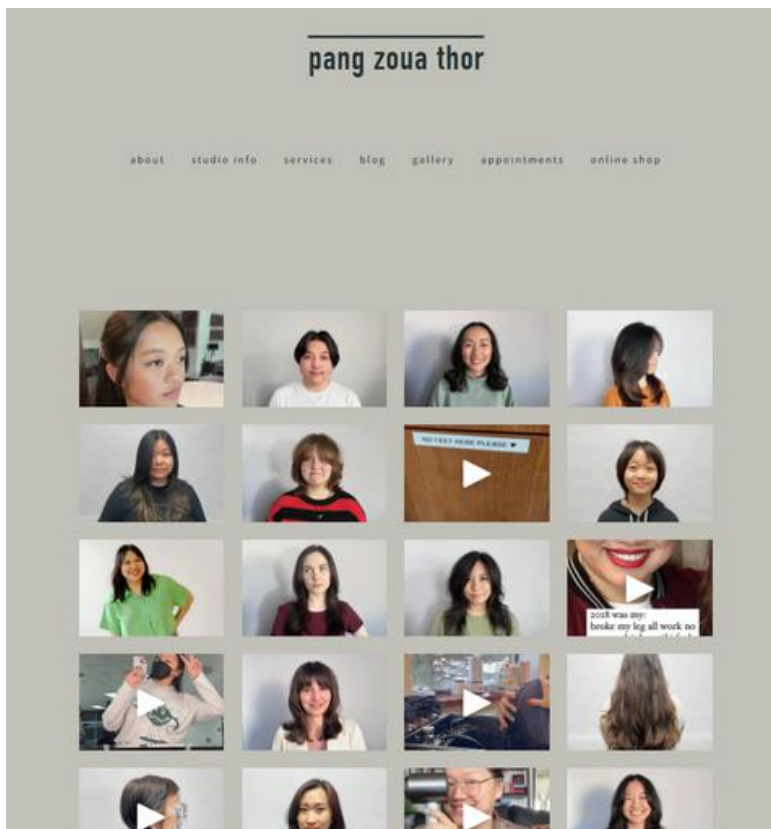


### **Learning Business by Doing**

At first, Pang didn't know much about running a business but had blind faith in herself. For years she juggled three part-time jobs, unsure if she could make her dream work, until one day an audiobook pushed her to "just go for it." In the beginning, she worked two extra jobs to keep her studio going. Some months she had only 15 customers, but she was still thrilled to have them. In 2019, she invested in a \$600 business coaching course with Britt Seva — a 16-month program that taught her how to reach new clients, build a website, and use social media effectively. After completing the program, she completely transformed her approach. She began managing her own marketing, tracking clients online, and shaping a more professional image. She says she still thinks about what she learned in that course and continues to apply it today.

### **Trial, Error, and Growth**

One of her biggest challenges has been wearing every hat in the business. From HR and administration to advertising, website design, and social media, she handles it all herself because she'd rather learn than pay someone else to do it. This has meant hours of trial and error — experimenting with beginner-friendly platforms and keeping her website simple so customers can easily understand her services and book appointments. While running every aspect of the business can feel overwhelming, she finds it rewarding to see her hard work pay off and loves hearing compliments from clients who appreciate her personal touch. Still, she knows it takes time, research, and constant upgrades to reach new people and keep improving her online presence.



### Tips from the Pang: Commitment and Patience

Pang's advice for anyone hoping to start a business in the beauty industry is simple but firm: you have to truly commit. "When you try it, you have to dig your claws in and focus," she says. Part-time effort will bring only part-time results — to succeed, you must give 100 percent and practice your craft relentlessly. She encourages aspiring entrepreneurs to stick with it for at least five years, because by then you'll either have learned enough to make it work or realized it's time to pivot. Drawing from her own experience of juggling multiple jobs, scraping by with only 15 clients in her first month, and then growing through the pandemic, she believes hard work and persistence are the real keys. Above all, she hopes others will give themselves the time and focus needed to build something lasting.

