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ED GOLDMAN: Meet a Valley Vision dynamo

Sacramento Business Journal by Ed Goldman, Columnist

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When Drexel Met Sally — “My generation is the multiple-choice one,” says [Sally Phonthachack](#) (PON-tuh-chack) over coffee at Tower Café late in the morning, late last week. “Sometimes I think we have too many possibilities, which makes it hard to settle down with one job.”

Phonthachack has been in the U.S. since she was a year old. Her family escaped from the relentlessly strafed Laos 32 years ago, and she’s been in Sacramento since she was 3. She holds an associate of arts degree from **American River College**, a BA from Sacramento State in business administration “with a concentration in marketing,” she clarifies — modestly leaving out the fact that she’s the first member of her family to earn that degree.

Now, as she works on her masters at the local campus of **Drexel University**, she’s landed an eight-month fellowship from Valley Vision, the regional economic development group dedicated to job and wealth creation. The gig began at the beginning of the year.

Valley Vision has her working on business strategies, its newsletter and its Feb. 17 regional forum, a free event that will be held at Folsom Community Center (details are online at valleyvision.org). It runs from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Her main focus is on the group’s “Next Economy” campaign, which has the goal of revving up both job growth and new investment in the six-county Greater Sacramento area.

Phonthachack speaks in a rush — *kindoflikethis* — and seems as though she’s going to jump up from her seat any minute to tackle a new assignment. She has some nonprofit entrepreneurial plans in the works to benefit the local Laotian community, whose population is more than 12,000 — and, like any smart startup person, declines to divulge details. “It’s really a pretty simple idea,” she says, “so I don’t want anyone stealing it from me.”

While her surname is probably longer than she is, Sally’s first name, in Lao, is Bouasavamh. I won’t trouble you with the phonetic spelling; I’ll just ask you to enjoy what the name means in English: “A lotus blossom in heaven.” What a beautiful way, amid chaos and danger, to start out a child’s life. Keep your eye on this young woman.



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