Learn More about Pang Zoua Thor, visit <https://www.pangzouathor.com/>.





**Preface:** The Asian American Business Resilience Network has teamed up with Asian Media Access to co-develop the St. Paul Sears Site, we will publicize a series of articles to highlight our progress.

**Series of SEARS Redevelopment - Article #20**

## **A SHARED PATH FORWARD: COMMUNITY INSIGHTS FROM THE SEARS SITE WALK AUDITS**

In collaboration with REACH and other local partners, Asian Media Access (AMA), the Asian American Business Resilience Network (AABRN), and the Frogtown-Rondo Business and Cultural Alliance (FRBCA) successfully launched and completed two Walk Audits to assess and improve walkability in the area surrounding the former Sears site.

### **Two Walk Audits, One Community Vision**

These audits were designed to evaluate sidewalks, crossings, bike routes, and transit access—identifying what’s working well and where improvements are needed. Just as importantly, they provided a platform for residents—especially youth, elders, and people with mobility challenges—to share their perspectives through photos, videos, and form-based feedback. Using tools like the AARP/Safe Routes Walk Audit Toolkit, the audits gathered community insight to inform both immediate enhancements,



such as pop-up crosswalks and protected bike lanes, and long-term infrastructure planning that reflects the community's priorities.



## Exploring All Directions: North, East, South, and West Routes—What We Discovered

The first Walk Audit on June 26 examined the North and East Routes around the former Sears site, highlighting issues such as midblock crossings, bus stop safety, limited bike lanes, and inconsistent curb ramps. The second Walk Audit on July 10 focused on the South and West Routes near University Avenue and the Capitol area, noting similar concerns with signage, crossings, and access, as well as bike lane gaps and boulevard maintenance. Together, both audits offered a fuller picture of mobility challenges and opportunities across all four routes, including ideas for long-term improvements like a future lid park to reconnect neighborhoods divided by the freeway.

## Documenting Barriers and Opportunities for Safer Mobility

Across both Walk Audits, nearly 30 St. Paul neighbors joined, bringing diverse perspectives and experiences. Together they reflected on how easy it is to navigate the area, whether sidewalks are clear and connected, and if crossings feel safe and visible. They also evaluated how welcoming the spaces feel, looking for features like seating, shade, lighting, and clear signage. Throughout both days, participants discussed who the area currently serves—and, just as importantly, who it might be leaving out.

## Listening to the Community: Key Takeaways on Access, Safety, and Retail Needs

Survey feedback from both Walk Audits offered rich insights into transportation preferences and desired amenities. On the first day, walking was the top preference (four mentions), followed by biking, transit, and driving. On the second day,



participants highlighted walking and driving as the most common modes (each mentioned by 13 participants), followed by bicycling (10), bus (8), and light rail (6). Across both days, participants called for safer crossings, larger crosswalks for children, better lighting at night, cleaner sidewalks, marked bike lanes, shaded rest areas, and slower traffic speeds supported by more stoplights and speed bumps.

Regarding services and retail, residents expressed interest in a mix of housing options, healthcare, grocery stores, restaurants, coffee and boba shops, parks, youth-friendly gathering areas, and event spaces. Many also emphasized support for cultural businesses and community spaces that reflect neighborhood diversity. The consistent theme across all feedback was the need for safer, cleaner, and more inclusive infrastructure to support active transportation and daily life.



## Upcoming Plans for Inclusive Redevelopment

Together, the two Walk Audits provided a comprehensive look at how the former Sears site and its surrounding streets can better serve the community. Feedback underscored the importance of multi-modal transportation—walking, biking, transit, and driving—while also highlighting the need for improved lighting, bike infrastructure, cleaner sidewalks, and welcoming public spaces. Participants also envisioned a vibrant mix of housing, essential services, cultural amenities, and neighborhood gathering spaces that would draw people to the area and support daily living. With both Walk Audits now complete, the collected community feedback will inform and shape future plans for the Sears redevelopment project—building a safer, healthier, and more inclusive environment for all. To learn more and stay updated, please visit the St. Paul Sears Redevelopment’s Facebook page or <https://searsstpaul.info/>.

## POSITION YOUR BUSINESS FOR FALL SUCCESS: A FINANCIAL CHECKLIST FOR ENTREPRENEURS



For many entrepreneurs, fall marks a key transition point that can set the tone for year-end performance. It's a crucial time for business owners to assess their finances and prepare to capitalize on upcoming opportunities and new cycles of customer engagement.

Some businesses may see an influx of traffic during the fall and winter, especially during the holidays. For those that experience a natural slowdown as the temperatures drop, it's an ideal time to refine strategies and set the stage for future peaks. Either way, the seasonal transition provides an opportunity to maximize the last part of the year.

To ensure success, here are some tips to help businesses optimize cash flow, manage inventory, and make data-driven decisions.

**Solidify cash flow.** Cash is king, and business owners need to meticulously manage and monitor its flow to finish the year strong. This fall, business owners can do so by:

- **Forecasting budget:** For businesses in certain sectors — think tourism and hospitality — cash flow is susceptible to feast-or-famine cycles. Peak summer and winter seasons may bring in a wave of customers and, therefore, substantial revenue, which leaves a potential lull during the fall months. Over-indexing on periods of high demand can lead to budgets that become hard to sustain during quiet periods. To shield the business, build potential revenue dips, whether due to slower customer activity or seasonal demand shifts, into your budget.
- **Negotiating with suppliers:** If there are any new suppliers you will be working with in the fall months or agreements up for renewal, plan to negotiate those vendor contracts as appropriate. Ask for extended payment terms, discounts for early payment, or volume discounts. If you can't come to an agreement, don't be afraid to shop around for better deals and partners.
- **Accelerating receivables when possible:** Look for ways to incentivize customers to make early payments. For example, you might offer a limited time fall discount to customers who pay by a certain date. You can also stay on top of receivables by invoicing promptly, and don't be afraid to follow up on late payments.

- **Proactively exploring financing options:** Don't wait until you're in a Q4 cash crunch to seek financing. If you don't have an existing relationship with a bank or credit union, start fall off right by establishing one. A line of credit can be a valuable safety net toward the end of the year.



Optimize inventory for fall demand. Business owners should examine physical inventories and adjust as needed to streamline for the fall months. By strategically optimizing inventory, they can more confidently navigate fluctuating demand, avoid costly overstocks, and ensure customer needs are met. Some tactics to manage inventory include:

- **Analyzing sales data and adjusting:** Consult historical sales data to identify your best- and worst-selling products during the fall months. By understanding proven demand patterns, you'll be able to make more informed decisions about which products to stock up on and which can be moved off the shelves.
- **Implementing just-in-time inventory:** If possible, work with suppliers to implement a just-in-time inventory system to receive items when you truly need them. This will help minimize storage costs and the risk of overstock, allowing you to capture sales opportunities while maintaining leaner operations.
- **Considering seasonal promotions:** As summer comes to an end, run promotions to clear out excess seasonal inventory and create more space for new fall arrivals.

Think like a CFO. Every season, business owners should use data to identify trends in customers' behavior, forecast revenues, and plan. Business owners can start by looking at the past three to five fall seasons and determining the specific revenue dips and expense spikes. From there, it is crucial to identify the why behind these numbers. Having a deep understanding of performance metrics will help entrepreneurs better prepare for the future. To do this, start by:



- **Segmenting your customer base:** Understand which customer segments are most active in the fall and tailor your offerings to them. Are locals more likely to spend, or are you reliant on tourists? These considerations can better inform marketing messaging and spend.
- **Developing and tracking key performance indicators (KPIs):** While overall revenue is important, you should be using a variety of metrics to measure the success of your business. Track KPIs like customer acquisition cost, average transaction value, and website traffic, which provide visibility into your current performance and enable you to identify growth pathways, pinpoint optimization opportunities, and accelerate your progress toward goals.



Owning a business is a rewarding but challenging vocation, and a crucial element of success lies in effectively managing fluctuating consumer needs and costs as the seasons change. By taking proactive steps through the fall months, you can set your business up to thrive in the final quarter of the year.



***Lydia Swanson***  
***Senior Vice President, Senior***  
***Relationship Manager Business***  
***Banking, Bank of America***



August 9~10

## ASIAN STREET FOOD NIGHT MARKET

The Asian Street Food Night Market was more than just a food festival. It was a celebration of culture, community, and connection. With authentic Asian street foods, live performances, family-friendly activities, and unique vendors, the event created a space where people from all backgrounds came together to enjoy a vibrant and unforgettable experience. Photo Courtesy: Asian Street Food Night Market





August 16~17

## KAREN TRADITIONAL WRIST TYING CEREMONY

The Karen Culture Organization of Minnesota hosted the Karen Traditional Wrist Tying Ceremony in Harris, Minnesota, celebrating culture, unity, and community. The two-day event featured music, dance, food, and traditional rituals, bringing together families and community members to honor and preserve Karen heritage. Photo Courtesy: Karen Culture Organization of Minnesota

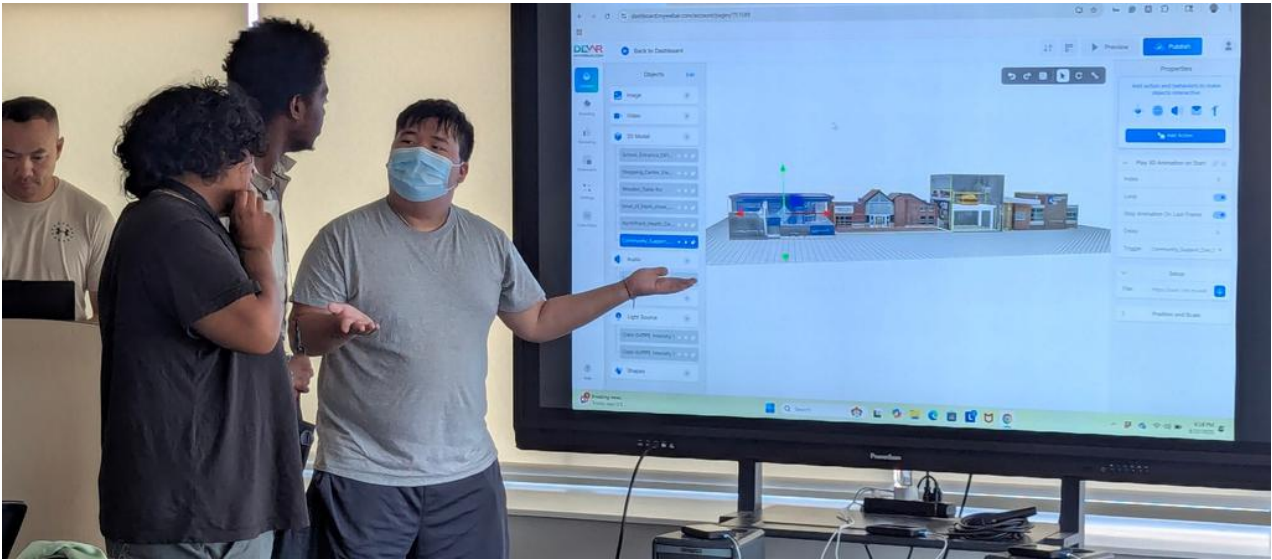




August 22

## SUMMER AR-VR STEPUP PROGRAM

We wrapped up our Summer AR-VR StepUp Program with more than 10 participants successfully completing the full course and gaining valuable hands-on experience in augmented and virtual reality technologies. Throughout the summer, students showed incredible dedication and growth, and we're proud of everything they accomplished. We're excited to see how they apply their new skills in future creative and tech-driven opportunities.





August 23~24

## HMONG 50 FESTIVAL

Hosted by the Center for Hmong Arts and Talent, the 50 Years of the Hmong American Story celebration took place at the Minnesota State Capitol, honoring five decades of Hmong history in the United States. The event featured music, dance, fashion, art, and traditional food, offering a powerful tribute to the journey and cultural resilience of the Hmong community since 1975. Photo Courtesy: Center For Hmong Arts & Talent





August 29

## LET IT GO SWAP & FLEA MARKET

The first-ever Let It Go Swap & Flea Market, hosted by ZIRAN and MinnSea Academy with support from the Hennepin County Community Zero Waste Grant Program, brought together around 50 vendor families and 400 attendees for a fun, eco-conscious gathering. The event promoted reuse and waste reduction while celebrating Chinese culture, offering a lively space for shopping, connection, and community engagement. Photo Courtesy: ZIRAN





September 6

## BROADWAY OPEN STREET

We were excited to participate in Open Streets West Broadway, a vibrant community celebration that turned 13 blocks into a car-free zone filled with music, food, biking, dancing, and family-friendly fun. With over 3,000 attendees and more than 250 vendors and participants, the event offered a powerful reminder of how public spaces can bring people together and strengthen community connection.





September 13

## 2025 SELBY AVE JAZZFEST

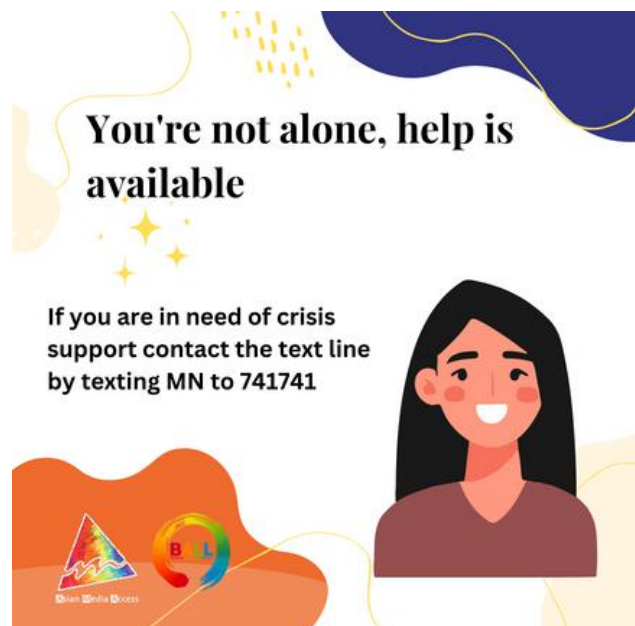
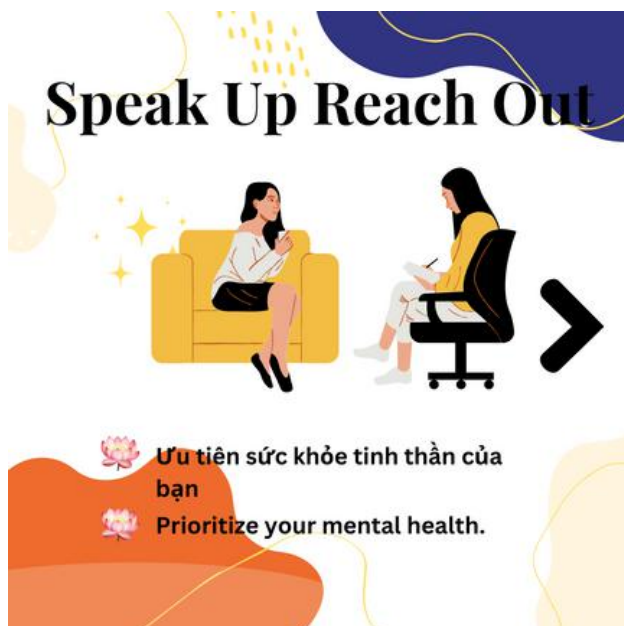
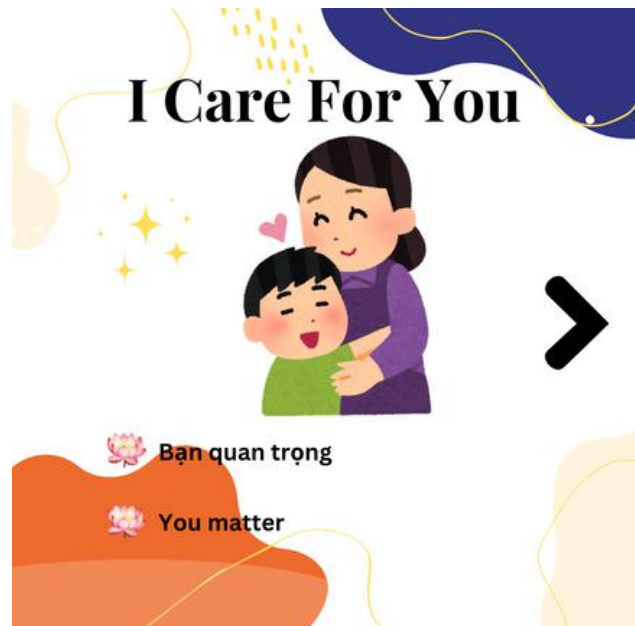
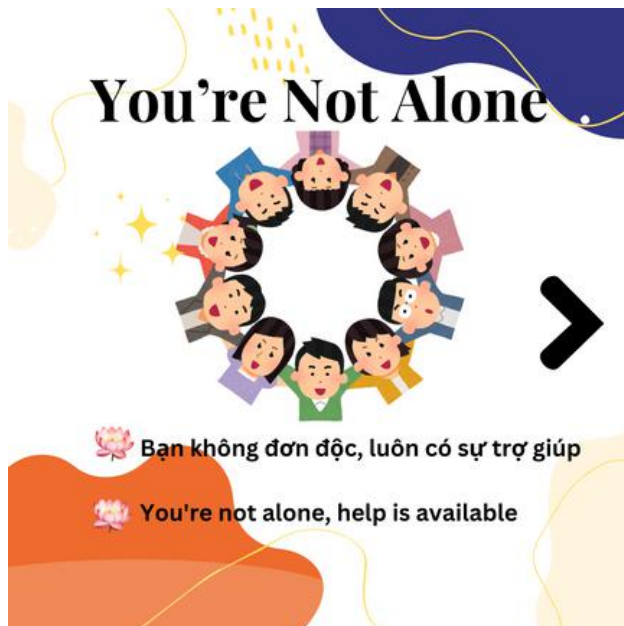
The celebration continued with a full day of music, food, and community. This free, family-friendly event kicked off with a high-energy parade and featured performances by the Selby Avenue Brass Band, Walker West Jazz Ensemble, Brio Brass, heyArlo, and Yuko Mabuchi. The day wrapped up with a dynamic headline performance by Cory Henry and The Funk Apostles, leaving the crowd energized and connected. Photo Courtesy: Selby Avenue JazzFest





## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS FLYERS

Asian Media Access has created a set of mental health heritage story cards. If you are in need of crisis support contact the text line by texting MN to 741741.







## MN PROMISE ACT ROUND 2

The MN PROMISE Act Round 2 application goes live on Tuesday, September 23 at 12:00 PM (noon). Applications will be accepted until Sunday, December 14 at 11:59 PM.

As a proud partner of the MN Promise Act, the West Broadway Business & Area Coalition (WBC) is here to support our business community in accessing these critical funds. If you need help along the way, reach out to our Business Specialist, Donna Sanders, at [donna.sanders@westbroadway.org](mailto:donna.sanders@westbroadway.org) for one-on-one assistance.

Make sure to keep an eye on the [MN PROMISE Act website](#). The application link will be added to the homepage as soon as it opens.

In the meantime, here are two ways to get ready:

- Not sure if you're eligible? Take a quick [Eligibility Quiz](#).
- Prep your materials with the [Applicant Checklist](#).

We're excited to walk with you through this process and help ensure our Northside businesses are ready to seize this opportunity.



## We can help you find your focus

Building a budget that actually works.  
Growing your network organically.  
Mastering work/life balance. All this  
and more with Digital Ready. What will  
your focus be?

Check it out



## BUDGETING TIPS AND NETWORKING KNOW-HOW

Struggling with budgeting, networking, or work-life balance? Digital Ready can help you find your focus and achieve your goals. Discover expert insights and practical tools to streamline your success at:

[https://link.digitalready.verizonwireless.com/OTk2LUtXQy0zNzcAAAGZKn5A0-kz96GrTzwrOAAOnZ\\_2TNNWrU\\_BQXIGWbjvQHw\\_pjs1hSTgctExNiFQleIF4R3PHE=](https://link.digitalready.verizonwireless.com/OTk2LUtXQy0zNzcAAAGZKn5A0-kz96GrTzwrOAAOnZ_2TNNWrU_BQXIGWbjvQHw_pjs1hSTgctExNiFQleIF4R3PHE=)

Find the event that fits your goals:

<https://digitalready.verizonwireless.com/category/events>



Event • Ask the Expert

Small business chat:  
Beauty Box Philly,  
Anghelo's Suit and Tux

Sep 26, 11:00 am-12:00 pm →



Event • Ask the Expert

Simplifying small  
business cybersecurity:  
Easy habits to protect...

Sep 29, 11:00 am-12:30 pm →



Event • Ask the Expert

Social media SEO

Oct 6, 2:00 pm-4:00 pm →

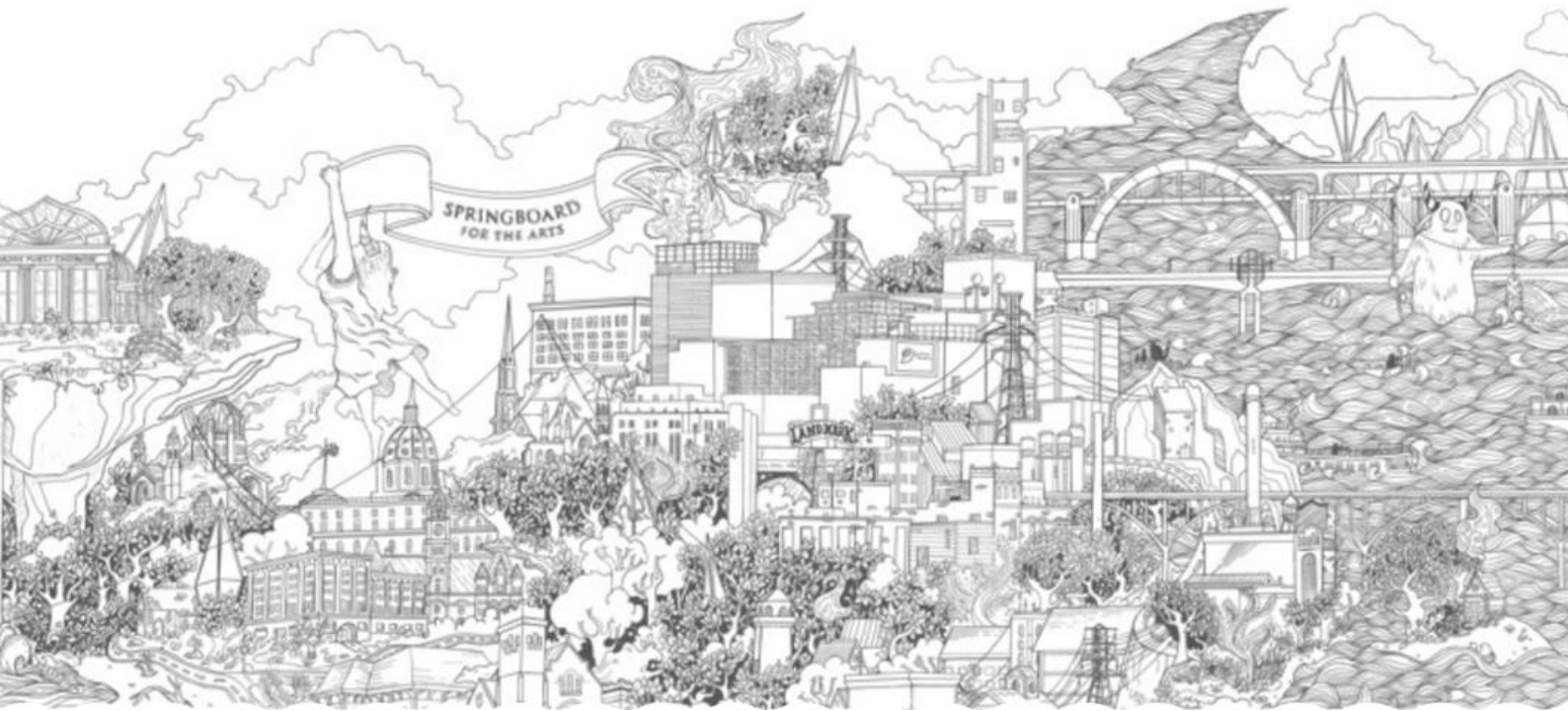


Event • Ask the Expert

Mentoring and coaching  
your team

Oct 7, 12:00 pm-2:00 pm →





## Springboard for the Arts Calendar of Events - Professional Development

- September 22, 2025 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm - Work of Art: Grant Writing – PLRAC (St. Peter)
- September 23, 2025 6:00 pm to 8:30 pm - Work of Art: Portfolio Kit
- September 27, 2025 1:00 pm to 3:30 pm - Artists Working in Community
- October 3, 2025 10:00 am to 12:30 pm - Work of Art: Marketing – PLRAC (New Ulm)

Learn more and register at: <https://springboardforthearts.org/events/>

## Additional Resources

- Get connected to Artist Career Consultants here:  
<https://springboardforthearts.org/professional-growth/career-consultations/artist-career-consultants/>
- Work of Art Toolkit: <https://springboardforthearts.org/woa>
- Handbook for Artists Working in Community:  
<https://springboardforthearts.org/artists-working-in-community/>

## Tax Tips from the IRS



- [Here's what taxpayers need to know about business related travel deductions](#)
- [Companies who promise to eliminate tax debt sometimes leave taxpayers high and dry](#)
- [Get an Identity Protection PIN](#)
- [Tax Resources for Members of the Military](#)



SEP  
**23**  
1pm~2pm

## Deep Dive into Entity-Owned/8(a) and HubZone Applications

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

SEP  
**24**  
11am~1230pm

## International Go-to-Market Bootcamp

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

SEP  
**30**  
930am~11am

## Minnesota Paid Family and Medical Leave – Are You Ready?

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

OCT  
**1**  
10am~1130am

## Find Your Perfect Pricing

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)





OCT

1

12pm~1pm

## Focus on What Matters MOST: Do Less to Maximize Impact

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

OCT

3

1pm~2pm

## Messaging That Sells: How to Talk About What You Do

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

OCT

7

11am~12pm

## Reddit 101: Growth Strategy & LLM Readiness

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)

OCT

10

11am~12pm

## Unlock Gaming's Superpowers – Create Customer Experiences That Stick

Business Webinar

[LEARN MORE >>](#)



Visit Our Website for More Upcoming Events

[OFFICIAL WEBSITE >>](#)

# Contact Us

**Email**

aabrn@amamedia.org

**Telephone**

(612) 376-7715

**Address**

2418 Plymouth Ave N, Room 105,  
Minneapolis, MN 55411



## Partnering with



Asian Media Access



---

Asian American Business Resilience Network